

FIBO GLOBAL MEDIA PARTNER

HCM

JANUARY 2021

HCMmag.com

@HCMmag

UNITING THE WORLD OF FITNESS

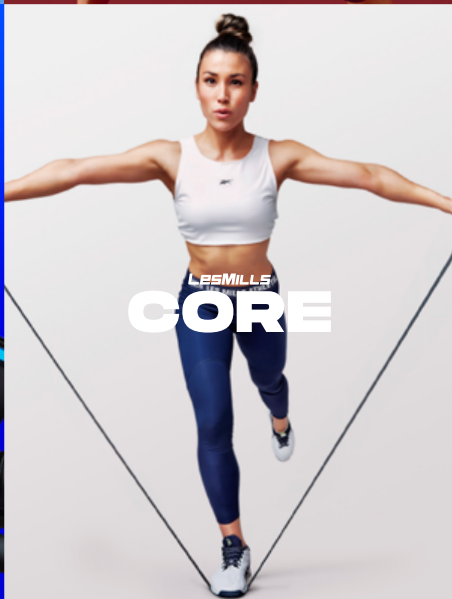
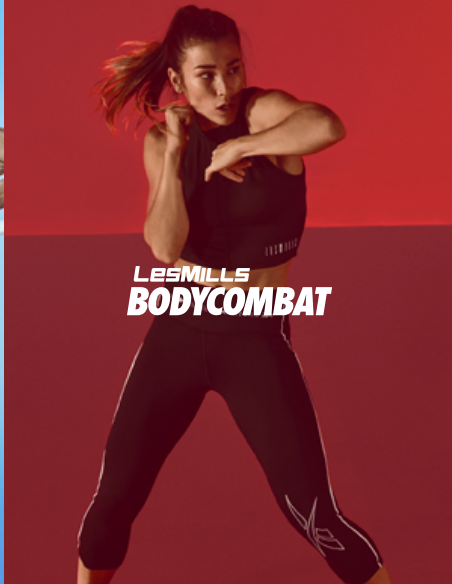
LES MILLS

THE ULTIMATE GROUP FITNESS SOLUTION

STREAMING
ON DEMAND
VIRTUAL
LIVE

INCREDIBLE OFFERS!

FIND OUT MORE AT: [LES MILLS.COM/UK/ULTIMATE](https://lesmills.com/uk/ultimate)



+18 MORE WORLD-CLASS WORKOUTS, AVAILABLE NOW IN CLUB OR AT HOME

Greg Whyte & Kevin Cahill

Joining forces
to launch virtual
'couch to exercise'
programme, RISE
p78

Adam Tranter

The UK's first
Bicycle Mayor p14

Everyone's talking about

Mental health

p44

Richard Darwin

The CEO of The
Gym Group talks
COVID survival
and strategy p32

LOCKDOWN SURVEY

Leisure-net is
tracking the
impact on the
sector p68

ON THE COVER

Fixing Dad

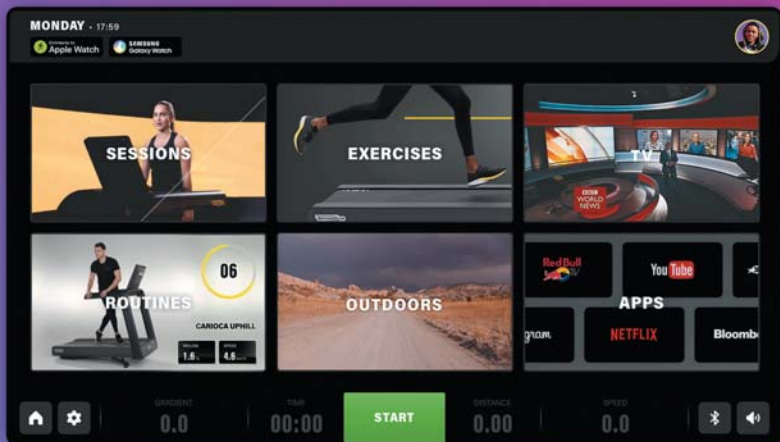
*How Anthony and Ian Whittington gave up
their jobs to save their father's life p50*



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

- **Training variety:** training is more fun and inspiring for any age or fitness level with tailored on-demand workouts, and countless entertainment options
- **Mobile connectivity:** personalise your experience by connecting your personal device; charge your phone wirelessly
- **Space-savvy:** the redesigned excite run offers the best floor footprint to training space ratio (-30% footprint / +13% running space)
- **Energy-savvy:** the new excite line represents the next generation of sustainable equipment

Discover more on technogym.com/HCM



TECHNOGYM LIVE

Precision Training Experience



Discover the new
Excite line



A woman with blonde hair tied back is sitting in a meditative 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 grassy field with some fallen leaves, bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

**FIRST
FOR
FITNESS
SOLUTIONS**

PHYSICAL[®]
FIRST FOR FITNESS SOLUTIONS

Our mission statement, First for Fitness Solutions, reflects our expertise in the way people now choose to train: functional, mind body, small group training and free weights. However large or small your workout space, these disciplines should be your first thought – and we should be your first call.

www.physicalcompany.co.uk • +44 (0) 1494 769 222 • sales@physicalcompany.co.uk



Work Out to Help Out

There's never been a more important time for us all to be focused on lobbying, as the industry fights for its work and potential to be recognised and supported

Losing new year trade as a result of lockdown is a hard blow for the industry and we're backing ukactive in fighting for sector-specific support, such as VAT relief, to help through this challenging time.

