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Omnichannel is about letting consumers have what they want, on their own terms



ESSENTIAL

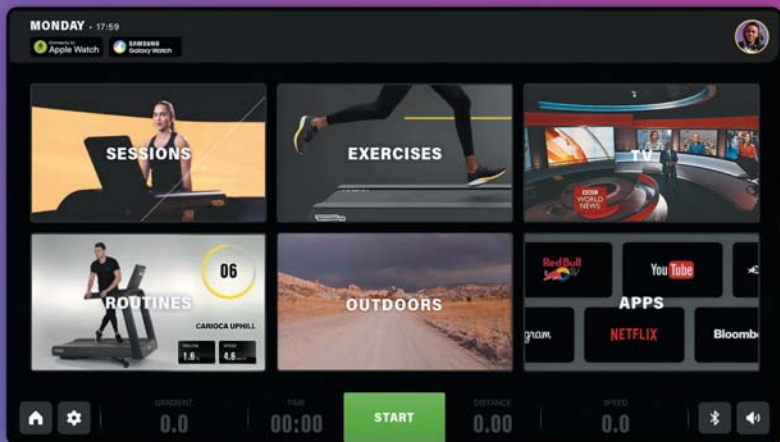
We must recognise the fitness industry as an essential service, p44



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We are essential

The science shows being fit mitigates against COVID-19. We've proven we can operate safely under the SAGE COVID-secure Framework. Time to join it up by securing essential service status

We want to see the UK government reclassifying gyms, leisure centres and PTs as an essential service, so they can stay open to save lives and help people fight and recover from COVID-19.

Research shows exercise protects against the virus by keeping body fat under control and increasing levels of extracellular superoxide dismutase (ecSOD) in the body. This bathes the organs and cells in a protein which protects them against COVID-19 and other pathogens.

As a result, people who exercise are less likely to be hospitalised with the virus; if they're hospitalised, they're less likely to need to be ventilated; and if they need to be ventilated they're less likely to die. Being fit also increases the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.

These are three of the multitude of physical and mental health benefits which come from enabling people to keep fit – something that comes at no cost to the exchequer.

We're calling on the government to keep gyms and leisure centres open and to encourage people to exercise, with a Work out to Help out scheme, so we can fight the virus and ensure the success of the vaccination programme.

The idea of essential service status was first proposed in October by Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive and would see gyms and leisure centres placed in the same category as things such as supermarkets, banks and chemists.

On page 45 of this issue of HCM, policymakers make the case to government for essential service status, with professor Greg Whyte, chair of the ukactive Scientific Advisory Board, arguing that the sector is already fulfilling this role, citing – for example – that 66 per cent of the nation's cancer rehab and prehab services are delivered in gyms and leisure centres by Level 4 staff.

Getting essential service recognition for our sector must be our number one priority, with the industry continuing to unite to fight for this at every level.

The fitness industry has proven it's COVID-secure and can operate without community transmission by adhering to the SAGE-approved framework for safe operations which was agreed with government through ukactive.



Boris Johnson has benefitted from the fitness industry

“Being fit increases the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, so we’re calling on the government to keep gyms open and encourage exercise”

Gyms and leisure centres should not have been forced to close during second lockdown and they must not be closed again. It's time the government looked at the science and let operators continue their valuable work supporting the NHS and enabling people to exercise their fundamental human right to self-care.

Boris Johnson benefitted from the power of the fitness industry in his post-COVID recovery, and it's vital this option is extended to everyone, not just the elite. The pandemic is revealing awful levels of deprivation in some parts of the UK and our sector is one of the solutions.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

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Uniting the world of fitness

NOVEMBER 2020 No 284



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HCM

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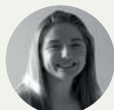
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A woman with blonde hair tied back is sitting in a lotus position on a grey yoga mat. She is wearing a black sports bra and black leggings. Her hands are resting on her knees with palms facing up. She is looking down with a focused expression. The background is a lush green field with some fallen leaves, and the lighting suggests it's late afternoon or early morning.

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6 *Working in partnership with Berkley Care Group, we've developed a bespoke training programme to improve and maintain fitness and mobility in older adults*

Davide Ferreira, Power Plate UK

In a recent issue of HCM, Jamie Bunce, CEO of Inspired Villages, said his primary aim is to "focus on people's health and wellbeing, for the greater good of our NHS, social care, society and most importantly the individual." (HCM August 2020, p62)

With a shared sentiment, we have been actively supporting the aging population for decades, and more recently have seen growth in the UK healthcare sector – where statistics from Caring-UK indicate there are 456,000 elderly people in care. By 2030, this figure will rise to 730,000.

Forming a partnership with Berkley Care Group during the pandemic has proven to be highly effective, with residents from all six of the company's care homes benefiting from gentle exercise, increased mobility, and general wellbeing using Power Plate's Personal product.

Care workers can move the machine from room to room, making it accessible for less mobile residents and enabling staff and residents to counter the negative effects of inactivity on the human body, in a safe, effective manner.

Working in partnership with Berkley Care Group, we've developed a bespoke training programme to



Berkley Care Group residents are engaging in regular exercise

improve and maintain fitness and mobility in older adults, by stimulating natural reflexes, increasing muscle activation, and improving circulation.

We've also trained two members of staff at each property to use the product and key outcomes are being tracked over a 12-week period, to show how specific, evidence-based physical activity connects to key health benefits, as well as improving quality of life, independence, confidence and social interaction.



‘Rehabilitating our nation from COVID-19 is going to require a team effort and we should be leading the charge. Scheme providers and operators should begin getting their offer ready

Stuart Stokes, ReferAll

Coronavirus has presented the health and wellbeing industry with greater challenges than it's ever faced before. But we're already seeing green shoots of positivity; this is especially evident for public health referral schemes.

Many of the 166 schemes using our software are reporting that referral rates from healthcare professionals, which were at an all-time high even before lockdown, are bouncing back remarkably quickly as the NHS seeks to improve the nation's health.

Furthermore, there is a new challenge coming our way and we, as a sector,



must be prepared to step up and offer support.

'Long COVID' is now officially recognised as a condition and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is developing guidelines for doctors in dealing with it. The Zoe COVID Symptom

Study has produced figures suggesting 10 per cent of people who contract COVID-19 remain unwell after three weeks and 5 per cent continue to be ill for months.

No one is better placed to take on this challenge than our industry – in particular referral scheme providers.

Rehabilitating our nation from COVID-19 is going to require a team

effort and we should be leading the charge. The gov.uk website is already recommending 'patients recovering from COVID-19 should speak to their GP about local care pathways for support and assessment of any long-term symptoms or health problems' and the government has also created an online recovery portal.

Funding should follow and we must engage, not for the opportunistic chance of short-term funding, but as a long-term delivery partner. Scheme providers and operators that can help should begin getting their offer ready now; get long COVID rehab schemes up and running right away, so that we, as an industry, have something to offer the NHS 'off the shelf'. This is our chance to make a difference.



Scheme providers and operators should start creating rehab programmes for sufferers of 'long COVID', says Stokes



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HCM people



I've been in the industry for a decade and it's the first time I've seen it truly unified from the top to the bottom

Nick Whitcombe

Founder, Body Tech Fitness



Independent gym owner Nick Whitcombe has become a fitness industry campaigner of international renown, since refusing to shut his gym in the October tier 3 restrictions in Liverpool.

Whitcombe's campaign has made him something of a media sensation: featuring on the BBC's Panorama, (9 November), with a page of coverage in *The New York Times*, and his reach has stretched as far as *Russia Today*.

He's receiving up to 15,000 social media messages a day from people in the industry and well wishers supporting his cause. As a result, pinning him down for an interview was a bit of a challenge, but he managed to squeeze in a quick chat between talking to industry captains and MPs. "It's a crazy situation," he says, seemingly bemused that all of this is happening to him.

In case you missed the story breaking, Whitcombe refused to close his bodybuilding gym – Body Tech Fitness – when Liverpool was placed under tier 3 restrictions, despite multiple visits from police and being issued fines.

Using scientific data to back up his decision, he countered that he needed to stay open for his members' physical and mental wellbeing. "With 62 million gym visits across Europe with only



Whitcombe has refused to close his gym during COVID-19 restrictions, saying it is essential to members' wellbeing



487 confirmed cases, we're not adding to the problem, we are part of the solution," he says.

Whitcombe's campaign quickly gathered momentum, with industry heavyweights getting behind it, as well as receiving support from local MPs. A petition reached 600,000 signatures in less than a week, and a gofundme page to pay fines and legal costs raised £52,000 in six days.

Collaborative effort

Now, as we're in the second lockdown, Whitcombe is at the heart of a second campaign to get the health and fitness industry classified as an 'Essential Service', which would mean it can stay open during lockdowns and be a fundamental pillar to support the NHS. "Everyone's on board in this campaign. We're working with local MPs, ukactive, sports and nutrition companies and the big players like Grenade, Pure Gym and Gymshark," he says.

"I've been in the industry for a decade and it's the first time that I've seen it truly unified from the top to the bottom, which I think is a silver lining to come out of this situation. We're all standing together now – independents, corporates, suppliers. This is testament to the magnitude of the situation."

Whitcombe is deeply frustrated at the enforced

shutdown of the health and physical industry: "The suicide rate is at an all time high. The depression rate is double that of last year. Our members are missing out on the physical and mental benefits of a workout."

Essential service

Whitcombe says that rather than focus on getting the decision to close gyms overturned, he is putting his energies into the campaign to have the health and fitness industry classified as an Essential Service which supports the NHS. Long-term this would be a phenomenal accomplishment and have a far reaching impact.

He wants to see a Work Out to Help Out scheme, to help avoid the deterioration in mental and physical health the second lockdown is sure to bring.

"Prevention is better – and more cost-effective – than cure," he says. "The government doesn't always listen to logic, but they will listen to

“

It makes no sense to close gyms: we're a pillar which holds the NHS up. We've got lives at stake

budgets. So if we can show them how we can stem the drain which lifestyle diseases, such as diabetes, put on the NHS, they may comprehend how our industry can genuinely protect the NHS. No other sector can support it as we can."

Whitcombe launched his gym in 2013, coming into the industry from an acrobatics and Parkour background – he was a former stuntperson, working for big hitters such as Redbull, Nike and Adidas. He says he comes from a very accepting, non-competitive culture and was keen to bring that ethos into his gym. As a result, members are encouraged to be social – get to know each other, connect on social media and share advice.

I don't think the government has ever appreciated how influential our sector is



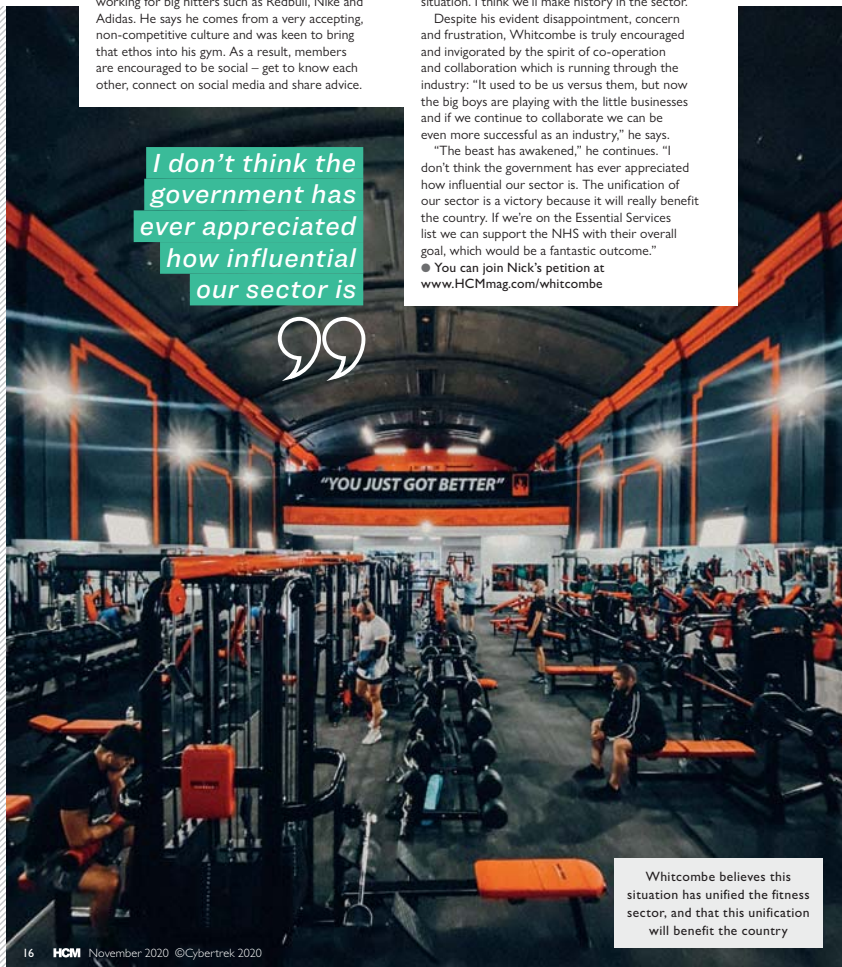
Making history

"For me, as one of the little guys, being part of this industry movement is insane," he says. "It's been absolutely crazy to have emails from the titans of the industry in my inbox. It's like the local takeaway chatting to the CEO of McDonald's! It's never happened before. It's not testament to me, it's just a demonstration of the magnitude of the situation. I think we'll make history in the sector."

Despite his evident disappointment, concern and frustration, Whitcombe is truly encouraged and invigorated by the spirit of co-operation and collaboration which is running through the industry: "It used to be us versus them, but now the big boys are playing with the little businesses and if we continue to collaborate we can be even more successful as an industry," he says.

"The beast has awakened," he continues. "I don't think the government has ever appreciated how influential our sector is. The unification of our sector is a victory because it will really benefit the country. If we're on the Essential Services list we can support the NHS with their overall goal, which would be a fantastic outcome."

● You can join Nick's petition at www.HCMmag.com/whitcombe



Whitcombe believes this situation has unified the fitness sector, and that this unification will benefit the country

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*Having someone just feeling comfortable
walking into the gym is important*

Harley Pasternak

Trainer and author





PHOTO: FORME LIFE

The future of working out in the age of COVID-19 will be a hybrid of at-gym and in-home fitness, with an increasing focus on digital offerings, predicts celebrity trainer Harley Pasternak.

Pasternak is a personal trainer and nutritionist, who made his name working with celebrities including Halle Berry, Orlando Bloom and Rachael Weisz. He also has a fitness gym facility design business, and works as Global Fitness Advisor for Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts.

"I think fitness providers will be okay," he said, talking to *HCM*. "I think things will come back to very close to what they were before the pandemic, but there will be more of a focus on hygiene, ventilation and private spaces to work out. More home fitness will exist than before, but people will come back to gyms for the social aspect and for pieces of equipment that it doesn't make sense to have at home."

His advice to gym operators is to, "Think about who's going to be using your facility. How you cater for them, how you prioritise function over form, create different spaces for different people with different goals and comfort levels.

Pasternak has been involved with the concept and design of *Forme Life*, a new piece of home workout equipment

"With COVID-19, the idea of creating personal pods where people can exercise in a very hygienic and private way is a new area we haven't looked at yet. And whenever you can create an outdoor amenity, that's also very helpful."

He also advises gym operators to increase their use of digital workout offerings. "It's the future and present," he said. "From a staffing and financial perspective it makes so much sense. You're able to personalise things even more digitally than you are with one person in a class. A machine can keep track more and knows way more exercises."

Attracting new members

With COVID-19 acting as an incentive for many to lose weight, Pasternak advises gyms to become more welcoming for people at the start of their fitness journey.



PHOTO: FOUR SEASONS HOTELS & RESORTS

Pasternak designs gyms and workout protocols for Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts

The rules for fitness

Pasternak shared his five daily habits for fitness with HCM

1 Create a daily step goal – aim for 12,000 steps per day, ideally outside of a gym

2 Try to get at least seven hours of quality sleep per night

3 Unplug from technology for at least an hour a day

4 Eat well – three meals and two snacks, consisting of protein, fibre and healthy fats and keep your sugar intake below 30 grams a day

5 Push something, pull something or lift something for 10 minutes every day

Coming from the land of the freeway, Pasternak is a strong advocate of walking more, saying:

“We’ve put too much focus on mechanical and group programmed cardio. If you look at the healthiest populations in the world, these are people who walk anywhere from two to four times more per day than the average American. “Walking can be done by anybody, at any time and in any place”

"Keep it simple," he said. "Not all workouts have to be an hour and half long with 20 exercises. Having someone just feeling comfortable walking into the gym is important. Maybe giving them two simple moves to start with. I think people should start on free weights rather than machines – if machines are people's first exposure to resistance exercise, they can actually create bad habits, but as they become more advanced, they can be great tools for variation and isolation."

Forme Life

Pasternak is behind the design and development of several pieces of widely-used strength equipment, and is always on the lookout for the next big thing in fitness, he said. When he was asked to be chief fitness adviser for recently-launched Forme Life – a full length mirror designed by Yves Behar with resistance training equipment and a touch screen experience, offering a wide range of live and on demand workouts – he was instantly keen.

"When Trent Ward, the founder of Forme Life, approached me as they were developing this product, I thought, yes! I'm hitching my wagon to this horse," he said. "I was very excited – it's going to be a revolutionary product."



Pasternak is chief fitness advisor for Forme Life

Forme Life comes in two models: Full Studio and Screen-Only Studio. When turned off, it becomes a sleek full length mirror designed to blend into the home.

"If the Mirror is an audio cassette and Tonal is a CD, Forme Life is today's modern digital music," said Pasternak. "This is what I've been telling my clients to hold out for."

Looking ahead, Pasternak's gym design company has a range of gym designs underway, including several for Four Seasons, and an updated version of his bestselling *The Body Reset Diet* book is due to come out early in 2021.



Harley Pasternak BIO

Pasternak holds a MSc in exercise physiology and nutritional sciences from the University of Toronto and an honours Degree in kinesiology from the University of Western Ontario. He is also certified by The American College of Sports Medicine and The Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology, and served as an exercise and nutrition scientist for Canada's Department of National Defense.

Pasternak is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose books include *5-Factor Fitness*, *5-Factor Diet*, *The 5-Factor World Diet*, and *The Body Reset Diet*. Harley's titles have been translated into 14 languages in over 25 countries around the globe.



Our road map is to manage leisure facilities, developing them into community hubs and ensuring the most in need get the most support

David Burns

Co-founder and CEO, Collective Leisure

Collective Leisure has just become the first social enterprise leisure management company in Australia. Its CEO talks to Liz Terry

What's the purpose of Collective Leisure?

To enable 'wellbeing without boundaries'.

This means no matter who you are, where you're from or what your background is, you should be able to access education, services and opportunities to enable your wellbeing and reach your potential.

We intentionally trade to tackle chronic disease, build resilient communities and provide access to employment and training for people from marginalised communities, using a systems approach.

We work in communities with communities by following a set of values and principles, including:

1. Distributed leadership – the power of self-responsibility, taking the initiative and collaborating at all levels.
2. Resilience – cultivating resilient communities through building strong relationships.
3. Inclusivity – fostering diversity and helping to build inclusive communities.
4. Vitality – serving with energy and optimism.
5. Leading with empathy and compassion.

What activities do you engage in?

We consult to local government to help them deliver service excellence to their communities.

We design and deliver wellbeing and sports programmes for educational establishments and community groups to help disadvantaged communities, such as asylum seekers and refugees, and those from lower socio-economic groups and people with disabilities.

