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25th ANNIVERSARY YEAR 25

Trump

Equinox and SoulCycle and that fundraiser. What can be learned?
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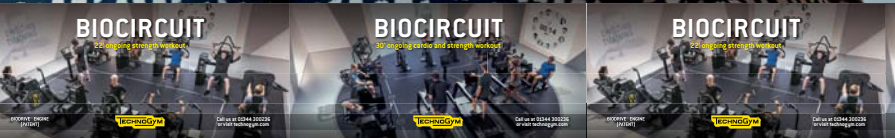
ukactive is driving a huge agenda for change in the activity sector, says its chair p60



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> – Danni Mohan, Health Mentor and Personal Trainer, Nuffield Health

Movement = happiness

A substaintial new research study has mapped the global fitness and physical activity market. As well as giving us a benchmark to measure growth, it also reveals some important correlations

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has mapped the global physical activity market for the first time, with the publication of a study called *Move to be well: the global economy of physical activity*, authored by GWI's senior researchers, Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston.

The report shows physical activity with a value of US$828bn, sitting near the top of the US$4.5tr wellness industry in 2018.

In breaking this number down, Yeung and Johnston have split the market into three segments and valued them by expenditure – fitness (US$109bn), sport and active recreation (US$230bn) and mindful movement such as yoga (US$29bn). They also looked at 'enabling sectors' – equipment and supplies (US$109bn), apparel/footwear (US$333bn) and tech (US$26bn).

The GWI expects this total for the activity market to grow by 6.6 per cent per annum to reach US$1.1tn by 2023.

Importantly, Yeung and Johnston recognise that much activity people engage in cannot be measured, and have flagged up 'free activity' such as road running and tai chi in the park as being in addition to the totals laid out.

GWI has undertaken this research as part of its mission to map the entire wellness ecosystem and so these new numbers for the activity sectors sit within a wider study of the US$4.5bn global wellness economy, which includes workplace wellness, the spa economy, wellness tourism, personal care, beauty and anti-ageing, wellness real estate, healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss, traditional and complementary medicine, prevention and personalised medicine and public health.

Yeung and Johnston point out that the growth of the fitness, mind-body sector has been a major driver when it comes to making activity accessible to large numbers of people, with 3.7 per cent of the world's population (190m people) holding a gym membership. They report that revenues have grown by over 50 per cent since 2007, to come in at US$595bn.

Going forward, GWI says the Asia-Pacific region will overtake North America as the largest market for fitness in the next few years, accounting for 40 per cent of all global growth. China and India together will drive nearly a third of growth, while the US will account for a quarter.

It's interesting to look more deeply into the numbers, and analysis of the GWI research by Katie Barnes, editor of HCM's sister magazine, *Spa Business*, notes a strong and significant correlation between activity and mental health. Barnes says: "When you compare the happiest nations from the 2019 *World Happiness Report* to the countries with the highest rates for physical activity, there's very striking overlap.

"Fourteen nations make both top-20 lists, with countries such as Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark all ranking in the top 10 for both "happiest" and "most physically active". The movement and "mood" connection seems powerful."

With the current challenges being faced in relation to mental health and happiness, understanding powerful influences such as this are hugely empowering for our industry.

SHUTTERSTOCK/PROSTOCK-STUDIO

Happiness and physical activity are correlated

> **When you compare the list of the happiest nations with the highest rates for physical activity, there's a striking overlap**

Liz Terry, editor
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PHOTO BY ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE BUONICONTI FUND TO CURE PARALYSIS

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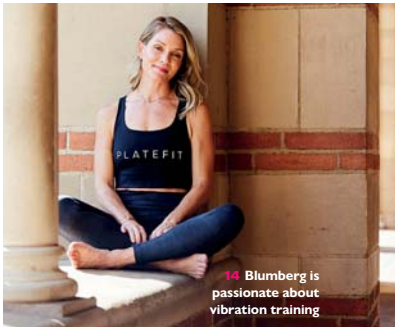

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HCM

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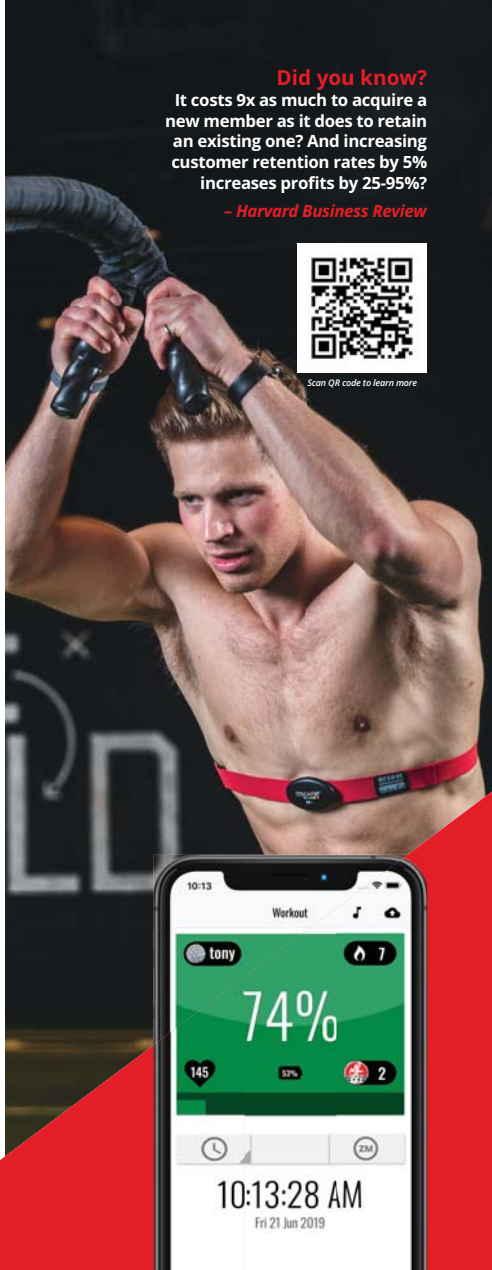

Did you know?

It costs 9x as much to acquire a new member as it does to retain an existing one? And increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25-95%?

– Harvard Business Review

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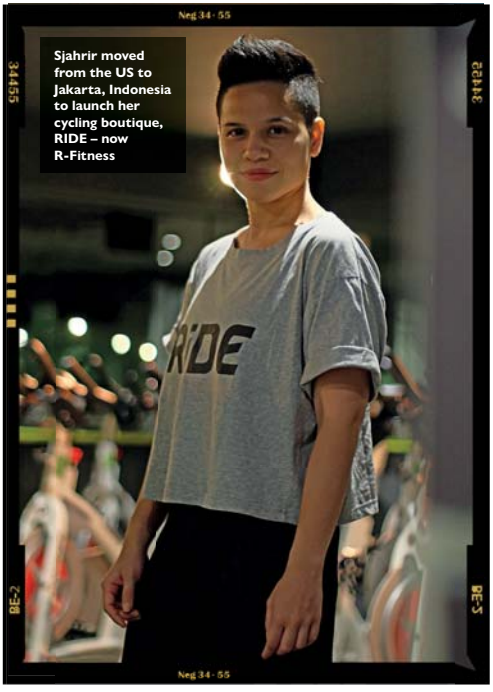
“

We became the first boutique fitness brand in all of Southeast Asia to ever raise venture capital backing. This was positive for the industry as it signalled that the industry had growth potential

GITA SJAHRIR

FOUNDER, R-FITNESS



Sjahrir moved from the US to Jakarta, Indonesia to launch her cycling boutique, RIDE – now R-Fitness

What's your background?
I'm originally from the US, from Boston, and I went to college at the University of Chicago. After college, I joined a boutique investment banking firm that specialises in the energy sector. This wasn't necessarily my passion, it was just something I got into when I was 22 but it taught me a lot about business development and the art of negotiations.

At 27 I felt like I was going through a midlife crisis and I didn't know what I really wanted to be doing. So I went to business school – Wharton – because the one thing I did love was business.

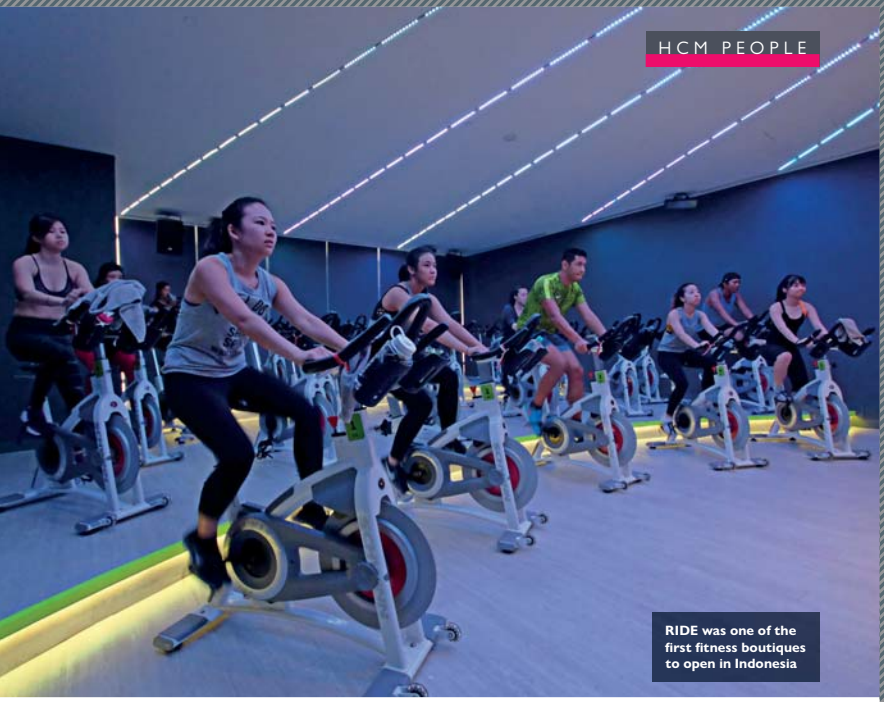
During business school I worked in a hedge fund specialising in retail – unfortunately I did this during the Wall Street crash, a time that challenged traditional businesses and corporations, as many people realised that no job is safe and began to pursue an entrepreneurial path.

So I thought, 'I wonder what it's like to create a business and sell a lifestyle. Could I do that?'

Why did you decide to launch in Jakarta?
The US was a highly saturated market already. I'm ethnically Indonesian – my parents were political refugees to the US in the 70s, which was why I spent the majority of my life in the US.

But I decided that although I could stay and do it in the US, going to Indonesia would make my life more exciting!

Why cycling?
Cycling means a lot to me personally. I've had advanced rheumatoid arthritis since I was 22, and it was really severe.



RIDE was one of the first fitness boutiques to open in Indonesia

But the way you can help battle the pain and inflammation is with exercise. So I'm very aware of the importance of stress management, sleeping and exercise, to manage my condition.

I loved cycling because it was a low impact exercise, and it felt comfortable on my joints. What matters most is that whenever I cycle, I don't feel like I'm working out because I lose myself in the experience. That feeling is what I wanted to offer to other people.

At the time, the fitness industry in Asia – and still globally to an extent – mostly cared about calories and looking hot, etc. So the challenge was 'how do I offer a more positive fitness mindset and create a community that celebrates inclusivity and not insecurity?'

How did you get your first studio off the ground?

RIDE has been around for four years, but I've worked on it for five years. It took a year of saving money and figuring out how to launch a brand in a market that has never had this boutique indoor cycling format before.

We were bullish on the market anyway because yoga had been through the same thing in Indonesia years ago, which set the stage for specialised premium lifestyle products. We came in when it was still a very nascent market where there were only about eight boutique players in a city of 25 million people.

Investors weren't sure how big the market was, and because there were few players they wondered if people were really buying into this fitness lifestyle market.

Fast forward five years and we're now seeing rapid growth in Southeast Asia. Although some people will see parts of Southeast Asia and say fitness isn't taking off, the fact is there were eight boutique fitness players in Jakarta in 2014 and and now there are about 200 brands. There are boutique studios opening literally every week. It's stunning.

How did you attract an audience?

We had to approach it from a community driven standpoint. You can't win on functionality, because you could technically cycle anywhere. We had to take an almost emotional approach to marketing the brand.

The good news is we relied on data in a big way, where we looked at demographics to understand our target market and tailor our product to that market.

For the first three years, our target market was 80 per cent female, middle to upper class, and they tend to spend on lifestyle experiences. We then diversified into R Fitness, and begin offering circuit training and yoga, and changed our positioning to make our product more affordable. This expanded our demographic and attracted people who have never tried fitness before.

And how have you grown the brand?

The first two years were very tough. We burned through a lot of capital because building anything in Indonesia is challenging, especially from a bureaucratic standpoint. Not to mention that we have to pay 100 per cent import tax on a lot of things.

In the beginning we really had to work on word of mouth and social media. A lot of it was experimenting with the best ►

way to educate and show the market what a RIDE class entails.

We got to a point where we were breaking even, and then profitable, which was nice, but my larger business mindset went, "no, let's shoot for the stars and make this one of the biggest fitness brands if we can because YOLO!"

Hence we needed outside capital. In 2017 we went to raise venture capital funding, which was unheard of then for a boutique fitness studio in southeast Asia. We were shut down by about 60 investors.

To this day, my co-founder and I don't mind having our ownership diluted, because our goal is to see how far we can push this brand. Besides, the value of outside investors isn't just the money. It's the years of experience in building businesses and helping their companies reach for the stars. I believe that if you want to go far, go together, if you want to go fast, go alone.

So did you eventually find an investor?

So after being rejected about 60 times and getting depressed and doubting myself, there was this venture capital called Intudo Ventures and they were the first to come on board.

Intudo, at the time, was in a similar boat. It was only their first few months operating. So we both had big dreams. They were the first one who gave us a chance and they brought in other incredible investors, including East Ventures.

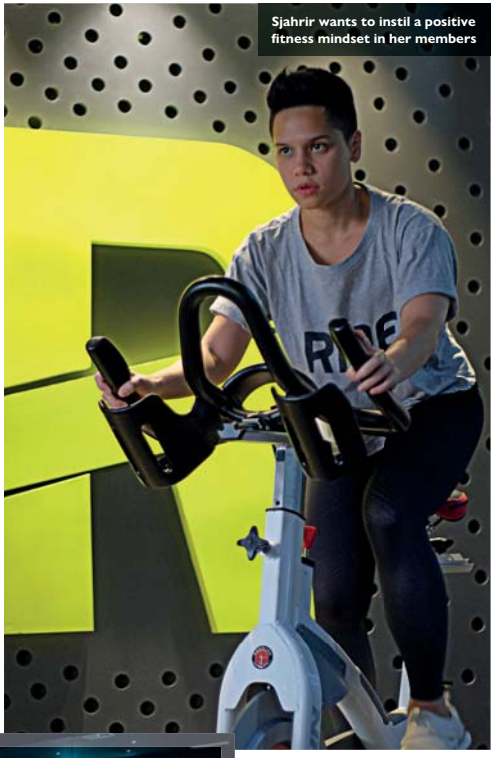
We raised a seed round in 2017, and this made us the first boutique fitness brand in all of Southeast Asia to ever raise venture capital backing, which was positive for the industry as it signalled that the industry had growth potential.

Since then we've built several more studios and worked on a stronger branding by building content and improving the company. We have to keep creating the groundwork to build a more scalable business that continues to challenge the industry.

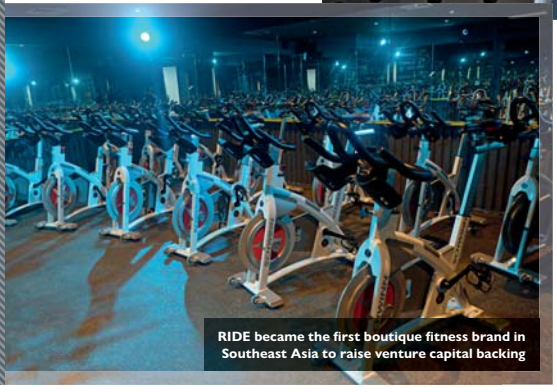
What are your future plans?

I want to keep building our brand and merge online and offline seamlessly. And to continue launching new products and be open to mergers and acquisitions.

In the end the brand itself doesn't really matter. The real question should be can we add value to people, their lives and their confidence? That's the bigger picture for us.



Sjahrir wants to instil a positive fitness mindset in her members



RIDE became the first boutique fitness brand in Southeast Asia to raise venture capital backing

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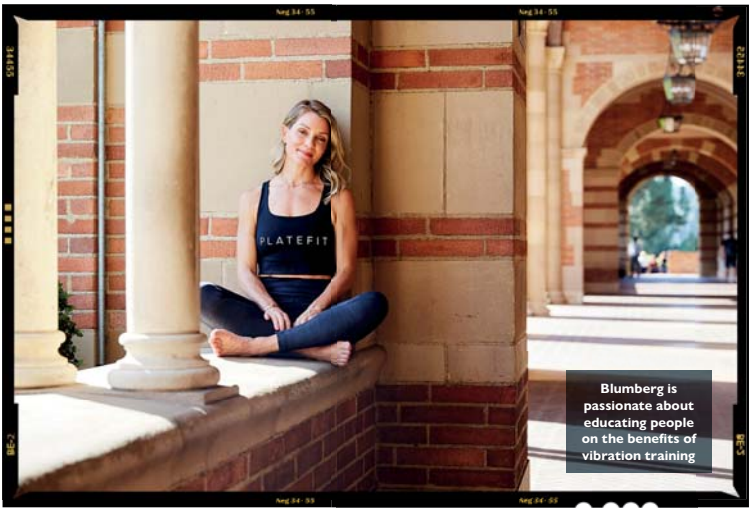
People know yoga, Pilates, HIIT and Barry's Bootcamp, but many don't know vibration training and it's my intention, passion and purpose to make it available and bring it to the world

RACHAEL BLUMBERG

PLATEFIT: CREATOR AND FOUNDER



Blumberg is passionate about educating people on the benefits of vibration training

What's the concept?
Platefit is a premium vibration wellness brand, based in Los Angeles. We offer a wide range of 27-minute workouts centered around Power Plate machines, a medical grade device which uses harmonic vibration. The plates are always moving in three directions – left to right, front to back and up and down - which activate muscles, making them contract 30 to 40 times per second.

We use the science of vibration to wake up cells, increase circulation, drain and detoxify the lymphatic system, reduce inflammation and accelerate recovery time. The body's response to vibration increases serotonin and HGH and reduces cortisol.

How did you come up with the idea?
Fourteen years ago, when I was 26 years old, I went to the gym with a friend and saw a vibrating platform in the corner. I asked the fitness instructor what it was, and they didn't really know how to use it, or show any interest. I had a go for 30 seconds, which changed my life! Intuitively I knew it was amazing and great for the body and I wanted to know more.

That night I went home and started my research, finding out that pro-athletes were using vibration technology, as well as doctors, chiropractors and a range of other health professionals for different applications, including to help fine motor skills and treat Parkinsons. It's great for increasing power, as well as circulation, range of motion and stretching.

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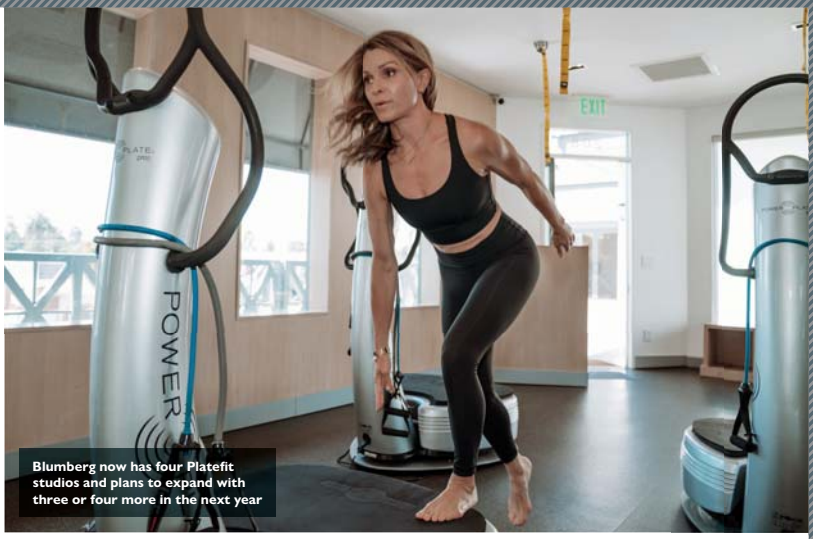


Blumberg now has four Platefit studios and plans to expand with three or four more in the next year

After six sessions I saw a huge difference in my body: I felt leaner, tighter and stronger. I was sold. Shortly afterwards, I quit my job to open a studio. I had the vision of hundreds of studios and making vibration technology available for everybody. I quickly realised that a lot of people didn't know what it was, so it became another passion project of mine to educate people on its benefits and bring it to the masses.

How did you bring the idea to fruition?

Shortly after quitting my job, I started training Cher on her Power Plate and we decided to open a studio together. Four months in, she decided it wasn't for her and we closed the studio, but she let me lease the machines really cheaply.