As part of our contribution to this lobbying, HCM has launched a Parliamentary Petition, calling on the UK government to fund a Work Out to Help Out scheme to relaunch the sector when lockdown ends. We're also calling for gyms to reopen in the first wave, to avoid a repetition of the 'pubs before gyms' debacle of 2020.

We hope you'll sign the petition and urge your members to do the same, so we can show the strength of support for the sector. You can find it at www.HCMmag.com/petition.

Work Out to Help Out would act as a reboot of the traditional new year membership surge, incentivising people to join a gym, club or leisure centre to get fit.

New research from Public Health England shows that 70 per cent of adults 'want to get healthier' in 2021, indicating that the scheme would be pushing on an open door.

Operators rely on the new year sign-ups, with up to 30 per cent of new members joining during this period and if we're unable to claw back this business, it will weaken the sector and reduce exercise options for consumers.

With government support and awareness-raising, we believe Work Out To Help Out would be a turning point for the health of the nation and would set us on the path to recovery after a winter of enforced sedentary behaviour and declining vitality and mental health.

Last year, the government backed the Eat Out to Help Out scheme and spent £.5bn of public money picking up a proportion of people's restaurant and bar tabs.

We believe the health and fitness sector is equally deserving of support and that using government money to fatten everyone up was not the wisest move, in the middle of a pandemic driven by a virus which preys on people with excess body fat.

We hope this year, the government will back gyms, so we can support people to get fit to fight COVID.

There's never been a more important time to (re)make the case for putting prevention at the heart of policymaking,

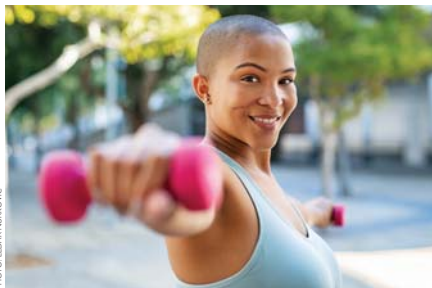


PHOTO: ELDAR NURKOVIC

Time to get back to exercise and get fit to fight COVID

6 New research from Public Health England shows that more than 70 per cent of adults want to get healthier in 2021

as there are daily reminders we've lost our way when it comes to health strategy. A study by the University of Cambridge has identified 689 failed policies over a 30 year period in the fight to address the obesity crisis, for example.

We're trying to vaccinate our way out of this crisis while denying people access to health-giving activity, rather than broadening the approach to utilise the power of prevention.

We must reboot our policies with a focus on helping people to be more healthy, reopening regulated, COVID-secure wellness environments such as gyms and spas and educating people – especially children – in self-care, so we are better-placed to win this battle and the battles to come.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

HCM CONTENTS

Uniting the world of fitness

JANUARY 2021 No 286



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND



PHOTO: ADAM TRANTER

64 ClubIntel on the customer journey during COVID-19

14 Bicycle Mayor and catalyst, Adam Tranter

07 Editor's letter

The pandemic has shown the need for us to embrace prevention in all areas of life

14 HCM people Adam Tranter

The Bicycle Mayor of Coventry talks about bikes and public health challenges

18 Kate Little/Paula Harris

The duo from Everyone Active are taking on Amazon by launching online retail with the aim of hitting £1m p.a. turnover

20 Scott O'Shea

A 19th century mill in Hampshire has been converted into a high-end training gym by O'Shea and his partners

24 HCM news

Stay up to date with the latest news. This month, Gymbox enters the hotel market and Sport England publishes its 10-year strategy

32 Interview Richard Darwin

The CEO of The Gym Group talks about the impact of COVID-19 and how the business is innovating to stay ahead

44 The great debate Mental health

The pandemic is driving a mental health crisis. Industry experts explore the scope of the challenge and open the conversation about what can be done

50 Anthony Whittington

Anthony and his brother Ian founded a health charity, Fixing Dad, to save their father's life. They tell their moving story

58 Building communities

The Retention Convention saw experts sharing exciting examples of best practice around customer relationship building

64 ClubIntel research

The late Stephen Tharrett explores the US member journey in the age of COVID-19

68 Lockdown insight

Leisure-net's lockdown 2 survey yielded findings that will set a course for the UK industry as it comes out of lockdown 3

PHOTO: EVANGELIS



50 Fixing Dad: sons Anthony and Ian Whittington gave up their jobs to save their dad's life with lifestyle change

PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP



32 Richard Darwin, CEO, The Gym Group

PHOTO: HR YEUNG



44 Global Wellness Institute's Ophelia Yeung on mental health

74 Fitness to wellbeing

Muir Gray argues the industry needs a change of focus to optimise its potential

78 Interview

Greg Whyte & Kevin Cahill

The two have teamed up to create a free, virtual couch-to-exercise programme

84 Profile

David Gutstadt

The founder of Philadelphia's Fitler Club explains its high-end concept

92 Supplier showcase

Venueserve Fitness

The Health Club Collection on its collaboration with Venueserve Fitness

94 Supplier showcase

Fisikal

Third Space has been working with tech specialist, Fisikal, to build out its digital offering for members

96 Product innovation

Klafs launches an infrared sauna and Pulse Fitness a new strength line, Precor reveals Preva Mobile and Virtuagym unveils Pro+