We combine these services with human potential coaching and consulting to help

Burns migrated to Australia from the north-east of the UK



The new Gunyama Park Aquatic and Recreation Centre in Sydney

people work through what prevents them from realising their true potential and a fulfilled life.

Our road map is to manage leisure facilities, developing them into community hubs - ensuring the most in need get the most support.

How is the organisation funded?

Collective Leisure is privately owned. I co-founded the organisation with my fiancé, Jennifer Barker.

Which outcomes have been most meaningful?

We were only established a little over a year ago, but two projects spring to mind at different ends of the system. Setting policy and delivering programmes.

The first was the development of a best practice contract specification, focusing on social outcomes and strong governance, for the City of Sydney's new Gunyama Park Aquatic and Recreation Centre.

The facility, designed by Andrew Burges Architects in association with Grimshaw and TCL, will be an exemplar for access and inclusion and is the biggest aquatic complex built in Sydney since the 2000 Olympics. You can find out more at www.gunyamapark.com.au

The second project was delivering a wellbeing programme for Bankstown Senior College, based around Collective Leisure's 'wheel of wellbeing' to refugees aged 18-22-years from war-affected countries, such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. This has been really rewarding and has led to

us becoming the official wellbeing partner of the Australian College of Physical Education.

We've also been working on the New South Wales Inclusive Schools Programme where we've partnered with Special Olympics Australia to deliver sports sessions on their behalf to children with learning disabilities and autism. We're also employing people from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds.

How do you measure success?

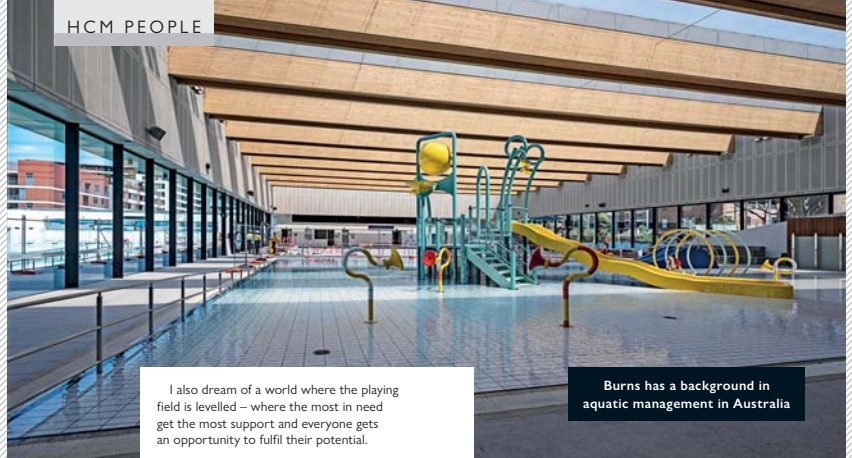
We've partnered with Substance in the UK to use the Views impact measuring platform to measure our service delivery. We are the exclusive distributor of the platform in Australia.

What are your dreams for the future?

Collective Leisure is becoming a leisure facilities operator. From there we'll provide service excellence with inclusion being not just an initiative, but a mindset.

I strongly believe the social challenges we face (COVID-19 included) can only be solved when people and organisations work together across sectors, boundaries, and cultures, ie, when we take a collective approach. There is an opportunity for greater collaboration in the industry.

Australia is a long way from England but there's a big opportunity to share our collective intelligence for the betterment of our sectors and local communities. I aspire to be a conduit for this.



I also dream of a world where the playing field is levelled – where the most in need get the most support and everyone gets an opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Burns has a background in aquatic management in Australia

What can be learned from the work you're doing? What lessons are transferable?

As we're all part of the bigger system, Collective Leisure decided to align with goals much bigger than its own.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all members of the United Nations, has at its heart 17 Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). These are an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership.

Collective Leisure is tackling these global priorities at a local level, focusing on three specific SDGs: good health and wellbeing, quality education and reducing inequality.

Finding a pathway to align local and global priorities is critical if we want to change the systemic problems of our time.

The principles of systems thinking are not new, but are so powerful. I would encourage anyone in the industry to practice systems thinking, which is an ongoing journey of learning for us all.

Our own personal practice can become the strongest influence in how we understand and see the system. We believe that to manage others we must first learn to manage ourselves and then lead with compassion.

What's holding you back – if anything?

It's going to be a bumpy road ahead for the sector, with government budgets reduced and consumer confidence low. Pressure to meet operational efficiencies in running leisure facilities has the potential to decrease service levels, resulting in widening inequality.

What have you learned this year?

We talk about the benefits of physical activity, but we've got a long way to go from simply knowing about these benefits to translating this knowledge into action to reduce incidences of chronic conditions.

It's taken a pandemic for the focus to shift from viewing health as the absence of illness, to a new awareness of the value of cultivating wellbeing.

There's momentum growing behind the idea of developing a public health system based on prevention rather than cure, but we need whole system thinking to make sure no one is left behind.

David Burns CV highlights

- MSc (Hons) Sport & Exercise Science from Teesside University
- Early career dedicated to sports development and inclusion – using sport to break down barriers in disadvantaged communities
- Created a Sportability Club and coached children and young people with disability in Middlesbrough
- Worked in grassroots football for the North Riding County Football Association as a football development officer
- Kick-started a 10 year football development programme tackling crime, unemployment, health and education for Hartlepool

Council, as social inclusion football development officer

- Moved to Australia, worked in the aquatics leisure industry as a contract manager for local government, overseeing the City of Sydney's aquatic leisure facilities and as a regional manager overseeing aquatic leisure facilities in the private sector, with Belgravia Leisure
- Founded Collective Leisure with fiancé, Jennifer Barker
- Launched a weekly show called 'Part of the system' on social media, interviewing people from organisations across all relevant sectors www.HCMmag.com/burns
- Currently four subjects into a masters degree in social impact



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€100m Lanserhof Sylt project forges ahead towards 2021 launch

Medical spa brand, Lanserhof Group, is growing its footprint, with construction underway on the €100m (US\$116.6m, £90.3m) resort on the island of Sylt in Germany.

The destination's topping-out ceremony took place on 2 October 2020 and signifies a milestone in the build.



It's a beautiful island and a very prestigious place
Christoph Ingehoven

In addition to the signature LANS Med Concept, Lanserhof Sylt will focus on cardiological rehabilitation for acute or chronic diseases, such as COVID-19, as well as treatment for respiratory and skin diseases. Guests will be offered an individual, holistic approach and connection between natural therapy and high-tech medicine.

Located on one of the highest elevations on the islands, the resort will cover 20,000sq m and be complete with 67 guest rooms. Visitors will discover a panoramic view of the nearby harbour and the adjacent landscape conservation area, against the backdrop of the Wadden Sea.

The construction and design of Lanserhof Sylt are under the direction of Lanserhof architect, Christoph



Lanserhof Sylt will offer a 5,000sq m, wellness facility

Ingenhoven, founder of Ingenhoven Architects.

According to Ingenhoven, the design is inspired in part by the local architecture of Sylt.

"It's a beautiful island and a very prestigious place," he told HCM.

"Architecturally, the special thing about the buildings on the island of Sylt is that they have big overhanging reed roofs, so I said that's what I want to do in our design."

More: http://lei.sr/9C4F2_H

Mental health gym raises US\$3m to create emotional fitness platform

A new platform, marketed as an "emotional fitness studio" and offering live classes and one-on-one therapy, has secured US\$3m worth of seed funding.

Coa is the brainchild of co-founders Alexa Meyer and Dr. Emily Anhalt and provides live, therapist-led classes designed to bolster mental health through emotional fitness workouts.

The interactive group classes are built on Dr. Anhalt's research-driven method on the 7 Traits of Emotional Fitness and have been designed to foster a sense of community, while building emotional wellbeing.



Coa will initially operate online, but looks to open clubs too

Starting at US\$25, the classes follow a proprietary "learn, exercise, breakout, discuss" framework.

The programming, overseen by Coa's head of emotional

fitness, Vaneeta Sandhu, will include both drop-in classes and weekly, ongoing series.

"We know the number of people experiencing mental health challenges is growing



The number of people with mental health challenges is growing
Alexa Meyer

exponentially in 2020, yet mental health services remain unaffordable," said Coa co-founder Alexa Meyer.

More: http://lei.sr/v4j5G_H

Countries with lower obesity rates keeping gyms open

Investigations by HCM have revealed a correlation between countries with lower obesity rates and those where governments have kept gyms open during lockdowns.

HCM found European countries with an obesity rate of 22 per cent or above are more likely to be closing gyms, while countries with lower obesity rates – under 22 per cent – are more likely to keep them open.

European countries with the highest rates of obesity, including the UK (obesity rate of 26.40 per cent), Czech Republic (26 per cent) and Ireland (25.30 per cent) have closed their gyms as part of the latest round of lockdowns.



We applaud governments that prioritise health

Liz Terry

Meanwhile, countries with obesity rates among the continent's lowest – Switzerland (19.50), Denmark (19.70), Austria (20.10) and The Netherlands (20.40 per cent) – have kept their gyms open.

HCM editor, Liz Terry, said: "This correlation between



The Netherlands has kept its gyms open during lockdowns

gyms being open and obesity levels shows different government attitudes towards their citizens.

"We applaud governments that empower people to keep themselves fit and enable them to take responsibility for their own wellbeing."

"We utterly condemn those who feel justified in removing this most fundamental human right from their populations – the right to take personal responsibility for your own wellbeing."

More: http://lei.sr/s6D8Y_H

Europe-wide study adds to evidence that gyms are safe

The latest study into the infection rates recorded at gyms has shown that the average infection rate at gyms and health clubs across Europe sits at just 0.78 per 100,000 visits.

An analysis of data from 62 million visits to European gyms in the past month – conducted by the King Juan Carlos University in Spain and Sheffield Hallam University

– showed that there were just 487 positive cases of COVID-19.

The SafeACTIVE study, commissioned by EuropeActive's Research Centre THINK Active, looked at data from operators based in 14 countries – Germany, France, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Poland, Denmark, Luxembourg and The UK.

The results should go a long way to mitigating public health concerns, as it seems to confirm that fitness clubs are safe environments with a low risk of COVID-19 infection.

More: http://lei.sr/x6V8C_H



The results should go a long way to mitigating public health concerns regarding fitness facilities



The survey looked at 62 million gym visits in 14 countries

Gym closures: cancer prehab and rehab services out of action

The UK's physical activity sector is currently lobbying to have gyms and leisure centres classed as essential services, in order for them to be able to operate during COVID-19 lockdowns.

There is, however, plenty of evidence to suggest that the sector already is an essential

service. This is the view of Greg Whyte, chair of uactive's, Scientific Advisory Board and Professor of Applied Sport and Exercise Science at Liverpool John Moores University.

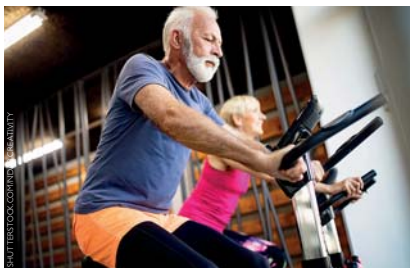
According to Whyte, a perfect example of the essential nature of the sector is the fact that two-thirds of the country's cancer prehabilitation and rehabilitation support services are delivered at industry facilities.

"According to Anthony Crozier and the PAEx team at Liverpool John Moore's University, 66 per cent of cancer prehab and rehab support services are delivered at leisure centres, with 69 per cent of this provision funded through local authorities and the third sector," Whyte says.



Two thirds of cancer prehab and rehab support services are delivered at leisure centres

Greg Whyte



Whyte says the physical activity sector is an essential service

"In addition, 73 per cent of functional assessments and 80 per cent of the exercise programmes which support these interventions are delivered by Level 4 instructors from the sector. If we are to avoid a future healthcare catastrophe, we

must recognise the fitness sector as an essential service."

Whyte also said the need for the physical activity sector's support services will only grow, once the country emerges from the pandemic.

More: http://lei.sr/f2g2b_H

Blame obesity for high level of COVID deaths, says former CMO

Thousands of COVID-19 related deaths could be prevented if successive governments had tackled the country's obesity crisis in time, according to Dame Sally Davies.

The former chief medical officer said there was a "direct correlation between obesity and a high mortality for COVID".

With one of the highest rates of obesity in the world – and second-highest in Europe – the UK has seen one of the highest death rates from COVID-19.

Official figures show that people classed as obese are 48 per cent more likely to die of COVID-19.



Exercise and diet are the best solutions to combat obesity

In an interview with *The Times*, Dame Sally urged the NHS to start acting as a preventative body rather than just looking after those who are ill. Exercise – alongside a

healthy diet – is proven to be the best solution in combating obesity and keeping fit.

The government's decision to close fitness facilities during lockdown has been met with



There's a direct correlation between obesity and a high mortality

Dame Sally Davies

a furious backlash from the public, with a 600,00-strong petition prompting a full Parliamentary debate.

More: http://lei.sr/j6p3c_H

ukactive reveals details of new Active Standard

Physical activity body, ukactive, has revealed plans to create a new sector standard for active leisure, to act as a product and service quality trademark.

Speaking at the ukactive Summit on 4 November, the industry body's chair, Tanni Grey-Thompson, said: "This standard will cover the full scale of our sector – from operators, suppliers and children's activity providers and will be developed with key partners, stakeholders, members and customers."

"The 'Active Standard' will provide reassurance for customers that they are receiving the best possible service from ukactive members and help members access



“
The standard will provide reassurance for customers

Tanni Grey-Thompson

new partnerships across the wider health agenda.

"The ability to enhance a standard across the sector by capitalising on the collaboration of all sector channels shows the need of a defined standard to evidence quality to stakeholders and wider society."



The 'Active Standard' will cover all aspects of fitness delivery

ukactive will begin developing and consulting on the standard, with the aim of rolling it out from Spring 2021.

"The impact of the Standard will ensure member and the industry's reputation are protected moving forward, while further raising

the value of our work," Grey-Thompson added.

"It is the all-encompassing approach needed to maintain the standards necessary to enhance the continued professionalism of the sector."

More: http://lei.sr/B8V8R_H

Nuffield introduces rehab scheme for COVID-19 sufferers

Nuffield Health is launching a specialist, 12-week rehabilitation programme in Manchester to support COVID-19 patients in their recovery process.



“
We're in a unique position among the fitness sector to utilise our broad range of expertise

Davina Deniszczyc

The programme blends together physical therapy and mental health support and will run in partnership with Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, before being developed into a national programme.

The recovery plan consists of a six-week, virtual programme of at-home exercises, before moving to a Nuffield Health fitness and wellbeing centre.

"We are in a unique position among the fitness sector to utilise our broad range of expertise," said Dr Davina Deniszczyc, charity and medical director at Nuffield Health.

More: http://lei.sr/z6Y2N_H



Exercise has been placed at the heart of the programme

£400m UK winter grant scheme to support the vulnerable

The government has been forced to make a U-turn and to spend more than £400m to support vulnerable children and their families in England.

Following a high-profile campaign led by footballer Marcus Rashford, the government announced plans for a winter grant

scheme, to be run by councils and local authorities.

Plans include supporting vulnerable families with food and bills, as well as an expansion of a holiday food and activities programme.

The latter's inclusion in the funding programme was welcomed by physical activity body, ukactive.

"We praise the decision to expand the existing Holiday Activities and Food scheme," said Jack Shakespeare, ukactive's director of children, young people, families and research.

"ukactive has been lobbying government since the publication of our Generation Inactive report in September 2018, to recognise the health issues surrounding inactive school holidays, and



A holiday activities programme will receive funding

invest in interventions to tackle this societal issue.

"Research by ukactive shows that children and young people suffer a loss in fitness levels of up to 74 per cent over the summer holidays, with the fitness of those

from low-income families falling 18 times faster than their more affluent peers.

"The COVID-19 crisis has magnified inequalities, with lengthy school closures."

More: http://lei.sr/F2g3s_H



Research shows that children suffer a loss in fitness levels during holidays

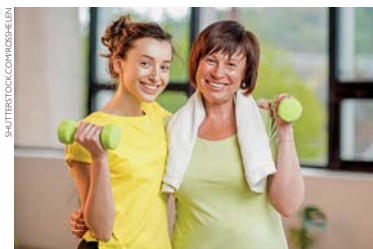
Jack Shakespeare

TimeTogether campaign to get teenage girls and mums active

A new national campaign aims to bridge the physical activity gender gap between women and men by empowering daughters and mums to get active together.

Launched by Women in Sport, #TimeTogether looks to help daughters and mums discover new ways of spending time with each other – by inspiring them to dance, walk, climb, swim and play sport together.

Currently, only 42 per cent of teenage girls meet activity guidelines and just under a third of girls (32 per cent) are inactive, doing less than 30 minutes activity per day.



The aim is to get mums and daughters active together

The figures, from Sport England's Active Lives survey, also shows that 65 per cent of men are likely to be active, in comparison to 61 per cent of women

"Our research has shown that teenage girls cherish alone time with their mum and view their relationship as a 'safe space' without any fear of judgement,"

said Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of Women in Sport. "We want every mother and every daughter to get active."

More: http://lei.sr/d5f7t_H



Teenage girls cherish alone time with their mum
Stephanie Hilborne

Gym Group building pipeline of new openings for 2021

The Gym Group will look to further grow its 183-strong portfolio across England, Scotland and Wales during 2021, as the demand for gym memberships has remained strong, despite the disruption caused by COVID-19.

In a trading update, the budget operator said it "continues to see an opportunity to access attractive potential new sites" and is building a pipeline for new openings in 2021. It has already had leases exchanged on four sites, with "several more under negotiation".

The company revealed that when it reopened its estate on 25 July 2020, it had 658,000



Since reopening after the first lockdown, we saw good levels of membership demand

Richard Darwin

members. 574,000 of these were ongoing paying members – and the figure excludes members who had opted to freeze their membership without charge and students whose contracts had been extended to November 2020 due to the initial lockdown.



The number of paying members is up by 2.4 per cent

"In the three months since reopening The Gym Group has seen good levels of membership demand reinforcing the beneficial role that affordable fitness makes to physical and mental well-being," said Richard Darwin, The Gym Group CEO.

"We have traded profitably during the period and we're confident our strong financial position, with close to £70m of unused facilities, will provide the platform to resume our growth path once we reopen."

More: http://lei.sr/x8p6c_H

NFD 2020 breaks all records – 19.1 million people get active

Millions of people throughout the UK took part in physical activity during this year's National Fitness Day (NFD) – a show of strength from the UK's fitness industry.



NFD showed how much our nation loves to move

Will Smithard

Results, recorded using ComRes polling, showed that a total of 19.1 million people were inspired to be physically active on the day (23 September), smashing the campaign's 10 million target and making it the most successful NFD to date.

In all, 8.7 million children took part in activities on the day – an increase of more than six million on the previous year.

"NFD inspired millions more people to be active, showing how much our nation loves to move," said Will Smithard, UKactive's strategic projects director.

More: http://lei.sr/p9t4f_H



NFD smashed its target of getting 10million people active

Physical fitness crucial to tackling depression and anxiety

A major seven-year study of more than 150,000 people has found that those with higher levels of aerobic fitness and muscular strength are significantly less likely to experience depression and anxiety.

The study, *Individual and combined associations between cardiorespiratory fitness and grip strength with common mental*

disorders: a prospective cohort study in the UK Biobank, was led by Aaron Kandola of University College London's Division of Psychiatry and involved 152,978 participants, aged between 40 and 69, who were part of the UK Biobank Study.