I struck out on my own and found a 200sq ft studio in West Hollywood with very cheap rent, and room for five plates. I painted it myself and brought in a boombox. There was a really affluent school opposite and I started marketing myself there and grew my customer base via word of mouth among the moms.

How has it grown since then?

I met my husband four years ago and got pregnant really quickly and at that point we made the decision for me to teach less and build and expand the brand. He believed my concept was much bigger than 'the corner of a gym.' Platefit was born was from that point.

We invested some money in creating a cool brand, formalised a seven day training course, found some instructors and launched the second studio in Brentwood. This was followed a year later by Studio City. We will launch Sycamore in October and are looking to expand by three or four more studios in the next year. Each studio is slightly larger than the last; the upcoming studio is 1,200sq ft and will have 15 Plates.

We have plans to grow across the US and globally. People know yoga, Pilates, HIIT and Barry's Bootcamp, but many don't know vibration training and it's my intention, passion and purpose to make it available and bring it to the world. At the moment we are growing the chain ourselves, but further down the line we may look for financial backing, or franchise the concept.

Who are your customers?

In the early morning we get the young working men and women, and these are followed later on by moms. We also get high school athletes who are competing in sports and want to get stronger, as well as older people. We recommend that people come three or four times a week to get the best results.

How much do you charge?

It is $27 for one class, but we also have packages and memberships and we're on ClassPass.

Is LA a difficult market to launch health and fitness concepts?

It's probably the most competitive market in the world for health and fitness, but there are also lots of people who are willing to try new concepts. I think that if Platefit can survive and thrive here then it could work anywhere.

There are some copycat concepts, who have come to our classes and replicated what we do and launched in other places, so they're doing our research for us.

CLASS RUNDOWN

- **AbFIT**: focused on building core through exercises and props.
- **BarreFIT**: Blends elements of Pilates, dance, ballet and barre workouts, with additional emphasis on the core.
- **BootcampFIT**: High intensity, full body workout.
- **Barre/DanceFIT**: Involves easy-to-follow dance moves with plyometrics, weights, sculpting and toning exercises.
- **Deep Stretch/CelluliteFIT**: uses low therapeutic vibrations to enhance a deep stretch, ending with relaxation and a deep tissue massage.

People often assume that those who pay more stay longer, but we don't see this. What we see is that if you have PT you stay longer because you use more, not because you pay more

JOSÉ TEIXEIRA

SC FITNESS, PORTUGAL: HEAD OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

What's your back story?
I was a professional athlete in beach volleyball and studied a degree in Sports and Physical Education, before joining Sonae Capital in 2004. Starting as a sales consultant, I went on to be club manager, area manager, operations director and now head of customer experience for the group, overseeing projects, innovation and data.

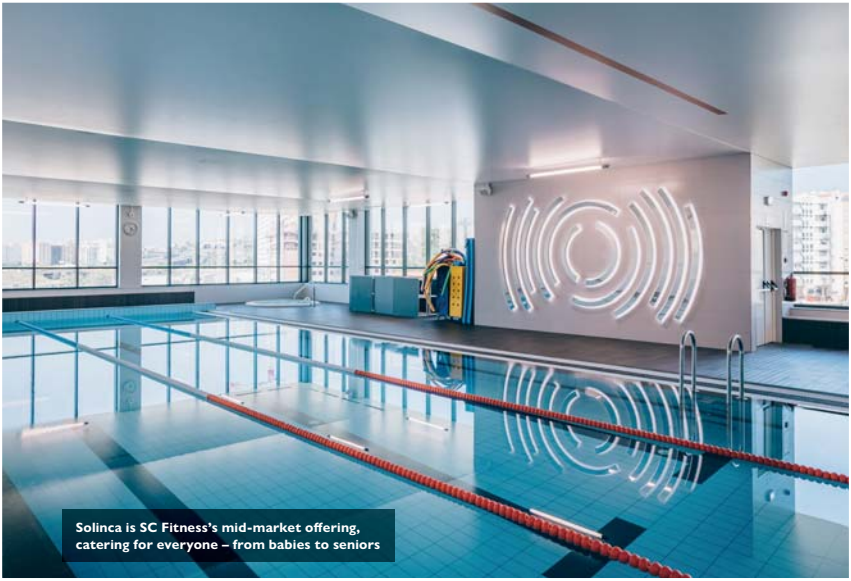
What does your role as head of customer experience involve?
My role is to improve service quality and length of stay of our clients. Data is the key to this: we have a business intelligence department with two business analysts and a psychologist. Our company no longer has to make assumptions, we can work out the reason and support it with numbers.

We have a lot of data about members: not only information like age, gender, height, weight and health, but their length of stay, and their usage. We track entries and exits of group exercise classes and use sensor cameras to get further usage data, we profile clients, as well as monitor who is coming and who is leaving.

Has this data dispelled some previously held assumptions?
A lot of them. For example, we have found that overcrowding is much more important than both cleaning and maintenance in terms of its role in causing a member to leave. If there isn't space to work out, because there aren't enough treadmills or room in the class, they leave.

An instructor missing a class hurts the club a lot more than some hair in

José Teixeira says analysing data is key to understanding your members



Solinca is SC Fitness's mid-market offering, catering for everyone – from babies to seniors

the showers. Cleaning and maintenance in the gym is important, but it is not as important as many would assume.

We also found that older people stay as members for longer: they have more stable lives, are more stable financially and move less. And people with a contract also stay longer.

People often assume that those who pay more stay longer, but we don't see this. What we see is that if you have PT you stay longer because you use more, not because you pay more.

What is the most important factor for improving member retention?

Increasing usage. People who use the club more, stay longer. For each incremental visit per month, people stay 1.26 months longer as members. As soon as we sell a membership, we think about retention: our sales consultants book the assessment when closing the membership and then our fitness instructors help people to build a routine. New members are more likely to drop out, so it is important to get the first 30 days going well: we aim to get new members to come 12 times in the first 30 days.

We used to sell memberships and 20 per cent of the people never even came to the facility, because we didn't make an appointment for an induction.

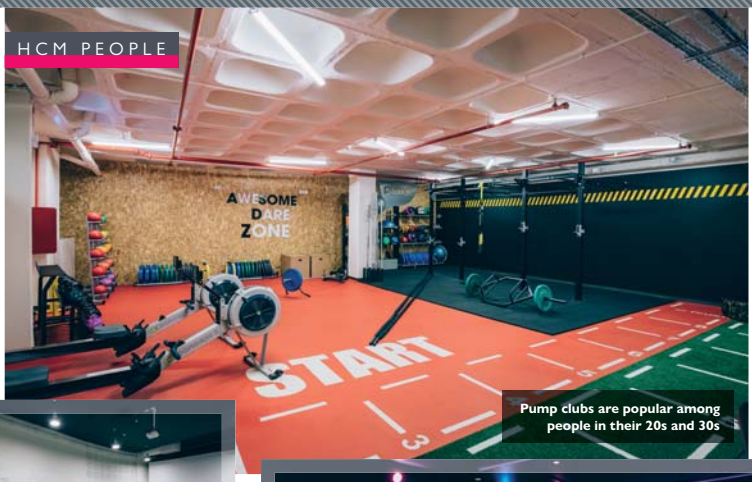
Pump is a low cost chain of 14 clubs, owned by SC Fitness

SC FITNESS OWNS 35 CLUBS ACROSS THREE BRANDS IN PORTUGAL:

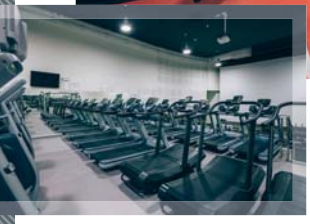
Solinca is a mid-market offering with pool and fitness, catering for every age from babies to seniors, with the most popular demographic being 40 year olds. Priced at €40-€50 per month, there are currently 20 clubs, with two more opening this year.

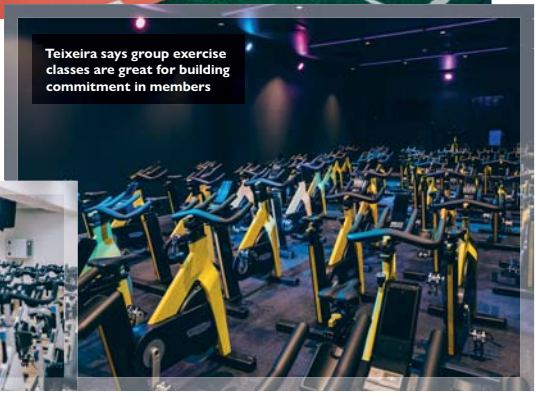
Purchased two years ago, Pump is a low cost chain of 14 clubs, which offer gym and group exercise classes, but no pool. Popular among younger people in their 20s and 30s, membership is €20-€35 a month. Three more will open this year.

SC Fitness owns one premium club, which was acquired last year and rebranded to One. It is similar to Solinca, but with higher quality equipment and materials, less members and higher retention. It costs €60-€65 a month and appeals mainly to an older demographic.



Pump clubs are popular among people in their 20s and 30s





Teixeira says group exercise classes are great for building commitment in members

▶ Now 85 per cent or our new members attend assessments.

Are you using any other tools to build retention?
Group fitness classes are really good at building commitment, because the instructor can say at the end of the class to come back again next week. We are trying to create this similar interaction on the fitness floor, maybe by giving them a challenge, but also to keep developing our group exercise programme.

Our average length of stay is 20 to 24 months, but this can rise to three or four years for those who do fitness classes: people like it because the workout is measured in time, you know what you do, it's social and you get results.

How can other operators improve their business intelligence?
Just an Excel spreadsheet does miracles. Many clubs don't know simple information, such as how many males and females they have, how many of their members are boomers, or millennials, or their average usage in the first 30 days. This is all very easy information to find out.

Clubs need to track their own reality, finding out their member profile and who is joining and leaving. Every club is different – even within our clubs we see differences.

What's the benefit of having a psychologist on the team?
Ninety nine per cent of the communication our fitness instructors have with members is about creating a routine and changing behaviour, which are all psychological questions. So, our psychologist is working on ways to improve the quality of communication with members, as well as informing our zero to 500 customer lifecycle, which is focused on keeping members engaged throughout the lifecycle.

Any future plans for the brand?
One of the things we're looking at is how to integrate fitness and activity into everyday lives. All operators need to be looking to be multi-channel operators, so we can engage with our members 24/7, so that when they are not in the club they can still stream our classes, or do exercises set by instructors at the gym.

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"We find it's a great way to get new customers into our club, many of which go on to become members with us directly."

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Deloitte: corporate wellness a 'huge opportunity' for sector

A Deloitte report has suggested that getting involved in corporate wellness programmes could offer health and fitness operators a huge opportunity for revenue growth.

The *Deloitte Corporate Wellness Report* is based on a study of the corporate wellness industry at a global level. It found that 78 per cent of employers were looking to invest in physical activity programmes in the next three years and that most of the current corporate wellness programmes include initiatives focused on promoting physical activity.

A rich opportunity exists within the corporate wellness market
Concepción Iglesias

Among the existing programmes, on-site fitness classes and subsidies or discounts for off-site gym memberships are most popular. In the US, 70 per cent of corporations include these practices within their wellness strategy in 2018.

According to Concepción Iglesias, Sports Leader of Deloitte Spain – which conducted the study – the sector presents huge scope for fitness operators.

On-site classes are among the most popular programmes

"A rich opportunity exists within the corporate wellness market, where companies are investing in programmes to attract and retain employees, to promote healthy and active lifestyles," she said. "These programmes are becoming increasingly popular."

More: http://lei.sr/Q7D2d_H

GWI report: global physical activity sector now worth US$828bn

The physical activity economy is now a US$828bn (€752bn, £655bn) market – and its value is expected to grow further to US$1.1tn (€1tn, £870bn) by 2023. The figure comes from a large-scale economic study by The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) called *Move to be Well: The Global Economy of Physical Activity*.

The physical activity economy is described as incorporating fitness, sports, active recreation, equipment, apparel/footwear, technology and mindfulness activities.

Among its findings are that the global fitness industry is now worth US$109bn (€99bn, £86bn) and that the market d continues to be 'fast and furious' in its growth.

GWI says the global fitness industry is worth US$109bn

This is attributed partly to the fitness sector's enthusiasm for innovation and its ability to devise new approaches and ways for people to get active.

The report lists trends such as HIIT and CrossFit as recent additions to the sector's offer.

Another finding is that the average global participant spends US$384 (€349, £304) a year on fitness-related activity.

"Health clubs and gyms have experienced tremendous global expansion over the last decade, with over 50 per cent growth in revenues from 2007-2018," it says.

"In 2017, GWI estimated that the fitness and mind-body sector was worth US$595bn (€534bn, £462bn).

When it comes to average spend on physical activity by person, North America (US$1,345) and Europe (US$528) lead the way.

More: http://lei.sr/t5J7d_H

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Justin Musgrove appointed CEO of Leejam Sports

Musgrove: moved from Bannatyne to Leejam in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia-based Leejam Sports Company has appointed former Bannatyne Group chief executive Justin Musgrove as its new CEO.

Musgrove will take over the helm with immediate effect and will be tasked with further growing the company's Fitness Time-branded chain of health clubs.

With more than 100 sites, Fitness Time is Saudi Arabia's largest fitness company and Leejam has plans to expand the brand's footprint internationally. It already has locations open in United Arab Emirates and is in talks for further openings across the Middle East and North Africa.

In a statement, a spokesperson for Leejam said: "Our aim is to be the best, biggest and most advanced sports and fitness centre chain in the Middle East and North Africa and to steer society towards a healthy lifestyle, encouraging people to exercise daily."

While still considered to be in its infancy, the Saudi fitness market is expected to grow rapidly following the launch of the government's National Transformation Programme (NTP) in 2017.

The NTP seeks to get Saudis more physically active, after it was revealed that only about 13 per cent of the population exercise regularly.

The NTP will see the government invest significantly in its ambition to increase the number of active people from 13 per cent to 40 per cent by 2030.

There are currently two main players in the Saudi market: Fitness Time and Bodymasters, with around 30 clubs in the central/eastern region. The remainder of the market consists of smaller operations and independent health and fitness clubs. Leejam recently listed on the Saudi Arabian stock market.

More: http://lei.sr/t6E8N_H

Ninja Nation launches global franchise programme

Ninja Nation, the US-based operator of obstacle course gyms, is looking to take the concept global through franchising. Targeting the family market, Ninja Nation facilities are equipped with a variety of obstacles catering for "ninjas of all ages and skill levels", with the aim of providing a space to "play, train, and compete".

"

I sensed there was a huge, unmet need for a fun alternative to sports
Wayne Cavanaugh

Each site also has group fitness classes for adults, such as the HIIT-based H.E.R.O. Fit.

Ninja Nation currently has seven sites across the US with more in the pipeline.

The company was launched partly on the back of the success of American Ninja Warrior – a hugely popular TV sports entertainment competition – which had increased interest in obstacle courses as an activity.

The Ninja Nation fitness concept targets the family market

According to founder Wayne Cavanaugh, the company has ambitious expansion plans.

"When I started the company, I sensed there was a huge unmet need for a fun, youth fitness alternative to traditional sports," Cavanaugh said.

More: http://lei.sr/g3A6s_H

Kobox expands London portfolio with third studio

The new Marylebone studio was designed by architects SHH

Nightclub-themed boutique boxing studio operator Kobox has opened its third London location in Baker Street, Marylebone.

With the motto of "fight club meets nightclub", Kobox offers 50-minute HIIT sessions accompanied by music and blacklights to simulate a late-night entertainment venue. The training combines boxing training with rounds of strength training with free weights, resistance bands and slam balls.

The latest studio was designed by architecture and interior design practice SHH, which was given a brief to bring Kobox's nightclub theme to life with "unusual design elements" that combined features from entertainment venues with a modern gym facility.

"This is the second location we have designed for KOBOX, which is expanding with new sites across London to accommodate a rapidly growing client base," said Rose McShane, project architect from SHH.

"People come here to experience a clubbing vibe in a high-intensity environment. Our approach was to focus on which elements would have the greatest impact on the overall user experience."

More: http://lei.sr/V4T2u_H

CMO report: 10 recommendations to end childhood obesity

The outgoing chief medical officer, professor Dame Sally Davies, has called for urgent action across the industry – and the public sector – to help the government reach its target of halving childhood obesity by 2030.

In a hard-hitting report, entitled *Time to Solve Childhood Obesity*, professor Davies sets out 10 recommendations, each of which are supported by a wide range of detailed actions.

Aiming the report at politicians and policymakers "now and in the future", Davies writes: "Politicians, I call on all of you across the political spectrum to come together and take action. The health of our children is in your hands. You can take action because you, on behalf of our society shape our environment.

"You can – and must – take action now to ensure that our children have the opportunity to run, bike and play safely; have access to healthy and affordable food; and are protected from the marketing of unhealthy foods."

> **The health of our children is in your hands**
> Dame Sally Davies

Among the recommendations is a call to ensure that the built environment encourages physical activity and for children to "grow up free from exposure to marketing and incentives to consume unhealthy food and drinks".

More: http://lei.sr/C7t3U_H

The report calls for the creation of more active environments for children

Digme to open sixth site in West London – adds new yoga classes

Digme Fitness is expanding its portfolio with the opening of a studio in Ealing, London.

The site will be the operator's fifth in the capital – and sixth in total – as it looks to tap into the booming boutique market.

To accompany the launch, Digme will be rolling out a new yoga concept across its sites.

The new Restore yoga workout programme will comprise four classes; Ignite, Calm, Recover and Breathe. Classes will be hosted in a bespoke studio – 'The Island' – designed to "transform the body and mind". The new opening follows the announcement that Digme will begin offering its business model to franchisees, as it looks to grow its brand in the UK and internationally.

Launched in 2016 by husband and wife team Geoff and Caoimhe Bamber, Digme currently owns and operates five studios in London and one site in Oxford.

Digme offers pay-as-you-go indoor cycling and HIIT training, as well as yoga.

Digme is adding yoga to the mix for the first time as it opens its sixth site

More: ttp://lei.sr/3g4E4_H

Lack of physical activity costing UK employers £6.6bn

Getting employees more physically active could save UK businesses up to £6.6bn through improved employee productivity each year.

The figure comes from *The Economics of Exercise: Measuring the business benefits of being physically fit* report, conducted by research group PJM Economics on behalf of medical insurer AXA PPP healthcare. It states that the UK would receive the £6.6bn productivity boost simply by all employees meeting the recommended CMO guidelines for physical activity – 75 minutes of vigorous activity or 150 of moderate activity a week.

The report draws upon a range of sources – including academic literature – and uses economic value transfers to quantify the value of exercise to organisations.

"For many of us, finding the time to be more active is challenging," said Eugene Farrell, mental health lead at AXA PPP healthcare.

"Employers are in a unique position to positively influence change that supports and enables employees to be more active."

More: http://lei.sr/E4s2W_H

For many, finding the time to be more active is challenging
Eugene Farrell

The UK would get a productivity boost of £6.6bn if all employees met the recommended CMO guidelines

Brits spending 'twice as long' making tea as doing exercise

The average UK adult spends more than twice as long making tea as they do exercising each week.

A study of 2,080 UK adults by ComRes reveals that Brits spend an average of 40 minutes a day making tea – equating to four hours and 37 minutes a week – compared with an average of just 14 minutes' moderate physical activity a day, equating to one hour and 38 minutes a week.

Commissioned by health body ukactive, the survey also highlights a "glaring fitness gap" in the UK, with 13 per cent of respondents claiming not to do any exercise at all and 15 per cent doing fewer than 30 minutes of moderate exercise a week.

This means that 28 per cent of UK adults are classed as physically inactive.

Modern living has stripped physical activity from our days
Huw Edwards

The study was published ahead of National Fitness Day

Inactivity isn't down to ignorance, however – 80 per cent of respondents rank health as a priority concern.

Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive, said: "The figures show that despite our best intentions, modern living has stripped physical activity from our days."

More: http://lei.sr/v8k7m_H

Pioneering GP practice launches its own fitness club

A medical practice is opening its very own fitness club, as part of plans to improve the health and wellbeing of its patients and staff.

The Clarendon Lodge Medical Practice, north of Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, will launch a fitness club offering a range of activities – from yoga, taekwondo and salsa taster sessions to HIIT session led by Wasps rugby players.

There will also be workshops on how to get involved in running, cycling and swimming, organised by partners such as ParkRun and the Leamington Ramblers Association.

"We feel strongly that we have a central part to play in helping people live more active lives," said Dr Ollie Lawton, a partner at Clarendon Lodge.

"It's one thing to give lifestyle advice in a consultation, but getting involved in Clarendon Lodge Medical Practice Fitness Club shows our patients and our staff the practice's commitment to improving physical and mental health through exercise.

David Spraggett, chair of NHS South Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group, added: "I'm delighted to see one of our GP practices taking such a proactive and forward-thinking approach to helping patients improve their health and wellbeing.

"We need to future proof the health of our patients and this initiative is an excellent example of how we can do it."

More: http://lei.sr/P3M4H_H

The Clarendon Lodge Medical Practice is to open a fitness club

We have a central part to play in helping people live more active lives
Ollie Lawton

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New campaign to promote mental health benefits of swimming

A new campaign is promoting the benefits that swimming can offer to people struggling with mental health issues.