98 HCM directory

HCM's guide to products and services

100 Research

Researchers have found that women over 50 gain the same benefits from strength training as men of the same age



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/LOTTN44

68 Leisure-net lockdown insight

MEET THE TEAM



Editor
Liz Terry

+44 (0)1462 431385



Publisher
Jan Williams

+44 (0)1462 471909



Managing editor
Steph Eaves

+44 (0)1462 471934



Head of news
Tom Walker

+44 (0)1462 431385



Editor at large
Magali Robathan

+44 (0)1462 431385



Assistant editor
Megan Whitby

+44 (0)1462 471906

Email us:
fullname@leisuremedia.com

Circulation

+44 (0)1462 471932

Subscriptions

+44 (0)1462 471910

Finance

+44 (0)1462 471930

Customer services

+44 (0)1462 471901

Credit control

+44 (0)1462 733477



Choose how you read HCM

Print

HCM magazine is available in print at www.leisuresubs.com

Digital

Read free online and enjoy extra links and searchability www.HCMmag.com/digital

PDF

A PDF edition is available to read offline at: www.HCMmag.com/pdf

Other resources from HCM

HCM Handbook

www.HCMhandbook.com
www.HCMhandbook.com/pdf

HCM Online

www.HCMmag.com

HCM Ezine & Instant Alerts

www.leisuremedia.com/subscribe

Fit Tech

www.fittechglobal.com

Leisure Opportunities

www.leisureopportunities.co.uk
www.leisureopportunities.co.uk/archive

Buyer Search Engine

www.fitness-kit.net



©Cybertrek Ltd 2021 ISSN 1361-3510 (print) / 2397-2351 (online)

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

HCM (Health Club Management) is published 12 times a year by The Leisure Media Company Ltd, Portmill House, Portmill Lane, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1DJ, UK. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright holder, Cybertrek Ltd.

Printed by The Manson Group Ltd. Distributed by Royal Mail Group Ltd and Whistl Ltd in the UK and Total Mail Ltd globally. ©Cybertrek Ltd 2021 ISSN 1361-3510 (print) / 2397-2351 (online). To subscribe to HCM (Health Club Management), log on to www.leisuresubs.com, email subs@leisuremedia.com or call +44 (0)1462 471930. Annual subscription rates are UK £45, Europe £57, rest of world £80, students (UK) £22.

Times are changing!

Keep your members. Keep moving.
Just do it differently!

#AboutTime

Build a new member model for changing times:

Live streaming
On-demand
Virtual 1:1 sessions
In the gym or park*


fibodo

www.fibodo.com/hcm

* subject to national and local restrictions

LES MILLS

THE ULTIMATE GROUP FITNESS SOLUTION

STREAMING

STREAM YOUR INSTRUCTORS TEACHING LES MILLS CLASSES
(OPTIONS TO BUILD YOUR OWN DIGITAL LIBRARY)

ON DEMAND

BECOME AN AFFILIATE PARTNER OF LES MILLS ON DEMAND*
OR HOST LES MILLS CONTENT ON YOUR CLUB'S APP OR WEBSITE

VIRTUAL

SCREEN VIRTUAL LES MILLS CLASSES IN CLUB

LIVE

ALL 22 INSTRUCTOR-LED LES MILLS PROGRAMMES OR SELECTED
PACKAGES LIVE IN CLUB

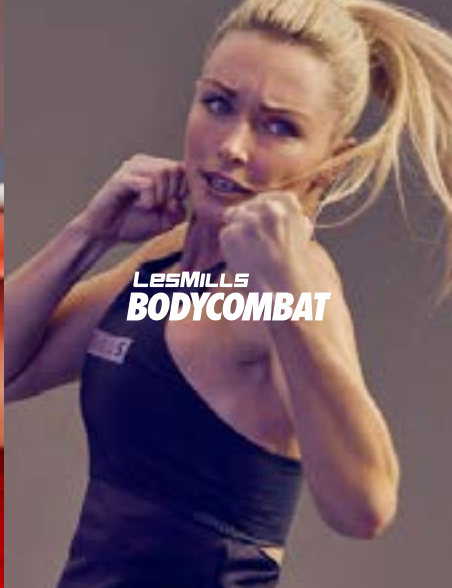
*VOTED BEST AT HOME WORKOUT (USA TODAY'S READERS' CHOICE AWARD)

INCREDIBLE OFFERS!

FIND OUT MORE AT: [LES MILLS.COM/UK/ULTIMATE](https://lesmills.com/uk/ultimate)



LES MILLS
BODYPUMP



LES MILLS
BODYCOMBAT



LES MILLS
BODYBALANCE



LES MILLS
GRIT

18 MORE WORLD-CLASS WORKOUTS, AVAILABLE NOW IN CLUB OR AT HOME

HCM people



If we could get bike journeys up from 2% to 4% it would make a huge impact on emissions, people's health and mental wellbeing

Adam Tranter

Founder, #Bike is Best and Cycling Marketing Board



Tranter runs a marketing agency which specialises in cycling and running



What's Bike is Best and when was it launched?

Bike is Best is a public-facing campaign to promote cycling and get more people on bikes, whether for exercise, pleasure, or to reduce journeys made by car. We want to encourage people to have fun on bikes, as well as use them to swap out the car for those short trips to the shops, the gym and every day errands.

The main aim is to present an inclusive image of cycling and help shape the public narrative of cycling, as well as provide data and reasoning to influence local authorities to provide safe cycling environments.