Kandola and his team collected baseline measurements from the cohort between August 2009 and December 2010. An exercise test and dynamometer were used to measure cardiorespiratory and grip strength. A follow-up then measured common mental health symptoms via a Mental Health Questionnaire.

The research found that people with low combined fitness levels (low cardiorespiratory fitness and low grip strength) were



Fitter people were less likely to suffer from depression

twice as likely to suffer from depression than those with higher combined fitness levels.

Those with lower fitness were also 1.6 times more likely to suffer from anxiety.

"To our knowledge, this is

the first study to examine the link between cardiorespiratory fitness and grip strength with mental disorders," the study authors said.

More: http://lei.sr/X3f8C_H



This is the first study to examine the link between these factors

Aaron Kandola

Research: 10 minutes of massage will help your body fight stress

A recent study from the University of Konstanz in Germany has revealed that 10 minutes of massage or rest can help the body reduce stress.

The study showed that massage is an easy-to-apply intervention that can boost the body's principal engine for relaxation – the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) – and lead to a reduction in perceived mental stress.

According to researchers, the discovery that massage is effective on the level of both psychology and physiology via the PNS will help pave the way for future studies



Massage was proven to reduce perceived mental stress

on understanding the role of relaxation on stress.

"Massage, being such a commonly used relaxation therapy, was our first study," said Maria Meier, study first

author and doctoral student in the lab of Neuropsychology at the University.

"Our next step is to examine whether other short interventions, like



Our next step is to study if other short interventions show the same results

Maria Meier

breathing exercises and meditation, show similar psychological and physiological relaxation results."

More: http://lei.sr/k8K6t_H

Gympass

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I used to worry about competition, but today, I have such confidence in our new business model I don't feel worried. The rest of the market can try to compete, but our clubs will be in a different league

”

Alhagbani is a fitness industry veteran and serial entrepreneur, currently building his third health club business



Fahad Alhagbani

Smart clubs, a deal with 1Rebel and a collaboration with Amazon. The co-founder and CEO of Saudi Arabia's Armah Sports talks to Kate Cracknell

What is your fitness background?

Ours is a family business – we are 10 brothers and sisters – and have many years' experience in, and passion for, fitness.

Back in 1994, my eldest brother Abdulmohsen founded Bodymasters, a chain of fitness clubs in Saudi Arabia. I joined him soon after and together we built a portfolio of 13 clubs in the capital city of Riyadh. We were also partnering with my cousins on that business, and we ultimately sold it to them and moved on to create Fitness Time.

How did you develop that new concept?

Before we opened the first Fitness Time club, we spent time travelling, researching and talking to experts around the world – that was 2006 and 2007. We wanted to create something different from Bodymasters, something that harnessed the latest trends and thinking. We launched the first Fitness Time club in 2007 – just one, to see how people responded – and by 2018 we'd reached 150 clubs. We were ranked #15 in IHRSA's list of leading global operators in terms of fully-owned clubs.

Tell us some of your highlights of that time

We did some nice things along the way: we sponsored FC Barcelona for three years, for example, and brought its FCB Escola academy to Saudi – a social responsibility initiative which aimed to instil the core values of the Escola in the youth of Saudi Arabia.

We won the Mohammed Bin Rashed government's Sports Creativity Award in 2015 – a global award presented in recognition of the fact that we helped change the lifestyle of people in Saudi.

Do you have investors?

Investcorp, the private equity company that came on-board in 2013 – taking a 25 per cent share – played a huge part in that growth. We gave them two seats on the board and they helped us open up, accept change and transform into a business operating to international standards, rather than a family business adhering to local practices.

They also helped me, personally, to focus and evolve. After a couple of years, I became CEO of Fitness Time, with my brother in the role of chair.

In 2018 we did an IPO, which valued the business at £540m. After that, there was a new board and we found we had differing visions for the company, so we sold our shares, left the business and invested the entirety of the IPO proceedings into a new venture.

That venture is Armah Sports. Tell us more

Armah Sports was established in January 2019, with the family agreeing that I would run it; my brother Abdulmohsen is non-executive chair.

We had so many ideas for things we could do, but in the end, we came back to the thing we love and do best: fitness.



We're creating a health club environment where physical, digital and human systems come together to create an enhanced user experience

As our third fitness venture in the region, I wanted to do something different. Certainly I didn't want to replicate what we had done in the past. Replicating the past is easy. What I wanted was to be innovative and creative. I wanted to make something great, and not just by the standards of our region. I wanted to create something great by international standards.

What have you created?

In 2017, I joined the Roundtable of Executives (REX) and at one of our meetings, the theme was 'the health club of the future'. That triggered my thought process and I carried on brainstorming afterwards, writing down ideas of what my health club of the future might look like. I realised I wanted to create the first fully-fledged smart club in the world.

I had a very clear business model in mind: one that centred on experience and service in a similar way to the boutiques, but in a large club of 3,500–4,000sq m.

We mapped out every touchpoint – classes, environment, technology, cleanliness, service, trainers and so on – and broke each of them down in great detail, then tried to check every single box to ensure we would deliver the best possible member experience.

But of course, the term 'smart' implies technology and that's at the heart of the model: we set out to build the technology infrastructure first, and only then to build clubs on top of this.

What smart tech did you opt for?

During my travels, I've seen a lot of smart things being done in fitness clubs: building management solutions, UV pool filtering, connected cardio equipment and so on. But no-one had really been successful in pulling these things together and weaving them into an integrated solution.



Abdulmohsen
Alhagbani, non-exec
chair of Armah Sports

Not only that, but I saw these things as just the tip of the iceberg: once you start looking into the latest technologies and adjacent industries, you see there's an enormous opportunity to make fitness clubs smarter.

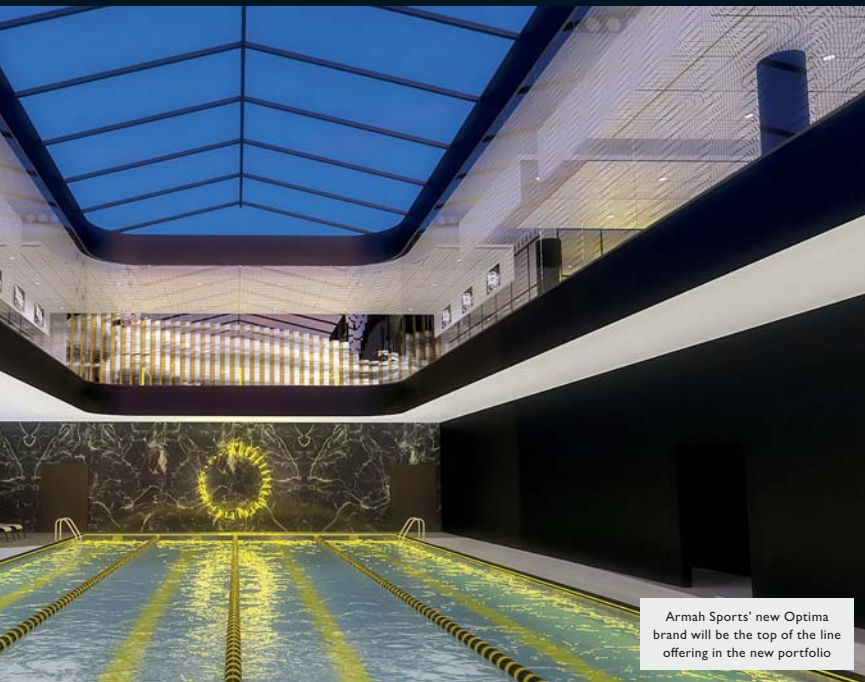
I don't want to share all the details of our smart ecosystem just yet, but I can say that we are creating a health club environment where physical, digital and human systems come together to enable an enhanced user experience for all stakeholders.

Can you give a few examples of innovation?

We're creating some world-firsts, including a collaboration with Amazon for its Alexa product – I wanted to bring voice control into our smart clubs, so you can now use Alexa to book our classes, make enquiries about trainers' schedules and so on.

Of course, you can still book through the app, but lots of clubs let you do that. To book a class through Alexa... this is something nobody has done before and I'm proud to have delivered this to the market.

We're also the first example of Perfect Gym and Virtuagym doing a full integration. Perfect Gym has excellent management modules; Virtuagym excels in its



Armah Sports' new Optima brand will be the top of the line offering in the new portfolio



Alhagbani is developing four new gyms brands at a range of price points



The Armah team: Fahad Alhagbani with (R-L) Abdulmalik Alhagbani, Sulaiman Alkadi and Nathan Clute



OPTIMO clubs will be 'hotellic', with luxury, hotel-style environments



To book a class through Amazon Alexa... is something nobody has done before and I'm proud to have delivered this to the market

fitness modules. I wanted to bring it all together into one system that's also connected to the equipment on the gym floor. Everything in the ecosystem is connected.

Meanwhile, our in-club innovation lab will give people a chance to try out the latest concepts. Whether it's virtual reality, augmented reality, the internet of things – whether it's a small concept or a major innovation – I want to bring it in and let people try it. We want to be trendsetters, not trend followers.

We'll also harness the machine learning module in our club management software to gain an in-depth understanding of member behaviours, allowing us to better target our advice and recommendations.

What else will be special and different?

Our clubs will be the first in Saudi to integrate mental health into the core offering. There is a natural link between physical and mental health and fitness, and we think this has been ignored for too long. Just as we were pioneers in bringing physical fitness to the Kingdom, so we want to do the same with mental health.

We will have co-working spaces, too, because I want the younger generations to come to the club and be connected to our environment – to be inspired by it.

We're also highly motivated by our environmental responsibility: we are the first fitness operator in

Saudi to sign with Tarsheed – an Arabic word that means 'conscious on consumption' – and enter into an environmental agreement with the government whereby we commit not to waste water or energy.

Tell us about the operating brands

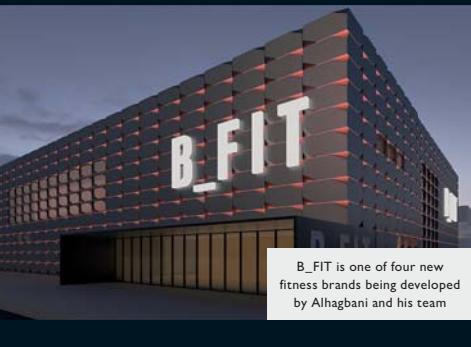
We have two smart club brands: OPTIMO and B_FIT and a budget offering called LIFT.

B_FIT is a progressive brand. It's avant-garde, egalitarian – for the people. It's about workouts. It's about you versus you.

Meanwhile, OPTIMO is a fully-fledged fitness club, but it has what I call a 'hotellic' approach – a luxury hotel-style of environment. The workout is there – all the trends, the services, the top-end equipment from Technogym and Life Fitness – but it's also about spending time in the environment.

Using an airline analogy, OPTIMO is first class and B_FIT is business class. Membership at B_FIT will cost you around £1,000 a year, vs around £2,000 a year at OPTIMO, with fees taken via monthly direct debit rather than cash advance payment – another first for Saudi.

Budget offering, LIFT, takes inspiration from some of the best budget club concepts from around the world. It will be a totally new evolution of the concept, however, in line with our smart strategy. We will launch it when



B_FIT is one of four new fitness brands being developed by Alhagbani and his team

the Saudi market is really ready – which I think is not far away – and we are confident it will disrupt the market.

So, we'll have the full portfolio of first class, business class and economy class smart clubs. We'll also have high- and low-intensity boutiques (see MAVERX & REBELS briefing).

What are you investing in each club?

For both OPTIMO and B_FIT, the cost of each build is between £4m and £5m. Additionally, where in the past we would take long leases, we now acquire the land. Owning the land provides stability and security to the family for future generations, while also enabling us to have full control over our developments.

Over the next five years, we plan to invest approximately £200m in Armah Sports through a combination of real estate purchases, facility construction and operations.

We're also utilising strategic partnerships, such as the one we have with Unified Holding – the McDonald's master franchisee in Saudi Arabia – to capture prime locations within new lifestyle destinations.

We now have 13 locations secured, 10 of which are owned and three through our partnerships.

What's your growth plan this time?

You can grow so much, sometimes, that it becomes hard to maintain the quality across all your clubs. When we were planning this new venture, we sat down and wrote a list of all the mistakes we had made in the past. Then we worked on new strategies and ideas to try and avoid those mistakes in the future. No-one's perfect, but we strive towards it.

This time, we don't want to open 150 clubs. We want quality over quantity. We want to own the space and make the business sustainable. So, we'll open 30–35 clubs over the next few years, and they will be great clubs with great service that we continually refine to make them even greater still. ▶



Maverx & Rebels

“Alongside Armah Sports, I wanted to do something for fun,” says Fahad Alhagbani

“Nathan Clute and I had worked together for many years at Fitness Time – he is my friend, my brother – and he wanted to stay with us after we sold that business. So, I told him about my desire to create my own boutique brands.

“We came up with two boutique brands, MAVERX and Studio-8, and in the process, we visited and studied around 150 different fitness concepts from around the world.

“For us, the number one boutique – in terms of quality, branding and image – was 1Rebel.

“Then we discovered that 1Rebel wanted to come to Saudi Arabia, and they had been advised to speak to me. At that point, though, we were determined to bring our own concepts to life.



A deal with 1Rebel will see boutiques opening across seven markets in the Middle East

"I didn't really want 1Rebel coming into our market with someone else, but equally, we didn't want to partner with anyone.

"I made that position clear, but James Balfour and Giles Dean – the co-founders of 1Rebel – got on a plane and came out to see us anyway. We spent two days together and got on very well, but we were honest with them: we didn't want to be a franchisee, because we know how to run a club and we wanted the freedom to create our own thing. We didn't want a board telling us what to do and we didn't want to pay big fees to take on someone else's brand when we had our own brands we wanted to launch.

"Ultimately, though, it became clear that James and Giles shared the same core values as us, and that they were committed to the spirit of fun, friendship and flexibility. James urged me not to let past experiences prevent me from exploring new opportunities for partnerships. So we shook hands and from then on – it's been one year now – the relationship has been great. There



The partnership line-up (R-L), James Balfour, Fahad Alhagbani, Giles Dean and Nathan Clute

is no interference and they give us whatever support we need.

"As a result, our plans for our own brands changed. We killed off Studio-8, but we loved the MAVERX concept and wanted to keep it. What we have done, though, is refine the concept so MAVERX offers modules that 1Rebel doesn't. 1Rebel is about HIIT. MAVERX will be medium to low impact: pilates, yoga, dancing, all delivered in a different way from the norm.

"We have the 1Rebel rights to seven markets in the Middle East – Saudi, UAE, Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait – and have two locations to open in 2020, as well as four additional locations secured that will open in 2021/2022.

"We're also now working with 1Rebel to develop a new functional training concept, REFLEX, to introduce throughout the network. This illustrates the spirit of our partnership.

"We also have one MAVERX location which will open in 2021. And we'll see how it goes from there."



The style for the new clubs – developed by a London-based agency – will be new to Saudi

Longer-term, we're open to doing another IPO and taking our smart clubs overseas, or to doing another private equity deal, but for now, the focus is on building the company

- In the past, I used to worry about competition, even when we had 150 clubs. Today, I have such confidence in our new business model that I don't feel worried about competition. The rest of the market can try to compete, but our clubs will be in a different league.

How did COVID impact your business?

We were meant to launch early this year, but I'm glad we didn't open then, only to immediately close again due to lockdown.

As it was, we were able to look at the pandemic from outside the circle, taking a different perspective as we extracted learnings. All of these were incorporated into our strategy and our documentation so that, if god forbid there's another pandemic, we will be ready with a crisis management plan, which is something I think the whole sector was missing this year.

Certainly COVID has reaffirmed our decision to focus on digital in our new model. In fact, we have now tweaked our strategy to focus even more on the digital space. Nothing can match the physical experience, but we are looking at how to translate this into the virtual space in a premium way, to offer a balance between physical and virtual.

The other thing this crisis has done, of course, is validate our strategy to buy land. If we now have to shut our clubs, we won't have to pay landlords. It's our land.

When will your smart clubs launch?

We have clubs under construction on all 13 sites. The first, a B_FIT club, will open in December. Four more clubs will open in Q1 2021, including our first OPTIMO club in March. The rest will roll out from there.

We'll continue to buy land until we have 30 sites and at that point, we'll reassess whether we want to grow further. What's certain is that we won't go to tier two and tier three cities, but will focus on the main cities in Saudi, of which there are five.

Longer-term, we're flexible. We're open to doing an IPO again and taking our smart clubs overseas and we're open to doing another private equity deal.

In four or five years' time, I'll be happy to hear about such opportunities, but today, I want to keep my head down, focus on building the company and its brands, take the responsibility on behalf of my family and pay back the trust they've placed in me to run the business.

We were raised as a family to be very transparent, very honest: when we promise, we deliver.

Equally, I recognise I cannot be successful alone. My nephew Sulaiman Al Kadi and cousin Abdulmalik Al Hagbani are my executive team and the next generation of the family. Nathan Clute is our senior advisor. Together we've picked a team to turn my vision into a fully-fledged business. If one day we're successful, the team will be the reason for that success. ●



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PHOTO: NUFFIELD/TECHNOGYM

Nuffield has launched a COVID-19 recovery programme for mental and physical health

The great debate

Should gyms be classified as an essential service?

Given its support for the NHS, should the fitness industry be classified as an essential service, and if so, how do we get the sector reclassified? Kath Hudson asks industry leaders for their views

With the first lockdown leading to sedentary behaviour, obesity shown to make death from COVID-19 more likely and gyms proving to be low risk environments, it seemed a no brainer for gyms and leisure centres to be allowed to stay open during the UK's second lockdown. However, in spite of powerful

lobbying from the sector, the shutters came down on gyms.

During the first lockdown good weather made outdoor exercise easy, yet in spite of this, Sport England research showed that three million more people became inactive.

This time around, as we're heading into winter, the need for safe indoor exercise facilities is all the more vital for people's mental and physical

health, hence the disappointment, anger and frustration felt by all when these benefits weren't recognised and facilities were closed again.

The spirit of cooperation in the sector is invigorating and unprecedented, so as the industry moves forward with a strong, unified voice, what is the appropriate message to put forward to secure essential service status? We ask the experts.



Huw Edwards

CEO: ukactive

Over the past months, ukactive has led the sector's case to be reclassified as an essential service, with the objective that the role of gyms and leisure facilities is fully recognised and they are permitted to remain open. Our sector has made this message very clear to the government and media, with incredible support from the public, which has seen a united movement behind our cause.

HCM readers will know very well why our facilities are essential. This health crisis requires fitness and leisure services to be accessible to support community health, even as restrictions tighten. Unlike many sectors, gyms and leisure centres heavily influence the nation's physical and mental wellbeing,

acting as frontline services which are vital during the current health crisis.

Analysis by the government's own scientific advisory group, SAGE, has warned that the loss in access to facilities will have a detrimental impact on mental wellbeing and potentially increase health inequalities with some BAME and vulnerable groups. There is also growing evidence from across the world that physical activity plays a vital role in COVID-19 resilience and rehabilitation.

To make this case, ukactive has supported operators with a range of tools to help engage local MPs and media behind our lobbying efforts. Our sector-wide **Fit Together** campaign uses the strapline: **We are safe, We are essential**. This campaign has been

Gyms and leisure centres heavily influence the nation's physical and mental wellbeing, acting as frontline services which are vital during the current health crisis

centred on evidence which shows the value of our facilities to communities.