The Get Set to Go initiative – a partnership between national governing body Swim England and mental health charity Mind – will look to highlight the physical, social and mental benefits of swimming. It will also focus on educating the swimming workforce and facility staff on mental health and use social media channels to share messages about how swimming can support positive mental health.

Swimming pools and leisure centres are being encouraged to work with Mind to gain further insights and expertise in the area of mental health, while a selection of fact sheets have been published to offer expert advice and support for people with a mental health problem who are interested in swimming.

Hayley Jarvis, head of physical activity for Mind, said: "We know that physical activity can play a vital role in the lives of people with mental health problems."

More: http://lei.sr/A9B2x_H

The Get Set Go initiative will target people of all ages

"Physical activity can play a vital role in mental health"
Hayley Jarvis

DW Fitness First launches Terminator-themed fitness campaign

DW Fitness First has teamed up with Hollywood film studio Twentieth Century Fox for its first-ever film partnership. The fitness chain is collaborating with the studio on the launch of the new blockbuster *Terminator: Dark Fate*.

A set of TV ads – backed up by digital, social and in gym/store communications – have been created to encourage consumers to try out the newly created 'The Dark Fate Challenge' at DW Fitness gyms. The challenge has been made available at all 120 DW Fitness First gyms and includes five exclusive six-week fitness programmes, featuring themes and movements from the film.

These include The Dark Fate Preparation Programme, Fat Burning Programme, Improving Fitness Programme, Improving Strength Programme and Back Together Programme.

To support The Dark Fate Challenge, DW Fitness First is introducing a new Be Back to Fit Programme to support those who are new to the gym.

"DW Fitness First is committed to helping everyone create positive fitness habits, and both The Dark Fate Challenge and Be Back To Fit Programmes have been designed to support, motivate and excite people to get back into exercising," said Sarah Coles, head of comms at DW Fitness First.

More: http://lei.sr/E4k4c_H

The advertising campaign will feature Terminator: Dark Fate scenes intertwined with high-adrenaline gym moments

"The campaign is designed to support people to get back into exercising"
Sarah Coles

Events calendar

OCTOBER

18–20 | OM Yoga Show London
Alexandra Palace, London, UK

The total yoga experience under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, a range of workshops, children's yoga and hundreds of exhibition stands covering all aspects of yoga, pilates, ayurveda and naturally healthy products.
www.omyogashow.com

28 | Women in Wellness Leadership Conference
The Waterfront Beach Resort Hotel, Huntington Beach, USA

Calling all female leaders and women who aspire to leadership in the wellness industry. This powerful day-long conference will address some of the most pressing issues facing women leaders and leaders-to-be with compelling keynote speakers and breakout sessions.
www.americanspawiw.com

31 October | ukactive National Summit
QEII, London, UK

The largest political event in the sector's annual calendar, the ukactive National Summit brings together key stakeholders from public health policy and beyond. The event attracts senior influencers from across physical activity, health, policy, brand, media, research, the charity space and local authority commissioning.
www.ukactive.com

NOVEMBER

5–8 | SIBEC Europe
The Westin Dragonara Resort, St Julians, Malta

This event will bring the UK and Europe's major operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in health, fitness and leisure together with leading suppliers to participate in a series of one–to–one meetings over two dedicated business days.
www.sibeceu.com

5-8 | FSB
Koelnmesse, Cologne, Germany

FSB sets the industry in motion: The world's leading trade fair for urban living environments becomes the global hub for public spaces, sports and leisure facilities. Here is where you can meet your international market players from architecture, municipalities, sport and sport clubs.
www.fsb-cologne.com

OM Yoga Show takes place in London this month

FIBO 2020 will focus on the future of fitness

2-5 April 2020 | FIBO Global Fitness
Cologne, Germany

FIBO is an industry summit, education programme, and fitness festival all in one. The long running event is the world's leading forum for the fitness industry and caters for both business to business and consumer attendees, welcoming over 150,000 visitors each year.

FIBO Cologne was the first event launched by Reed Exhibitions. Sister events have been launched in China, Africa, South America, the US and - new for 2020, Singapore.

HCM is a global media partner of FIBO

PAUL JURIS

Incorporating fitness into climbing, with new tech that gives your workout an efficiency score. The director of sports science at Brooklyn Boulders, and part of the team behind the new BKBX boutique, speaks to Kate Cracknell

What's your background?

I'm a research scientist, so my pathway through the fitness industry has focused on the academic and the scientific. I've always been keen to push the envelope and induce a positive, constant change in what we do as a sector.

I previously ran the Cybex Research Institute – a biomechanics research laboratory conceived not only to support the equipment Cybex developed, but even more importantly as a traditional, academic research laboratory. The kinds of questions we were asking transcended equipment development. We were looking at human movement, trying to better understand how and why we move the way we do.

When did you join Brooklyn Boulders, and why?

When I left Cybex, I started a consulting business and was pretty happy doing that. But when I was approached by Brooklyn Boulders in 2017, I saw an interesting opportunity to help a company that really wanted to do things differently.

I've spent more than three decades in the fitness industry and, while it's growing overall, I still look at it as a niche business. It's catering to a very clearly defined, relatively small market: those who are dedicated to their own fitness. It hasn't yet found a way to entice everyone else in the population to lead healthy, active lifestyles. Brooklyn Boulders was different even before I came onboard.

How would you describe the Brooklyn Boulders concept?

For me, there are two key aspects to Brooklyn Boulders. Firstly, the offering is focused on climbing, with huge climbing walls – and this is a fun, engaging and curious recreational activity that appeals to so many different audiences. People are happy to just give it a try. I think fun is a big part of what we need to provide for people if we want to engage them.

The second aspect is a strong focus on community interaction and engagement. In a traditional gym, everyone's wearing headphones, in their own personal space, focused on themselves, and the energy you feel is mostly from the music on the AV system – there's ▶

PEOPLE ARE TOGETHER ON THE CLIMBING WALLS, CHEERING EACH OTHER ON, COACHING EACH OTHER, INTERACTING, LAUGHING AND ENJOYING EACH OTHER'S COMPANY. IT'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT FROM ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN

Above: The Brooklyn Boulders concept appeals to many audiences.
Below: There are four Brookyn Boulders clubs across the US

very little inter-human interaction. Meanwhile, at Brooklyn Boulders, people are together on the climbing walls, cheering each other on, coaching each other, laughing and enjoying each other's company. It's a completely different environment from anything I've ever seen.

It's also very inclusive. Whenever you go in, you really do see people from all walks of life.

Have you evolved the model?

There was already a fitness component at Brooklyn Boulders, but there was a desire among the management team to expand it. They acknowledged that, while climbing is gaining a lot of traction as a recreational activity, other opportunities were needed to attract those who might end up climbing but who might initially be drawn to the facility by something else.

Fitness was seen as something that could do this, and something that would also provide a reason – among those who might otherwise just come for fun every few months – to come more regularly.

We now have classes designed to support the climbing community: Climber Core, Yoga for Climbers, Bootcamp for Climbers. It creates a link between climbing and fitness, driving more

Juris wanted to show casual climbers that the clubs have a wider fitness offering

engagement in our fitness activities, and the classes are very popular – they're always full.

But we're able to push people both ways. For those already interested in fitness, and who might come in to climb on a day pass, we can now demonstrate that we have all the fitness tools they need to satisfy that interest – classes, functional training spaces, some cardio equipment – as well as that extra dimension where they can also drive their fitness through climbing.

Once the word really gets out, I think we'll find ourselves actively attracting fitness aficionados. I think it will even get to the point that, rather than having a gym membership and also attending classes at a boutique, people will see Brooklyn Boulders as the one place they need: that feels like home, with everything they need in front of them.

What's the ethos behind your offering?

I was very keen to create an accessible fitness experience and felt that if we could harness the elements of fun recreation, human interaction and inclusive engagement already present at Brooklyn Boulders, we could build a fitness model around it that would be more attractive to the general population.

Our team is key here. We place a huge focus on staff training, both in the science – that's important to me – but also in the customer journey. We don't just get people in the door and leave them to their own devices. Our consumer journey is continually supported, with ongoing interaction. It's a very nurturing environment.

So that's the climbing side of the business – our Brooklyn Boulders-branded facilities – but there's also a new side to the business that's more focused on fitness.

Tell us more about the fitness-focused business...

Shortly after I joined the company in October 2017, there was a move to get into the fitness business directly via a new boutique concept.

The new business is called BKBX – BKB being Brooklyn Boulders, plus an X signalling 'expedition'. It's about making fitness an adventure, as opposed to making it just ►

The original Brooklyn Boulders sites are huge spaces with 60ft ceilings, but the new BKBX clubs will be smaller and easier to roll out. The company has had investment backing from North Castle Partners

about fitness. It does still have climbing elements – it always will, because that's core to our business and our philosophy – but this one is clearly a fitness play.

The first site opened in March 2019 in Boston, Massachusetts, adjacent to the Harvard University campus. It offers three distinct spaces. The first is a 2,000sq ft studio that plays host to an adaptable, multi-modality, interval-based fitness class; one of the things I recognised when I first came to Brooklyn Boulders was the popularity of the bootcamp classes, so with BKBX I set out to create the best bootcamp experience possible.

The studio features some traditional elements – a rig, free weights, some cardio equipment – but there are a lot of interactive components too, which makes it really engaging, challenging and fun. There are programmable lighting systems, interactive cognitive problem solving, gamification. There's also a deconstructed climbing zone, by which I mean we take the elements of climbing and make a fitness application of it. You don't have to get into special gear and it's all done in an enclosed space, but it gets people off the ground, swinging around and moving around on walls. It's like a really sophisticated jungle gym, or monkey bars in the playground.

The other two areas are a 90ft bouldering wall and a 1,500sq ft recovery space featuring cryotherapy, an infra-red sauna, compression sleeves, vibrating rollers and so on. It's all designed to keep people moving – to keep them active, but also to give them an opportunity to recover, rejuvenate, feel good and then to continue to do this on a regular basis.

We also use some very advanced technology that nobody else has, including proprietary analytics software. Nowadays everyone wears some type of activity monitor, but my question is always: so what? How are we using that information? Do we understand not just what people have done, but how well they've done it and what they should therefore do tomorrow?

At BKBX, our activity monitoring is best in class, and the information we generate is used for prescriptive purposes.

So, just how advanced is your technology?

Today, everyone measures heart rate, which basically tells you your level of exertion: the harder you're working, the higher your heart rate. But what people don't know is the result of that exertion. What's the outcome if you exert yourself like that?

We decided to develop a system through which we could show people the benefit, or the detriment, of their levels of exertion.

There are, in theory, four conditions. If you have a very high heart rate but also a very high output, you're working really hard physiologically but you're performing at a very high level at the same time. That's potentially a good thing.

WE'RE TRYING TO HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW MUCH EFFORT THEY NEED TO APPLY IN ORDER TO GET THE BEST OUTCOME, SO THEY CAN DO IT OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME AND NOT BURN OUT. THE OVERALL TRAINING EFFECT IS THEN MUCH BETTER

If you have a very high heart rate and a very low performance output, that's a bad thing: it means you're over-exerting yourself and your output is suffering as a result.

Then there's very low heart rate and very low output, which basically means you're not trying.

And then the last one, which is the most optimal: a relatively low heart rate but a very high output. What that means is you're super-efficient, able to perform at a very high level without pushing yourself too hard.

To measure output, we use triaxial accelerometers and convert measures of acceleration to force – the force that people are producing while doing our workouts. It allows us to create what we call an AQ – an Adventure Quotient – for each individual, which is essentially an efficiency score. It's your force production relative to your heart rate response; the higher that value, the better your performance.

We track this in real time, so instructors can offer the right advice over the course of a workout, guiding people as to whether the effort they're putting in is productive. Is your heart rate going up and your force production going down? Then you're over-exerting and you need to back off. Is your heart rate higher than we'd usually like, but your force production good? Then keep going, keep pushing yourself.

We're trying to help people understand exactly how much effort they need to apply in order to get the best outcome, so they can do it over a long period of time and not burn out in the process. The overall training effect is then much, much better.

Juris says he's focused on using the most advanced technology to help members train and perform better, in a way that's tailored to each individual

How has BKBX performed so far?

I think we'll cap membership at 500 – we only need around 250 members to break even – and we've sold 100 memberships so far; our location means we have a transient student population, with many leaving for the summer. However, our six classes a day are already about 80 per cent full and are getting great reviews. ►

The Brooklyn Boulders sites offer fitness classes designed to support the climbing community, such as Yoga for Climbers, Climber Core and Bootcamp for Climbers

We charge US$35 for a one-off bootcamp class – less for bouldering and recovery – through to an unlimited monthly membership of US$199.

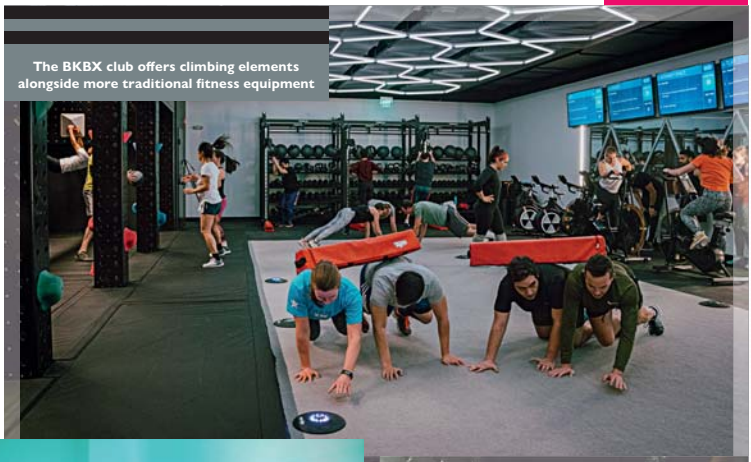
What are your expansion plans?

The first Brooklyn Boulders opened in 2009 and there are now four locations in New York, Chicago and Boston. These are huge spaces: the club in Boston is 45,000sq ft. You stand at one end and look toward the other and you're literally in a canyon. It's visually stunning.

But of course, in urban environments, it isn't always possible to find 45,000sq ft spaces with 60ft ceilings! We are opening new gyms, including in new markets – we're putting a second club in Chicago and we're looking at Washington DC and Miami – but clearly, the smaller BKBX clubs are easier to roll out. So, we're looking to aggressively expand BKBX, with plans for one or two new openings a year.

You say 'aggressive' growth, but is one or two sites a year really aggressive?

As anyone with any experience in this sector knows, the biggest limitation is talent acquisition and development. If you try and expand too quickly, without finding suitable talent at all levels in the organisation – and I don't just mean your instructors but also front desk personnel, maintenance staff, everyone – it's much more challenging to make your business work. Ours is a customer service business: if you can't provide an exceptional member experience at all levels of the business, you're going to struggle.



The BKBX club offers climbing elements alongside more traditional fitness equipment

BKBX features a recovery space with cryotherapy, infra-red sauna and compression sleeves

I'm convinced, after all these years, that it really does come down to the people and the service that's delivered: the quality of the individual leading the experience for the member, how well trained they are, how knowledgeable, how good at both answering and asking questions.

Will the BKBX model differ in future sites?

We have a lot of flexibility in terms of the programming and product mix. We'll see what becomes available in the different markets into which we want to move, and only then decide which model to put in there.

For example, where the first BKBX is very much a boutique – a total footprint of 8,500sq ft – the next venture will be a very high-end, multi-modality, hybrid fitness business. This facility – a 27,000sq ft site in Brooklyn, New York – doesn't have 60ft ceilings, so it isn't amenable to a big climbing facility, but it is a significant space. It will have three boutique studios, plus traditional group fitness, an open gym area so people can just come and work out when they want to, and a recovery space.

One boutique space will offer a very novel climbing experience that we're designing at the moment. The other two will be bootcamp-style – one being the same as our first site in Boston, and the other something we're still working on. This new club will open at the end of this year.

Any other plans for future evolution?

I'm heavily invested in technology right now.

I'm keeping a close eye on virtual fitness, seeing how that evolves over time and what role we may have there. I love the idea of it, but even though you're in a virtual community, you're still exercising in your own individual space. It misses out on the human interaction and connection of Brooklyn Boulders. So at the moment, I'm still standing back and observing.

I'm also developing more algorithms so we can expand how we use monitoring technology to curate lifestyle experiences for people, getting even more into the prescriptive side. We want to make personalised recommendations whenever a member comes in – to be able to say, for example: 'We know you're planning to do a workout today, but actually you're really stressed and you could over-exert yourself, so let's go and do a recovery session with you instead.'

I can't give too much detail yet, but we're looking at motion capture, sleep analysis, recovery, bringing together more information about each individual than they can get anywhere else – all as the basis for a really robust, intelligent assessment model that we use regularly in order to track change.

We don't want to be afraid to say: 'You know, we've been doing this and it's not really working, so let's try something else.' I think that's the deathly fear of a lot of fitness providers: they don't want to do continuous testing in case people don't improve and realise they're wasting their money. We want to have enough confidence in what we do to say: 'We're going to track everything and if it isn't all working well for someone, we'll get rid of the things that don't work and really start to push towards those that do.' ●

A new club in Brooklyn, New York will be a high-end, multi-modality hybrid facility, with three boutique studios, traditional group fitness, an open gym area and a recovery space, plus a climbing experience

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MAXIMISE YOUR MANAGERS

If you think of school leavers when you think of apprentices, think again. Apprenticeships are far from limited to career starters, with new generation programmes tailor-made to bring out the best in accomplished managers

Making the most of your managers makes perfect sense: already demonstrating great skills and embodying your business values, why risk them taking their talents elsewhere? The Team Leader / Supervisor Level 3 Standard enables employers to upskill their best staff and keep them in the business

LEADING THE WAY

Ahead of the curve is Virgin Active UK with over 100 colleagues – including sales managers, personal training managers, operations managers, group exercise managers and assistant general managers – studying the Team Leader Supervisor apprenticeship.

OLIVER BLOOM, assistant general manager, Virgin Active Tower Bridge

Oliver started as a member services manager at Virgin Active Aldersgate in 2016 and progressed to operations manager at the Broadgate club before being promoted to assistant general manager at Tower Bridge. "I learned a huge amount on the programme," he says, "not least of which was how to adapt my natural style and look at different ways of doing things. There was plenty of guidance and the Active IQ Toolkits helped pushed me to achieve a certain level of work, preparing me well for a successful End-point Assessment. I'm now ready to fulfil a general manager role within Virgin Active UK."

Over 100 Virgin Active employees are studying Active IQ's Team Leader Supervisor apprenticeship

Offering this apprenticeship in a bid to recruit more of its senior management population from within the business, Virgin Active is working in close partnership with Active IQ to assess this qualification in small, phased groups.

VIRGIN TERRITORY

Facing its first encounter with the End-point assessments process, Virgin Active UK turned to Active IQ for support. "Active IQ stood out for its impartiality and professionalism," says Jeanette Hartley, Virgin Active UK apprenticeship manager. "The team demonstrated a rigorous process which, combined with its renowned integrity and reputation for excellence, helped shape our decision.

"We identified a skills gap among our management population and wanted to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours," explains Jeanette. "The transformation by the time they reach their Team Leader Supervisor End-point assessment is incredible to

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Virgin Active wanted to recruit more of its senior management population from within the business, in order to retain its best staff members

witness. Active IQ shares our ethos and values and brings a friendly, flexible approach, endless energy and complete commitment to tailoring the assessment for our managers."

TRAIN TO RETAIN

"Our ultimate aim is to keep our best talent in our business by management progression from within Virgin Active," says Jeanette. "This bespoke apprenticeship programme appeals strongly to talented managers looking to further their career." Both employers and apprentices gain from this approach, as the apprentice brings improved ability to their day-to-day job, while locking in their new skills through using them at work.

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

"Apprenticeships have evolved considerably over the last few years, with more in-depth content and more challenging assessments," explains Jenny Patrickson, Active IQ managing director.

"Knowing what's expected at the End-point Assessment at the beginning of the process is vital, as the first successful Virgin Active cohort has shown.

"We developed Apprentice and Employer Toolkits when we recognised the need for focused support to navigate the changing landscape of apprenticeship delivery and assessment." ●

ELSA ORLER, assistant general manager, Virgin Active Mayfair

Elsa joined Virgin Active in September 2016 following six years' experience at Tonic Fitness Network in her native Italy. She started as service and operations manager at Virgin Active Barbican before moving to Mayfair as assistant general manager. "The Team Leader Supervisor Apprenticeship really developed my knowledge and expanded my management skills," she says. "Taking my learning straight into work and putting it into practice brought it to life for me and the Active IQ assessment resources were a great help. "This apprenticeship has broadened my horizons and given me the tools and confidence I need for the next step in my career."

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Equinox, SoulCycle & Trump - what can be learned?

Equinox and SoulCycle became mired in controversy recently, when the CEO and majority shareholder of their parent company hosted a fundraiser for President Trump's re-election. What's the way forward for these brands and what can we learn from this furore? Kath Hudson asks the thought leaders

For some companies it wouldn't be too much of an issue if their owner decided to host a fundraiser for the most divisive president the US has ever had. For Equinox and SoulCycle it has become a huge issue.