Our message is that cycling is inherently good for society: it gets people physically active, is good for mental health and if used instead of the car would have a large impact on carbon emissions, as well as providing a less risky alternative to public transport. With scientific research showing areas with poor air quality are seeing 15 per cent higher COVID deaths, car pollution is an issue that we really must tackle.

The campaign launched in June 2020, to take advantage of the momentum surrounding cycling. My agency, Fusion Marketing, already worked with a number of cycling clients, and so we swiftly gained the backing of around 50 partners, including Trek, Brompton, Cannondale, Strava, Frog and Isla Bikes, to launch a multi-faceted marketing campaign to promote cycling, overcome the barriers and encourage more people to develop a cycling habit.

How well is the UK doing in using bikes instead of cars?

Only two per cent of journeys in the UK are made by bike. This compares to 50 per cent of journeys in some cities in the Netherlands, where cycling is an intrinsic part of their culture and lifestyle.

Our planning system is set up for driving, particularly with out of town industrial estates, however, many of our car journeys are short enough to be made by bike: 68 per cent of all journeys are less than five miles and 24 per cent are less than one mile. Even if we could get the figure of bike journeys up from 2 per cent to 4 per cent it would make a huge impact on emissions and people's health and mental wellbeing.

Air pollution causes the premature death of around 40,000 people every year which less car use and more cycling could help prevent. Cycling could also help to reduce the strain which sedentary diseases place on the NHS.

While COVID has been disastrous for gyms, it's has provided a boost for cycling. What impact has it had?

We've been able to make more impact in the last nine months than in the last nine years, as – particularly in the first lockdown – research by Cyclescheme showed that 83 per cent of people went back to cycling, digging old bikes out of sheds.



The UK government has invested £2bn to double the number of people cycling over the next five years

Bike shops were allowed to stay open during lockdown, the government actively encouraged people to go and have fun with their families on bikes, funding was quickly made available, there were 1950s levels of traffic, with great weather and better air quality. Many key workers also started cycling to work to avoid public transport.

What are the main barriers to cycling?

Cycling received a huge boost from the 2012 Olympics, but it is dominated, rightly or wrongly by a stereotype: usually middle aged men in lycra. We are keen to change that perspective so everyone feels as though it is an activity for them.

According to our research, the main barrier is safety – either a perceived danger or worries about the lack of cycling infrastructure. Even though cycling is statistically safer than walking per mile travelled, for many people cycling on roads doesn't feel safe.

The cost of bikes and equipment can also be off putting, as are concerns about fitness, mechanical issues and body image.

What do you need to do to overcome these barriers and encourage more cycling?

We need budget and the political will and at the moment we have both. The government has said it wants to double the number of people cycling over the next five years and is making £2bn available. It's not enough, and is dwarfed by the £27bn allocation for new roads, but it's a very good start.

At the moment we're seeing vastly different approaches from local authorities and we want councils across the country to make cycling and walking investment plans. The main priority is to provide safe cycling environments via bike lanes and low traffic neighbourhoods. During the first lockdown we saw pop-up bike lanes made with cones, which gave an element of separation – enough to make people feel safer. Many of these are now becoming permanent.

Low traffic neighbourhoods – where small residential roads are sealed off to through traffic – are cost-effective, bold interventions. They're not universally popular, as some people don't

The main priority is to provide safe cycling environments via bike lanes and low traffic neighbourhoods



Adam Tranter is Bicycle Mayor of Coventry

Bicycle Mayors

Tranter was appointed Bicycle Mayor of Coventry in early 2020.

Born and raised in the city, Tranter and his wife Aurelie set up the county's first school cycling bus there, taking 20 children safely to school each Friday.

Speaking about his new role, Tranter outlined three main priorities:

- 1) Work to ensure that Coventry meets its cycling potential; working with policymakers to ensure priority is given to cycling and active travel
- 2) Engage media and partners to better communicate and

showcase the benefits of cycling for everybody in Coventry

3) Prioritise the implementation and promotion of initiatives that benefit the most vulnerable: children, people with special mobility needs, vulnerable road users and those affected most by pollution.

About Bicycle Mayors

There are over 100 Bicycle Mayors worldwide. The initiative started in The Netherlands.

Find out more:

www.HCMmag.com/biciclemayor

like to be limited about where they can drive and often they get rid of a rat run which might shave a couple of minutes off a journey. However, they're embraced by many communities and those who'd like to walk, cycle and allow children to play in the street. They can be made a lot more cheaply than bike lanes, which can cost around £1.2m per mile.

A number of councils are already doing good work, including Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham and some parts of London, including Hackney and Lambeth. However, it was extremely frustrating to see Kensington and Chelsea take out a bike lane, which was used by 4,000 people a day, after receiving 320 complaints from residents – less than 0.2 per cent of the borough's population. They didn't use data or reasoning to inform the change and it leaves a gaping hole in London's cycling network.

We're asking councils what is the alternative to cycling? We need to improve air pollution and we need to tackle climate change, which means we have to use our cars less. So if it's not cycling, then what is the solution? And if not now, then when? ●

About the Cycling Marketing Board

The Cycling Marketing Board was established by Tranter January 2021 with a 'vision to entice new consumers to cycling' and to diversify cycling's image with governments and the media.

The board has a long-term vision and will run two major advertising campaigns annually and work on a programme of advocacy initiatives to support the "interested but concerned" group who would cycle, if provided with improved infrastructure and a notable cultural shift towards cycling as transport.