We want the entire sector to unite behind this campaign, so we can show how important our facilities are for public health, society and the economy.

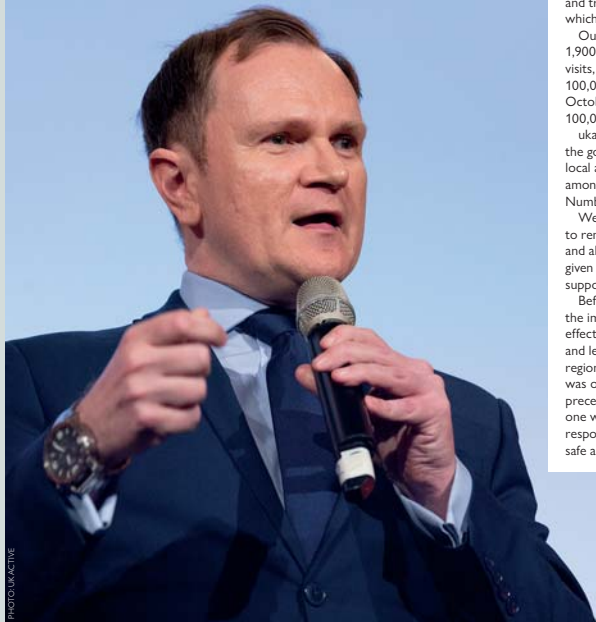
We've provided regular updates for the government using our latest aggregated data showing COVID-19 prevalence in our sector, in order to build transparency and trust – demanding decision-making which is based on science and fact.

Our latest findings, collected from 1,900 facilities following 50 million visits, show a rate of 2.88 cases per 100,000 visits from 25 July to 20 October; compared with 150 cases per 100,000 in the general population.

ukactive must continue to engage with the government and decision makers at a local and national level, fostering support among MPs, local leaders and, ultimately, Number 10 [the prime minister].

We've made a clear call for the sector to remain open as an essential service, and alongside this, for the sector to be given the tailored financial and regulatory support required to enable its recovery.

Before the second lockdown, we saw the impact of this united movement in effect, as the decision to close gyms and leisure facilities in the Liverpool region as part of tier 3 restrictions was overturned. This sets a powerful precedent for the other regions, and one which puts the spotlight on our responsibility to continue to provide safe and essential services to the public.



Professor Greg Whyte

Chair: ukactive Scientific Advisory Board



PHOTO: GREG WHYTE

Recovery from COVID-19 is likely to be complex and protracted for many. Central to the rehabilitation process will be the role of the fitness sector in providing the facilities and expertise required for physical therapy to overcome the negative impact of the virus on physical function, including the loss of muscle mass, strength, aerobic capacity, and mobility, to name but a few.

Following news of a vaccine breakthrough, it should also be noted that physical activity plays an important role in increasing the efficacy of vaccines and as a result, is vital to providing any new vaccine with the best possible chance of success.

However, COVID-19 is not the only disease where the fitness sector plays an essential role. The vast majority of prehabilitation and rehabilitation for a range of diseases is provided by the fitness sector, including cancer, cardiac, pulmonary, and neuro. Without access to these facilities and expertise, many patients will go unsupported in their hour of greatest need.

Macmillan has reported that there were 50,000 undiagnosed cases of cancer during the first lockdown, a figure that is projected to break 100,000 by 2021. But the damage caused by lockdown does not end with missed diagnoses. The closure of gyms and leisure facilities also has an impact.

According to Anthony Crozier and the Physical Activity Exchange team at Liverpool John Moores University, 66 per cent of our nation's cancer prehabilitation and rehabilitation support



66% of cancer prehabilitation and rehabilitation services are delivered at leisure centres, meaning these services have not been available for the whole month of November

services are delivered at leisure centres, with 69 per cent of provision funded through local authorities and the third sector, meaning these services have not been available during lockdown. In addition, 73 per cent of functional assessments and 80 per cent of exercise to support these interventions are delivered by Level 4 instructors.

We must recognise the fitness sector as an essential service if we are to avoid a future healthcare catastrophe – they are essentially already filling this role.

It's clear, from the science, that fitness facilities have an outstanding safety record. Furthermore, the sector has a robust, rapid and effective track and trace system to support the protection of the population.

The fitness sector also takes its responsibility for public health seriously, and is working on upskilling its workforce to provide specialist support for COVID-19 patients, as well as all other diseased states that require physical therapy.

I'm working with a group of specialists on a project called iCARDIO to create an accreditation framework for clinical exercise physiologists – something that will be required to ensure the industry is recognised by the health sector when it comes to providing essential services for patients across the disease spectrum.

If we are to protect our health service, deal with COVID-19 and avoid future healthcare catastrophes, we must recognise the sector as an essential service in the prevention and treatment of disease and keep these valuable facilities open.

● Greg Whyte is professor of applied sport and exercise science at Liverpool John Moores University



In short, we have in our gift the most powerful solution a government could wish for. We need to mobilise consumers to show those in power how much they value what we do

Tara Dillon

CEO: CIMSPA

The cross-sector collaboration and partnership we've seen has been a big positive to emerge from the pandemic. Collectively, we've pushed community sport, leisure and physical activity provision higher up the political and media agenda than it has ever been before.

This has led to a win, of sorts, with £100m of government money allocated to supporting public leisure and CIMSPA has been able to secure £2m of funding, via Sport England, for its ReTrain platform, to help operators plug skills gaps in their workforce.

Alongside pushing for further financial support – especially for the self-employed who have had less help than employees – I believe our focus as a sector should now shift to making sure that our indoor facilities and outdoor activities are the

first to open, as soon as this lockdown period ends. As a sector we achieved notable successes in England's tier 3 areas and we should push to ensure this momentum is not lost when we come out of the national lockdown.

Looking further ahead, if we're going to have to live with COVID-19, we need a healthier nation. One where hospital beds are not occupied by people who, if more physically active, would never find themselves burdening an already stretched NHS.

The industry could also provide an intervention for the inevitable mental health crisis the pandemic is causing. In short, we have in our gift the most powerful solution a government could wish for.

So we need national and local politicians to understand the role we play and position our sector as an essential service, right at the heart of public health. Partly, this is about professionalisation and regulation of the workforce, but it's also about perception: we need the decision-makers to understand the impact we have on health, and the value that creates.

We have powerful statistics to make this case, and we should continue to do that, but this is about people as well as numbers. I believe we need to mobilise our consumers to show those in power how much they value what we do, and the difference we make to their quality of life. We need to bring this down to a more human level, telling individual stories, as well as painting the national picture.



PHOTO: CIMSPA

John Treharne

Founding director: The Gym Group

Some good things have come out of this difficult time and over the course of the year the fitness industry has made great strides in how it presents itself and how it is viewed by government.

At the start of the first lockdown, many ministers – including Nicola Sturgeon – described fitness facilities as dangerous places to be, but over the last few months we've been able to prove that this is not the case and to demonstrate that gyms and leisure centres are safe spaces to work out.

It was encouraging to see that under the tier system, when local authorities had the power to close down gyms, they didn't choose to do so, apart from in Liverpool, which then overturned the decision. Also many MPs have got behind the industry, including the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.

Government officials, representatives from Downing Street, the health ministry, DCMS, as well as virologists have visited facilities to see what modern gyms are all about. This has allowed us to get across key messages and moved us forward in terms of profile. We've been able to demonstrate our cleaning and distancing protocols, show the equipment we've invested in for sanitising and – crucially – our sophisticated ventilation systems.

I've been in the industry since 1991 and on the board of ukactive since 2013 and I've found the recent inter-sector collaboration, led by ukactive, remarkable. All operators, large and small, are sharing essential usage and infection data, which is a critical proof point in the conversation with members and government on how COVID-secure our sector is.

The Gym Group, for example, has only had 2.88 cases per 100,000 across all staff and members since reopening.

Going forward, the industry needs to work with the government, not fight against it. We need to keep going with the messaging around the safety of the gym environment, as well as the benefits the industry can provide for mental health, and how we can support the NHS in tackling obesity and building health to provide more resilience against the virus.

Hopefully this lockdown will be restricted to the four weeks and if we return to the tier system afterwards, we need to ensure gyms stay on the list of businesses which are allowed to stay open.



The industry needs to work with the government, not fight against it. We need to keep going with the messaging around how we can support the NHS in tackling obesity and building health to provide more resilience against the virus

Glenn Earlam

CEO: David Lloyd Clubs



This pandemic presents the government with an immense challenge, and the roadmap out of this crisis must be truly mindboggling, but prioritising garden centres and dog groomers over the nations' fitness facilities just doesn't make any sense.

An endorphin-boosting trip to the gym is clearly much better for the mind, body – and the NHS – than ordering a takeaway pizza, opening another bottle of Pinot Grigio before settling down on the sofa for a boxset binge-watching session.

Not only has COVID-19 placed an unprecedented strain on the health service, but obesity has also been cited as a significant factor in severe cases. The impact of physical fitness on boosting immunity and fighting the virus is clear and so exercise in COVID-secure environments should be treated as a key part of the solution to the problem.

As we head into winter, the need for safe indoor exercise facilities is vital.

Mental health problems are another ticking timebomb for the NHS, which our industry could help to alleviate.

Depression and anxiety are at record levels and exercise has been proven to be instrumental in fighting them. When we reopened in June, I was struck by how overwhelmingly emotional many of our members were and how much they rely on our facilities to support their mental health.

The industry has been able to prove that gyms are COVID-secure and essential to the nation's physical and mental health, so they should open as a priority when the lockdown is lifted. Indeed, SAGE advised that shutting fitness facilities would likely cause more harm than good at the moment.

It's time the government listened to its own experts, and recognised that gyms and leisure centres should be classed as essential services so that we can support the nation in its recovery.

Going forward, the industry needs to continue working together with integrated lobbying, PR and social media focussing on the messages that gyms are essential to maintaining and enhancing the nation's physical and mental wellbeing and that regular exercise supports mental health and immunity.

As well as being able to open our facilities as soon as possible, I'd like to see the government extend the rate relief scheme beyond April and the rental default protection beyond January.

PHOTO: DAVID LLOYD LEISURE



It's time the government listened to its own experts, and recognised that gyms and leisure centres should be classed as essential services so that we can support the nation in its recovery



Jane Nickerson

CEO: Swim England:

We've been busy repeatedly making the case to government for the importance of supporting people to remain active during the pandemic through our **#OpenOurPools** campaign and our continued support for the sector wide **#SaveOurSports** campaign. The latest sobering statistics from Sport England show that activity levels fell massively during the first lockdown, and the impact of the second is likely to be even more severe as we see shorter, colder, days.

Before COVID-19, swimming consistently remained one of the most popular activities in the country, with 14 million adults swimming within the last 12 months. Up and down the country thousands of people who are unable to exercise on dry land due to physical impairments but are able to get active in water, will suffer physically and mentally because of swimming pools having to close again. The benefits of swimming are well known, including helping people feel twelve years younger, improving self-confidence, community cohesion and also saving the NHS and social care system over £357 million a year.

Importantly, as people continue to deal with the challenges to their mental health and wellbeing of living through a pandemic, our research

revealed that pre-lockdown, 1.4 million adults in Britain felt that swimming had significantly reduced their symptoms of anxiety or depression.

Around 200 public facilities have yet to reopen from the first lockdown and we fear losing many more due to enforced closures, which is why we keep shouting loudly alongside our partners for the government to provide an enhanced **Sports Recovery Fund** to help protect the sector through the pandemic and beyond.

We've proven swimming pools are COVID-safe environments and in these challenging times, we believe physical activity is more vital than ever before.

Swimming pools make an essential contribution to the nation's health and wellbeing and should be classified as such by the government. Pools are often at the heart of every community – we should treasure them for the unique benefits they offer. It is therefore imperative that leisure facilities are among the first facilities that are allowed to reopen as we emerge from the second lockdown and are adequately supported so that they can continue to play their part in the nation's recovery. ●



Thousands of people who are unable to exercise on dry land due to physical impairments are suffering physically and mentally because swimming pools are closed



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Yes, this is an industry, but it has much more in common with a campaigning movement



People in our industry do what they do out of passion and love

Standing Together

**Steve Ward celebrates
the transformational energy
being unleashed in the fitness
industry by the pandemic**

It's painful to think back to the sensationalist headlines the fitness industry had to endure in March 2020.

Quoting Australian physician Dr Norman Swan, a Daily Mail headline screamed "Gyms are a high-risk location for coronavirus".

"You've got these big blokes pumping away and you never know, one of them might be a super spreader," Swan had told ABC News.

Even in May, growing positivity about our sector was threatened by The Times newspaper which reported on private discussions between industry representatives and government officials, saying: "Gyms won't be open any time soon".

With such a wave of negativity to contend with, it's testament to the serious, professional and well-resourced public affairs capability of the industry in the UK that this situation has been turned around.

I've been in awe at the strength in depth of the powerful industry advocates for our sector who have taken this cause forward. Wave after wave have taken to the airwaves to make the case – powerfully and to the great credit of their organisations.

I expect nothing less from my former colleagues at uactive – they were built for moments such as this, to show their full value to our industry.

What I'm most impressed by is how the crisis has inspired the leaders of the major brands in our industry to become powerful media contributors in their own right, working from an aligned narrative and with full industry-wide coordination. This new voice could have a positive, lasting legacy for our industry.

The professionalism with which gyms reopened has also demonstrated the quality of our sector and its irrefutable record on safety.

Conclusively, the narrative has subsequently been changed – gyms are now seen as part of the solution, not the problem.



**Gyms are now seen as
part of the solution, not
the problem, says Ward**

Essential service

Expectations have grown with the success of this public affairs work and now we're tackling the biggest challenge – making the case for the classification of our industry as an essential service.

Thanks to this new-found voice from industry leaders, their true belief in the power of the public affairs capability that stands at their service and the spirit of collaboration that prevails, it's only a matter of time before this aim is achieved.

I've long believed our sector is unlike many others. Yes, this is an industry, but it has much more in common with a campaigning movement.

This is because people in our industry do what they do out of passion and love. They've seen what our industry does for people, the buzz that comes from making a positive impact and they commit their lives to making that impact every single day.

I was privileged to witness the power of this movement when we unleashed it to support common goals, such as National Fitness Day, but nothing that has gone before can compare to what we're seeing now. The industry today is functioning at a totally different level.

If 2020 has proven anything, it is that resilience is the greatest strength we can cultivate



► This crisis has seen our campaigning movement become infinitely stronger. Not only do we now have professional public affairs experts on our side, but they're also joined by "general public" affairs. And my word, haven't the general public stepped up to support us?

In my view, it's this mobilisation of the general public in support of our industry that has been a decisive factor in our recent gains.

It certainly was a major contributor to the success in Liverpool, where campaigning independent operator Nick Whitcombe (see page 14) was able to rouse nationwide support to overturn the unjust closure of gyms as part of tier 3 restrictions in the city.

Whitcombe raised £53,500 via crowdfunding to pay fines and supported a Parliamentary petition, which has been signed by 650,000 people and counting.

For sure, professionally managing the interface with central and local government and public officials, such as the city and metro mayors, was critical to the decision to allow gyms to open in tier 3, but it was the groundswell of public support that won the day.

This groundswell was secured by major national chains joining with Nick and hundreds of other independent operators to mobilise their customers – respectfully, articulately and intelligently making the case for our industry.

It was customer voices that made a difference, explaining how essential our services are – most powerfully, in my view – for mental, as well as physical health.

Campaigning for kids

This campaigning spirit has also been seen in the drive by footballer Marcus Rashford to expose the callousness of the government in not doing absolutely everything possible to prevent children from going hungry during school holidays.

Political arguments about the economic viability of offering such support, or arguments that it was the responsibility of parents to feed their kids, were blown away by a true campaigning movement, backed by real experiences, facts, and an unwavering sense of what is just.


This movement has been decisive in securing something we've desired for many years – for government to back a nationwide programme of holiday clubs to ensure children can be active and well-fed during holiday periods.

The result – funding for holiday support – is something the team at ukactive has campaigned on for years, but it was put in the back of the net by a true 'general public affairs' campaign that helped secure the breakthrough policy moment.

Connecting with members

Our great strength in lobbying for reopening has been our ability to identify each and every user of our facilities, communicate effectively with them in the event of a COVID-related incident and reassure those working in Track and Trace that we're unlike any other sector in that regard.

In our battle to prevent closure in tier 3 and make the case for 'essential' status going forward, we've found our customers are just



The overwhelming support from the public is helping the fitness industry make its case

as passionate about our industry as the people working in it. They're ready to make the case for our sector and show its value to their own lives.

What a powerful thing this could become. Mobilising our customers to help us drive this movement forward, engage more people and spread the word that being physically active is essential to building resilience to whatever future shocks might be ahead in our lives.

If 2020 has proven anything, it is that resilience – in our organisations, our families and our lives – is the greatest strength we can cultivate. As a result, our industry has found a new mission in strengthening the resilience of our nation.

A marathon

I believe the recent news on vaccines conclusively confirms our position in the second half of this marathon. It has been a testing time and we're already seeing some who are sadly unable to finish the race. We have to continue to pace

ourselves, not take undue risks and make sure we make it through to the other side, as there's still a long way to go, and testing spells lie ahead.

It's frustrating that, despite this feeling of being in the second half of the marathon, someone has unhelpfully removed all the mile markers, so we're running blind – unsure if we're at mile 13 or mile 25 – and we have to act accordingly.

This makes it all the more important that we take energy from those who are cheering us on and the discovery of the powerful support of customers must give us the boost we need to make it to the finishing line.

Then we can plan the races we want to run, safe in the knowledge that this pain we're suffering has been a life-changing experience that will only make us more resilient in the decades to come.

Steve Ward, former CEO of ukactive, is chief transformation officer for Ingescor, the parent company of GO fit

Trend gazing

Andy Hall, COO of data and tech solutions brand, Volution, looks at the trends we can expect to see emerging in the global fitness market in 2021

Since the onset of the pandemic, the global fitness industry has been forced to change, pivot and adapt to keep up with evolving consumer demand. While we could spend time analysing how the industry has changed since March 2020, there's an even more important matter to consider – what lies ahead?

Here are seven pointers for fitness businesses to consider as we head to 2021.

1 It's all about content – but premium content

We exist in a content economy. While all brands are potential 'publishers', it's premium content that will win the day. Not least because quality content can become a revenue stream – either by attracting a loyal following or by creating a demand for the content.

At the height of the first COVID-19 wave, many operators looked to deliver online classes. However, some brands broadcast questionable content: sessions streamed from messy bedrooms, unprepared instructors, sound quality issues – we could go on.

As we move into an era where online streaming becomes the norm, we expect to see the quality of content improving. There are some quick wins that can be adopted to achieve this, but the winners will be operators who begin using data delivered via an appropriate trackable platform, to inform and guide decisions and actions.

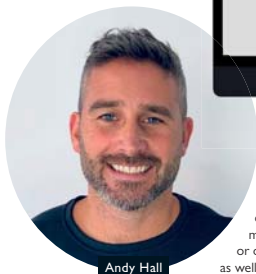
2 It's not about gyms vs at-home fitness – it's all just health

Many of us wear health trackables and use the data to better understand what improves our health and people are already monitoring and using the data to drive action and behaviour.

This is creating a huge opportunity for fitness brands and clubs are now also picking this up by creating hybrid club models.

We expect to see further integration of the different aspects of health monitoring. Operators will begin using their own bespoke platforms and online virtual hubs to bring data together and support customers with focused and personalised health content.