Both operators have set themselves up as lifestyle brands that are empowering and supportive of liberal thinkers, women and the LGBTQ community, championing diversity and inclusivity. The founding ethos and core values of each brand has won them a celebrity clientele and a liberal, progressive membership: the type of people who take issue with Trump.

Equinox was acquired by Related Companies in 2006 and Related has billionaire tycoon, Stephen Ross, at the helm. A friend and supporter of Donald Trump, Ross hosted a $100,000-a-ticket fundraiser ($250,000 to join the round table discussion), at his home in The Hamptons in August.

Many members were outraged and took to social media saying they were leaving because they "don't support racism and mass murder" and "don't want to fund a Nazi regime". Actor Conrad Ricamora tweeted: "Sorry @SoulCycle...you can't peddle inspiration in your classes and have an owner funding hate and racism in the back room. Byeeeeee."

Neither company has responded to requests for comments from the media, but they did issue a joint statement on social media distancing themselves from Ross, saying: "Neither Equinox nor SoulCycle has anything to do with the event later this week and do not support it. As is consistent with our policies, no company profits are used to fund politicians.

"We're committed to all our members and the communities we live in. We believe in tolerance and equality and will always stay true to those values. Mr Ross is a passive investor and is not involved in the management of either business."

However, this didn't stop the outrage or stem the flow of defections. So what's the way forward? Can the operators win back members and mend their reputations? We ask the experts.....

Neil McLeod

The PHA Group: head of strategic communications

Equinox and SoulCycle have consciously blurred the lines between simply being a business and being more ingrained in their members' lives. Because of this ethos, the Trump fundraiser has gone against the beliefs of the most important people to their business – their customers.

The less-than-sharp handling of the crisis has made it worse. Firstly, they've made the age old mistake of not saying sorry. They haven't held their hands up and taken responsibility, so it appears they've been blasé towards their members.

Releasing a statement on Instagram, and refusing to respond to journalists' questions, is a strange way of dealing with a blazing issue, and this approach failed to address concerns.

Attempting to distance themselves from someone who's clearly a key person in the business looks as though they're trying to gloss over the issue.

Doing this has added fuel to the flames and Equinox and SoulCycle are now in a situation where the attempted cover-up looks as bad as the crime.

> **They've made the age old mistake of not saying sorry. They haven't held their hands up and taken responsibility, so it appears they've been blasé towards their members**

It would be difficult to replace Ross as an investor, but he needs to step down as chair, and be replaced by a strong leader who will hold up their hands and say: "We got this wrong. We messed up, didn't read the signs and didn't listen." While this happens they need to follow this up offline, contacting people personally. They won't be able to win back everyone, but they would show they are listening.

Crises happen in business, but it's important to act quickly, with a clear leader, showing customers they're important and listened to.

We live in a world where customers demand transparency, openness and honesty and it is vitally important to respect that.

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PHOTO BY ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE BUONICONTI FUND TO CURE PARALYSIS

Stephen Ross, CEO and majority shareholder of Related Companies, which owns Equinox and SoulCycle, is a friend and supporter of Donald Trump

Felicity Wingrove

Zen Communications: managing director

The responses from Equinox and SoulCycle have fallen short of many of the golden rules of crisis management. It's positive that they responded quickly with a statement, but their refusal to engage with the main media was a big mistake. Never refuse to comment.

Another golden rule is to take responsibility for the situation and show that you are trying to rectify it. By claiming Stephen Ross is nothing more than a passive investor, they are far from taking responsibility. Added to this, the statement was not well written and doesn't connect with their community - they even speak about members in the third person!

The problem for Equinox and SoulCycle is that they have sold their members on a lifestyle brand which offers a sanctuary, but the businesses are now tainted, because the money behind them does not share the same values. Ten years ago, this would have been less problematic, but now consumers rarely engage with a business which they don't connect with and so brands are judged far more unforgivingly.

Equinox and SoulCycle can't simply bounce back from this, it's going to be about rebuilding. And if I was them I'd be concerned about what Ross will do next. They need to separate from him as soon as they can, although, with mass resignations of memberships and revenues down, it's not a good time to be looking for alternative investment.

In the shorter term, they need to reconnect with their grassroots and do some proper engagement work with their community, showing they're taking responsibility and action. The social media response has shown that their community values diversity and inclusion, so the brands should look to do something that shows they also care about this: not just writing a cheque, but working towards shared outcomes.

In an age of faceless hedge funds and venture capital funding we've seen scant due diligence from brands before taking investment. This just shows that if you're getting into bed with an investor, they need to be able to stand up to scrutiny and align with how you're positioning yourself and your company.

> **If you're getting into bed with an investor, they need to be able to stand up to scrutiny and align with how you're positioning yourself and your company** ►

Harris says many people stop rebelling when they risk losing their creature comforts

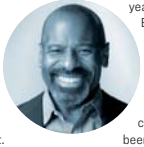
David Harris

Simon Sinek Inc: igniter

I think there are far more pressing global issues which deserve media attention and with all that is going on in the world, it's unfortunate that this has been a major headline. But Equinox is a big brand and big brands, with big investors, are targets of protest these days.

We have already seen this with brands like Nike and Chick Filet. This phenomenon permits people to vote with their wallets and this is the first time it has been highlighted in a big way in the fitness/wellness/lifestyle industries.

As former VP of Equinox and a gay black man who worked there for 25 years, I can say that Equinox has a very diverse employee base and the commitment to diversity within the walls of the company has always been there. I know there's great pride in this, and not just on LGBT issues.



Whether or not members come back to Equinox and SoulCycle will not be a question of forgiveness but of discomfort and service disruption

Whether or not members come back will not be a question of forgiveness but of discomfort and service disruption. The average gym box lacks sophistication, does not deliver on service well and are often not clean. Equinox has always been committed to that, and it is critical to the high-end consumer. People love their creature comforts and in general among that consumer, the revolution ends at personal discomfort, and maybe even a bit of their own contradictions. It's also about the relationship these consumers have built with many loyal and talented employees. I think that – more than anything – is the crux of the conflict and, therefore, the decisions consumers confront. As a society perhaps we should be more self inquiring.

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Daniel Korschun

Drexel University: associate professor

The revelation that Stephen Ross is a fervent supporter of President Trump is potentially very damaging to Equinox and SoulCycle.

One of the key findings in my research is that consumers are more tolerant of different viewpoints than we often think. Just as most people have friendships with people who have opposing views, so too can they keep relationships with brands with which they disagree.

Just as in a friendship, the key to success in business is to be open about political views. In other words, it's not just the political statement, but the intentions behind it that are important.

Equinox and SoulCycle have not done this. Both brands are positioned lifestyle brands and members have bought into a set of values. So, when they found out about the Ross fundraiser, many felt duped. By claiming itself to be something they're not, SoulCycle and Equinox seem hypocritical.

When consumers feel betrayed, it can leave a permanent stain on a brand. If the value proposition is good enough, defecting customers may eventually return, but the original betrayal is always lurking in the background. The bottom line is that Equinox and SoulCycle will survive, but we probably won't see the same fervour from members as in the past.

By claiming to be something they're not, SoulCycle and Equinox seem hypocritical. When consumers feel betrayed, it can leave a permanent stain on a brand

The companies now have two very tricky problems to address. The first is the loss of trust. The second is the notion – whether true or not – that a portion of their gym dues will find its way to the Trump campaign. Neither can be completely resolved without Ross getting bought out. As his exit is unlikely, it will make the next six months very rocky indeed.

The damage will become more apparent in the coming months, with the real test being around the new year, when many gym memberships come up for renewal. Further damage could also come if personal trainers decide to defect as well, as these contractors have dozens of devotees and could create a substantial ripple effect.

The operators need to sweeten the deals they give their best trainers and instructors to prevent this eventuality. They also need to directly address the source of the problem, which is the perception that dues are going to the Trump campaign.

Attempts to give money to more liberal causes may backfire because they may be seen as further evidence that the company is trying to deceive. ►

Soul Cycle has positioned itself as a brand that holds liberal values

Dave Courteen

Mosaic Spa and Health Clubs: managing director

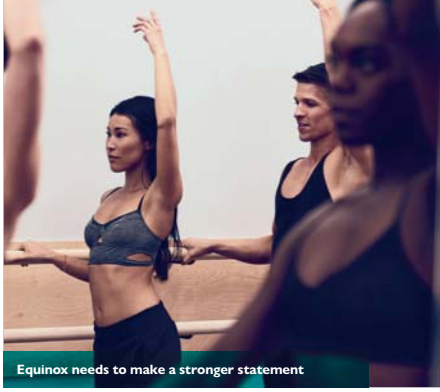
On the face of it, Stephen Ross' political beliefs and what he does shouldn't have an impact on Equinox or SoulCycle. But, the problem is that both companies have created a personality around the brands and what they stand for, and Ross' actions are at odds with that. This is a very emotive subject. It's the equivalent of a club in the UK being very pro-Europe and then finding out that a key player in the company is campaigning for Brexit and friends with Nigel Farage.

Sometimes with social media attacks the best course of action is to stay quiet. The immediacy of the medium means that if you stay quiet it is all forgotten about within 48 hours and everyone has moved on to the next issue.

Maybe this explains the initial low key response from Equinox. However, a couple of months later the issue is still being talked about, so they need to take more decisive action.

By describing Ross as a passive investor, Equinox and SoulCycle have tried to distance themselves from someone who's clearly a key player and this hasn't washed with members.

A far stronger statement is required and they need to very publicly live out the brand values they have previously tried to portray. Maybe they need to instigate a public campaign working with groups and charities which align with those values and are counter to Trump, to demonstrate what they really stand for. ●



Equinox needs to make a stronger statement

A far stronger statement is needed and Equinox and SoulCycle need to very publicly live out the brand values they have previously tried to portray

Both brands must demonstrate their values to members

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Places Leisure recently opened a Places Gym within one of Places for People's housing developments in Edinburgh

In conversation

Sandra Dodd, CEO & John Oxley, COO

Commercial diversification, standing up to the competition, and the challenges of operating in the local authority market. The senior management team at Places Leisure offer Kate Cracknell an overview of their business

GROWTH WITHIN A GROUP

"It's been nearly seven years since we were acquired by Places for People and it's worked well for us," says Sandra Dodd, CEO of UK-based management contractor Places Leisure – formerly DC Leisure. "It's great to have the support of a large placemaking group which believes so strongly in what we do, and that provide access to capital and procurement advantages.

"But just as importantly, the Places for People Group is the perfect home for our business: we're doing more and more work with the Group. For example, we opened our first gym inside one of Places for People's housing developments, in Edinburgh, a few months ago: a Places Gym, which is the affordable, community gym brand we own and operate and which we launched five years ago.

"The Edinburgh club only opened in November 2018, but it's already exceeding expectations in terms of member numbers. It's essentially the same model as our other Places Gyms; the only real difference is that – alongside memberships being sold to the general public – discounts are offered to residents of the housing development.

"We're hoping to do more of this, collaborating with the Group from the early planning stages to look at incorporating gyms and even pools into new housing developments. Places for People is very keen on the idea as well: the company exists to create places that work for everyone, whatever their background and whatever their needs, and health and vitality is key to this. This is where Places Leisure plays a vital role.

"So, this is definitely something we all want to do more of.," she says. "However, we won't open Places Gyms where the local market is already saturated with low-cost and local authority competition. Each gym has to be commercially viable as a standalone business, which is why we haven't done more already. We're selective about where we invest in new facilities."

SCALING THE COMMERCIAL DIVISION

"We now have six Places Gyms," says Dodd, "Two within Places for People developments and four standalone – and they're performing well. The other collaboration with Places for People is a gym next door to its support office in Preston, which is great for employee health and wellbeing, as well as being open to the general public. We're keen to do even more in the area of employee wellbeing – it's such an important priority, and one we've set up a working group to explore.

"We currently operate 119 facilities, of which six are private gyms owned by Places Leisure; the remainder are centres we operate on behalf of local authorities. So, at the moment, Places Gym is quite a small part of our £158m turnover business. We're ▶

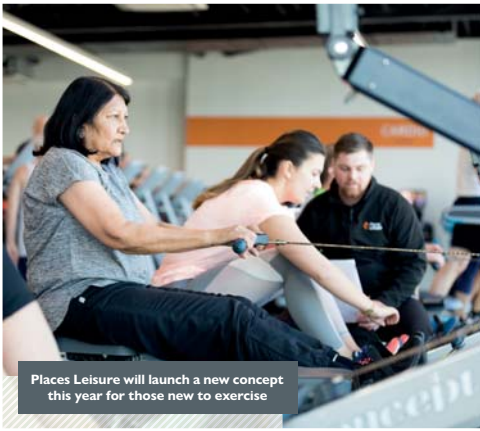
trialling it, making sure we have the right model – including the right technology – and it could grow to be important, but there's a lot of low-cost competition out there so we're treading carefully.

"We do see it as an opportunity to diversify some of our business away from the local authority side of things, but it's not as if we're going to stop bidding for local authority contracts and only concentrate on Places Gyms. It's just something we're exploring, and certainly our preference would be to grow Places Gyms within Places for People developments wherever possible.

"Being able to control the membership offer also helps on the rare occasion when we operate a Places Gym in the same area as we operate the local authority leisure centre. At the moment, this only happens in one location, and we've been able to create two quite different offerings: the local authority offering is a premium membership that includes swimming, classes and the gym; Places Gym is a more limited proposition at a value price point. You can also pay to access both the leisure centre and the gym. It all works out nicely."

Places Leisure COO, John Oxley, takes up the story: "The advantage is that what we offer doesn't have to be a low-cost or community gym. It could be a fitness or physical activity proposition of any nature, designed to suit the particular local demographic and priced accordingly.

"We have a different membership structure in Edinburgh compared to our other Places Gyms in Preston, Telford, Sheffield, Hinckley and Chesterfield, for example. Meanwhile, one of the opportunities we're looking at with the group at the moment is in London. The location doesn't suit a traditional low-cost gym, but it would suit more of a boutique-style model. Doing it in partnership with our group and with them getting involved from the outset in determining space requirements and so on, gives us that flexibility."

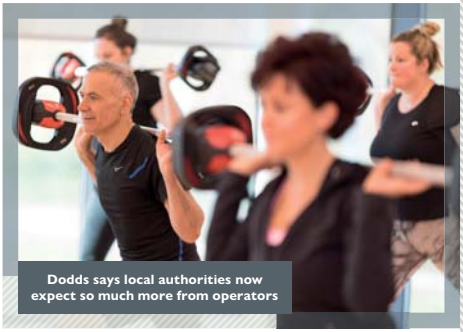


Places Leisure will launch a new concept this year for those new to exercise

Places Gyms are a way for the group to diversify

Swimming is a strong growth area within Places Leisure centres

> *"One of the opportunities we're looking at is in London. The location doesn't suit a low-cost gym, but would suit a boutique-style model."*
>
> John Oxley



Dodds says local authorities now expect so much more from operators

ON PUBLIC SECTOR DYNAMICS

"The core of our business, therefore, remains local authority contracts," continues Dodd. "We have a very good relationship with our 36 local authority partners, who I think all understand that we're not just about the bottom line. We genuinely want to make a difference. It's why we're so proud of the social value of our business: we generated £180m last year through improvements in physical and mental wellbeing, educational attainment and reductions in crime."

"But the public sector generally has become a very challenging market," says Dodd. "There's still a margin to be made, but local authorities now expect so much more from the operators of their leisure centres. Operators are expected to make a large payment to be able to operate facilities, as well as taking on greater liability for councils' assets.

"Tenders remain skewed more towards price than quality. We hope this will change over the coming years, but we haven't seen any sign of that yet.

"So, when I say it's a challenging market, it's not about there being more competition. In fact, it tends to be the same contractors who turn up for the tenders, and my perception is that there are fewer of them these days. It's more about the pressure to meet local authorities' expectations in terms of what we should pay them.

"Meanwhile, our margins are being squeezed by the national minimum wage, pension auto-enrolment, the apprenticeship levy and energy prices. Everybody has struggled with that. I think we've done a good job of finding ways to make savings to balance out the rising costs, and we have areas of success that we can exploit: swimming, for example, is a strong growth area in our centres, and family is an important focus for us. But it's a tough market – and of course the ever-increasing number of low-cost gyms has really hurt local authority operators as well."

Oxley adds: "And it isn't just the low-cost market. The sector is so broad now, with so much choice, from premium ►

Newly built leisure centres can compete well with low-cost competitors

to mid-market to low-cost, boutiques to aggregators, digital platforms and online resources to runs in the park and apps to measure your activity for free… the quality has never been better and the cost of exercising never cheaper. It's an increasingly complex area that we're navigating our way through, taking on-board learnings to shape our own way forward."

COMPETING WITH BUDGET CLUBS

Dodd explains: "For me, local authorities have to come round to the idea that – with budget clubs and all the other activity opportunities attracting a lot of the customers who previously would have used local authority leisure centres – operators are not going to be able to continue paying the level of subsidies they've done over the past 10 years. It's about managing local authorities' expectations in the future.

"In return, we believe a sharing mechanism with the local authority is the best model for the long term: enabling the local authority to share in any excess surpluses that are made from the operations."

She adds: "All that said, we've consistently found that, when we have new leisure centres – either built by ourselves or invested in by local authorities – we do very well. When it's a new facility that's been built with the modern-day consumer in mind, we can stand up to the low-cost clubs and other local competition: we have so much data to prove the value of new builds in terms of increased participation and revenue."

Oxley explains: "When our new Dover facility opened, for example, visits quickly soared from around 15,000 to over 56,000 each month. The new Sparkill Pool and Fitness Centre attracted over 2,000 members and 97,000 visits within its first three months of opening. And in Waltham Abbey, gym memberships doubled – up 120 per cent – in the first eight weeks, with group exercise attendances also doubling, up 108 per cent. The number of casual swims also rose by 66 per cent.

"We just completed an NPS report on Dover and it's sitting at 48, which is well above the national average. It just demonstrates the degree of satisfaction that can be derived when, as Sandra says, you have the opportunity to introduce a new, purpose-designed facility into a community.

"Not only that, but our experience means we can also help the authorities design them from an operational perspective, so as well as being more appealing to the local community, the build and operational costs are also lower."

Dodd concludes: "Sport England stats suggest that 40 per cent of the UK's leisure centres are over 20 years old, and really need to be rebuilt. With such a strong case to show for the impact of new builds on driving participation, I'm keen to see more of these opportunities come to market, including community hubs designed to house leisure and other community facilities under one roof."

CREATING A CONSUMER-FACING BRAND

"We're now known as Places Leisure, rather than Places for People Leisure – it's more consumer-friendly," says Dodd. "As a continuation of that, in 2017, we were presented with an interesting opportunity to brand a new leisure centre with our name: Places Leisure Eastleigh."

Oxley continues: "We came to an agreement with Eastleigh Borough Council for the naming rights, which

Oxley and Dodds are putting a strong focus on measuring the customer experience

we saw as a good marketing opportunity. It's enabled us to get our consumer-facing brand out there, so that physical activity in the Eastleigh area is now synonymous with the name Places Leisure.

"From a brand engagement point of view, that has significant benefits: brand presence and recognition is enhanced, which in turn drives attendance."

Says Dodd: "We have plans to introduce further Places Leisure-branded sites over the next couple of years."

ON MEETING CONSUMER NEEDS

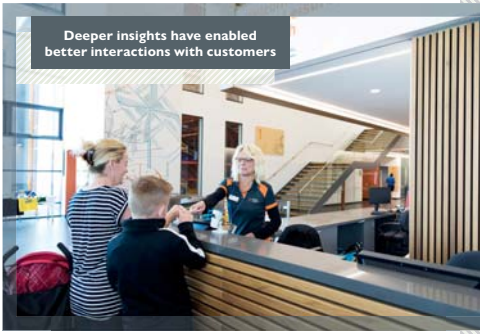
"One of the most significant things we've done in the business recently has been around measurement of the customer experience," says Oxley. "The fitness industry, famously data-rich, yet information-poor, has for too long relied on instinct rather than insight. Soon after Sandra and I started in our roles, we, therefore, appointed a customer experience manager – the company hadn't had one of those before.

"We're now collecting an unprecedented level of insight. We do 200 mystery customer visits every month, as well as NPS in a much deeper, more sophisticated way than we've done before: we're able to extract different NPS scores for different types of customer, and we're getting close to being able to do daily NPS. We're doing a lot of work on gathering insights through our app too [see Q&A with commercial activities director Jamie Brown, overleaf].

"All of this is proving invaluable in truly understanding what our customers think, feel and expect, which is enabling us to make smarter decisions.

"It's led us to review our membership structure and tariffs, for example, factoring in insights around what matters to a premium member – gym, swim and classes – versus what a gym-only member wants. Because they're different, yet we didn't fully appreciate the significance or the nuances of that before.