The initiative is supported by Cycling UK, Sustrans, British Cycling, London Cycling Campaign, The Association of Cycle Traders, The Bikeability Trust and Wheels For Wellbeing.

Support comes from founder partners: BIKE-DROP, Brompton Bicycle, Cairn, Cyclescheme, Green Commute Initiative, Havebike, Komoot, Le Col, Love to Ride, Madison, Muc-Off, Raleigh, Schwalbe UK, Sigma Sports, Specialized UK, the Bike Club, Trek, Universal Colours, Upgrade, Wahoo, Yellow Jersey Cycling Insurance and Zwift.

Find out more: www.fusion-media.co.uk



All products have been priced competitively, using Amazon as a benchmark, to ensure the shop can thrive in a competitive market



Kate Little & Paula Harris

Regional retail managers, Everyone Active

You've been getting into ecommerce – tell us more

Everyone Active has launched the Everyone Member Shop, an online store stocking fitness equipment, apparel and accessories from brands including Reebok, Under Armour and Gympro.

We've always had strong retail sales, so ecommerce was the natural next step. While we support the rest of the industry in the fight for gyms to be

re-categorised as essential services, we can at least keep our members stocked with the equipment they need to continue their preferred forms of training.

How does the shop fit into the wider business?

The Everyone Member Shop complements Everyone on Demand (EOD), our 2,500-strong on-demand workout product, as it includes a

section which helps EOD users to find the products they need to enhance their favourite at-home sessions.

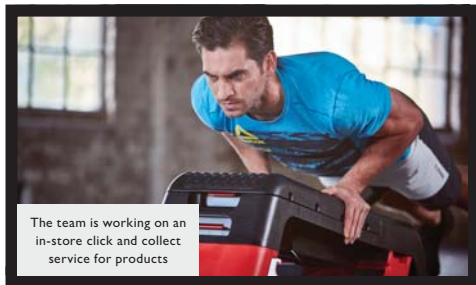
How is it being delivered?

The store is being managed and fulfilled by D2F Fitness, a long-term partner of Everyone Active – also the exclusive fitness equipment provider for the online offering.

The two companies worked together during the first national lockdown launching a basic shop, which showed strong sales throughout spring 2020. The success of the test shop led to the project being rolled out on a wider scale.

We moved our own-brand retail, as well as our partner brands' stockholding, into D2F's warehouse for online distribution. We've recently added an aquatics line and there are plans to introduce new brand partners.

The shop was designed and created in Shopify, by Action Group. All products have been priced competitively, using Amazon as a benchmark, to ensure



The team is working on an in-store click and collect service for products



The Everyone Member shop is expected to turn over £1m in year two

the shop can thrive in a competitive market. Initial sales reports show dumbbells are the most popular item.

How much did it cost to set up?

It was fully funded by profits from sales made from the online shop during the first national lockdown

How long did it take to set up?

Around six weeks

Why did you choose Shopify?

It's a simple, intuitive platform that can be fully managed by 'non-techies', which makes it easier for us to be responsive to sales in real-time.

What turnover are you expecting?

We're forecasting £500k turnover in year one rising to £1m in year two.

How are you marketing the Everyone Member Shop?

We're prioritising digital including email, social media, push notifications and

direct links from the main Everyone Active Website. We're also using Instagram and Facebook shopping to make it easier for customers to purchase from our social platforms.

When centres reopen we'll market products via digital screens including cardio consoles. We'll also be running referral campaigns with colleagues.

How will it affect your existing retail offering?

Everyone Active has always presented strong retail sales. We don't intend to lessen the focus on our physical retail but see online as a complement which helps us reach a wider audience with a larger product range. We'll be able to move end of season/line stock from centres to online for flash sales.

How will you cross-market in-centre retail and online?

Not all centres have the space for large physical retail displays, but our members can view capsule collections in-centre

before ordering online. In the future, we plan to use QR codes to make it easier for members to find and order products they see in-centre, even if they're viewing them via an on-screen ad.

We are also working on launching an in-centre 'click and collect' service with all the products we sell.

What are your long-term plans?

The Everyone Member shop will be a permanent part of the business. We know that for it to succeed in the long-term we need to be able to sell at competitive prices, so we'll continually review the market to ensure we're offering the best prices.

We'll continue to source new suppliers and products that are relevant to the activities we offer in our centres and at home, via EOD. The online shop provides an opportunity to widen the product ranges. We'll also be working with suppliers to forecast seasonal stock. Find out more: <https://shop.everyoneactive.com>



Scott O'Shea owns Station Mill, along with his business partners



Coming from a personal training background, my experience has taught me that people hire the trainer before the training

Scott O'Shea

Founder, Station Mill



Tell us about the new club

My vision for Station Mill is for it to be the premium gym and studio in the region, offering a facility where the focus is on design and a great user experience. I want to make it a special place to be and create a real wow factor, with many different elements.

We're in Arlesford, near Winchester, UK and we've developed a new gym built into a 19th century millhouse. We don't believe anything in the area reaches this level.

What did you think when you first saw the building?

When presented with Station Mill as an opportunity, I didn't hesitate to grasp it.

The architecture is stunning and this area has a rich history, having once been the centre for dispatching grain and watercress via the Watercress Line to London.