Creating bespoke online branded health hubs, for example, will be a great way to achieve this. We see



Andy Hall



clubs developing online virtual hubs, where members can book and attend live streaming or on-demand PT sessions and group classes, as well as downloading and consuming blogs about nutrition and listening to podcasts about mindfulness.

We also see an increased demand for a holistic approach to proactively managing health in a 360-degree way – which, for operators, could mean generating an upturn in revenue, engagement and value.

3 Wearables and the importance of data

Wearables will only grow in popularity. Market research firm IDTechEx predicts the value of the wearable market will reach US\$100bn by 2023, while penetration rates among adult users will grow to 25.3 per cent by 2023 from a base of 18.1 per cent in 2017.

According to IBM Watson, the average person will generate more than 1m gigabytes of health-related data in their lifetime. But how can we realise the full potential of this data?

Data can be collected and analysed in a destination, such as your own online virtual hub, (as touched on in #2). Data partners, such as Volution, can help operators develop smarter ways to deliver content, support and advice to their members – in a way which adds value to the member's lifestyle, while keeping them engaged with the brand.



Data partners, such as Volution, can help you develop smarter ways to deliver content, advice and support to your members – in a way which adds value to the member's lifestyle, while keeping them engaged with the brand

4 Forget the silos – it's all about integration and collaboration

We're all part of the same sector and we need to work together to move it forward. This in mind, we expect to see more integration and collaboration between technology and data solution providers in 2021.

A tech solution seldom offers a one stop shop but, rather, a piece of a larger puzzle or a simple plug-in. Having more integration and collaboration between providers and suppliers will deliver more intelligent solutions and outcomes for operators.

5 More partnerships please!

We also expect to see more partnerships between suppliers, which bring down barriers and break the mould. The driver for this is that the sector has woken up to the reality that it needs to diversify and keep innovating in order to generate commercial returns.

6 The rising stars of your team

Influencers are a key part of the social media ecosystem and are often more trusted than 'traditional' celebrities.

Every operator has at least one standout instructor or coach; someone who makes members want to return time after time. We expect operators to increasingly bottle this "magic" and use it to inspire, motivate and ultimately drive more revenue.

Savvy operators will use data-driven online virtual hubs, giving members access to their superstar trainers and increasing member-trainer touchpoints and interactions through online training, coaching, classes, and support.

When done right, this can significantly boost engagement and retention rates, not to mention giving the operators data-rich information to learn from.

Having a 'superstar' member of staff front a club's online content can also help attract new members – as well as removing barriers for existing members to take part in classes.

7 Leverage your facility through 'fitfluencers'

Alongside maximising the potential of their own superstar team, we predict an increase in clubs streaming sessions led by 'fitfluencers', to complement their in-house staff.

This could take the form of an Instagram-famous yoga teacher streaming a single class a week, adding a sprinkling of stardust to elevate an operator's business.



VOOLUTION

To learn how Volution can help your facility/brand to harness the industry's biggest trends through data, visit: www.volution.fit



Not enough attention is paid globally to mental illness prevention and mental wellness promotion



The report defines mental wellness as an active process that helps us to build resilience, grow and flourish

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about the spa and
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A new study from the Global Wellness Institute highlights the scope of the \$121bn mental wellness market, as Katie Barnes and Megan Whitby report

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has identified mental wellbeing as a US\$121bn (€101.6bn, £91.8bn) segment of the global wellness economy, based on consumer spending in four markets in 2019.

The figure was released in the GWI's new study, *Defining the Mental Wellness Economy*, claimed to be the first paper to define mental wellness as its own industry.

Researchers say the industry encompasses businesses whose primary aim is to develop our internal mental wellness resources.

A definition

The report defines mental wellness as more than just an absence of mental illness. Instead, it's an internal resource that helps us think, feel, connect and function; it's an active process that helps us to build resilience, grow and flourish.

Due to COVID-19, mental health issues and mental unwellness are on the rise and taking their toll on individuals, families and society.

Furthermore, the World Economic Forum has estimated mental illness and mental unwellness will cost US\$16.1trn (€13.5trn, £12.2trn) globally in 2030.

In response, the report argues mental wellness can provide strategies to help increase wellbeing and be used as a pathway to ease the financial burden caused by mental unwellness and illness – a point

it hopes will incentivise governments and business to promote and invest in mental wellness.

"Clearly, the human suffering and economic dislocations caused by the pandemic have increased demands for mental wellness pathways and solutions on a global scale," said co-authors Katherine Johnston and Ophelia Yeung.

"Not enough attention is paid globally to mental illness prevention and mental wellness promotion.

"Practices that improve our mental wellness don't only lessen the symptoms of mental illness, but also reduce the risk of developing a mental illness," they added.

A new category

The GWI has now added mental wellness as a new industry bubble to its Global Wellness Economy framework, which defines and measures the size of the US\$4.5trn (€3.8trn, £3.4trn) global wellness economy.

Johnston shared that next year's research will focus on updating the framework diagram, which will hopefully show the impact of coronavirus on the industry in a post-virus world with a vaccine.

The paper officially launched on 9 November, the first day of the annual Global Wellness Summit (GWS), which was held in Florida, US. ▶

Find out more: www.globalwellnessinstitute.org

The Global Wellness Institute has valued and categorised the emerging industry into four main sectors:

1. Senses, spaces and sleep

Value: US\$49.5bn €41.7bn £37.6bn

The largest mental wellness sector, this category spans products, services, and design that target both our senses and the mind-body connection, with the growing understanding that environmental stimuli have a major impact on our mood, stress levels and sleep.

Sleep is the goliath sub-segment of the research, with an exploding array of sleep- and sleep-environment-optimising solutions, including smart bedding and sleep accessories; sleep apps, wearables and trackers; and sleep retreats and nap cafés.

The segment includes sound (sound therapy, white noise, noise cancellation and wellness music); scent (aromatherapy, home fragrances and diffusers); touch (stress toys and gadgets and weighted blankets); and light (human-centric light and light therapy consumer devices). It also includes multisensory experiences (from flotation tanks to forest bathing), wellness travel, spa, fitness and entertainment destinations and sensory-based design and architecture (biophilic design and circadian lighting).



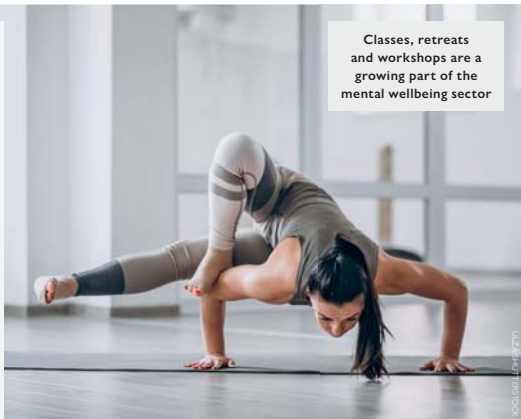
The quality of spaces impacts our mental health

2. Self-improvement

Value: US\$33.6bn
€28.2bn £25.5bn

This category spans a wide range of activities associated with self-help and personal development, including classes, workshops and retreats; self-help books, media, videos, apps and online platforms; self-help gurus and influencers; personal and life coaches; self-help organisations and mutual support groups; cognitive enhancement and brain training products/services; creative organisations and interventions that combat loneliness and isolation.

Classes, retreats and workshops are a growing part of the mental wellbeing sector



3. Meditation and mindfulness

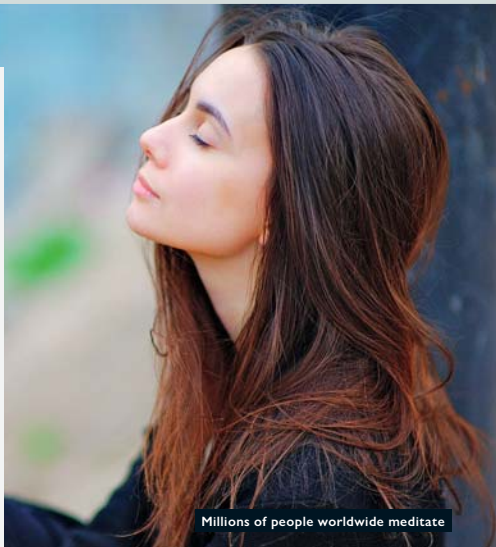
Value: US\$2.9bn €2.4bn £2.2bn

While meditation and mindfulness are the approaches most firmly associated with mental wellness, it's the smallest (if an extremely fast-growing) market, because while millions of people worldwide practise meditation, only a small fraction spend money on it.

The category includes all forms of meditation practice, related mindfulness practices (breathwork, guided imagery, body scan, relaxation exercises), and products and services that support these practices.

Key spending categories include classes, teachers, retreats, books and online platforms with mobile apps (such as Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer) – a huge driver of consumer adoption and spend.

There's a growing market for meditation accessories (cushions, beads, chimes) and mindfulness products (journals, colouring books), as well as a fast-growing range of connected gadgets, trackers and monitors to support meditation (headbands, glasses, wearable sensors, lamps) – many of which build on biofeedback, neurofeedback, and VR technologies.



Millions of people worldwide meditate

4. Brain-boosting nutraceuticals and botanicals

Value: US\$34.8bn €29.2bn £26.4bn

This covers ingestible products developed with the specific goal of improving mental health and wellbeing, including natural supplements, herbal and botanical products and functional foods and beverages. These often claim to boost brain health, sleep, memory and energy.

The category also includes plant-based substances that are increasingly used for mental wellness, with the legal cannabis and derivatives market growing rapidly in the last couple of years and cannabis, hemp, and CBD making their way into many supplements, foods, and beverages. The segment also includes functional mushrooms, with some seeing a rapid acceleration in clinical research for use in mental health and wellness.

GWJ researchers say the quickening relaxation of regulation in some countries means plant-based psychedelic drugs will increasingly be used for both mental wellness and clinical treatment. For example, in the US recently, Oregon legalised Psilocybe cubensis and the District of Columbia decriminalised the recreational use of psilocybin and other psychedelics.



The market for mood boosting medicinal herbs and supplements is now worth \$34.8bn globally

Our sector can do more for active ageing – it's never been more important

With many older people in crisis due to the pandemic, ukactive's head of health and wellbeing development, Kenny Butler, explains why the organisation is launching an active ageing consultation and how you can get involved



There's never been a better time to recognise the incredible value of gyms and leisure centres in supporting the health and wellbeing of older adults and people with long-term health conditions.

These facilities provide services that are vital to achieving not only greater physical activity levels, but also improved social connections, generating significant health, economic and social value.

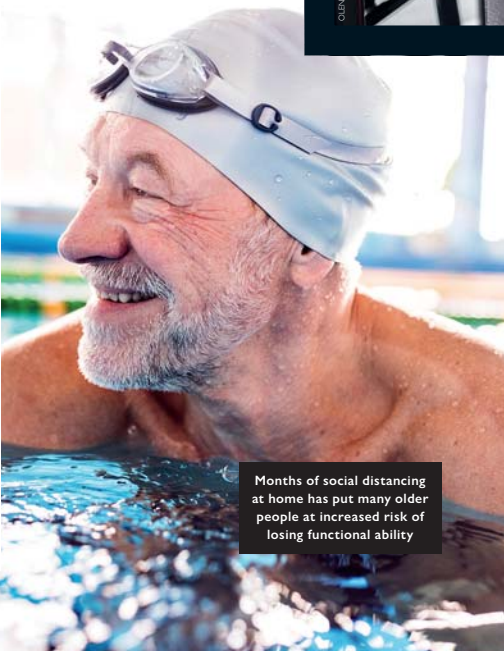
Sport England's 2018/19 Active Lives Survey reported only 40 per cent of people aged over 75 were meeting the recommended chief medical officer guidelines of 150 minutes' activity per week, meaning 60 per cent do not. This makes it even more important that the sector continually improves user experience, to ensure the right level of provision, choice and accessibility, with ability and age-appropriate offerings.

New initiative

ukactive has launched an Active Ageing Consultation with the aim of developing and highlighting existing industry-wide activity options according to the level of physical activity required, not just by age group.

Months of social distancing, and increased time spent being sedentary at home has had a deconditioning effect on many people – particularly on those in mid- and later-life, and those living with long-term health conditions.

Deconditioning is real. It can lead to loss of muscle mass, stiffening of joints, loss of bone density and decreases in aerobic fitness, meaning the impacts of COVID-19 will put many more people at risk of losing functional ability sooner than they otherwise



Months of social distancing at home has put many older people at increased risk of losing functional ability

OLENA YAKOVCHUK/SHUTTERSTOCK



Older people lose functional ability if the opportunity to exercise is withheld

60% people aged over 75 are not meeting the CMO's recommended guidelines of 150 minutes' activity per week

would have. Already, research carried out by Age UK has found many older people reporting they find it harder to get around and that they are less steady on their feet compared to before the pandemic.

During the pandemic, many people's rehabilitation programmes have been disrupted because services were paused or due to the re-prioritising of caseloads. The pandemic has also clearly highlighted the importance of rehabilitation and the need for a strategic approach to cope with increased demand from people recovering from COVID-19, as well as those awaiting paused urgent and routine planned care who have further deteriorated in their health and function.

In addition, people who avoided accessing health services during the lockdown and are now at greater risk of ill-health or other conditions developing need these services, as do people dealing with the physical and mental health effects of lockdown.

Get involved

The fitness industry is well placed to help an ageing population with increasingly complex health challenges. Vital first steps include asset mapping and ensuring the primary care sector is aware of what's on offer, so healthcare professionals can draw on these services.

The Active Ageing Consultation, led by the ukactive Research Institute, will help ukactive to develop best practice evidence for the sector, by understanding what's currently working and what offers can be altered and improved. This involves understanding how current or future offers support activity levels, wellbeing and resilience and are ability-focused rather than just age-focused.

The success of our consultation will depend on the quality of submissions we receive, in the shape of case studies, from the sector, so please submit yours at the following link: www.HCMmag.com/activeageing

Bold Move

Ruskin Fitness Club has transformed its gym in partnership with Technogym, adding the new Excite Live line, as well as dedicated workout zones

The doors of Ruskin Fitness Club in St Helen's may have been closed during lockdown, but plenty was going on behind the scenes. An impressive refurbishment has transformed this popular fitness club into an enviable facility of 4,300 sq ft, full of the latest Technogym equipment.

Stephen Palfrey, operations director, said: "We took the opportunity to advance our refurbishment plans while we were forced to close during lockdown.

"A refurbishment of this scale was a bold move given the uncertainty around when the industry would reopen, but we felt our plans had to be ambitious to give members the all-encompassing modern health and fitness facility they deserve."

Ruskin Fitness Club has always placed the wellbeing of members at its core. The large-scale remodelling brings something unique to the area, so members can benefit from a new and holistic fitness offering.

The gym floor has been zoned into separate spaces and kitted out with the latest equipment from Technogym.

In the zone

The refurbishment involved a total redesign and luxury refit of the interior space. Alongside a new reception area and healthy-eating café, the gym has been divided into dedicated areas for functional fitness, strength and conditioning, and stretching, making it a more enjoyable space to use. The changing rooms have been



PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

Ruskin Fitness Club used the lockdown to refresh and renovate the club with new equipment

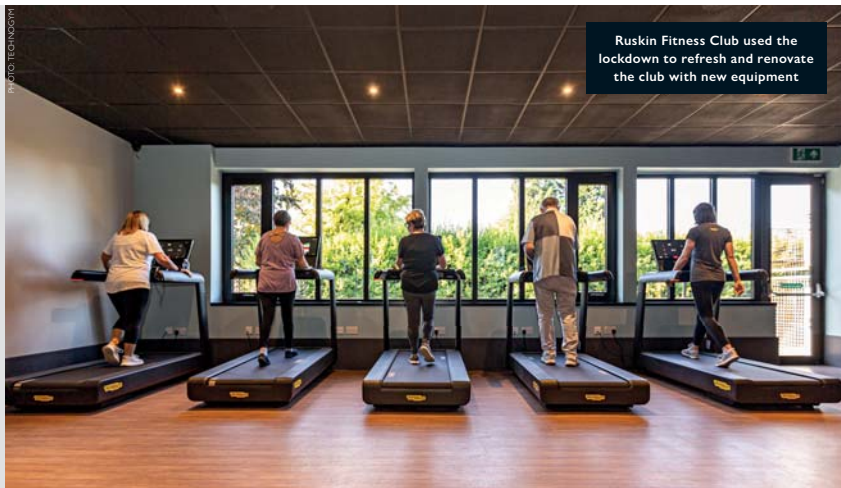


PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

The gym is now divided into zones for functional fitness, strength and conditioning and stretching



We felt our plans had to be ambitious to give members the all-encompassing modern health and fitness facility they deserve



Excite Live allows users to personalise their training, as well as accessing a complete range of content

**STEPHEN PALFREY,
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR,
RUSKIN FITNESS CLUB**



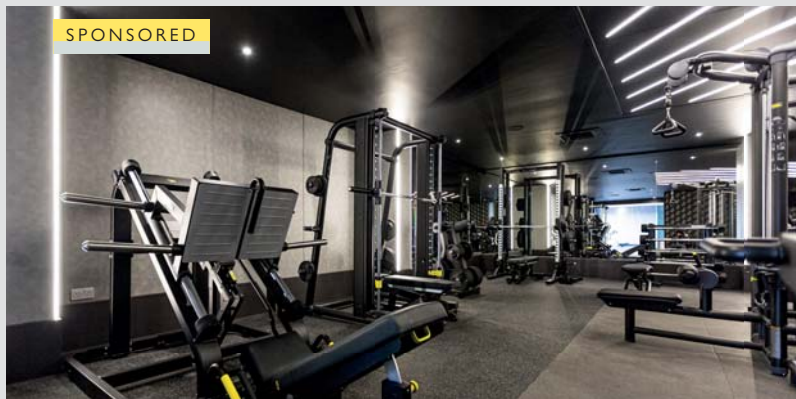
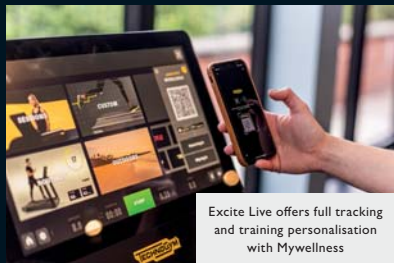


PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

The new gym has been completely reconfigured with Technogym equipment



PHOTO: TECHNOGYM



Excite Live offers full tracking and training personalisation with Mywellness

- expanded, two studio spaces transformed and a tranquil spa area has been developed to enhance the club's wellness offering.

Personalisation with Excite Live

The club chose to partner with Technogym, becoming one of the first in the country to feature the new Excite Live range of innovative cardio equipment.

"We really wanted the renovated club to be the best in the area, offering something special to our members," said Stephen. "Not only have we upgraded to include the latest Technogym strength and functional equipment, but we are also proud to have invested in the Excite Live cardio kit which adds a new dimension to our members' training."

Excite Live allows users to personalise their training, as well as tapping into a huge range of content, accessing virtual coaching and even having the virtual experience of training outdoors in exotic locations, thanks to advanced technology.

Ruskin's choice of Excite Live cardio equipment, functional exercise kit, resistance training equipment and plate-loaded machines from Technogym shows how serious the team is about creating the ultimate customer experience.

Technogym partnership

Such a large-scale refurbishment takes time, but Palfrey says he was pleasantly surprised to discover that lockdown didn't create any unwanted delays.

"I did wonder if our plans could be achieved in time during lockdown, but Technogym reassured me from the start that they would work to our deadlines," he said.