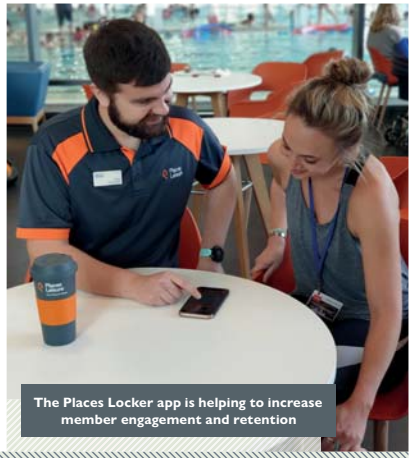
"We've been able to fine-tune the way our front-of-house teams interact with customers too, because now we know what's important to them, we know how to communicate with them. Crucially, we're also able to do so at an increasingly individual level. In my mind, this – using insight to segment your audience and communicate in a personal and relevant way – is the secret to business success." ►



Deeper insights have enabled better interactions with customers

He continues: "Our new insights are even starting to shape the product itself. For example, some of the feedback we got was that, while we were well geared up for those who knew they wanted a membership, for those who weren't quite sure – who just wanted to dip their toe in the water and get comfortable – we didn't really have anything. We didn't really have a starting-out product – one that would appeal to the large proportion of the population who could be physically active, but just aren't – so we've developed one now and will launch it this autumn.

"We'll use different language to talk about it, we'll have videos on our website so people know what to expect, we'll train our colleagues differently. And most important of all will be customer referral. Every one of our customers will know somebody who could be physically active, but who's currently inactive. When they see our new product, they will think to themselves: 'That's just right for my friend, my partner, my mum…' I think we'll see significant growth in participation through recommendation and word-of-mouth." ●



The Places Locker app is helping to increase member engagement and retention

JAMIE BROWN COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR

Tell us about the Places Locker app

Places Leisure launched the Places Locker app in 2017, created in partnership with Technogym and powered by the mywellness cloud.

The original remit for the app was to boost the visibility of activity levels, both for customers and for the fitness teams at the sites they were visiting – and it delivers.

Members can track gym activity, follow guided exercises and workouts, monitor outdoor activity – using apps and wearables such as MapMyFitness, Strava, Polar, FitBit and so on – access fitness challenges and book classes.

However, in the end the solution delivered so much more than that.

The Places Locker app offers a shop window for all the great things our centres can offer, helping customers discover new products they may not have thought about trying – or even have been aware of – that match their motivations and interests.

How do your teams use the app?

The insights from the app allow instructors to interact meaningfully and relevantly with each customer, which means members benefit from a more personalised service.

Specifically, the 'Who's in' software – featured within the mywellness platform and fed in to by the Places Locker app – is a fantastic retention and engagement tool. It enables colleagues to know who is in the gym, when they last visited, their preferred work out details and other activities they have undertaken at the centre. This enables us to tailor the customer experience, as well as engaging with those who are rarely in the gym or classified as at risk of leaving. Ensuring customers have multiple interactions with different gym staff helps create more of a welcoming environment.

What impact has this had on the business?

A recent Technogym study demonstrated that sites using the mywellness platform are achieving a higher level of member interactions, and those interactions are having a positive impact on members' frequency of visit and overall length of stay.

The study focused on 14 Places Leisure sites, using membership data from the centres' 2.34 million visits across a six-month period. The research found that Places Locker app users visited 50 per cent more often than non-users: an average of 7.5 visits a month, compared to 5.0 a month for those not using the app. Additionally, the research discovered that those engaged with the app retained their membership for 20 per cent longer than those who didn't engage.

The opportunity for the business now is to continue to maximise usage of the platform to achieve even greater engagement and retention.

What are your plans for the app?

We're now working to introduce new functionality into the app, to further increase member engagement and to build an audience on the platform. This will enable us to send personalised information and guidance based on customers' own personal journeys, as opposed to blanket communications that don't enable them to get the best out of their experience.

It's about using the new information we have available to build personalised, insight-driven customer pathways that allow members to control their own journeys.

pulsebeat

pulse fitness

INNOVATION

WHAT EVERY MODERN GYM IS LOOKING FOR.

Using a mix of strength and cardio machines, many gyms may look like one another at first glance. But the gym floor is changing. At Pulse, we're developing and designing fitness equipment to meet the evolving demands of modern gyms.

The typical gym member wants something different. While treadmills and rigs are important, gyms today are more interested in innovation. They are looking for something new that drives positive engagement and retention in an increasingly competitive market.

That's why we're particularly excited about our recent distribution agreement with 'Limitless Gym Equipment'. We're now the exclusive distributor of a range of Limitless products including the innovative Free Trainer Pro machine. Designed by athletes, conditioning coaches and physiotherapists, it's a slick piece of kit for the gym floor - which allows users to do over 150 exercises.

Operators are also looking for solutions that are tailor-made for their facility. One of the biggest trends we're seeing on the gym floor is a focus on functional rigs. Bespoke rigs are more popular than ever. There is no such thing as "one size fits all".

Gym members today are also training harder than ever before, so they want kit that can work as hard as they do. Take our Alpha Runner for example; with a 15.6mph top speed and massive 20% incline, it is a hardcore and stylish addition to any gym floor.

Operators are taking more interest in what their members do outside the four walls of the gym. They are increasingly interested in connecting fitness at the gym with fitness at home. At Pulse, we are very aware of this trend and working hard on some exciting innovations in this area. We hope to be able to tell you more about this in a future edition of Pulse Beat.

We have big plans for the business over the next five years and beyond. I'm excited to see where it goes, and I am looking forward to taking this great British brand to new heights.

Mo Chaudry
Chairman of
Pulse Fitness

Slick Kit with Limitless Potential

Recently, Pulse Fitness signed a long-term exclusive deal with Limitless Gym Equipment to distribute a range of products, including the innovative 'Free Trainer Pro' machine. This unique product combines plate-loaded and functional resistance options to allow users to perform over 150 exercises. We chatted with Ricky Lee, Director of Limitless Gym Equipment about the partnership and this innovative piece of kit.

Limitless Free Trainer Pro

What's special about the Free Trainer Pro?

For starters, it's the world's only IFI-accredited plate-loaded machine. Because of its unique bearing system, it moves like a free weight, but it can perform a huge range of exercises – everything from a bicep curl to an explosive clean and press. It's completely versatile and designed to be used with or without weight plates and resistance bands, to allow a huge variation in exercise intensity. As a result, it can be used by anyone, regardless of experience or ability; making it a pretty attractive piece of kit for your gym floor.

What other products are in the range?

There is also the Free Trainer Active Pro and Free Trainer Dual Pro, developed specifically for gyms and clubs where saving space is of critical importance. Both can be easily manoeuvred to suit the space available and simply fold away when not in use.

Why Pulse Fitness?

It was important for us to work with a partner with heritage and expertise. With close to 40 years of market experience and an extensive sales operation, we know we can count on them to help us get Limitless into more UK and European gyms.

Why should operators take notice?

The Limitless Free Trainer is a completely new take on plate-loaded and resistance training, in one compact station that allows gym goers to choose from hundreds of exercises. Not only is it a great piece of kit for new gym goers, it can also be used by your most hardcore member to great effect. The plate-loaded version of the machine can hold up to 100kg per arm - perfect for gyms where heavy weightlifting is popular. Versatile, space efficient and innovative - this machine will bring fresh challenges to trainers and members alike.

For more information on the Free Trainer Pro, get in touch:

+44 (0)1260 294600 or info@pulsefitness.com

News in brief

Southampton Solent - Solent University has officially opened its new sports centre, with our support as its dedicated fitness partner. With a £100 million estate development plan to transform its campus, there is a high-performance facility for the university's elite athletes, and a dedicated teaching facility for the sports degree students. There's also a 90-station, state-of-the-art community gym which includes our latest equipment - such as the brand new CrossClimb and the VR Treadmill.

Third Space - Set to open later this year, Third Space, Islington's 15-station install, will include Pulse Fitness plate-loaded equipment, and the highest specification of selectorised strength equipment, complete with 10-inch touchscreen consoles. All kit will be designed specifically for Third Space, including premium carbon fibre upholstery in bespoke black with tailored branding.

CrossClimb - We recently launched the CrossClimb, the first ever cross-trainer/incline stepper hybrid machine. Combining cardio and strength training, the CrossClimb has been designed to maximise lower body muscular engagement.

New kit from Pulse Fitness keeps Craven Leisure Centre members entertained, engaged and motivated

Q&A

with Neil Harrison,
Fitness Manager at Craven Leisure

Craven Leisure, operated by Craven District Council, originally opened its doors in 2003 with two swimming pools and a small 30-station gym. Today, the facility now includes a gym with over 100 pieces of the latest fitness kit from Pulse Fitness, a group fitness and cycling studio, and two swimming pools with sauna and steam room. Working together with the team at Pulse, the most recent refurbishments have had a significant impact on member growth and retention.

We sat down with Neil Harrison to talk about the evolution of this thriving fitness facility.

Could you tell me about the recent changes to Craven Leisure?

We completed our most recent refurbishment in December 2018. This incorporated a range of new equipment, including strength and CV kit from Pulse Fitness, re-decoration, wall art and flooring. In August, we completed the upgrade of our strength and CV range to a new NFC system.

Why NFC?

This has been an incredible world first upgrade for our customers. Now, they can log in to each machine faster with their membership cards just by tapping a screen. This allows them to see workout programmes, select their personalised workouts and access online content like YouTube, Netflix and BBC News. It also allows them to record reps and sets, weight amounts and which hand/seat position to select. It focuses on correcting form with speed and range of movement, so members get the best results from their workout.

What kind of impact have the changes had on your members?

Since the refurbishment in December 2018, we have added 170 new members. We've also seen an increase in the student age group since the refurbishment. Now, our member base ranges in age from 14-80, all using the same kit.

It's early days for the NFC-enabled equipment, but we suspect this will have a significant impact on retention. Members can access the PulseMove app free to monitor their workout results in the gym and outdoors, all in one place, or they can be sent weekly emails with their workout stats. This is an incredibly motivating way to track and maintain a fitness journey.

What do you look for in an equipment supplier?

Good after-sales service, good maintenance service and quick response to technical issues. We've been impressed with Pulse since working with them in 2011. They are always at the end of the phone to help with any issues. They also have a handy portal for instructors to report any issues. Over the years we've worked together, they've gone from strength-to-strength providing us with improved features and services that have had an obvious and immediate impact on our customer base.

Do you have any advice to other operators on how to pick an equipment supplier?

Work with a supplier that invites you to go and test the kit yourself. We were invited to visit Pulse Fitness at their head office in Cheshire on several occasions to try out their kit. It was a great way to meet the team, stress-test the kit and truly understand the value it could bring to our members. You get part of the story from salespeople, but you obtain the most information when you go and try the kit yourself.

Which treadmill should I buy?

Treadmills are one of the most popular pieces of equipment on the gym floor, so ensure you make the right selection to meet the needs of your members.

Alpha Runner

Incorporating the most advanced technology, entertainment workout apps and cutting-edge design, the stylish Alpha Runner will turn heads in any facility.

Paired with new technologies, more accurate multi-touch interfaces and a powerful free run belt, the Alpha Runner enables the highest efficiency self-regulated workouts.

The state-of-the-art technology enables users to experience a range of levels, from resistance-free running through to a tough all-out sled push.

Curve Treadmill

The self-powered Curve Treadmill is built to allow users to improve their power, speed, stamina and agility effectively. Produced to recreate a natural running style and reduce stress on the legs, the Curve uses more muscle groups in the body at one time than other traditional treadmills.

With 8 workout options, including 3 interval training HIIT sessions, the Curve Treadmill offers a comfortable running experience that exploits a curvilinear leg stroke to improve performance.

Premium Treadmill

IFI Accredited, this treadmill offers peak performance at great value.
With a top speed of 15mph, the Premium Treadmill comes with a 'quick control zone' so you can easily make speed and elevation adjustments, while a flexible sprung deck enables a smooth workout and helps reduce knee and joint stress.

Everybody's Talking About... Cardio Innovation

Cardio equipment used to mean treadmills, cross-trainers, exercise bikes, and a rowing machine if you were lucky! Now, gym owners can choose from so many more innovative pieces of equipment, significantly enhancing their member experience.

Here's our pick of the three latest must-haves.

Airbike

The ultimate cardio blast! Unlike traditional exercise bikes which have fixed handlebars, the Airbike has handles that move as you pedal. This dual action provides a total body workout for improved results. Resistance is created by a large flywheel and just like with an air-rowing machine, the harder you work, the more resistance is created. In other words, the only limit on your workout is you!

Curve Treadmill

A curved treadmill is seriously on-trend right now. The curved track supports a more natural running style than its flat counterparts, encouraging you to run on the ball of your foot and subsequently recruit more muscles. The self-powered set up also requires you to work harder to regulate your speed, so you burn around 30% more calories than on a standard treadmill.

Stepmill

Whilst not new to the gym-floor, the Stepmill is gaining a huge fan base as consumers realise the glute boosting benefits of this cardio workout. Newer versions of this popular piece of kit include full connectivity with all your favourite apps and wearables, so you can record the results of your intense workout.

What could we do for you? Let's start the conversation today.

Pulse Group, Radnor Park, Greenfield Road, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4TW
T: +44 (0)1260 294610 E: info@pulsefitness.com www.pulsefitness.com

pulse fitness

Join us

at National Summit 2019 and be part of the conversation that will help shape our nationÌs health.

www2.ukactive.com/nationalsummit

Headline Partners:

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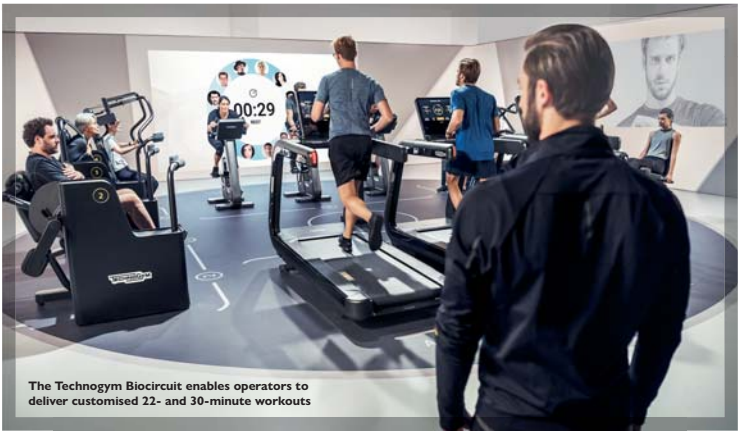
Physical activity, and the sector that delivers it, is the backbone of a modern Britain: vital to its wellbeing but inextricably connected and influenced by an array of industries and institutions. From construction, housing and building developers, to employee benefits providers, and the insurance, retail and business communities, we are all connected in our ambition to reverse generation inactive, transform working life and reimagine ageing.

On Thursday 31 October 2019, the ukactive National Summit will address how physical activity is impacted by:

HOW WE LIVE | WHERE WE LIVE | HOW WE WORK

UK ACTIVE NATIONAL SUMMIT

#NATIONALSUMMIT



The Technogym Biocircuit enables operators to deliver customised 22- and 30-minute workouts

IT FITS YOU

Introducing Technogym Biocircuit

Exercises, workload, work/rest ratio and pace have been defined and integrated into personalised programmes

Losing weight, building strength, wellbeing and good health: whatever needs attract your members to your facility can be met by Biocircuit, the new circuit training solution from Technogym which offers personalised workouts to help users achieve their goals.

Biocircuit's guided programmes deliver engaging experiences that require no adjustments or wait-time, since exercises, workload, work/rest ratio and pace have been defined and integrated into personalised programmes.

Offering a quick and effective 22- or 30-minute workout, Biocircuit includes everything end-users need for the best muscle activation. Moreover, thanks to the Technogym Biodrive patent, Biocircuit is the first training line offering a personalised workout in a safe, guided and effective way.

Based on revolutionary aerospace technology, Biodrive is a motor controller that delivers a tailored workout to help users achieve the best results in the shortest amount of time.

MACCLESFIELD LEISURE CENTRE - EVERYBODY SPORT & RECREATION

Everybody at Macclesfield Leisure Centre is thrilled about the launch of Biocircuit.

The introduction of this new product has allowed us to offer something new and exciting to our members. As a charity, our aim is to continuously provide new and innovative fitness technology alongside our key mission 'Leisure for Life'. Biocircuit is evidence of this, as whatever the goal of our members – from athletes looking to enhance their training, to people on our health and wellbeing programmes looking for a safe way to stay active – Biocircuit has benefits for everyone.

Paul Winrow, director of sport and operations, Everybody Sport & Recreation

Biodrive is the only system on the market that is connected with the native software of the circuit; it requires only one login and is totally customisable to the users' needs.

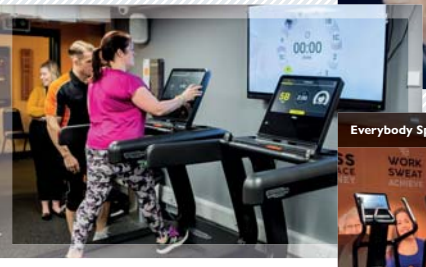
Different needs require different programmes, only Biodrive can balance all phases of movement, both concentric and eccentric, in order to provide each user with a personal programme:

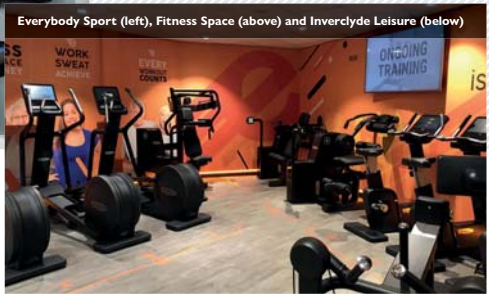
- **RESISTANCE PROFILES**
  Biodrive offers different intensity profiles in order to meet the needs of people requiring isotonic resistance, needing to reduce inertia, or choosing to use viscous resistance
- **ADAPTIVE WORKLOAD**
  Biodrive ensures that the workload is constantly controlled
- **SPOTTER ASSISTANCE**
  Biodrive activates the spotter function to provide assistance to users to effectively manage their workout
- **PACE**
  Biodrive selects the proper pace based on users' needs to achieve maximum effectiveness

 ©Cybertrek 2019

FITNESS SPACE - CARDIFF

Biocircuit provides residents and employees in Cardiff with an elevated Fitness Space service. It allows members to come to the studio and complete a full body workout in 30 minutes, while also supporting a wide range of health and fitness goals, meaning it's not restricted to a certain type of member. The digital capabilities of the equipment also mean that once the coach has supported members with set-up, they're able to complete their workout in confidence, knowing they're always guided, making it an integral part of being a Fitness Space member.
Tim Benjamin, founder, Fitness Space





Everybody Sport (left), Fitness Space (above) and Inverclyde Leisure (below)

The Biocircuit format includes equipment that automatically adjusts to the user's requirements, consoles that display programmes on each machine, flooring that guides users to the next station and a Unity Self dedicated kiosk where users start and finish their journey. This also keeps all the equipment synchronised.
The Biocircuit equipment range includes:

- **BIOSTRENGTH**
A complete range of up to nine pieces of strength equipment, including a motorised seat adjustment system for a fast and seamless setup
- **RUN**
With a dynamically adaptive running surface and fast track system, enabling users to adjust speed and incline on the fly
- **BIKE**
Offering three training positions, easy entry pedals, fast track and fully automatic saddle height adjustment
- **SYNCHRO**
With the longest stride of 67cm, natural total body movement and adjustable ramp to change gradient from five to 35 degrees.

PORT GLASGOW POOL – INVERCLYDE LEISURE

At Inverclyde Leisure we're always looking for new and innovative solutions to diversify our product offering. Investing in Biocircuit has allowed us to offer a different model at Port Glasgow Pool in the form of a dedicated suite as our fitness offering. It's the perfect product to offer an effective workout and engage a wide range of user groups to reduce the perceived barriers to fitness. Regardless of the goal, whether it's getting mobility back, losing weight or just trying a new way of fitness in a fun, relaxed and social environment, Biocircuit is inclusive to everyone.
Kieran Vango, CEO, Inverclyde Leisure

LAUNCHING A SUCCESSFUL BIOCIRCUIT ZONE

Technogym provides support to maximise the implementation and success of Biocircuit. To find out more, please contact Technogym on 01344 300236 or email *uk_info@technogym.com*

MY VISION, BASED ON MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, WOULD BE FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO BECOME THE NORM – NOT SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO DO, BUT SOMETHING YOU JUST GO 'YEAH, THAT'S PART OF MY EVERYDAY LIFE'

TANNI GREY-THOMPSON

The time has come for Westminster to provide the same urgency and focus for the health of our nation as it does for Brexit, the chair of ukactive tells Kate Cracknell

What's your personal vision as ukactive chair?

I often talk about physical activity at a personal level. It saved my life and gave me access to the life I have now. If my parents hadn't encouraged me to be physically active, I wouldn't have gone to the school I went to, wouldn't have got the same education, would never have achieved what I've achieved. So that's the personal driver, and that to me is really important. Because I believe that to bring the power of physical activity to life, you have to tell individuals' stories.

My vision, based on my own personal experience, would be for physical activity to become the norm – not something you have to make an effort to do, but something you just go 'yeah, that's part of my everyday life'. I want it to be something we've designed and built into people's lives. Fun opportunities. Opportunities you don't even have to think about – they're just there. We have to find ways to make it easier for people.