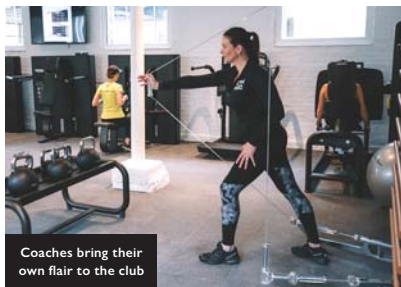
I own the building, along with my three business partners. It's such a beautiful setting, that itself creates a special environment.

It was important for the brand to complement the heritage, so when creating the brand and the brand values the statement, *First Class Departs Here*, was coined as a nod to the railway next door and the level at which we aim to do things.

Renovations to create a premium fitness facility have been done with finesse and care and I wanted to put my own spin on the club to deliver on the vision of providing a premium fitness destination.

What's your target market?

I've been working in Winchester for ten years training affluent clients, who've always



said there isn't a high-end or exclusive environment locally where they can train.

People travel some distance for similar training experiences, so I'm aiming to tap into this market, targeting people in their 40s and 50s, as well as early retirees – those who've stepped out of the corporate world and who have a huge interest in their health and wellness.

What's your approach?

Coming from a personal training background, my experience has taught me that people hire the trainer before the training. Our coaches are all experienced and bring their own flair to the club. We want Station Mill to be the destination for personal training, gym, yoga, pilates and cycling.



Dual-stack equipment means the weaker side isn't dominated by the stronger

What was your approach to the design?

Creating a boutique environment is no small feat. Every detail, the look, feel and presence that's being created needed to be tailored and finely-tuned to build an enticing environment and overall memorable experience.

The big influence for me was the London boutique sector. Third Space, Equinox, 1Rebel and Core Collective have been a great inspiration from an aesthetics perspective.

What kit did you opt for?

The gym floor features Technogym Kinesis Station and Kinesis Personal, which we use for progressive functional training, designed around human movement. I feel it's easier on the joints for our target members, as they can achieve a freer range of movement.

As a coach, I believe in working with dual-stack equipment, as this means the weaker side isn't going to be dominated by the stronger side.

We also have a Skillbike studio where members can take part in three different classes, depending on their training goals: Performance, Race and Just Ride.

You don't have to be a cyclist to take part; they're also a way to get fitter in an efficient and trackable way.

How about digital?

We track members' activity in and out of the club using the Mywellness band which automatically logs and stores their data, creating a simple,



Station Mill: aiming for the high-end

effective member journey to provide results-driven performance. This means they can see their progress, which in turn significantly drives long-term member retention.

PTs can also access this data, which is helpful with motivation and scheduling.

How would you sum up your philosophy?

The values of honest information and a premium service with a results-driven approach are integral parts of our offering.

We want each member to leave Station Mill feeling they've achieved or learned something from their training – be it in a class or a PT session. ●



O'Shea (third left), has woven a high-end gym into a heritage building

There are three cycle class types on offer: Performance, Race and Just Ride



Sport England to focus on children and the disadvantaged

Sport England has vowed to tackle inequality and create a nation of “inclusive and connected communities” through physical activity.

Revealing its latest 10-year strategy, *Uniting the Movement*, the grassroots body wants to see a country where people

live “happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives”.

Children and the most disadvantaged in society will be placed at the heart of the new plan, with an emphasis on transforming fitness levels and tackling obesity.

“For certain people – such as disabled people, those from lower socio-economic groups and people from BAME backgrounds – there is a clear pattern of low levels of activity and so there will be a focus on providing more opportunities for those being left behind,” said Sport England CEO Tim Hollingsworth.

Specifically, Sport England will focus its time and resources on three areas – “advocating for movement, sport and physical activity”, “creating the catalysts for change” and



The strategy will guide Sport England's work until 2031

“joining forces on big issues”. The strategy also outlines the importance of providing different types of investment and support, with an emphasis on looking for new ways to increase participation – such as better use of tech and data.

Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive, said: “The strategy needs to be accompanied by a commitment from the government to not leave parts of this sector behind.”

More: <http://lei.sr/B7b7r.H>



There will be a focus on providing more opportunities for those being left behind

Tim Hollingsworth

689 weak policies blamed for failure to tackle UK's obesity crisis

The failure to tackle the UK's obesity crisis is down to successive governments being guilty of weak policy design, lack of effectiveness and botched implementation.

That is the message of a hard-hitting report which studied 14 government obesity strategies published from 1992 to 2020, containing a total of 689 wide-ranging policies.

According to the study, the approach taken by governments to their own policies has “destined them to fail”, as there has been a reliance on attempting to influence individuals to change their behaviours



The strategies have “relied too much on individual agency”

– rather than changing unhealthy environments.

The work – conducted by a team at the University of Cambridge and funded by NIHR – doesn't pull any

punches: “Many of these policies were set out in a way that does not readily lead to implementation,” say the report's authors – Dolly Theis and Martin White, adding:



Many of these policies were set out in a way that does not readily lead to implementation

Dolly Theis

“and the largest proportion of policies did not fulfill any of the implementation viability criteria.”

More: <http://lei.sr/k3j4u.H>

Petition calls for gyms to reopen first after lockdown

HCM editor, Liz Terry, has launched a Parliamentary Petition calling for gyms to be in the first wave of reopenings after the lockdown and for the government to fund a 'Work Out to Help Out' scheme.