"Of course, on-site meetings had to become remote, but this meant decisions could be made quickly. The Technogym team were true to their word, and everything ran to time. We're very grateful to them for their support and expertise."

● More: www.technogym.com/HCM

The
Technogym
team were
true to
their word.
We're very
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expertise



TECHNOGYM LIVE



Discover the
new Excite line

Precision Training Experience

The new Excite line provides all users with an engaging and tailored exercise experience thanks to the Technogym Live platform.

- **Training variety:** tailored on-demand workouts, and countless entertainment options
- **Mobile connectivity:** personalise your experience by connecting your phone; charge it wirelessly
- **Space-savvy:** the redesigned Excite Run offers -30% footprint and +13% running space
- **Energy-savvy:** the new excite line represents the next generation of sustainable equipment

Discover more on technogym.com/HCM



DELIVERY PARTNERS

HCM talks to policy makers, operators and decision-makers about the public sector and trust response to the pandemic

To say it's been a difficult year for local authority leisure trusts is an understatement; with many struggling to juggle the financial and logistical challenges of two lockdowns with the expectation of providing their community with health and wellbeing programmes.

In fact, a recent report from the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sports and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) found that, without meaningful financial support, almost half (48 per cent) of public leisure facilities could close by the end of 2020, resulting in the loss of 300,000 jobs.

Despite this, some community leisure trusts have found the positives in this pandemic. HCM talks to organisations making powerful strides.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CLIVE HARRIS

Fusion reports 10,000 families have taken part in special swimming sessions

"It's vital we keep ourselves fighting fit through the winter months and gyms and leisure centres are crucial to this"

Delivering against needs

Steven Scales
Client services director
ukactive

The government's £100m fund to support local authorities will help to keep more leisure centres open and we hope this grant is a turning point in the government's long-term support for local facilities, as the pandemic has made us stop and think about what our sector means in a broad sense.

In order for public facilities to bounce back properly, we need collaboration with the government and private sector, so we can deliver against society's needs, reduce inequalities and increase activity. Our sector can save lives and, ultimately, can save the government billions of pounds.

As the culture minister said, "It's vital we keep ourselves fighting fit through the winter months and gyms and leisure centres are crucial to this," and we look forward to working with government and partners to establish further support for the wider gym and leisure sector.



First line of defence

Kirsty Cumming

CEO

Community Leisure UK

Leisure providers operate on very fine margins and many have depleted their reserves; there's recognition that local authorities are continuing to work hard in difficult circumstances to support their leisure service providers and the UK government, along with the home nations' administrations, have introduced or are planning to introduce supplementary funding to support leisure through the recovery period. But government financial support needs to reach leisure providers most in need quickly, and more financial support will be required to ensure facilities can remain open.

A coordinated approach, coupled with the capital investment required, will enable us to become a new, effective, first line of defence to protect our NHS

The leisure sector has proven itself to be safe and effective, it is essential to increasing population activity levels, delivering the government's national obesity plan and helping people build resilience to, and recover from, COVID-19.

The pandemic has brought the sector closer together. This collaborative ethos can be capitalised upon to help reset the sector around a common purpose, vision and set of objectives, in order



to deliver a greater impact on improving population health and wellbeing.

Many leisure facilities are run-down and require investment, which will not only reduce the costs of operation, but will also better enable leisure to support the nation's health and wellbeing. A

coordinated approach, coupled with the capital investment required, will enable us to become a new, effective, first line of defence to protect our NHS.

The heart of communities

Jo Cherrett

COO

Trafford Leisure

We were so excited to launch 'move Urmston', the £7m redevelopment of one of our leisure centres, back in March. We had fantastic new facilities and equipment, a new brand name and engaged staff, but just five days after opening – 23 March 2020 – we shut the doors on move Urmston, along with the other venues we manage for Trafford Council.

We reopened in July, with an impressive 53 per cent rise in memberships, a clear strategy of customer engagement, open communications and a relatable marketing campaign; growing membership at a time we desperately needed income.

When lockdown happened, we gave customers the choice to continue paying their membership, to freeze or to leave.

We chose not to automatically freeze direct debits; instead we commenced an open dialogue, asking if they were in the position to continue making payments, their generous 'donation' would help pay staff salaries, local suppliers and sustain building and maintenance.

It was a risky move and took a delicate balance in our messaging, but during May, 40 per cent of members continued to pay. I was humbled by the support of the Trafford community.

We've also been financially supported by Trafford Council,

The key to our partnership is that Trafford Council understands the value of what we do and of working together to ensure no funds are sought unless absolutely necessary

which agreed to provide our community interest company financial support in the form of a monthly grant.

The council moved swiftly to re-designate a budget of £968,000, originally earmarked to compensate our leisure centres for loss of income during future refurbishments, to help us through the remainder of this year.

The key to our partnership is that Trafford Council understands the value of leisure, a completely open book approach and working together to ensure that no funds are sought unless absolutely necessary.

As we enter this potentially dark winter, a second lockdown and a recession, we need to position our offerings even better than before. The Government,

local authority and the community must see and value us as an essential service that can help level out health and wellbeing inequalities.

'Leisure' should go hand in hand with NHS and Government policies – we must offer the unemployed affordable daily purpose, support the lonely with meaningful interaction, be there to combat inactivity and be visible in reinvigorating the high street.

Leisure centres really are at the heart of our communities, and this pandemic should enhance their relevance and reputation.





Our customers have stuck with us, they understand we're a charity – we had 7,500 members continue to pay their subscriptions throughout the first lockdown

Joined up thinking

Steve Walsh
CEO

High Life Highland

Our services reach the Highlands community as a whole, from cradle to grave, through leisure, education and cultural services, including sports, community groups, libraries, music tuition and adult education. The charity, set up in 2011, runs nine services for the Highland Council, including 26 leisure sites.

When we closed in March, we felt our customers trusted and supported us and we were thankfully proved right. We communicated clearly and regularly with them, explaining what would happen, what we could provide during lockdown and how we would reopen when the Scottish Government allowed us to in August.

We supported isolated and rural people and families, with our museums providing engaging content for homeschool lessons, online tuition for learning an instrument, online fitness classes and support mechanisms in conjunction with other charities.

This level of service is our lockdown legacy; a legacy our customers continue to engage with and believe in. Our customers stuck with us, they understood we're a charity, and we had a total of 7,500 members continue to pay their subscriptions throughout the first lockdown, which include services

to leisure, libraries and access to online publications. We are currently ahead of the projections we made at the start of the first lockdown to take into account the impact of COVID-19, with our subscriptions now up to 10,000.

We had an amazing 2,447,989 online customer engagements between April and September. Because our services cover so many areas of our customers' lives, this helps them to understand the real and true value of our offer.

This joined-up approach delivers essential services the community trust, support and have readily returned to.

Swimming usage is healthy, with around 100,000 swims booked each month. Pools have been an area that struggles to be profitable, so we must plug into this enthusiasm

Come on, dive in

Anthony Cawley
Director of operations
Fusion Lifestyle

The surprise for us, since reopening our centres, has been the resurgence of swimming. Understandably, in the summer our lidos were extremely popular and we're looking forward to our Christmas and new year outdoor swims.

All swimming, including swim school, has been high in demand. Yes, the pool and chlorine-treated water might be the safest place, giving customers additional reassurance, but customers are seemingly enjoying the ease and speed of coming to the pool beach-ready.

Who could have predicted that having to book family swim or lane swimming would be so well received? Across our centres, 70 per cent of swimmers have returned to swim



school, with over 20,000 children back in their lessons. Overall, swimming usage is healthy too, with around 100,000 swims booked each month and 10,000 families attending our family sessions across the business. Pools have largely been an area that struggles to be profitable, so we must plug into this enthusiasm.

COVID-19 has unfortunately impacted on both the participation and commercial performance of leisure centres; we are operating with new restrictions that limit our capacities and therefore customer footfall.

While pleased the government has given £100m funding to local authority groups, this has arrived very late and it's hard to see it will stretch far enough.

We're working hard with our local authority partners to open as many of our centres as possible. We value the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve and know how important it is to keep the nation as fit and active as we can during this difficult time and into the future.



Results are up on this time last year and customer feedback has been amazing

Lessons learned

Simon Blair
Head of business
Oldham Community Trust

Oldham has been hit hard by this pandemic and we've lived with restrictions for many months now. We were delighted to reopen in July, and even happier to stay open when the tier three restrictions were introduced to the Borough in October.

Remarkably, we've seen our Net Promoter Score (NPS) rise across our leisure centres since reopening in July. In August we scored an impressive 73 overall across our leisure centres, with Royton Leisure Centre achieving an outstanding score of 79, outperforming companies such as Apple (65) and Amazon (69).

What's even more remarkable is that our results are up on this time last year.

It's clear to me our customers missed our services and the OCL team during the lockdown. Our customers have loved the new enhanced COVID-secure centres, including the meet and greet of all visitors, an overall greater staff presence, an increase in cleaning and an expansion in our timetable to compensate the reduction of class capacities. This level of service is something our customers want now, and something they'll continue to want long-term, post pandemic and post-second lockdown.

Our customer feedback has been amazing, we've celebrated and promoted this to both reassure our community and to reinforce the value of our offer. There are lots of lessons we should be learning now to take us forward, which will continue to drive customer satisfaction, participation and ultimately revenue for the future. ●

Tonbridge and Malling Council agreed to two injections of income, now and in the financial year 2021/22

Growing partnerships

Martin Guyton
CEO
TMACTIVE

We've built a strong and successful partnership with our local authority – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. The local focus of our trust has helped us to keep momentum through the pandemic.

Before COVID hit, TMACTIVE was in a good place financially; we had a £7 million turnover and had reserves. However, like so many other community trusts, the pandemic struck at both our immediate financial position and our ongoing business strategy, as our reserves were soon depleted.

In March only 18 of our 420 staff remained un-furloughed. We stopped all recruitment, made savings with suppliers and put a freeze on pay rises. We are fortunate to have a very open and transparent accountancy approach with our local authority. This trusted relationship has no doubt helped, as they soon came to realise that to make our services sustainable for the longer term, we needed financial support now.

Tonbridge and Malling Council agreed to two injections of income, now and in the financial year 2021/22. We know we can bounce back quickly once we're

able to offer a full service, but without a financial commitment our business model would quickly become unsustainable.

Just before second lockdown, our cashflow is improving, 75 per cent of our membership is back, our clubs, such as gymnastics and dance are back, and 95 per cent of our swim school have returned.

Predictably, our outside pool was extremely popular in the warm weather and we had a huge demand for tee times on the golf course. However, we're balancing on a tightrope. We need to ensure our voices are heard. We need to deliver a clear and joined up message that leisure centres are COVID-secure.

I welcome the long overdue announcement of £100m of Government aid for public leisure sector, although I remain only cautiously optimistic pending an understanding of how and to whom this will be distributed.

It falls a long way short of the £1.57bn provided to culture and arts and doesn't reflect the Government's hyperbole around the importance of physical activity to the health of the nation.



An exercise *in* luxury

Deansgate Square, the newest residential star on Manchester's impressive skyline, is a fitting home for some of the city's most stylish health and fitness facilities, with specialist acoustic flooring by TVS Group

Sitting on the southern edge of Manchester's retail heartland, an imposing quartet of grey stone and glass towers are amongst the latest additions to the city's impressive skyline. Little wonder some locals have dubbed this part of Manchester Manc-hattan. Deansgate Square's tallest tower reaches 64-storeys and the development houses more than 1,500 stylish apartments and penthouses. It also boasts one of the most luxurious health and fitness complexes in the region.

Without specialist knowledge, integrating leisure facilities alongside luxury accommodation in high-rise buildings can be an unhappy marriage. TVS Group was approached by acoustic consultants, Fisher Acoustics and the main contractor, Renaker Build, to recommend a specialist acoustic floating floor and sports flooring, capable of isolating residents

from unwanted noise that might be transmitted during the use of health and fitness facilities.

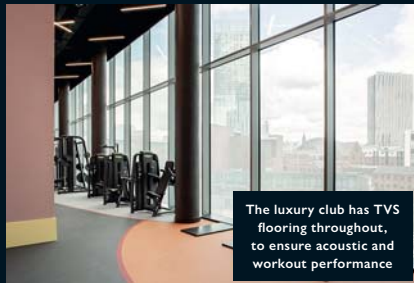
"The project involved work across a wide range of facilities, from fitness areas to a sports hall and studios for yoga and spinning classes," says TVS group sales director, Andy Roberts. "TVS was selected because of its dual ability to address acoustic requirements and specify, supply and install high quality sports flooring solutions.

"Acoustics were a key element of the project and we needed to meet stringent criteria to guarantee satisfaction for both residents in adjoining apartments and leisure users involved in different activities," he added.

The prestige nature of the project at Deansgate Square also meant that TVS would have to deliver bespoke flooring and acoustic wall materials that integrated seamlessly with the colour themes already chosen for the various fitness areas.

TVS worked on the project with Fisher Acoustics and Renaker Build





Sports hall and fitness studios

Designed to be used for a variety of fitness and sports activities, the spacious sports hall and adjoining fitness studios needed flooring that would be both shock-absorbent and offer the perfect grip rating for excellent aerobic performance and user comfort. A seamless polyurethane flooring system, TVS PU-Sport, was chosen as the perfect solution with all the various colours custom produced to match the designer's vision for the new facilities. Free-flowing zone markings were then added to separate activity spaces within the studios and heavy duty Sportec Style tiles were installed in the free weights zone to provide maximum impact resistance. TVS even supplied paint finishes for the impact resistant walls that would match the flooring perfectly.

With all sports halls, reverberation and acoustic issues are a concern, and large, open spaces can result in flutter echoes - a series of rapid, repeated reflections caused by soundwaves bouncing around between parallel reflective surfaces. This is unpleasant for users and can even make communication difficult between individuals and staff.

To combat this, TVS was able to install its clever, custom-sized and colour-matching TVS Absorb Sport Panels. "The panels are a proven way of reducing reverberation and with special impact-resistant layers are the perfect choice for cost-effective acoustic control in sports halls where ball sports are likely to be played," explains Roberts. "They're also easy to install and can be cleaned in situ if necessary."



TVS was selected because of its dual ability to address acoustic requirements and specify, supply and install high quality sports flooring solutions



TVS GROUP
HEALTH | WELLNESS | SPORT | COMMUNITY

Acoustic floating floor

For the High Intensity Interval Training facility and separate Yoga Studio, another flooring solution was required to offer maximum acoustic protection to residential properties below. Here TVS installed a specialist Dry RESi Floating Floor system to dramatically reduce impact and airborne sound transmission. Acoustic Dry Floating Floors are a lightweight alternative to concrete-based systems and feature an air gap below and special isolators that help to cushion impacts and suppress structural noise. They are also quick to install and offer outstanding performance over the lifetime of a building.

Finally, TVS decoupled all the different elements of the fitness and health complex from one another ensuring that, even when every activity area was in use, there would be nothing to distract users, whether involved in high tempo training or the calm and tranquillity of a yoga class.

"From an aesthetic point of view alone, the health and fitness facilities at Deansgate Square are amongst the best in the north-west, and as a company which prides itself on its wide range of flooring colours and finishes, this project really pushed the envelope," reflects Roberts. "The project has also been an excellent opportunity for different parts of the TVS Group to work together to deliver acoustic and flooring perfection."

Find out more: www.tvsgroup.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1706 260 220

“Research typically investigates sleep and recovery using passive approaches as solutions. This study shows that an active approach is beneficial and positive for participants as well”



New generation yoga

Regular sessions of new-generation yoga can help tackle the lockdown blues, increase sleep quality and boost mental health

A new study, presented at the American College of Sports Medicine Annual Conference recently by associate professor, Jinger Gottschall, delivers insights into a new-generation yoga protocol, demonstrating the power of the discipline for people coping with life during this turbulent year.

The protocol tested was Les Mills Bodybalance, a class which blends elements of yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates with mindfulness. Bodybalance is delivered in 10,000 fitness clubs each week internationally.

The *Les Mills Bodybalance and heart rate variability* study measured a range of responses, with the research team collecting heart rate variability and survey data related to life satisfaction and sleep quality to inform their findings.

The study found that participants who incorporate three 30-40-minute sessions of this stretching and meditation protocol into their weekly routine, experienced significantly improved sleep and cardiovascular health, enhanced recovery from mental and physical stress and boosted positive feelings.

Researchers found that six sessions can increase participants' Heart Rate Variability (HRV) enough to deliver:

- 15%** Improved sleep quality
- 39%** Increase in positive feelings relating to confidence
- 39%** Decrease in feelings of sadness and negativity
- 29%** Increase in motivation
- 26%** Decrease in negative emotions; anxiety and tension
- 18%** Increase in satisfaction with daily life

HRV is the measurement of interval variation between each beat of the heart – the tiny difference in the length of this interval is a sign of a healthy cardiovascular system and indicates that a person is in an optimal state of recovery.

Central to the results was a statistically significant increase in HRV, an accurate measure of the body's ability to regulate vital health factors such as anxiety and sleep.

The higher the HRV score, the more likely we are to be equipped to cope with the pressures of daily life, while studies show that low HRV correlates with anxiety and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Gottschall said: "The study's findings show that new-generation yoga is a useful active recovery solution for improving physical and mental health, with participants reporting feeling more positive, confident and motivated."

Bryce Hastings, head of research at Les Mills said: "We need recovery from life, not just from exercise. This study demonstrates that we can enhance recovery from everyday stress and exhaustion through simple and targeted movement and mindfulness training.

"The increased popularity of recovery is sometimes misdirected," said Hastings, "it assumes that only athletes and high-performance individuals need recovery. Due to the collective trauma our population has experienced in 2020, we're starting to understand that increasing positive emotional, mental and physiological transformation can occur with small but consistent changes that are accessible to anyone. We're pleased to show our evidence-backed workouts offer this."

Gottschall said: "Many studies and research articles investigate sleep and sleep awareness using passive approaches as solutions. This study shows that an active approach is beneficial and positive for participants too." ●

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Upping the Online fitness game

Venueserve Fitness enables clubs to offer white-label content streaming to optimise capacity and member engagement

In this ever-changing world, there's one thing we know for sure; social distancing measures are here for the long-run, meaning even when clubs are open there will be capacity limits.

With 40 per cent of members favouring group exercise classes, ensuring they have access to their well-loved programme has never been more important, and operators are welcoming a new, white-label online fitness platform, offering live streaming of classes at the touch of a button.

Venueserve Fitness is an easy-to-use, low-cost web- and mobile web-based platform, already being used by more than 45 health

clubs across the UK, including London's Roehampton Club, The Marlow Club and the clubs in The Health Club Collection.

Set-up takes just a few hours and includes 70 pre-recorded training sessions, so operators can kickstart their own virtual club immediately, all branded as their own.

Venueserve Fitness's comprehensive, built-in reporting dashboard allows operators to gather valuable membership data and insight, which can't be obtained via Facebook Live or Zoom. The back-end reporting and payment system also means Venueserve Fitness can be used by PTs or instructors such as yoga teachers, who can use the subscribe, data capture function as their own membership system.

Strong reputation

The platform is the brainchild of Lee Booth, Founder and CEO of global tech company Venueserve. The company, which has a well-established reputation within the ticketing and sports membership sector, is taking its first steps into the fitness industry.

Booth says: "Venueserve Fitness gives operators the tools to offer a branded virtual membership, whether that's as a free, 'nice to have' for existing members, upsold as an additional bolt-on virtual membership or sold separately as a subscription-based online membership package for those who aren't ready to visit a gym yet.