How long have you been chair of ukactive?

I've been chair for four and a half years and I always said I'd do two terms of three years. I think it's really important not to outlive your time, even though there's still loads to do. I still have a year and a half to go, of course – and even when I do go, I won't be very far away. But the sector has to have a chance to change and move on. It needs to continually evolve.

What ukactive initiatives are you excited by at the moment?

I'm here at a really cool time for ukactive and the physical activity sector as a whole.

I'm really excited about our work to support schools as community hubs: what we can do in the summer holidays to keep young people active, how we can get them thinking differently about physical activity, and how we can better use the 39 per cent of community sports facilities that sit behind school gates.

The sector might not see the benefits straight away – it's a slow burner until those young people leave school and earn their own money to pay for their activities – but if we're not doing something with that age group and their families now, it's a lost opportunity.

Another highlight for me is getting to work with people like Professor Rosie Meek, John McAvoy and Phillip Lee in harnessing the power of physical activity to prevent reoffending.

Again, it's hard to measure, but it's about using physical activity to change people's lives, either through activity itself or by providing a career route. I still don't see another sector like it where you can start off working part-time as a lifeguard and end up with an amazing job. That career path is really interesting and there's more we have to do to develop it, but using physical activity to give people a second chance is really important to me.

There's loads more – the ActiveLab accelerator programme, for example, which is growing each year. I see our role as making connections, helping people meet each other, enabling entrepreneurs to break into the sector to encourage innovation.

Generally, we're seeing growing support out there for our sector; our members are seeing new opportunities. When I started four and a bit years ago, I'm not sure we would have thought about talking to the pension sector, but that's something we're now doing. As we develop and grow, we have to look for those different opportunities. We have ►

to ensure ukactive and its members are sitting in the middle, getting our message heard by as wide a group as possible – local authorities, government, other businesses, other sectors.

What progress has been made politically?

We definitely have more influence in Westminster now. Politicians are starting to grasp the sheer size and scale of our sector – how many people work in it, its contribution to society, the secondary spend. But they're also starting to appreciate the benefits of activity at a personal level. I see a lot of MPs not looking terribly happy or healthy, and when I talk to them about workplace health, you can almost see the lightbulb turn on – the 'oh, that's me' moment of realisation.

Are we reaching a tipping point whereby the government buys into our preventative healthcare agenda? We're closer to it, absolutely, but exactly where that tipping point is I'm not sure. Politics is just really slow sometimes. You have to keep chipping away, finding best practice examples and demonstrating their monetary value.

We made a call for government to leverage £1bn of capital expenditure funding to regenerate the UK's ageing fleet of leisure centres, turning them into a new preventative frontline of one-stop wellness hubs – to the benefit of all operators in the sector. It was always going to take time but now we are working with Sport England to make scaling this model a reality, exploring investment options such as the pension funding surplus to increase the number of hubs out there.

In an era of political turmoil, how do we keep physical activity on the agenda?

While Brexit has been soaking up a lot of people's time, I've found MPs have been very open to talking about physical activity. I talk to them about changing people's lives, about people's personal experiences of physical activity. It's obviously a much happier topic for conversation than Brexit!

Now we need the political agenda to provide the same urgency and focus for the health of our nation as it does for Brexit. We're still facing an inactivity crisis, and that has only deepened since the referendum.

There are lots of things we can't change in the wider world of politics, and I don't know what Brexit will bring, but we're talking to the Department for Education, DCMS and lots of other departments we haven't talked to before.

We've developed as an organisation and people are seeing us in a different light. We're sitting at tables that two years ago we wouldn't have been at.

Crucially, though, you can never sit back and say 'yeah, we've got it now, it's all sorted'. With each change of government, each change of minister, you have to keep working on those relationships. We have to keep going – to be ready to take on

ukactive is working with Sport England to regenerate the UK's ageing leisure centres and turn them into one-stop community wellness hubs

PHOTOGRAPH: SPORT ENGLAND

YOU CAN NEVER SIT BACK AND SAY 'YEAH, WE'VE GOT IT NOW, IT'S ALL SORTED'. WITH EACH CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT, EACH CHANGE OF MINISTER, YOU HAVE TO KEEP WORKING ON THOSE RELATIONSHIPS

TANNI GREY-THOMPSON

whatever comes our way and keep talking about what an amazing job our members do.

The other important thing to recognise is that it's very easy to get caught up in the parliamentary work. Yes, that's where lots of decisions are taken – but equally, lots of decisions are taken at a local authority level. The conversations we have with the Local Government Association are massively important, as is our partnership with Sport England.

But we don't know what the next year in politics will bring. We need to concentrate on the things we can influence. Of course, there's always so much we could do – and a temptation to try and do it all, but we've identified three pillars where we feel we can deliver the greatest value and where we'll be focusing our efforts and these are: children and young people, workplace wellbeing, and active ageing.

What's the theme of this year's ukactive Summit?

The theme will be The Backbone of a Modern Britain, positioning physical activity – and the sectors that deliver it – as critical to the future health, wellbeing and prosperity of the nation.

Where previously I've spoken about having to change the way we live, this year we'll be looking at the environments and the infrastructure needed to deliver that. We'll examine the three major areas of public life: how we live, where we live, how we work. We want to show how our sector is connected and influenced by other sectors and institutions, from construction, housing and building developers, to employee benefits providers and insurance, to business, retail and the high street.

It's about reiterating that all of our sectors are intrinsically linked by a shared ambition, and that physical activity has to be the backbone of what we're all doing.

What sessions are you most looking forward to?

We have a session on youth violence – that's a personal passion of mine. I sit on a foundation that uses sport as a tool to change kids' lives and some of the stuff I've seen in other countries, where kids aren't allowed to take part unless they leave their guns at home and they're only six years old… In comparison, while the situation in the UK is quite scary, I'm both positive about and fascinated by what we might be able to achieve.

The session on regenerating the high street through physical activity promises to be a good one too. I live in a small community in the north-east and have been watching with interest what's happened to the high street over the last few years. It used to be all independent shops and now probably half the high street is big brand name shops. I'm hearing similar stories from across the UK, so I'm excited to explore ways in which physical activity can help.

And then the prevention Green Paper session, because that really sets the tone for everything else.

What will be your rallying call for the industry at this year's Summit?

It's easy to look at what we haven't yet done, but we should also learn to celebrate the things our members are achieving every day. We should recognise that we're in a good place already.

Grey-Thompson says physical activity saved her life and she wants everyone to experience its benefits

But we can do more, and everyone can do something to make a difference. I've never met anybody in the sector who doesn't passionately care about it. I believe we have to trust the strength of our people, our workforce, and get as many different voices as possible making the case for physical activity. ●

THE UKACTIVE NATIONAL SUMMIT

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I was seeing a lot of bad pad work and poor teaching in gyms, which broke my heart but spurred me on to develop a dedicated course for boxing technique

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THIRD SPACE

CATHY BROWN

The former European boxing champion has founded training company Boxology and is working with Yazidi women and children in Iraq via her Boxing Sisters initiative. She talks to HCM's Steph Eaves

What were the highlights of your boxing career?
I had so many highlights – from becoming the second woman in the UK to receive a boxing licence, to fighting for world titles in three different weight categories and being ranked number three in the world.

Becoming European champion and the first UK woman to win an English title was very special, while fighting for a world title in Germany in front of thousands was one of my most powerful fights and challenges.

What lessons did you take from boxing into your career as a PT and sports coach?
The obstacles during my professional career were huge and came in many forms; my family not supporting me, boxing promoters refusing to work with me, not being allowed to train in certain gyms, not getting sponsorship, so having to work full-time.

This was simply because I was a woman and a lot of people did not agree with women being allowed to box professionally.

These obstacles helped me develop the resilience to never give up and truly experience that if you want something strongly enough and work for it hard enough, and find a drive for your determination, you'll get results.

I use my experience to help clients develop mental resilience and inner strength. I'm also able to understand the struggles that life can bring and how boxing can help you to feel better, stronger and more able to cope with struggles. This helps me give individuals the motivation to train.

I can also identify that every day you're not going to be able to give optimum performance and can adapt training for individuals depending on their mindset. This is what makes an excellent coach.

Why is boxing so beneficial as an exercise?
It's a magical form of stress and anger release and a powerful way to help with anxiety and depression.

It also increases confidence, as well as being an amazing form of cv and strength training. It gives PTs the 'tools' to mix training up with their clients, among their weight and sports programming, so it keeps clients motivated.

Boxing training can also be transferred onto other sports, as it helps mindset, agility, power, recovery, fitness and strength. If you can integrate boxing within your programming, it will enhance performance and results and make sessions more varied and enjoyable.

Why is proper technique so important?
Bad technique will cause injuries, not only to your clients, but also to you as a coach. It's vital that you're able to hold the pads correctly and teach clients to punch correctly.

Teaching correct technique will also make you better as a coach and enable you to attract more business. The best way to do this is to understand the fundamentals of boxing, as once you comprehend the art fully, you'll be a better coach.

Tell us about your Boxology training course
Boxing is becoming more and more popular as a form of training because of its positive results and for that reason a lot of PTs and ►

At her peak, Brown was ranked number three in the world. She retired from boxing in 2007

▶ sports coaches are integrating boxing into the workouts they do with their clients.

The training you can do on most PT courses is very short and generally not focused on good technique, as it's impossible to teach someone how to teach boxing in just a few hours. Consequently, I was seeing a lot of bad pad work in gyms, along with poor teaching. This broke my heart but spurred me on to partner with Greg Williams and develop a dedicated course for boxing technique.

It teaches how to hold pads correctly and also trains in strength and conditioning for boxers.

We wanted the course to be the best in the industry in terms of quality and professionalism and approached Active IQ to seek the endorsement of a reputable education provider and to secure CPD points for our course, which CIMSPA provides.

We also created an app with 250 technical videos to complement each course, which you get free access to when you attend the courses.

We wanted to create a reference source to use after the course, as most people only retain a small percentage of information in training: the book and app cover everything learned.

Courses are aimed at sports coaches, martial artists and personal trainers who want to teach good boxing technique within their sessions. We also have boxing enthusiasts who just want to learn in more depth about the science of boxing.

As Greg and I both work at Third Space in London we teach all our courses there.

How does the content in Boxology differ from how boxing is typically used by PTs and instructors?

We cover every movement microscopically and break it down so attendees understand why they're teaching a technique. We want each person to understand what techniques to use and why. The detail and professionalism has been fully assessed and recognised by Active IQ – which awarded us its Professional Recognition status, and CIMSPA which also endorses Boxology.

We have a maximum of 10 people on the course so each will be given a large amount of one-to-one attention and help. We found a lot of courses out there cram students in and due to the nature of boxing, it's harder to teach to large groups.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THIRD SPACE

Boxing training can be transferred onto any other sport, as it helps mindset, agility, power, recovery, fitness and strength

How is the course structured?
There are two 'Rounds' to the course. Round 1 is a comprehensive guide to boxing and by the end, an individual will be able to teach basic boxing skills and correct technique and deliver a basic boxing session to a client safely and effectively.

Round 2 is a more advanced guide to boxing for anyone who wants to teach higher level pad work.

We're working on Round 3, which will cover how to get someone ready to fight.

How important is psychology?
I studied sports psychology and cognitive behaviour therapy after I retired from boxing, as I realised how important it is, not just for fighting but for training and for life.

As coaches we're dealing with individuals who may have immense stress from work and life so it's vital to understand elements of psychology.

Each person is unique and should be coached differently. I get to know my clients very well and ask them questions about themselves: this forms a bond.

I also watch their body language and how they walk into a session and I speak to them so I can evaluate what kind of session to give them; if they're stressed, I won't give them such a technical, heavy session, for example.

My retention of clients is excellent as I build a relationship with them. This helps me know what days I can really push them; you shouldn't train them hard every time.

How can boxing help people who are dealing with trauma?
There is something magical about boxing, it gives individuals inner resilience and the ability to build a coping mechanism. Boxing releases so many negative feelings and has a natural ability to be able to open people up about their emotions.

Once you talk about things, you can start building up coping mechanisms. Talking about feelings and emotions is powerful to healing, while suppression is toxic.

The serotonin release you get from boxing serves as a natural anti-depressant and anxiety controller. So it can be a really powerful way to help deal with trauma. ►

These children and women in Iraq have been left with mental and physical devastation, but we are hoping the power of boxing will be able to help them

BOXING SISTERS

Cathy Brown and Greg Williams are working to empower Yazidi women and children in Iraq who have been the victims of rape and abuse

Cathy and Greg travelled to Iraq to work with women who have suffered at the hands of IS

PHOTO: ANNELISE MECCA

Greg and I went to Iraq in April to work with Yazidi children and women who were raped and abused by IS when they attacked in 2014.

There are so many heart-breaking stories – one of the girls we worked with was sold six times between the ages of seven and 10 to IS for sex and endured abuse that is unimaginable. As a result of this abuse, she is now unable to walk properly.

They have all seen murder within their families and have also lost their homes and education. They now live in a camp in the mountains, which is 40 minutes away from the nearest town and they have nothing. They are the kindest and most loving people we have met.

We are hugely passionate about the power and positive effects of boxing, so we stayed in Iraq for 10 days to work with as many children and women as possible and to teach them boxing.

We also ran a Boxology course for two women, so after we left they could teach boxing and carry on this effective therapy to the girls that need help, while also earning a living, so they can feed their families.

We're in constant contact with them and they send us coaching content via video, so we can help them become better coaches.

One woman cannot read or write and none of them speak English, so Greg and I have had to adopt different coaching styles for these women.

The project is called 'Boxing Sisters'. We're returning in October to work with the women in other camps and to train up another two women to coach.

All the children and women have been left with mental and physical devastation, but we are hoping the power of boxing will be able to help them open up about their ordeals, while sharing my CBT experience will help them create a coping mechanism." ●

The Boxing Sisters programme is helping women to recover from trauma through the power of boxing and CBT

PHOTOS: CLAIRE THOMAS

ALIVE AND KICKING

Legend Leisure Services has delivered an elegant website solution for ANGUSalive

Since its inception in December 2015, ANGUSalive, the culture, sport and leisure trust for the county of Angus, has offered residents and visitors a wealth of services and sought to inspire healthy, active and creative lifestyle choices.

The charitable trust focuses on five service areas which form the culture, sport and leisure offering. These include: libraries; museums, galleries and archives; sport and leisure; countryside adventure; and theatre and venues.

With a diverse portfolio of services and operating sites, having a clear and user-friendly 'shop front' is key to customer engagement. At the time ANGUSalive was established, however, the design and functionality of its website was limited. The trust wanted to build a clear, approachable, friendly brand that would attract and inspire customers, stakeholders, partners and employees.

Carol Petrie, principal officer at ANGUSalive, explains: "While the initial council microsite served us in terms of the first point of contact to our organisation and communicating information to our customers and prospects, it didn't reflect our diversity, product specialisms or identify with the focus and image we wish to project."

"The seamless integration between Legend's system and the LLS website offering was appealing"

Carol Petrie, principal officer, ANGUSalive

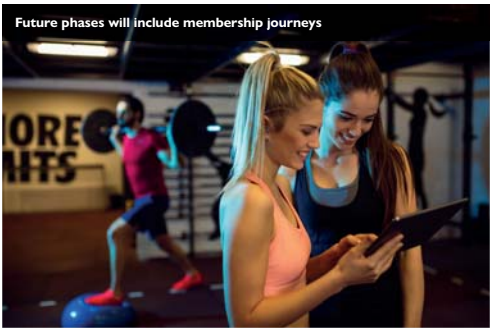
With aspirations to offer an excellent responsive customer service using digital platforms to promote its services, meet customer expectations and maximise organisational income and efficiency, ANGUSalive embarked on a search to find a new digital services provider.

Having already implemented Legend's One System, One Solution management system in late 2017, when ANGUSalive saw a demonstration of Legend's Umbraco CMS at the Legend Conference in October 2018, the solution presented itself.

"The seamless integration between Legend's system and the LLS website offering was appealing," says Petrie. "As a platform, Legend's Umbraco CMS also ticked all of the other key boxes, from cost-effectiveness and security, through to speed of innovation and the ability to layer functionality as we wanted."

Specifically, ANGUSalive wanted a shop window that would clearly and appealingly convey its brand image, moving away from one that was content-heavy, to one that was image-focused and could deliver a more attractive customer view of what the trust offers.

In addition, the trust sought to maximise the opportunity to have in-house control over digital offerings and be able to grow functionality over time.



Future phases will include membership journeys

CONCEPTION AND EVOLUTION

The project kicked off in November 2018 with a blank sheet, culminating with the Go Live in May 2019 of ANGUSalive's newly-designed and constructed Legend Umbraco website, together with the launch of online class bookings. The project was delivered on time and within budget.

Legend Leisure Services worked closely alongside ANGUSalive and developed an easy-to-navigate website that reflected the five different Angus service elements.

"In phase one of the initiative, our priority was to get the new content, structure and branding right," says Petrie. The seamless integration between Legend's management system and the new website meant information such as class timetables only needed to be updated once centrally, removing duplication of effort from ANGUSalive staff.

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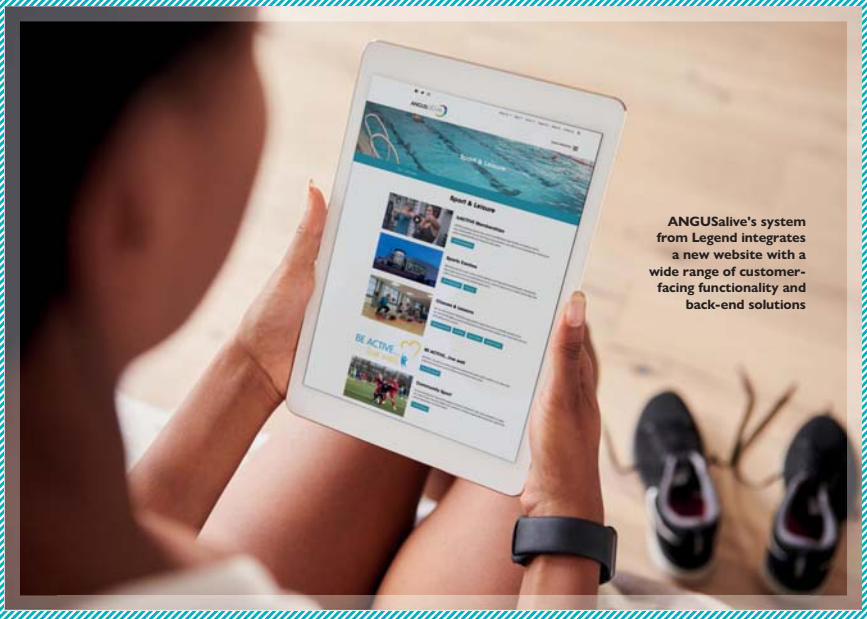

ANGUSalive's system from Legend integrates a new website with a wide range of customer-facing functionality and back-end solutions

"Initial feedback from both customers and our team has been amazing," Petrie enthuses. "Previously, employees were reluctant – even embarrassed – to direct customer enquiries to the old website – it just didn't feel like us.

"We were using social media in the absence of a proper destination, whereas the opposite is now true: online and social are properly integrated, employees know where to direct customers, it's easy to explain where to find the information they're looking for, although the site offers great search functionality, making it much quicker and easier to locate content – and it looks great!"

ANGUSalive and Legend are currently nearing the completion of phase two of the project, which is to add transactional elements, such as online joining. Future phases will include room and facility booking, swimming lessons and membership journeys.

"Our next objective is to lessen traffic to our reception desks and this change will be facilitated by online and self-service offerings," says Iain Stevens, senior manager, business management and development at ANGUSalive. "In improving our digital offering, we're giving our customers what they want, while also making ANGUSalive a great place to work, as our teams are able to add value to their jobs. It's a win-win scenario."

"In improving our digital offering, we're giving our customers what they want, while also making ANGUSalive a great place to work, as our teams are able to add value to their jobs. It's a win-win scenario"

Iain Stevens, senior manager, business management and development, ANGUSalive

LIVING AND BREATHING

Key to bringing any community together is a sense of partnership. The same holds true for any initiative whose purpose it is to achieve that. One of the main factors in the success of ANGUSalive's digital project has been the collaboration between Legend and the trust.

As Stevens concludes: "Legend is more than a provider, it's a true partner and we feel valued. At every step of the way, the Legend team has sought to understand what we wanted and then helped us deliver and improve on that. As a result, we now have a digital presence that reflects us, our values, our community and our history, in addition to being delivered on time and within budget." ●

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Thirty-eight per cent of people over the age of 55 are inactive. This represents a huge opportunity for the industry

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SECURING THE SILVER POUND

The 2019 *Moving Communities* report highlighted that the silver pound could drive significant growth in public leisure. Operators are capitalising on this potential revenue stream, but uptake is slow. Utku Topraksevten investigates

Figures published in the *Moving Communities: Active Leisure Trends 2019* report uncovered insights into how the industry is attracting, retaining and interacting with older members.

This third annual report from the ukactive Research Institute and the DataHub drills into trends driving public leisure in the UK, revealed that while the proportion of older members has increased slightly over the past two years (from 7 to 8 per cent of the population), there's still a major opportunity to attract older customers to use facilities.