Terry said: "Last year, we saw the government opening pubs before gyms as we came out of lockdown. This must not happen again. The fitness industry can unite and fight to ensure that this time around, we are open in the first wave, so we can get back to the valuable work of safeguarding the health of the nation."

"I hope the fitness industry will throw its weight behind this petition and encourage members to sign it, so we



Last year, we saw the government open pubs before gyms. This must not happen again.

Liz Terry

can make our voices heard. It's most important for us to stress that people need to sign and then also validate their vote via the email link to ensure every vote counts."

In the petition, Terry writes: "We want the government to recognise



Gyms are collectively losing £400m a month during lockdown

the importance of the sector in empowering people to look after their health, to stay fit and fight COVID.

"We're also calling for the government to fund a Work Out to Help Out scheme to help operators claw back the new sign-ups they've missed

this year due to the lockdown and to re-engage consumers.

"January and February are vital months, as these sign-ups bolster member numbers and this has been lost in 2021."

Sign the petition here:
www.HCMmag.com/petition
More: http://lei.sr/y5b7X_H

Gymbox moves into the hotel market with citizenM deal

Gymbox has entered the hospitality space with the signing of a deal to deliver in-room exercise sessions to guests staying at citizenM hotels around the world.



Our collaboration means we're able to offer our guests the choice to be active

Robin Chadha

Utilising its Out The Box digital platform – launched last year – Gymbox will deliver bespoke, pre-recorded classes across five categories: strength, sweat, fight, holistic and rhythm.

Guests at citizenM's 21 hotels will be able to access the service free via their in-room TVs. "citizenM hotels are designed to give travellers a great base," said Robin Chadha, CMO of citizenM hotels.

"Through our collaboration, we're able to offer our guests the choice to be active in the privacy of their room."

http://lei.sr/V9W6M_H



Gymbox will deliver bespoke, pre-recorded classes

Gym Group brings in Wais Shaifta and Rio Ferdinand as non-execs

The Gym Group has brought in Rio Ferdinand and Wais Shaifta as non-executive directors, signalling a broadening of its remit, new horizons and an intention to continue to refine and expand its member offering.

Shaifta is currently CEO at Europe-wide digital healthcare

company, Push Doctor, which works in partnership with the NHS to connect patients with clinicians. He was previously director of global operations at online beauty marketplace, Treatwell (formerly Wahanda), and prior to that spent six years at Just Eat, where he was responsible for group operations strategy.

His appointment will strengthen the board in developing its health- and wellness-related services, as well as its secondary spend operations, while his global experience would help the company in delivering international expansion – an option which is thought to be on the cards.

Footballing legend, Rio Ferdinand, has built a business career in broadcasting, and



See our interview with Gym Group CEO Richard Darwin on page 32

Rio Ferdinand has become a non-executive director

charity while championing areas such as social housing and youth development.

"I'm a passionate believer in the wide-reaching mental and physical benefits of living a healthy and active lifestyle," Ferdinand said.

The appointments were revealed alongside a trading update, in which the group said it was looking for expansion opportunities, after opening eight sites during 2020.

More: http://lei.sr/n7D9D_H



I'm a passionate believer in the mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle

Rio Ferdinand

Mike Ashley adds gyms to the mix for new high-end retail roll out

Fraser's Group will open three new regional flagship Flannels-branded retail stores during 2021 – each of which will feature fitness studios.

The Mike Ashley-owned retail group is betting on a recovery for British high streets with the plans, which will see stores opening in Liverpool, Leicester and Sheffield.

As well as a seven-floor Flannels megastore on Liverpool's iconic Parker Street, Fraser's will convert the existing House of Fraser store at Sheffield's Meadowhall shopping centre into a Flannels site. The third location is a new development



All three new stores will feature large fitness studios

at Leicester's Fosse Park shopping centre. The Flannels brand concentrates in retailing high end luxury brands.

All three stores will feature large fitness studios – although

exact details regarding facilities and branding are yet to be confirmed.

Fraser's Group's head of elevation Michael Murray said: "Liverpool is the fifth largest

retail centre in the UK, and in our opinion, underserved – we'll be the first multi-category destination to mark the city"

More: http://lei.sr/E4D5x_H



Liverpool is the fifth largest retail centre in the country, and in our opinion underserved

Michael Murray

Battle heats up for European fitness industry events

As the global vaccine rollout brings reopening closer and heralds the end of lockdowns, jostling is beginning for the resumption of live fitness industry events later in the year.

IHRSA has announced it's done a deal for the development of an event called the IHRSA SMART Summit, which will take place during new B2B trade show, FitnessConnected, at the Trade Fair Center in Munich, from November 17-19, 2021.

SMART stands for sales, marketing, analytics, retention and technology.

FitnessConnected is part of the ISPO-Network, and is headed by CEO, Ralph

Scholz, who was previously event director of FIBO from 2013 to 2017.

The IHRSA SMART Summit will begin with a gym tour of Munich, followed by summit sessions and will end with face to face business presentations during the afternoons of the FitnessConnected trade show (November 18 and 19).

The IHRSA SMART Summit will replace the IHRSA European Congress this year. This longstanding event was originally scheduled to take place in Berlin in 2020 – IHRSA indicates the Congress will resume in 2022.

IHRSA says it will release full details of the SMART Summit 'this spring' (northern hemisphere, we assume).



Scholz has inked a deal with IHRSA for a European conference

"I'm particularly proud about this partnership with IHRSA," said Scholz. "It brings us one step closer to our goal of being the central European platform for the fitness industry."