An impressive 1,700 out of 3,000 members continued to pay membership dues at the Marlow Club during lockdown, to get Venueserve Fitness

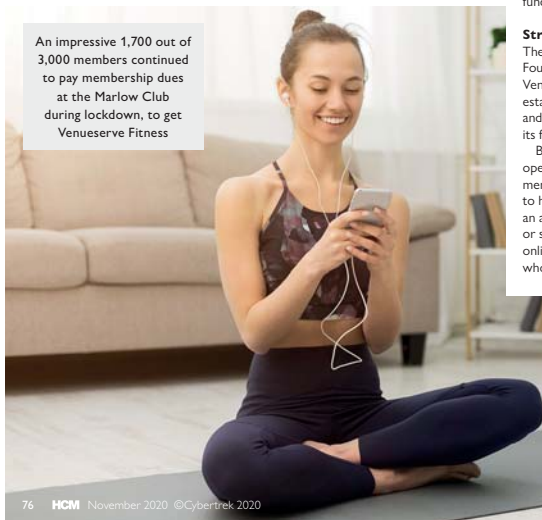


PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO: THE MARLOW CLUB

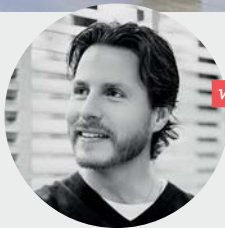
The Marlow Club

Luxury health and wellbeing club, the Marlow Club, delivers 250 exercise classes a week and has a very loyal community of members, who treat the facility as their wellbeing hub – their home from home.

COO, Jon Williams, reached out to Venueserve Fitness when lockdown first commenced in March; he needed an online offering for his 3,000 members that looked and felt like the club's own: "It's all about our members having a positive experience, every time they visit. When we switched to online during the first lockdown it was important this same positive experience happened virtually. Our online content had to look and feel like the Marlow Club.

"We gave our members the choice: to stick with us, to freeze or to leave. Those who continued with us gained access to our virtual membership. It was valuable income for the club, and I was humbled that 1,700 members continued to pay their full membership.

"It's testament not only to the community and the brand we've nurtured over 17 years, but to the engagement Venueserve Fitness enables us to deliver.



"You want to work out on holiday – no problem. You want to join in your favourite HIIT session at midnight – no problem. The Marlow Club now operates 24 hours a day – globally!"

Jon Williams, COO, The Marlow Club

Our live streamed classes feature our instructors doing the classes our members love. It means the Marlow Club can be accessed anywhere and anytime. It adds value to our offer and aids our customer retention - it's a service we will never be without."

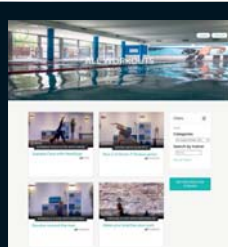
Marlow Club members have viewed the sessions almost 28,000 times to date, and since reopening in July, every live class is now streamed.

Williams says: "COVID-19 restrictions mean our classes run at 50 per cent capacity. Now, when members can't get into a physical class they can still participate virtually. All the instructor has to do is turn on the camera and

stream through an iPad – it's so simple and so flexible. The platform is also secure. I have a duty of care to my staff and instructors and I don't want them to feel vulnerable online; and Venueserve Fitness gives me that confidence and peace of mind."

As a result, the Marlow Club now sells virtual-only memberships, and already has around 100 exclusively online members.

He concludes: "The future uses of this application are limitless. You want to work out on holiday – no problem. You want to join in your favourite HIIT session at midnight – no problem. The Marlow Club now operates 24 hours a day – globally!"



The Venueserve Fitness white label platform is skinned to resemble the Marlow Club's website

"The simplicity of Venueserve Fitness means no one has to miss out, and the pre-recorded content means there's plenty to choose from for every type of club and every type of member."

Live-streaming is unlimited and each session is saved to the platform and categorised so it can be played again and again.

Instructors live-stream to Venueserve Fitness's servers and, from there, the content is sent to the club's own branded streaming site, which is skinned to match their website. Fresh pre-recorded content is also uploaded to the platform every week. ●

venueserve

FITNESS

Find out more:
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Jan Spaticchia

The chair of *énergie* and vice chair of BMF talks to Kate Cracknell about creating an omnichannel approach that brings together indoor, outdoor, online and VR

First things first Jan, didn't you retire last year?!

After we sold *énergie*, on 1 August 2019, I still sat on the board as a non-exec, founder director. However, I'd very much handed the business over to Bridges Fund Management and was really only there for a transition period.

If anyone had told me at that point that less than a year later I'd be buying the business back again, I would certainly have had big questions for them!

I truly believed Bridges was the right investor, selected for all the right reasons and with a great fitness pedigree and while the selling price was important, I saw picking the right buyer as equally so.

But ultimately, who could have predicted the events of 2020? Long story short, it was clear that COVID was going to punch a hole in revenues and that the business would need new funding. All parties were willing to invest – Bridges, the bank, myself – but the terms of a deal between Bridges and the bank – RM Funds – could not be agreed.

In the end, RM Funds asked me if I would be prepared to lead a management buyout if it provided part of the funding, so I worked with the bank to bring together a small consortium – including some previous shareholders – and, in June of this year, we completed an MBO.

I'm pleased we did. The *énergie* business is still my baby – started from my living room in 2003. I couldn't just sit back and watch it run into difficulties. Buying it back felt like coming home.

We haven't applied a blanket freeze to membership during lockdown 2, instead we've challenged our members to use the time to achieve a specific health and fitness goal



énergie's 'club in club' boutique, thé YARD, can be accessed by members on an enhanced package

How did you steer énergie through the initial lockdown?

The first thing we did, back in March when I was still a non-exec, was encourage all franchisees to hold their nerve. We wrote to every one of the 140,000 members across our estate with a heartfelt message, pointing out that while énergie was a national brand, every club owner was a local business with a family to support.

We acknowledged that some members would be facing hardship; if this was the case, we asked them to consider freezing rather than cancelling their membership. For those who could afford to continue to pay, we promised them a fantastic online programme to keep them active during lockdown.

We had 38,000 members who carried on paying throughout lockdown, bringing in around £400,000 a month. This went straight to the franchisees; we didn't charge fees during this time.

Both énergie HQ and the clubs worked hard to create a great online offering, with workouts and classes offered through Zoom so members could train and interact with their favourite instructors. Franchisees who put effort into their online service did incredibly well, losing very few members.

And what now, with lockdown 2?

We were always aware of the risk of a second lockdown and have been planning for such an eventuality. We're determined to be there for our members and know that fitness, nutrition and mindset are essential in the fight against COVID-19.

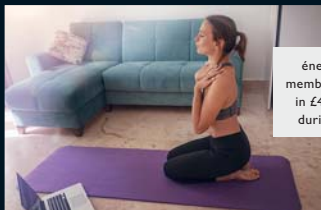
We haven't applied a blanket freeze to membership as many other operators have chosen to do, instead challenging our members to use lockdown to achieve a specific health and fitness goal.

To support this, on Thursday 5 November – as the UK's second lockdown began – we launched our most extensive online programme to date across three core disciplines of fitness, nutrition and mindset. We're fully exploiting the potential of technology and – within government guidelines – the outdoors, offering our members everything from live two-way interactive workouts with their friends and favourite instructors to meal ideas, mental health support sessions, live virtual coach podcasts and the BMF-inspired 'bubble buddy' outdoor programmes.

What are your forecasts now?

The business moved back into profit in September 2020. We did lose members throughout the first lockdown, as many operators did: we entered the first lockdown with 138,901 members and came out of it with 93,773. As at 26 October, we'd bounced back to 105,778 members – some new, some re-joining – and have also opened five new clubs since re-opening in July. Not only that, but our usual benchmark of opening with around 1,100 members was achieved at four of the five new sites.

So, we were in good shape. Now all of a sudden, we're faced with a second lockdown and have to ask our franchisees to step up once again.



énergie's digital membership brought in £400k a month during lockdown

Our goal had been to get back to pre-COVID revenues by March 2021, and we were potentially going to get there sooner, as we were ahead of forecasts last month. The new lockdown will of course affect that, but at this early stage it's hard to say to what extent.

But you're pushing ahead with plans to grow your international footprint?

We are. We've dabbled internationally before – we had some énergie Fitness for Women clubs in Latvia, we had a five-year licence for a club in Qatar, we still have a portfolio of clubs in Ireland – but we're doing it even more seriously this time, going for very capable partners who are well funded.

We recently signed an Iberian master franchise agreement with the very experienced team of Rod Hill and George Houtenbos and have also appointed Rod as managing director of énergie International; Neil King remains UK managing director.

The plan is for 75 énergie clubs in Spain and Portugal over the next 10 years, with the first currently scheduled to open in April 2021 – a delayed date due to COVID-19.

We've just signed a second master franchise deal for India, with a gentleman called Sumit Goel – previously a Gold's Gym franchisee. The first Indian club will open later this year, subject to local and regional lockdowns.

Our next master agreement, already in the pipeline, is likely to be for California.

Do you still have different sub-brands under the énergie umbrella?

All our clubs are now operated under the énergie Fitness Club brand which, although based on affordable memberships, is a generation on from the no-frills Fit4Less clubs that were previously our budget offering.

I would now describe our model as low-cost, high-service, with layered membership – currently two tiers – with a third soon to launch. I call the pricing strategy 'hook and yield'.

Classic membership, averaging £18.99 a month, gives access to the gym and a certain number of classes. Wow! membership adds a lot of extras – Bodystat analysis,



regular 'bring a friend' privileges, our YARD signature classes and access to personal training – and costs up to £29.99 a month.

Our new tier, Epic, will introduce the concept of omnichannel to our membership. During lockdown, we created a really compelling online offering and quickly realised members wanted it to become a permanent part of what we do – a way to connect with their club even when they're on holiday, away with work or just can't make it in. We're currently testing £35–40 a month for an omnichannel Epic tier.

It's early days and we're still defining exactly what will be included in each tier going forward, but I think it's likely that Classic will remain a club-based budget offering. We might bring omnichannel into WOW as well as Epic though; Epic would just include more extras.

We want to see how far we can take the service level once we have a member who trusts us, even when that member originally bought into a low-cost proposition. You'd be surprised how, once they're loyal and know they're getting a great service, it isn't as much about price any more.



énergie Fitness has launched a global franchise business, led by Rod Hill

PHOTO: ENERGIE FITNESS

Will there be any other facets to omnichannel, beyond online?

Omnichannel is about understanding what the consumer is looking for and letting them have it on their own terms. You want to work out in the club, you like the camaraderie that comes from being with the members and the staff you know? Fantastic, we're open for business. Want to work out at home? Then train online with us. Want to stay outdoors? We have a new association with BMF that will reach full force soon.

Tell us more about your role with BMF

In addition to my role as chair of énergie, I'm also vice chair of BMF (Be Military Fit), and saw a great opportunity for collaboration. As a result, énergie is about to secure an exclusive deal whereby members can take part in BMF classes as part of an omnichannel membership – everything from BMF's Active classes for deconditioned people, to its Special Ops team events.

Our view was that any operator can offer outdoor classes in their car park. We wanted to go a step further and for our outdoor credentials to be as strong as our indoor ones.

We're now very close to the launch of a VR fitness club membership experience

Creating a VR membership experience

"Visio is a project I started working on before I sold énergie, and it's now been spun out as a separate business," says Spaticchia. "It's a VR product where we create fully interactive virtual clubs: you can walk around the club and interact with the equipment, picking up dumbbells, activating videos on treadmill screens and so on.

"Originally we had a couple of key uses in mind. The first was membership pre-sale, showing people exactly what the club will look like. The second was for equipment manufacturers to use when creating gym floor layouts, enabling them to instantly change colours and switch equipment around to help customers better visualise how things would look. We've been working with Precor on this already, building a VR suite at its UK head office.

"But we realised, with the need for an omnichannel offering to meet consumer expectations, that the technology could be used to give members a really engaging virtual club experience. For example, they can walk into a 'studio space'



they recognise and choose from the wide range of virtual classes they can do from home.

If they go to the 'cycling studio' and they're asked if they have a bike at home. No? Then they're taken to the online store and shown various bikes they can buy.

"We're now very close to the launch of a VR fitness club membership experience," says Spaticchia, "We've created laptop and mobile versions and Facebook's launch of Oculus Quest has been a game-changer in terms of the full VR headset version. Instead of a £750 headset as it used to be, it's now £299–£399, with no need for a computer – just a little headset and no wires. Suddenly it's in PlayStation territory, and that's very exciting."

We're piloting this collaboration into the new year and will roll it out during 2021. Sometimes the outdoor space for BMF will be right outside the club, other times it will be a park a quarter of a mile away, but there will always be an outdoor component to what we do.

What are the practicalities of making this work?

We recently transitioned BMF to a fully franchised model: the last site, Clapham Common, became a franchise in August.

énergie franchisees are being given the opportunity to partner-franchise with BMF to offer a world-class outdoor programme and where there's already a BMF franchise locally, collaborative agreements can be struck.

Tell us more about this switch to franchising

BMF is a 20-year-old business that had become very set in its ways, but NM Capital and Bear Grylls – the owners since 2018 – were intent on saving the brand, and had invested a significant amount of their own money to do so.

It meant that, when I came into the business in November 2019, they had won me a bit of time to get the franchising systems and processes set up. We then approached the team members who managed our parks across the UK and offered them the chance to become an independent entrepreneur – to own their own business as a franchisee.

In a little under 12 months, every single viable park was transferred to this model and since people have started working for themselves, performance has only gone in one direction: up.

This pivot to franchising saw the remaining owner-operated BMF business go through a CVA.

We now have 73 parks operating, with the average franchisee owning three. We're also starting to open more parks on a monthly basis through franchising.

We're introducing new concepts too, such as BMF Urban. The first site is underneath Battersea Bridge in London and is a sort of boutique in a semi-outdoors space. It's really different and exciting, and shows that BMF is starting to stretch its legs in terms of what it can do in the outdoors.

BMF has also secured a pilot project with the British Army via its recruitment partner Capita. Potential new recruits come to us first, for training, in a bid to improve pass rates. We're running a six-month pilot using a combination of in-park and online programmes.

Finally, there's another BMF pilot, this time with the NHS: supporting rehabilitation following COVID-19. I see this as a priceless opportunity that the whole fitness sector should get on-board with: to reduce the pressure on the NHS this winter and position our industry as critical to the health of the nation.

Speaking of COVID, how has BMF performed this year?

Tommy Matthews, BMF's business development director, was amazing in the way he helped the business pivot. Within 48 hours, every park was delivering online classes to its members from instructors' gardens. I remember watching a class run by Jel, our Finsbury Park franchisee, and he had 200 members training with him – including one in California, a former Finsbury Park member who re-joined when he heard he could do BMF online. We had members taking part from all over the world.

We did the same as we did at énergie, writing to members to explain that franchisees were independent people who needed support from members to keep their businesses open. As at énergie, BMF members were allowed to freeze their membership if they needed to – they still had access to the online workouts – but they were invited to continue paying. An incredible 83 per cent of members did so. Some even got in touch with us and



BMF is now a fully-franchised business, with 73 locations

BMF Urban brings a boutique-style, semi-outdoor set-up to London's Battersea Bridge

PHOTO: BMF

“

BMF members were invited to continue paying during first lockdown and an incredible 83 per cent did so, with some paying double to cover others

asked if they could pay double, to cover someone else who couldn't afford to pay.

But then, BMF did some pretty amazing things to support members online. In addition to the live streamed workouts, we hosted a comedy night for BMF and énergie members, headlined by Ed Byrne. We ran a family-friendly boxing week with David Haye and his son Cassius. We had Zoom cook-alongs. Zoom personal training. Mindset coaching. We did special weeks: Marines Week, FOB (Forward Operating Base) Week where members weren't allowed to use proper equipment – they had to find bits and pieces from around their houses and gardens instead.

We basically did all the things we'd always dreamed of doing if we'd had the time, putting on an amazing array of activities. Suddenly we did have the time to innovate and Tommy takes an awful lot of credit for that – as do our franchisees who made it all happen.

My proudest moment came in the middle of lockdown – parks shut, members still paying anything from £35 to £65 a month – when we got a Net Promoter Score of 73.

In lockdown 2, we're again providing for members online, with énergie and BMF collaborating and another full programme including a comedy night with Dara O'Brian and Nish Kumar.

How are you viewing 2021 and beyond?

It's difficult to say if we'll see further lockdowns next year, or if fitness will finally be seen as an essential service as it should be. Either way, we're prepared to pivot our offering online whenever we need to, and our members appear to take it in their stride.

For énergie and BMF, the strength of these businesses will be in each other – in the fact both became strong online during 2020, and that both are national brands with passionate local owners.

With the investment we're continuing to make online, the outdoor expertise of BMF and the indoor expertise of énergie, I believe we're creating something very special.

But collaboration isn't only a theme for our two businesses. If you look at the efforts of ukactive during the current crisis, and of the likes of PureGym's Humphrey Cobbold in lobbying government, it's clear to me that all of the sector's wins at the present time are coming from collaboration. Being open to collaboration and being ready to adapt and change have been everything this year.

There may be lots to be scared of, especially with COVID-19 continuing to weigh heavily on the sector, but there's even more to be excited about for the future. ●

A cheeky workout

Butt, bottom, booty, bum – whatever you call it, working the backside is a vital part of the balance, power and wellbeing equation and has been ignored for too long, as Tom Tawell reports





Glute workouts play an important role in preventing lower back pain

Glute workouts are booming, and not before time. As education about the importance of strengthening these muscle groups increases, people are beginning to recognise the wide range of benefits on offer to people across the demographic spectrum.

The majority of back problems either arise due to issues with the glutes, or are exacerbated by them, meaning keeping a balance in terms of glute power is vital to good body maintenance. They're also essential for achieving a high functioning physique.

Although glute workouts can create a fuller, firmer posterior for those focused on aesthetics, everyone from everyday gym-goers to bodybuilders, medical professionals, and sports teams are realising the importance of glute activation for physical function, strength, and performance.

The benefits

Hasit Jethwa, tutor for The Training Room, a UK-based education provider for PTs, believes everyone should add glute exercises to their training routines:

"The glutes play a huge biomechanical role in the body and – similar to the core – are heavily involved in many movements," he says. "Think about your pelvis when it's fixed or moving, and the chances are the glutes are doing much of the stabilising.

"Most movements are anterior chain dominated (front of body) so it's massively important to work the posterior chain to balance it out," he continues. "Much of the population suffers from hip flexor tightness, lower back pain, and IT band tightness, so having workouts that enable correct glute activation scheduled into your programme is going to ease all of those issues as you get older."

When performed consistently, glute workouts can support people at every stage of life, as Jethwa explains: "One of the biggest benefits of glute training is the prevention of lower back pain, as they play a huge role in stabilising the trunk which reduces pressure on your lower back, including the vertebrae, and avoids potential issues such as disc hernias. Having strong, stable, mobile hips can also help to prevent falls amongst older adults."

DRIFTY/LOANSON/ALTYR/STOCK



One of the biggest benefits of glute training is the prevention of lower back pain, as they play a huge role in stabilising the trunk

Essential for elite sports

Glute workouts also benefit professional athletes. Alexander Hallafors, founder and director of Scandinavian Top Team, is an elite personal trainer who has coached world champion boxers, UFC fighters, members of the Swedish national football team, and Stanley Cup-winning ice hockey players, to name but a few. He says glute training is becoming one of the fundamental pillars for sports performance and injury prevention across all sports.