There's been a gradual increase in the total 55-plus membership base in the last three years – 19 per cent in 2017, 21 per cent in 2018 and 23 per cent in 2019 – but when you consider that this cohort accounts for 37 per cent of the UK population, the figures remain low.

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME

Using data collected by the DataHub from more than nine million members and 246 million individual visits across 534 leisure centres over the past three years, the *Moving Communities* report offers an unparalleled snapshot of the 2019 leisure and fitness landscape.

Last year's report showed engagement levels among older people weren't even close to meeting their potential – adults over 65 accounted for just 9 per cent of visits. Backing this up, the *Reimagining Ageing* report, released at last year's ukactive National Summit, revealed 38 per cent of over-55s are inactive, rising to close to half (48 per cent) of over-75s and 71 per cent of over-85s. The report called for the sector to collaborate to reimagine what ageing looks like.

Government is clearly keen to invest. Earlier this year it announced a new initiative – The Healthy Ageing Investment Accelerator – to distribute £12m worth of grants to small and medium-sized enterprises that aid healthy ageing, including those involving physical activity. The project will support the UK government's mission to ensure people can enjoy at least five extra healthy, independent years of life by 2035.

We're living longer, but those extra years are blighted by illness and frailty. We need to reimagine ageing

HUW EDWARDS UKACTIVE

UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY

Despite this call to action, older adults – who hold 70 per cent of the nation's wealth – remain unengaged in physical activity. By 2030, it's estimated there will be 20 million UK residents over 60, yet *Moving Communities* revealed only 11 per cent of leisure centre members are 55-64. Just 3 per cent are over 75.

"We all know we're living longer, but those extra years are increasingly blighted by illness and frailty – we need to reimagine ageing," says Huw Edwards, CEO at ukactive. "The report demonstrates average age of members is increasing, from 39 in 2017 to 41 in 2019, suggesting the sector is starting to take advantage of the opportunity presented by an ageing population.

"More is being done to promote physical activity to older people than ever before, but we're at the start of ▸

this drive; it'll take years of targeted engagement to achieve meaningful results. These initiatives show a clear direction of travel, one that ukactive will be championing during the coming years as a core pillar of our work."

Ed Hubbard, principal consultant at DataHub/4global, suggests a better understanding of what older adults want would help operators engage them. "For too long, the sector has grouped 'older' as everyone over 55. But offering a 60-year-old the same programming as an 80-year-old is like treating a 20- and 40-year-old the same. If we're to rebalance this segment, we need to use data and insight to engage participants in a targeted, personal way.

"Whether it's understanding how to support adult-only swimming with personal training or identifying the best marketing channels for older adults, our Data Analytics and Insight service gives a clear idea of the market opportunity and specific programmes that improve older member acquisition and retention."

For too long, the sector has grouped 'older' as everyone over 55. But offering a 60-year-old the same programming as an 80-year-old is like treating a 20- and 40-year-old the same!

ED HUBBARD DATAHUB

THE INVINCIBLES

Wellington Health and Fitness Club in Berkshire currently excels in this field – the majority of members are over 50, with 894 aged 60-79 and 133 aged 80 to 99. Eleven are over 90.

Ian Davis, commercial manager of Wellington College Enterprises, which manages the club, says: "We have a long-running 50+ group called 'The Invincibles' – 483 members who meet three times a week to exercise and socialise. Everyone's given free membership on their 90th birthday and we celebrate 80ths, too. Many members have lost partners and live far away from family, so the group provides a lifeline."

Davis says finding appropriately trained staff is challenging. "There are

The majority of members at Wellington Health and Fitness Club are over 50 years old

Oldham Community Leisure actively targets older members, putting the focus on socialising

There are consequences to having older members, purely because of their physical attributes. Some struggle with mobility, some dementia, others find negotiating kit hard

IAN DAVIS
WELLINTON COLLEGE ENTERPRISES

consequences to having older members, purely because of their physical attributes. Some struggle with mobility, some dementia, others find negotiating kit hard. This creates a duty of care from a club to them, other members and staff. It's a moral dilemma; we know how important the gym is to our older members, but no useful training or qualifications are available."

Davies believes specific training to work with older adults would allow instructors to confidently produce tailored fitness interventions for ageing members.

"In the months since *Reimagining Ageing*, numerous training providers have already committed to supporting older people to train as exercise professionals," says Edwards. "David Lloyd, for example, is employing at least one instructor aged 55 and over at every one of its 90-plus sites. At the same time, CIMSPA has accredited training that will support professionals to work with individuals with long-term conditions."

Elaine Briggs, director of education, Training and Innovation at Future Fit Training, argues this doesn't go far enough. "Training providers can only deliver qualifications set by awarding bodies that meet professional standards set by CIMSPA. These need revisiting; updating for the new, older generation," she says. "Let's be clear – over 55 isn't 'old'. Kylie is 50, Madonna is 61 – we don't see them as old! We need to revisit the language we use, give the qualifications a shake-up and the age brackets a re-think.

"Younger people coming into our industry need to be educated so they don't pigeonhole people just by age. You can get a very fit, active 65-year-old or an overweight, inactive 20-something; the training you'd advise each to do is so very different as is the communication style you'd use. Age is irrelevant; the things we qualified as 'specialist' a few years ago are now the norm for many exercisers and instructors need to be qualified across the board."

INSIGHT AND ANALYSIS

The 2019 report highlights how exercise preferences change as age increases. Younger members favour the gym (57 per cent); group exercise is more popular with older members and swimming accounts for just 8 per cent of 16-24 year old's visits, compared to 30 per cent of 65-74 year olds.

Sport preferences also change with age. Badminton is popular across all ages until 65, when health and wellbeing takes top spot, encompassing assessments and consultations with staff, GP referrals and rehab sessions.

"For us, working with people classed as older is about mindset," says Jackie Hanley, health and wellbeing manager at Oldham Community Leisure. "We actively target over-55s and it all starts in the local community. I do presentations to groups we want to encourage into our centres. If I talk about exercise, or even physical activity, people switch off – their perception is they're too old to exercise. I try to create a conversation around moving and socialising; nudging people towards small lifestyle changes."

Hanley's been working with older members for 12 years and says once they're exercising, they're hooked. "For older members, exercise rapidly becomes a ►

SPLIT OF VISITS FOR CORE ACTIVITIES BY AGE

AGE	SWIMMING	GROUP EXERCISE	FITNESS
16-24	8 per cent	23 per cent	57 per cent
25-34	15 per cent	27 per cent	44 per cent
35-44	19 per cent	30 per cent	35 per cent
45-54	20 per cent	38 per cent	31 per cent
55-64	26 per cent	36 per cent	27 per cent
65-74	30 per cent	29 per cent	29 per cent
75+	27 per cent	19 per cent	40 per cent

Age is irrelevant. You can get a very fit, active 65-year-old or an overweight, inactive 20-something

ELAINE BRIGGS
FUTURE FIT TRAINING

Older members favour late mornings and classes such as Zumba, Pilates and Yoga

mindset, then they keep coming back. Some of OCL's chair-based class goers are in their 90s; they've been coming for years," she says.

Being specific about what's on offer then communicating this with potential participants is key, says Hubbard. "Our data shows us older members clearly favour late mornings – 49 per cent of over-65s visit between 9am and 12pm – and the 65-74 group wants Pilates, Yoga and Zumba. If operators delve into and use this insight to inform programming, marketing and staffing, the offer for older adults can be improved and communicated more effectively." ●

Utku Toprakseven is director at the DataHub

Sources:

- *Moving Communities: Active Leisure Trends 2018 Report*
- *Moving Communities: Active Leisure Trends 2019 Report*
- *Reimagining Ageing 2018 Report*
- *ONS Mid-Year Estimates 2017*

THE MOST POPULAR GROUP WORKOUTS FOR EACH AGE ARE:

55-64	Female	Aerobics	Pilates	Yoga
	Male	Indoor Cycling/Spin	Aerobics	Yoga
65-74	Female	Aerobics	Pilates	Yoga
	Male	Aerobics	Indoor Cycling/Spin	Circuits
75+	Female	Aerobics	Pilates	Health Classes
	Male	Aerobics	Health Classes	Circuits

THE MOST POPULAR SPORTS/ACTIVITIES FOR EACH AGE ARE:

55-64	Female	Badminton	Health & Wellbeing	50+ activities
	Male	Badminton	Squash	Health & Wellbeing
65-74	Female	50+ activities	Health & Wellbeing	Badminton
	Male	Health & Wellbeing	Badminton	Bowls
75+	Female	50+ activities	Health & Wellbeing	Bowls
	Male	Health & Wellbeing	Bowls	Badminton

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> **Simplicity** and a **sense of belonging** are two factors that inspire almost **obsessive levels of devotion** to indoor cycling classes

THE PASSION OF INDOOR CYCLING

In last month's issue we grilled operators about what makes the best indoor cycling class, and they agreed instructors play a crucial part in the overall class experience. Now we're asking the experts on the frontline for their thoughts on what makes indoor cycling such a phenomenon

CAT BOOKER, OWNER OF CAT BOOKER FITNESS

There are many reasons why indoor cycling has such a huge fanbase. The whole experience is important; the instructor, the class, the atmosphere, the friends people make, the bikes, the ride, the fact that pretty much anyone can participate, and the personalised growth.

Once someone takes a class with us they become hooked. They bring their friends along too, creating a natural organic growth and sense of community, which is why the social aspect of cycling is so huge.

We take great care to put together bespoke rides, looking at the clients and their skill sets to ensure they get the most out of a class. While it's group exercise, people still want a personalised experience, with set goals they can strive towards achieving.

The bikes play an important part in the overall enjoyment of our classes; people want to feel as though they're cycling on a road bike. The Precor Spinner® bikes are robust, smooth and adjust to fit everyone. Along with the programming, this helps to give them an authentic experience.

There's definitely a shift towards the 'power' element, which is fundamental to bringing in road cyclists as well as general exercisers. SpinPower® gives clients the opportunity to be tested for a base line fitness and have a personalised programme created. Power, heart rate, RPE and cadence data is tracked during training by smart phone or transferred to leader boards. Adding power and providing accurate data means we can offer prescriptive programming and set specific goals.

Booker says the bike itself is a big part of the appeal, as people want to feel as though they're on a real road bike

Wattbike's Adam Daniel says exercisers want to be given meaningful data with which to track their progress

ADAM DANIEL, WATTBIKE LEAD MASTER TRAINER

Regardless of goals and ability, there are few things more frustrating to an exerciser than an indoor cycling class where the instructor fails to use data and measurement; such as rates of perceived exertion, heart rate zones or power meters, to understand their effort levels and performance.

The session's success has to be measured beyond sweating and sore legs. Exercisers want to have fun but they also want to understand how their power, pedal efficiency or heart rate might have changed compared to a month ago, to see how they've progressed. They demand intelligent, engaging programmes that utilise these types of data to maximise their time spent training.

Coaches have to be flexible in their delivery; being an entertainer to engage those who are simply there 'to keep fit', as well as having knowledge of the data and technology to keep keen cyclists interested. A good instructor will be a chameleon; able to adapt classes based on the group.

Indoor cycling has the ability to bring people together as a community. It can be motivating for those who are just beginning their fitness adventure or inspiring for others who want to dig a little bit deeper. Everyone, no matter the ability, can do the same session at the level that's right for them. And with the technology that now allows you to hop on an indoor bike at home and ride with friends across the world using a structured programme created by world-class coaches, indoor cycling is one of the truly inclusive fitness trends.

LOU ATKINSON, LEAD MASTER TRAINER FOR SCHWINN CYCLING

Something about indoor cycling inspires almost obsessive levels of devotion.

Simplicity. Pretty much everyone can ride a bike. People are more motivated to participate in activities they feel competent in, and someone who's only been to six or eight classes can already do everything the more experienced participants are doing.

While a few are driven to be the best, most are happy just to know they're doing as well as everyone else, and indoor cycling gives them that sense, due to the absence of complicated movement patterns and the necessity for only a very basic cardiovascular conditioning level.

A sense of belonging. There are those who embrace their indoor cycling identity; wearing the clothes, buying the gadgets and joining social media forums. However, many enthusiasts don't feel the need to go this far and they are just as much a part of the community.

Creating and delivering classes that bring people together whilst catering for everyone's needs is no easy feat, and requires significant skill, expertise and dedication. Most importantly, there's no substitute for an instructor's passion. If the instructor is genuinely excited to be there it's infectious, members will be drawn to the classes and follow them to different clubs.

For everyone, it almost certainly started in a small studio with strangers and an instructor who they suspect may want to kill them, and they discovered they actually loved it! I still get the biggest buzz from starting someone on their journey to becoming the next indoor cycling superfan. ►

A combination of music, technology and the passion of the instructor are what draws people to a class, says Katy Sullivan

KATY SULLIVAN, MATRIX MASTER TRAINER & INDOOR CYCLING INSTRUCTOR

From my experience, the console on the bike plays a massive part in people's indoor cycling experience. I've seen people leave a class before because there was only one bike left and its screen wasn't working, so they felt there was 'no point' in them taking part in the class.

Members love statistics and it's vital that bikes maximise the focus on this, as the latest Matrix Target Training Cycles do. Nowadays, people want to know their data. This includes RPM, power, calorie burn, heart rate and more. The more competitive members like seeing results in real-time, with their data on screen allowing them to compare and compete with the other riders in the room.

However, the bike, technology, instructor and the experience are all of importance when it comes to delivering a successful indoor cycling class. Most people go to group exercise classes for the experience, otherwise they would just work out on an indoor cycling bike on the gym floor. So you can have all the latest technology, but if the instructor delivers a mediocre class, members won't come back.

Music, technology and the passion of the instructor are predominantly what draws a person into a class. Music is hugely motivational and can really bring maximum efforts when people feel they have nothing left. And the instructor can have a big impact on the experience of each member – driving a community of regulars. It's not just their passion, but their knowledge of the technology being used and maximised that makes the class even more impactful.

DARREN LEE, INTERNATIONAL MASTER TRAINER FOR KEISER POWERED, UK

The modern indoor cycle studio is all about the environment; understanding the music, the choreography, the lighting, the multimedia and the bikes, but most importantly, it's about understanding the exercisers.

The days of being able to just bang out the latest nightclub anthem and jump around the bike are long gone. The audience is a lot more educated and they want certain things from a class. When first entering a studio, I immediately start to make connections with my audience members to get a feel for the atmosphere and whether this class wants to train, dance or detonate...

Cyclists these days are a mixture of different types of riders and today's modern indoor bike offers them the ability to add power into the classes, attracting the road cyclists back into the indoor environment. The Keiser m3i has both the geometric frame and the smooth pedal stroke which allows riders to physiologically develop their power as I incorporate power, zonal and sprint challenges that are projected on a huge screen taking real-time data from each of the bikes and each of the riders.

Hopefully at the end of one of my classes, even if you are an out-and-out racer or a dancer on a bike, you will come out having enjoyed most, if not all, of the elements. The Keiser m3i data app connection and data measurements allows us to look at performance and measure progress... after all, these guys did subscribe to improve their fitness and that will always be the primary objective.

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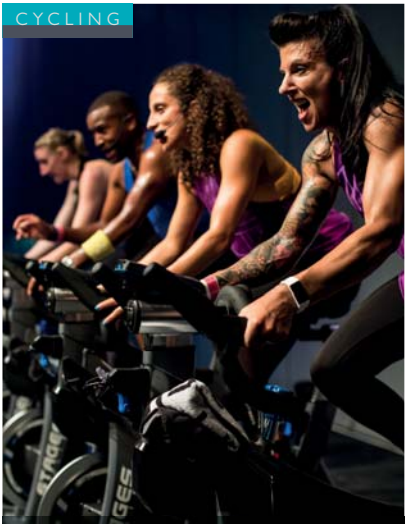

Equinox's Pursuit class uses data visualisation and results-driven programming to motivate riders

JEN ZWEIBEL, EQUINOX DIRECTOR, UK OPERATIONS

At Equinox, member experience is at the core of our values. Group fitness is an integral part of our business and we are constantly looking to remain at the top of our game.

Our cycling sessions are one of the highest utilised classes in our group fitness offering, in part due to the education we give our instructors and the signature programming we create. We consistently look to evolve our programming, but also found we needed to evolve our indoor cycling bike. Since 2016 every Equinox club has been fitted out with Stages bikes, and our member experience has improved dramatically.

Stages technology pairs well with our Pursuit class, an immersive studio cycling experience that uses ground-breaking data visualisation and results-driven programming to motivate riders, drive competition and inspire peak performance.

Gamification and data together have completely up-levelled the cycling experience for our members and the bikes have helped us achieve successful results. Equinox Bishopsgate will open in the City this winter, and will be the first club in our London portfolio to offer The Pursuit. We're excited to bring this unparalleled cycling class to the UK market in collaboration with Stages.

NATALIE MOHAN, LES MILLS RPM AND LES MILLS SPRINT MASTER TRAINER

Understanding the range of different personalities and abilities in your class is essential to running a session that everyone will enjoy. That's why I always make it a priority to arrive early, chat to members and show myself as a friendly face. This helps me to get to know everyone, understand what they want from the workout and then tailor my coaching accordingly.

Letting your personality shine through when you teach is really important. This is something Les Mills is big on; prioritising the need for us all to teach from an authentic place within their training modules. I quite often laugh at myself, make jokes and chat about random topical things. It definitely helps to build a connection with everyone in the room.

I like to keep the music fresh, choosing a variety of genres to suit all participants. In particular, LES MILLS SPRINT HIIT cycling programme is all about working as hard as possible and recovering during the breaks. The more encouraging I am, the harder my class works and the faster participants see results. That's what keeps them coming back for more.

Instructors should tailor their coaching style to the members in their class, says Mohan

 ©Cybertrek 2019

Instructors need to focus on getting the basics of a class right, says Sefiani

ZAHRA SEFIANI, ICG® MASTER TRAINER ON BEHALF OF LIFE FITNESS

People choose group exercise classes because they don't want to have to think about each repetition and they want to maximise their workout in a limited amount of time. Therefore, without doubt, it's all about getting the basics right, something many instructors can forget, that keeps people coming back for more.

It's the preparation before each session, regardless of the length, that makes each one a success. Once you've nailed the structure and the session aims, you can start to add in some variety; integrating themes based on the time of year, a certain sporting event or even just a specific genre of music.

Many instructors forget these basics, which leads to stop-start classes with little flow. By brainstorming beforehand, you can clearly communicate what's happening and set an expectation whereby each participant knows you're going to maximise the short period of time you have with them.

By remembering the basics, being prepared for every session and arriving on time, you can feel more comfortable focusing on the various people in the room and ensuring that you engage with each of them on a personal level. They'll keep coming back if they know the person they've entrusted with their time will push them to the limit and help them achieve their goals all within 45 – 60 powerful minutes.

Johnny G invented Spinning in the early 1990s

"Indoor cycling is a very inclusive activity. No matter what your age or your physical condition, you all train together"

JOHNNY G, FITNESS INNOVATOR AND CREATOR OF THE JOHNNY G SPIRIT BIKE WITH DYACO INC

The main reason that indoor cycling has built up such a passionate following over the years has to be the huge amount of enjoyment it creates.

Enjoyment stems from the combination of three key elements; the class format, the inclusivity of the activity itself and the community that's subsequently created within the indoor cycling studio as people come together to exercise.

The key ingredient to a great class format is the instructor. When you have an entertaining instructor who can create exciting, motivating, high-energy classes that feature the right music, tempo, structure, personality and guidance, then people will work hard and, most importantly, they will enjoy the sessions.

Indoor cycling is a very inclusive activity. No matter what your age or your physical condition, you all train together. There's a common thread, a collective experience, yet at the same time, people are training independently at their own level. The only competition is with yourself, not with each other.

This gives people the confidence and motivation to come back time and again and from that, a community of like-minded, supportive followers is formed. ●

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FS COMMERCIAL DIVISION

FLOOR DEEP

TVS Group is one of the leading suppliers of flooring and surfaces for gym, sports and play environments. We take a look at what's behind this company's success

The routes to success in the health and fitness industry are many and varied. But for TVS (Total Vibration Solutions) Group – now one of the UK's leading suppliers of gym flooring, sports and play surfaces – it all started with two things people didn't want – noise and vibrations.

It was the company's deep knowledge of acoustics, how sound is transmitted and, more importantly, how it can be suppressed, that led to its more wide-ranging involvement across gyms, sports and leisure centres, as well as colleges, universities and football and rugby stadiums.

Today, through three divisions – TVS Gym Flooring, TVS Sports Surfaces and TVS Play Surfaces, the group provides flooring solutions to many of the biggest gyms and health clubs across the UK and undertakes contracts large and small, on new-build projects and increasingly on the refurbishment of existing premises.

A fourth division, TVS Acoustics, continues to problem-solve noise and vibration issues both inside the sector and across cinemas and bowling alleys, commercial and residential buildings.

HIGH END CLIENT LIST

Such has been the success of TVS Group that its clients now include some of the best known names from across the health and fitness industry, as well as the sporting world, including Pure Gym, The Gym Group, Third Space, Virgin Active, Fitness First, Sports Direct Fitness, Xercise4Less, Fit4Less, Lifestyle Fitness, England RFU, Chelsea FC and Derby FC.