"Butt workout machines are starting to be seen as a must-have piece of equipment in all the big performance centres and the training programmes of most of the world's elite-level athletes," he says. "The Booty Builder machine, for example, has been a staple in many of my clients' programmes for the last two or three years."

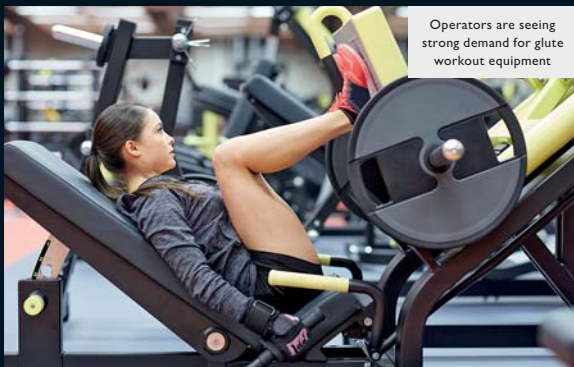
Regardless of the sport, and the standard being played, there is good reason why athletes are turning their attentions to glute workouts, as Hallafors explains: "All sports are focused around having powerful hips, and studies have shown that exercises like the hip thrust are better for horizontal power output than traditional squats, for example. This is why many elite athletes are now prioritising glute workouts as part of their training programmes. Maximum strength hip thrusts

are also a big part of athletic strength tests to determine physical performance and injury risk."

Looking at two of the world's favourite sports, it's clear to see why glute workouts are so important. "If you're a football player, you need to be able to sprint at top speed, jump high, and kick with full power; all of which is determined by how well functioning and strong your glutes are," says Hallafors. "In boxing, you always hear 'punch with the hip' and that refers to being able to torque the hip to let the whole body get behind the punch, so the punch gets more powerful. The torque of the hip is controlled by the glutes."

Besides the advantages for athletic performance, Hallafors says the glutes play a major part in injury prevention – crucial to the success and longevity of an individual or team: "Strong and functional glute muscles help control the knee, and also have a big impact on lower back health. When it comes to sport, we know that the athlete or team that remains the healthiest, and free from injuries, will ultimately be the most successful."

Overall, the appeal and benefits of glute workouts stretch far beyond the demographics sometimes associated with them, namely those looking for a 'Kardashian-esque booty'. Glute workouts are for all ages, genders, and ability levels, especially when performed with glute-specific equipment.



Operators are seeing strong demand for glute workout equipment

STOCK PRODUCTIONS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Glute training is a key pillar for sports performance and injury prevention

In boxing, you hear ‘punch with the hip’ – ie, torque the hip to get the whole body behind the punch. That torque is controlled by the glutes

Operators' perspective

The glute workout trend is causing growth in the market, with Booty Builder – manufacturers of one of the original hip thrust machines – reporting 800 per cent global growth in 2019.

Gymbox, in London, one of the UK's most forward-thinking operators, has been championing glute workouts for some time and recently invested in Booty Builder for its club in Ealing, viewing this as an important aspect of its member offering and experience.

Tom Atkinson, head of personal training for Gymbox, explains what he's been observing on the gym floor and why the business continues to back glute workouts: "Over the last 10 years, training the lower body has become so much more popular for the average gym-goer, and the emphasis on glute training has grown tenfold. One of the best things about having a 'hip thruster' in the gym is that it allows us to highlight to members that the main movement performed in everyday life is the hip extension; something that occurs every time we sit or bend down."

David Hammond, general manager for Bannatyne Health Club Shrewsbury, which serves a broad demographic, has also witnessed the increasing desire for glute workouts. "Isolating the glutes is certainly a trend and something that people are actively looking to do," he explains. "We were noticing a lot of people – both men and women – in our free weights area improvising by lying with their shoulders on a bench and a loose bar on their hips to activate the glutes. So, having a machine designed specifically for this purpose allows them to do this more safely and effectively."



The Nautilus Glute Drive from Core Health & Fitness

While glute exercises, in terms of functional training, have been around for years in various formats, Hammond also makes the point that people now want to do this with serious weights to achieve the desired results, either for aesthetics or performance. This reinforces the benefit of having specialist equipment. "The members of our gym who use Booty Builder are loving it – it's what they wanted and needed, and they feel the design and mechanics of the machine work really well to isolate the muscles while enabling them to progressively and safely increase the weight," he adds.



The Glute Builder circuit covers a mix of traditional exercises and new training trends

Technogym launches Glute Builder circuit

In keeping with the glute workout trend, Technogym has announced the launch of a new five-piece Glute Builder circuit, as part of its 15-piece Pure range of plate-loaded equipment.

The circuit includes Rear Kick, Standing Leg Curl, Standing Abductor, Hip Thrust and also Hack Squat, a recreation of the iconic piece of equipment designed and manufactured by Technogym founder, Nerio Alessandri, in his garage 35 years ago, that marked the birth of the company.



The Technogym research centre has tested the Glute Builder circuit with users of all different types, in order to ensure the delivery of a workload which is distributed throughout the entire movement trajectory, to produce the optimum exercise experience.

The Pure range is fully integrated within Technogym's digital Ecosystem: by downloading the Mywellness app, members can view exercise videos, check their training programmes, manually add exercises and keep track of all their activities.

For ease of use, every item is fitted with a QR code. Find out more: HCMmag.com/Technoglyte

Booty calling

The growth of the aesthetic market is undoubtedly a big driver of the new interest in glute workouts, with 'booty shots' and selfies a staple of social media channels such as Instagram.

Gone are the days when people asked 'does my bum look big in this?' today, the question is more likely to be, 'Does my bum look big enough in this?', such is the fashion for a well formed derriere.

Operators with members wanting to enhance their glutes for aesthetic reasons are finding that the provision of specific glute-building kit reduces their risk of injury while working out, increases the effectiveness of the workout and functions as a strong marketing signal that they are offering members what they want.

Having strong, stable and mobile hips can help to prevent falls among older adults

The provision of glute-specialised equipment has the advantage that it can be used by a wide range of members seeking different outcomes.

All demographics

According to Atkinson, glute workouts are being utilised by an ever-expanding pool of exercisers. "There's been a huge increase in people doing specific exercise movements targeted to every different muscle structure in the lower body, from the hamstrings and glutes to the quads," he says. "People are really diversifying their training to get stronger and more powerful and that's being reflected right through the user groups, from your everyday gym-goer to amateur and professional athletes. And it's not just the women working in this area, we see a very even split between men and women doing glute workouts at Gymbox."

Tracy Morrell, director of React Fitness, UK distributor for Booty Builder says: "We have a very diverse range of customers, from the military and United Nations to sports teams and fitness clubs. This proves there's a real demand for glute workout equipment across multiple demographics and sections of the industry and, therefore, growth potential in this area. With our expanding family of glute-building products, we're hoping more people will discover the advantages of these workouts for their physical health and performance." ●



The Booty Builder



GLUTE DRIVE



BIOMECHANIC DRIVEN DESIGN

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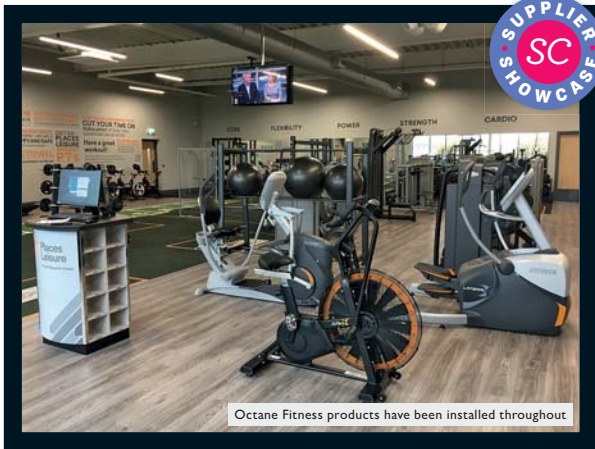
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FITNESS

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Octane continues to be an obvious choice to complement our first-class product line-up

Sarah Roberts,
Places Leisure



Octane Fitness products have been installed throughout

Octane Fitness fuels multi-million-pound leisure centre

Bulmershe Leisure Centre, run by Places Leisure, is providing its community with state-of-the-art fitness machines from Octane Fitness

The multi-million-pound facility, in Woodley, Wokingham, enables guests, members and VIPs from across the borough to stay physically active and emotionally engaged in fitness, sport and wellbeing.

To help achieve this goal, the centre offers some of Octane's most popular fitness innovations, including the revolutionary xRide recumbent elliptical, LateralX lateral elliptical and the intuitive AirdyneX HIIT bike.

"We've installed Octane Fitness products across our entire estate," says Sarah Roberts, fitness operations manager at Places Leisure. "We regard them as being unique products offering a fantastic variety of options. "Whether it's the xR6000 seated x-trainers and LateralX in the main cardio areas, or the AirdyneX fan bike for the HIIT trainers, with its superior levels of innovation, Octane continues to be an obvious choice to complement our first-class product line-up."

As part of Octane's zero-impact cardiovascular line, the innovative xRide xR6000S recumbent elliptical is ideal for



Places Leisure is producing some fantastic new gyms

Neil Campbell, Octane Fitness

anyone who wants to take on seated total-body, low-impact workouts, from beginners and those undergoing rehab, to seniors and committed exercisers. The xRide's PowerStroke technology benefits users by engaging more muscles.

Alternatively, exercisers can move in a new direction with the LateralX.

Adjustable motion

A one-of-a-kind variation of the traditional elliptical cross trainer, the LateralX offers smooth, 3D-adjustable motion that goes from a vertical elliptical stepping motion to an active

side-to-side motion to offer invigorating workouts that motivate and challenge exercisers of all fitness levels.

For HIIT, the AirdyneX is equipped with a 26-blade performance fan and a responsive, single-stage belt drive for virtually unlimited resistance and maximum efficiency, by converting the exerciser's effort into intensity.

Pedalling slowly yields lighter resistance, whereas a faster cadence results in greater resistance. Combined with the latest Octane Rô rowing machine, which has dual resistance, quick release foot straps and a multigrip handlebar, Octane delivers effective, efficient HIIT experiences.

"Places Leisure is producing some fantastic new gyms," says Neil Campbell, GM of Octane Fitness UK, "I love how the team is using Octane to complement the gym, by adding our unique x-training and HIIT training products.

"Octane is recognised as a leader in providing valuable variety and interest to many operators' gyms."

Find out more:
www.octanefitness.com

Product innovation

Liz Terry rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness



A new device tracks metabolism by analysing breath, explain **Michal and Merav Mor**



PHOTO LUMEN

Lumen gives metabolic readings from breath analysis

A new, hand-held, portable device and app has been launched that measures metabolism in real-time by analysing the breath.

Lumen gives insights into how the body metabolises fats and carbohydrates by measuring carbon dioxide levels, indicating the type of fuel being used to produce energy.

Daily reports give users insights into how the way they eat and exercise impacts their ability to shift efficiently between using fats and carbohydrates as sources of energy.

The app also shows how metabolism is affected by



"The only way to test metabolism was in the lab"

Michal Mor

sleep, physical activity and nutrition, and then gives personalised meal plans.

The aim of Lumen is to enable users to monitor and improve their metabolic health to improve their

metabolic flexibility.

The product was developed by Michal and Merav Mor, twin sisters with PhDs in physiology, who conceived the idea while training for an Ironman race.

"The only way to test metabolism was through an long laboratory process," says Michal Mor. "Leaving regular people with zero visibility into their metabolic rate and only haphazard ways of improving it."

Lumen was validated in a study by San Francisco State University.

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LUMEN

Octane will offer new LG screens as an add-on to its CV machines, says **Tracey Estes**

Electronics giant LG has entered the fitness market with the launch of a new 15-inch touchscreen display created especially for the exercise equipment sector.

The 15LU766A display has been designed specifically for fitness environments by offering higher-than-normal brightness settings and robust protection from liquids and dust – as well as allowing viewing from virtually any angle.

A graphical user interface also eliminates the need for channel up and down buttons, allowing exercisers to easily navigate TV programming.

LG plans to expand the add-on fitness line with a 22-inch model later this year.

South Korea-based LG has now also signed its first manufacturing fitness partner, Octane Fitness.

According to Tracey Estes, LG's fitness senior account manager, Octane will offer the display as an add-on to select models of its commercial CV machines.

"Octane Fitness and LG worked closely together to develop a customised user experience and an interface that provides simple, reliable access to TV programming and offers clients the opportunity to tie the displays into an existing network," Estes said.

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LG



"Octane and LG worked to develop a customised user experience"

Tracey Estes



The new LG screen is being used by Octane Fitness

PHOTO: LG OCEAN

PROMOTION

Wattbike AtomX leads the future of indoor cycling, says **Richard Baker**

The world's most advanced commercial smart bike – the Wattbike AtomX – is designed with cutting edge technology and boasts a feature-filled, high-definition Performance Touchscreen which elevates the user experience.

Richard Baker, CEO of Wattbike, explains: "The future of indoor cycling is smart and we're paving the way with a technologically advanced series of products to suit every Wattbiker's needs, automatically adjusting resistance for each individual rider to ensure that every pedal revolution is maximised."

The Wattbike Hub

"But a smart bike isn't just about the technology, it's also about the content," he says. "The Wattbike Hub, the 'brain' of our Wattbike AtomX acts like a coach or personal trainer, providing the rider

with relevant training plans and workouts, while testing performance and analysing training data 24/7, on-demand, at-home or in the gym."

A realistic ride

Integrated digital shifters allow riders to switch seamlessly between automatic resistance and gear mode to simulate the most realistic ride an indoor bike has to offer, while the all new climb mode lets riders tackle famous climbs from The Tour de France, the Giro and other races around the world, with smart technology changing the resistance automatically to precisely map the gradient of the virtual ride.

Wattbike measures over 40+ performance metrics and displays them live on screen and via the Wattbike Hub app or favourite third-party apps, so people can train their way,



The AtomX smart bike from Wattbike

A brand new, custom-built electromagnet sets the resistance for the Wattbike AtomX, making it faster and more reactive than ever before, as special sensors read the rider's data at an industry-leading speed of 1,000 times per second, creating unrivalled performance feedback.

The Wattbike AtomX has the capability to support every individual to improve their fitness, and overall

Wattbike has a way to quantify, track and improve physical health so we can better protect ourselves against disease

Richard Baker

health. In the current climate, people will be more aware of the importance of their health and the strength of their overall immune system than ever before.

"COVID-19 has forced everyone to take a look at themselves and address their health," Baker says. "Thankfully, Wattbike has a way to quantify, track and improve physical health, so we can better protect ourselves against disease, and ultimately live longer."

Fitness testing

"We've created an easy, accurate test that gives each individual their CRF score to benchmark their health. From this, we can then assign personalised training plans to improve their health and extend their life," says Baker.

● www.wattbike.com



Richard Baker is CEO of Wattbike



"The ALFI app is AR-ready, which means a life-sized instructor will be leading you through classes soon"

Zoe Bertali

The Refinery launches avatar-based PT service, as Zoe Bertali explains

Boutique operator, The Refinery E9, has launched a personal trainer (PT) service with a twist, by offering customers the opportunity to take part in exercise sessions led by an avatar.

Utilising motion capture, 3D and augmented-reality (AR) technology, 'ALFI' is a virtual PT, created in partnership with Unicorn XP and Riverswawe Developers.

The Refine with ALFI app has been designed to

provide the "most inclusive, visually appealing, and movement-focused PT ever experienced" in the virtual and on demand fitness space.

Using an algorithm, the app creates a unique fitness class of either HIIT or yoga, also offering a posture clinic for technical perfection.

The class is then presented by ALFI the avatar, using 3D motion clips to create the unique content, complete with synchronised music

PHOTO: THE REFINERY



The new app presents PTs as avatars

and voice-overs for a seamless user experience.

The app is run on the UNITY platform, using motion capture technology of experienced human coaches and includes 360-degree view of all poses and moves.

Zoe Bertali, co-founder

of ALFI said: "Our app is AR-ready, which means that very soon, life-sized ALFI instructors will be leading you through classes in your home, not just on your screen!"

[fitness-kit.net KEYWORD](#)

ALFI

NHS-approved exercise prescription app EXi launches free COVID-rehab programme with Sir Muir Gray

EXi, an NHS-approved exercise app designed to help people with long term health conditions, has launched a COVID-19 rehabilitation programme.

EXi teamed up with renowned British physician Sir Muir Gray to devise the programme, which comprises movement-focused sessions to support those recovering from the virus.

The EXi COVID-19 rehab pathway will restrict people to low/moderate intensity activity for the first 12 weeks. If they present a good health profile after this time, EXi will unlock higher intensity activity as an option.

The programme has been developed using the most up-to-date stats and data from health organisations to provide people with the tools they need to get better safely.

"For anyone who has had the disease, a carefully

PHOTO: EXISER MUIR GRAY



The EXi app supports COVID-19 recovery



"It's critical people increase the amount they move, to help them build their resilience"

Sir Muir Gray

prescribed rehabilitation exercise programme will speed their recovery," Sir Muir said, "It's absolutely critical that people with chronic health conditions not only keep moving but increase the amount they move to help them build their resilience to COVID-19."

COVID-19 has been proven to cause the most suffering and side effects in those with underlying health conditions, including

diabetes, respiratory and heart conditions and obesity. "Starting rehabilitation as soon as you're able can help to improve physical, psychological and emotional recovery," says Carron Manning, CEO and co-founder of EXi.

"Our programme guides users over a 12-week programme that is both personalised and safe."

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PHOTO: SHARON WICKS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Exercise has been found to improve cancer outcomes

Improved prognosis

New research from the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, has established why people who exercise when suffering from cancer generally have better outcomes

Cancer sufferers who exercise regularly have a generally better prognosis than inactive patients, but science hadn't managed to agree why that is, up to this point.

However, researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden have found a likely explanation of why exercise helps slow down cancer growth.

Randall Johnson, professor at the department of cell and molecular biology at the Karolinska Institutet, says new evidence points to physical activity changing the metabolism of the immune system's cytotoxic T cells, thereby improving their ability to attack cancer cells.

Johnson is the author of a study – *Cytotoxic T-cells mediate exercise-induced reductions in tumor growth* – which makes the connection. The work was published in the journal *eLife*.

"The biology behind the positive effects of exercise can provide new insights into how the body maintains health, as well as helping us design and improve treatments against cancer," said Johnson.

“ We hope these results contribute to a deeper understanding of how our lifestyle impacts our immune system and that this work informs the development of new immunotherapies against cancer

To examine how exercise influences cancer growth, researchers observed two groups of mice – one which exercised regularly and another that remained inactive.

T cell activation

They measured levels of common metabolites that are produced in muscle at high levels during exertion.

Some of these metabolites, such as lactate, altered the metabolism of the T cells and increased their activity.

The researchers also found that T cells in the exercising group showed an altered metabolism when compared to T cells from the sedentary group.

During the study, it became clear that cancer cell growth slowed and mortality decreased in the trained

group, when compared with the results for the untrained group.

The impact of exercise

Helene Rundqvist, the study's first author and senior researcher at the department of laboratory medicine at the Karolinska Institutet, said: "Our research shows that exercise affects the production of several molecules and metabolites that activate cancer-fighting immune cells and thereby inhibit cancer growth.

"We hope these results contribute to a deeper understanding of how our lifestyle impacts our immune system and that this work informs the development of new immunotherapies against cancer." ●

Find out more about this research at: www.HCMmag.com/TCELLS

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