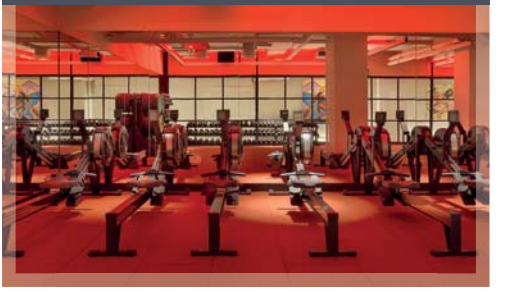
In addition, TVS Group has been responsible for a significant number of projects across the education sector for Sheffield Hallam University, Derby University, The University of Kent and Bryanston School, to name but a few. TVS Gym Flooring is best-known for its high-quality sports and fitness surfaces for use in commercial health clubs, weightlifting gyms, strength and conditioning facilities, public leisure centres, personal training clubs and multi-use games areas in schools and colleges.

Utilising its complementary skills in acoustic suppression, TVS

 ©Cybertrek 2019

TVS Acoustics provides solutions for noise and vibration issues in bowling alleys, cinemas and commercial and residential buildings

TVS specialises in high performance flooring for sports facilities, gyms, playgrounds and more in a wide range of colours and styles



Group also helps to overcome many unwanted noise and vibration issues in gym environments. Examples to date include the installation of anti-vibration pads for treadmills; impact-absorbing isolation rings for gym equipment; and spring jack-up floating floors for free weight areas.

Conscious that gyms also need to be attractive places to work out, the company offers one of the broadest ranges of coloured rubber floor coverings in a variety of thicknesses, allowing materials to reflect corporate colours where required or, alternatively, contrasting hues to brighten the environment.

In a complementary role, TVS Sports Surfaces specialises in high performance shock-pad underlay systems and highly durable surfacing solutions for indoor or outdoor sporting requirements. TVS Play Surfaces, meanwhile, supplies and installs surfacing for playgrounds and caters for a wide variety of equipment, play and sporting requirements.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Because problem-solving is in TVS Group's DNA, the company is often called on to resolve complex projects where a variety of surfaces may need to be utilised for different activities.

When Bryanston School in Dorset decided to create three new elite performance areas – an international standard 40m indoor sprint track, a European-compliant sports hall and a strength and conditioning area – TVS Group was awarded the contract.

"The three-lane athletics track presented a unique challenge," recalls TVS Group sales director Andy Roberts. "The surface had to conform to IAAF standards and take a running spike, it had to meet the strength and conditioning area at the same floor height and needed to match the colour scheme of the sports hall. What's more, one sprint lane needed to have under-track sensors to monitor athletic performance. The TVS Group's solutions and flooring materials all proved successful and provided an aesthetically pleasing result."

At Huddersfield Leisure Centre, meanwhile, TVS Group was helping to resolve a more familiar issue, a floor system not robust enough to withstand the high impact of heavy dumbbells. Explained Roberts: "The solution involved removing most of the rigid flooring materials, levelling the remaining structural slab and installing impact protection tiles beneath a layer of interconnecting heavy-duty rubber tiles. "Successful and durable gym and sports surfaces are about much more than the eye can see. At TVS Group we use well-proven techniques and high-quality materials to ensure that everyone gets the most from the surfaces they purchase, exercise or play on," added Roberts. ●

TVS GROUP
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FROZEN

Cryotherapy is hot right now, with more people attracted to its cited benefits, from reduced recovery time to improved sleep quality. Operators offering this chilly experience give us their advice

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / JACOB LUND

KXU integrates cryotherapy into personalised fitness programmes for members

HEALTH CLUB: KXU

WHERE? LONDON **SUPPLIER** ZIMMER

How long have you been offering cryotherapy?
Two years.

How do you encourage members to try it?
We offer one-off cryo sessions and courses but we also plan cryotherapy into the fitness programmes we create for clients. This can include pre-cooling, post-cooling or, in some cases, both.

Most of our bookings come from us consulting our clients on their aims and history and devising a fitness regime that includes cryo. In this way they know cryo is a serious therapy that can help them achieve their goals better. When it works and they see the results, they really appreciate how important cryotherapy and recovery and preparation are.

How has it been received by members?
Extremely well – we have a 100 per cent return rate. We've seen popularity and demand for cryotherapy grow since we first installed the unit.

We have had multiple success stories from clients who have experienced the benefits of cryotherapy during their fitness journey. Pain and delayed onset muscle soreness is reduced, flexibility increased and stamina and recovery significantly improved. It's a clever therapy that adapts to clients' needs, and we find if we consult clients on what they want to achieve and plot cryotherapy at the right points, the results are impressive.

What advice would you give to operators considering offering cryotherapy?
We consult and educate our members throughout their journey. In that way we manage their use of cryotherapy and we've seen our uptake of cryo rising as a result.

If we were just to offer cryo as an isolated, standalone therapy, we would get some uptake, but the traction is far greater when it's integrated into a fully expanded and considered wellness plan.

I also think it's important that all staff are as positive and energised about cryo as possible and for this reason we've made the therapy available to all our staff members. We make sure they're educated in its benefits and use, so they understand it thoroughly and can talk to clients about it.

HEALTH CLUB LE CHALET CRYO

WHERE? LONDON **SUPPLIER** MECOTEC

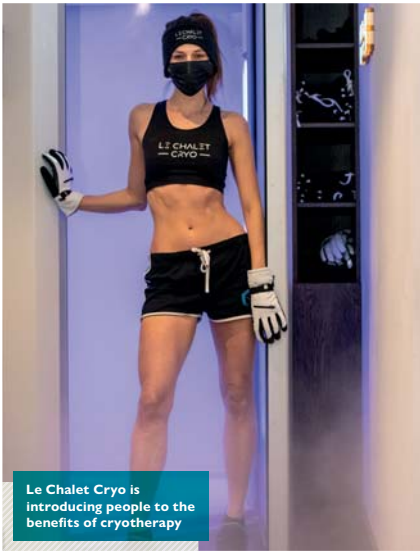
How long have you been offering cryotherapy?
Just two months.

How do you encourage your members to try cryotherapy?
We get a lot of walk-ins who are unfamiliar with the benefits of cold therapy. We introduce them to the treatment and explain the range of benefits and what they should expect. We also assess what they need, to find the best plan for them.

How has it been received by members?
Excellently. We are located in an area where people work long, exhausting hours and don't always have the time for self care. Our clients can be in and out of a cryotherapy session within 15 minutes and then attend their meetings feeling re-energised and clear minded.

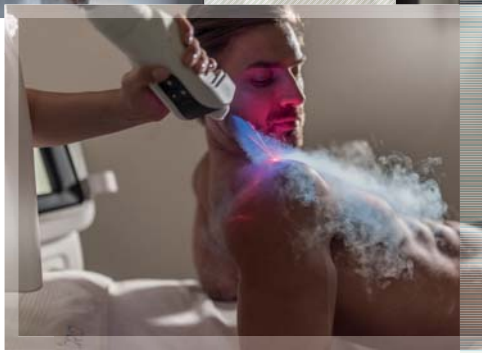
Our customers have reported experiencing improved sleep quality after just the first session. Those who train a lot have also reported having a much faster recovery and say that cryotherapy delays the onset of muscle soreness.

What advice would you give to operators considering offering cryotherapy?
Ensure your staff are well educated on cryotherapy and its benefits and that they know enough to be able to cater for every type of customer's needs.



Le Chalet Cryo is introducing people to the benefits of cryotherapy

A cryotherapy offering in Dubai's desert climate has proved very popular



HEALTH CLUB °CRYO HEALTH DUBAI

WHERE? DUBAI SUPPLIER °CRYO SCIENCE

How long have you been offering cryotherapy?
We've been offering °CRYO Science equipment for two years.

How has it been received by members?
Our clients love the °CRYO Arctic machine and it is our top selling treatment. Ever since we got the machine we have seen an increased retention rate. Clients are very happy with the results as it provides a private and cosy experience, which looks and feels premium while delivering excellent results.

How do you encourage members to try cryotherapy?
Setting up a business in any country comes with its challenges. But we have experienced several advantages because treatments like cryotherapy were completely brand new to the region in 2013. The idea of freezing people in the desert was just a cool concept straight off the bat. However, this also meant heavily investing in awareness campaigns through marketing and PR for the first two years. Even today, we are consistently working on educating the masses about the various benefits and usability of cryotherapy in the modern healthcare industry.

What advice would you give to operators considering offering cryotherapy?
We would advise they invest in educating their clients about what cryotherapy is – explain the various benefits and focus on how it can impact their lives. Also have influencers who can vouch for the treatment and speak to clients on a human level.

From a service provider perspective, it's important to invest in the safest and latest cryogenic equipment. Don't penny pinch with equipment because you will ultimately lose your clients due to a bad experience, faulty machine or worse. ►

HEALTH CLUB: CRYOLABS

WHERE? DORSET, UK **SUPPLIER** CRYOACTION

How long have you been offering cryotherapy?
18 months

How has it been received by members?
Very enthusiastically – all customers and members absolutely love it. Feedback has been extremely positive from customers, as we see in the reviews posted to our Facebook page.

What advice would you give to operators considering offering cryotherapy?
First, determine if you are aiming to target the spa market or the professional/clinical market and then choose your chamber accordingly. Speak to other operators to check whether or not manufacturers' claims as to operating temperatures are true rather than 'optimistic' and find out whether proper maintenance and servicing are available at short notice if anything goes wrong. ●

Cryolabs advises determining your market before choosing a chamber

WANT TO OFFER CRYOTHERAPY?

Elena Lapetra, director of Stronger Studios shares her tips on getting started with cryotherapy and the main factors to consider

Elena Lapetra

OPERATIONS

Start with a split timetable of available slots and grow it to include walk-in customers. Time the slots around other behaviours and demographics, for example, before work and around noon, office workers will be searching for brain fog relief and after a high intensity exercise class, people will want to optimise their recovery.

Choose your demographics, choose their benefit driver and create your timetable and messaging around it.

CHOOSING YOUR UNIT

Experts say anything above -100 degrees Celsius does not give a cryogenic effect, so ensure your chamber can offer sessions below this level. Equally as important is the way air circulates inside the chamber. Ensure the one you choose doesn't let the air concentrate in the space from the waist down.

You'll also need to consider whether the cryotherapy chamber can be programmed to automatically turn on in the morning, whether it needs any drying time or down time each day and how long it will take to reach the optimal temperature – all of these factors will impact your operations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Not all chambers get approval for insurance coverage; so ask that question early on in the process. Also make sure your service cover supports you not only for remote support and login for quick fixes, but also for on-site support with a good response time.

DOWN TO BUSINESS

It's best practice for clubs to work with their cryo partners to design ROI guidelines and a longer-term business plan. Successful business models would expect to return their investment in around 12 months.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

When it comes to cryotherapy, the list of claimed benefits can be split into physical performance and mental performance. The most-cited are reduction of recovery time and pain management.

However, cryotherapy is not magic! Doing it once is unlikely to yield results, therefore, make sure your first-timer sessions are a great experience, but are also educational, taking your business beyond just an Instagram post.

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Precor's Spinner® Chrono bikes are helping SIV members to improve their fitness levels

SIV chooses Precor

After a competitive tender process, Precor has been chosen by SIV to provide its Spinning® bikes and SPINPower® staff training to upgrade the offering at its leisure centres

With almost 14,000 members across its sites and Spinning® featuring as an integral day-to-day component in six out of the seven gyms, introducing the right bikes was paramount when Sheffield-based operator SIV was looking to make improvements.

Tim Hicks, head of health and wellbeing at SIV, says: "Several of our venues were at the point where the indoor bikes needed replacing. We wanted to take the opportunity to ensure any new bikes met the changing needs of our class offering and members.

"We looked into a number of different brands in detail and ultimately decided the Precor Spinner® Chrono bikes ticked all our boxes."

"We looked into a number of different brands in detail and ultimately decided the Precor Spinner® Chrono bikes ticked all our boxes"

Tim Hicks, head of health and wellbeing, SIV

NEW INSTALLATIONS

The Trust installed Spinner® Chrono bikes across its sites. Instructors also underwent a two-day SPINPower® Programme Certification.

Hicks continues: "Our Spinning® programme is comprehensive and extremely popular, so it was important for us to provide members with bikes that would help them achieve their goals.

"We found the Spinner® Chrono bikes to be very smooth and the added capability of intervals, as well as the association with the world-renowned Spinning® brand, helped cement our decision.

"The console also played an important part in the decision process, as we particularly wanted a multifunctional display, indicating power and RPM readings. We've already seen the impact it has on the way people train and the improvement in their fitness levels."

THE POWER OF SPINNING

Bryony Winfrow, fitness manager at SIV, underwent a two-day bespoke SPINPower® training course, along with other SIV Spinning® instructors, to understand both the physics and the physical behind the watts: what power is, how it's measured and why it's important, the relationship between power, RPE, heart rate and cadence, how to determine baseline fitness markers and SPINPower® Training Zones, and how to lead fun and effective rides.

Winfrow explains: "The workshop was a great hit, as SPINPower® programming allows training data to be tracked by smartphone or transferred to leaderboards, helping to improve member training and the overall class experience. We're actively looking to incorporate power training formally into classes. However, in the meantime, we're utilising the skills obtained on the course." ●

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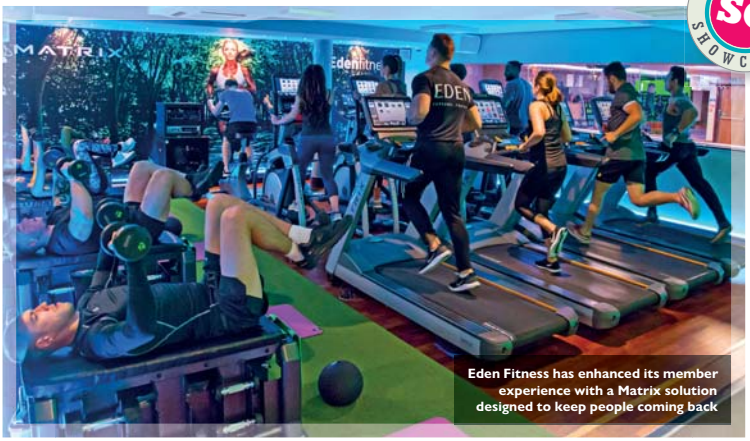
CONNECTED
SOLUTIONS



Eden Fitness has enhanced its member experience with a Matrix solution designed to keep people coming back

Fully connected

In June 2019, Eden Fitness, a premium private health club in the heart of Ealing Broadway, became the first site in the UK to install the new, fully-connected Matrix Fitness equipment

The install included the top-of-the-range Matrix 7xi cardio equipment, Ultra strength equipment with the connected intelligent training consoles, two of the new CXP Target Training Cycles and two versa cable machines.

Charlie Bourne, at Eden Fitness, comments: "Eden Fitness is a premium site and our members have come to expect connectivity in all aspects of their lives, including their fitness journey. Through the Matrix technology, we can now engage with members outside the four walls of the gym, integrate with third party apps and offer a more personalised service.

"We chose to work with Matrix to take our equipment offering up a level, to provide a fully connected experience for our members. The team were fantastic to work with and were able to install the new equipment in just one day, resulting in minimal disruption to our team and members."

REVOLUTIONARY NEW KIT

The Matrix 7xi series is a revolutionary way to link members to stunning entertainment, social media, effective fitness tracking and brand-building communication from the club. It's also an ingenious way to manage equipment to expedite maintenance and service, which maximises machine uptime.

With its intelligent training console, the Matrix Ultra strength series provides intuitive operation. The CXP Target Training Cycle has a distinctive target training touchscreen display that uses engaging graphics and vibrant colours to motivate riders, assess effort and keep everyone on track for their goals.

"With our fully connected cardio and strength equipment, we were able to transform the club offering, creating a pioneering, wrap-around, digital solution"

Noel Glenister
Matrix Fitness UK

To complete the install, equipment was set up with the Matrix Workout Tracking Network (WTN), a digital solution allowing members to capture data from all of their favourite fitness apps in one place, including the Matrix Personal Trainer Portal app, which creates a personalised training experience with flexible, customisable digital solutions to help trainers engage with members and tap into new revenue streams.

TRANSFORMATION

Noel Glenister, regional sales manager London and South East at Matrix Fitness UK, says: "Eden Fitness wanted to enhance its member experience and its HIIT training zones. With our fully connected cardio and strength equipment, we were able to transform the club offering, creating a pioneering, wrap-around, digital solution.

"Through connected solutions, our training consoles also include the Sprint 8 programme, a scientifically validated HIIT programme, designed to give your members results that keep them coming back." ●

To find out more, visit:
www. uk.matrixfitness.com
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Find out more – go to **fitness-kit.net** and type the fitness-kit keyword into the keyword search

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness

Pulse AirBike a test of 'mental and physical strength', says **Ben Steadman**

Pulse Fitness is set to expand its portfolio of cardio equipment with the launch of its new model, the AirBike.

Designed to utilise air resistance technology, the bike offers a cardiovascular CrossFit-style workout. Unlike traditional exercise bike offerings, the AirBike has handles that move as the user pedals, providing a dual action that incorporates the entire body.

"Our AirBike has already proven to be highly popular with the MOD"
Ben Steadman

Similar to an air rowing machine, the AirBike creates resistance through a large flywheel which generates more resistance the harder the user works. It also features a 7-inch LCD console with advanced controls that offer 12 preset training programme options, as well as a manual training mode.

Ben Steadman, business development director at Pulse Fitness, says: "The AirBike is a serious workout due to the fact that resistance is regulated by effort, meaning the harder you work, the more resistance is created. Used at high intensity, it's a real test of mental and physical strength."

"Our AirBike has already proven to be highly popular with the MoD thanks to its robust design and technology and we look forward to launching this product into the wider fitness market."

The bike has a low carbon footprint, as it doesn't consume any electricity and is fully adjustable, portable and low maintenance, making it ideal for use on the gym floor and at home.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
PULSE

The AirBike creates more resistance, the harder the user works

Fisikal enables operators to focus on front-of-house delivery, says **Rob Lander**

Fitness technology company, Fsikal, has developed a new digital business management solution for personal trainers and studio operators.

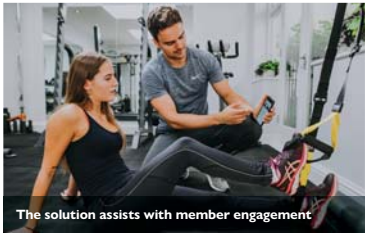
Available via a monthly subscription service, with prices starting from £75 per month, the platform offers a range of features, including client engagement, payment solutions, financial status reports, real-time booking and member assessment, to support operators with the day-to-day running of their business. Feedback on business performance is also available via the system.

"This solution puts an end to paper-based records"
Rob Lander

In addition, Fisikal offers a free-to-download member app, which enables them to manage their bookings, make purchases, manage payments and access a library of fitness content.

Rob Lander, Fisikal CEO, says: "This puts an end to paper records and hours of manual data collation.

"The platform is like having an accountant, operations manager and client services officer on hand 24/7, all working to improve business efficiencies and enhance the customer experience, but at a fraction of the cost."



The solution assists with member engagement

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
FISIKAL

Functional Training Zone - PureGym Southampton

Functional Training Zone - PureGym Waterloo

A partnership between Pure Gym and BLK BOX is challenging the low-cost model

PureGym is the UK's leading gym operator and first chain to successfully reach over a million members. The company is now celebrating its 100th Functional Training Zone (FTZ); a radical concept that five years ago would have seemed unachievable.

The unique 1,000sq ft concept was created in collaboration with equipment specialist, BLK BOX, whose challenge was to maintain PureGym's market leader position by enhancing the space and offering of its low-cost gym model.

Strong partnership

"The partnership between PureGym and BLK BOX has been nothing but positive," says Richard Annetts, model and equipment manager at PureGym. "The BLK BOX team have been with us every step of the way. Their creativity and superior knowledge have made them a fantastic sounding board as we introduce the new Functional Training Zones across the PureGym estate."

With close to 250 PureGyms across the UK, the company shows no signs of slowing down. As it continue to disrupt the budget gym market with a bold and innovative strategy, the focus remains on delivering real value to members – an ambition BLK BOX fully supports.

"Working with PureGym has been an extremely exciting challenge for everyone at BLK BOX," says Miles Canning, the company's head of product. "We spent a year working on and refining a concept which would differentiate PureGym from its competitors and – more importantly – increase member satisfaction."

"We spent almost a year working on and refining a concept which would differentiate PureGym from its competitors and more importantly, increase member satisfaction"

Miles Canning

Functional Training Zone - PureGym London Wall

Equipped with the latest functional training equipment, the FTZs are designed to excite PureGym members and inspire personal trainers. The zones are a thoroughly engaging space and are adaptive for one-to-one workouts and group classes.

Positioned prominently, the FTZs vibrant turf, along with custom functional training rigs create a remarkable feature throughout the estate. This is a partnership that's continuing to thrive and we look forward to seeing what they have in store for next year.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

BLK BOX

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