Scholz announced FitnessConnected in October 2020. The new deal squares up FIBO

and its conference partner EuropeActive, with FitnessConnected and IHRSA in a battle for the European trade show and conference market. EuropeActive has just signed a new three-year deal with FIBO.

More: http://lei.sr/P4c5a_H

Sport Wales offers £2.5k grants to PTs and instructors

Fitness instructors, personal trainers, coaches and other self-employed physical activity workers in Wales are being given extra financial support through Sport Wales.



This fund is the first of its kind in the UK for fitness and sport freelancers

Sarah Powell

Sport Wales has widened the criteria for the Sport Freelancer Fund, in a bid to help even more people.

It will offer individuals grants of up to £2,500.

To be eligible, applicants need to demonstrate how they've lost at least £2,500 in income. The scheme will close at 5pm on **Wednesday 3 February**.

Sarah Powell, Sport Wales CEO, said: "This fund is the first of its kind and is another clear sign of the importance that Welsh Government places on sport and its ability to make a positive difference."

More: http://lei.sr/5x4g3_H



Applicants need to show they've lost £2,500 in income

Nuffield launches free emotional wellbeing classes online

Nuffield Health has launched a series of free online classes, focused on emotional wellbeing. Available on the healthcare charity's digital platform, Nuffield Health 24/7, they aim to give people the means to focus on their mental as well as physical wellbeing, from their homes, during lockdown.

The first series of classes include mindfulness, relaxation, and stress management, in addition to muscle relaxation and deep breathing.

The first two classes to go live are 'Introduction to Mindfulness' and 'Calm Space'.

The former introduces people to the basic principles of mindfulness and how to be present and engaged in the moment, while the latter includes relaxation and helps manage stress, using grounding techniques.

Further classes launching in the coming weeks include: how to integrate mindfulness into everyday activities, progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing and mindful exercise.

Brendan Street, professional head of emotional wellbeing at Nuffield, said: "There



'Introduction to Mindfulness' and 'Calm Space' are available

is no health without mental health...and good mental health is so much more than the absence of mental ill-health.

"During difficult times it is even more important to invest in our mental health.

"Our free classes have been designed by clinicians and informed by evidence-based psychological theories, as a step by step way to enhance mental and physical fitness."

More: http://lei.sr/H2f7Z_H



Our free classes have been designed by clinicians and informed by evidence-based theories

Brendan Street

Lockdowns have resulted in 700m lost workouts at gyms in the UK

The UK COVID-19 lockdowns have resulted in the loss of more than 700m workouts.

The figure was presented to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Committee as part of a session which saw industry leaders outlining how the pandemic has had a "devastating effect" on the sector.

Those giving evidence to the committee during the meeting were ukactive CEO, Huw Edwards, PureGym MD, Rebecca Passmore, Mytime Active CEO, Marg Mayne and Rich Emerson, CEO of the Climbing Academy Group. All four outlined how lockdowns



The sector has lost around 40 per cent of trading days so far

during the past nine months have led to concerns over the future of the sector as a whole.

Huw Edwards said: "If we get to 23 March with the sector still in lockdown, that will mark

a year since the industry was first forced to close its doors.

"In that year, we would only have been operating for 121 days, losing more than 240 trading days – and

more than 700m individual visits to facilities."

Edwards called for targeted financial help for the sector.

More: http://lei.sr/G7p7g_H



Since 23 March 2020 the sector has only been allowed to trade for 121 days

Huw Edwards

1Rebel enters Middle East with two club in Riyadh

Boutique brand, 1Rebel, has entered the Middle East market for the first time, with the launch of two clubs in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The clubs will be operated in partnership with Saudi-based Armah Sports, which has the 1Rebel rights to seven markets across the Middle East – Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait.

The Riyadh sites are the first two studios to open as part of the collaboration, with four additional locations secured that have been slated to open in late 2021/2022.

Armah Sports is currently working with 1Rebel to develop a new functional training concept called



1Rebel share the same core values as us and are committed to the spirit of fun

Fahad Alhagbani

REFLEX, to introduce throughout the network.

Established in 2019, Armah Sports was founded by Fahad Alhagbani and Nathan Clute, both fitness industry veterans, with Alhagbani having previously founded BodyMasters and Fitness Time,



Read HCM's interview with Fahad Alhagbani
<http://lei.sr/R5Y9o>

The Riyadh sites are the first two studios to open

the largest chain of fitness centres in the Middle East, with over 150 locations.

Speaking to HCM about the partnership, Alhagbani said: "For us, the number one boutique – in terms of quality, branding and image – was 1Rebel.

"We discovered that 1Rebel wanted to come to Saudi Arabia. It became clear that the founders shared the same core values as us, and that they were committed to the spirit of fun, friendship and flexibility."

More: http://lei.sr/M8E3V_H

Google's Fitbit acquisition hinged on "compromise" over data

Google has finally completed a US\$2.1bn deal to acquire Fitbit, marking the tech giant's long-awaited entry to the wellness tech market. The deal was first announced in

November 2019, but has taken more than a year to complete.

The acquisition was only approved by the European Union after Google had agreed to make a series of commitments about how it will use Fitbit users' personal health data.

The European Data Protection Board, which governs and oversees the EU's strict data protection rules, including GDPR, raised concerns over the privacy of Fitbit data.

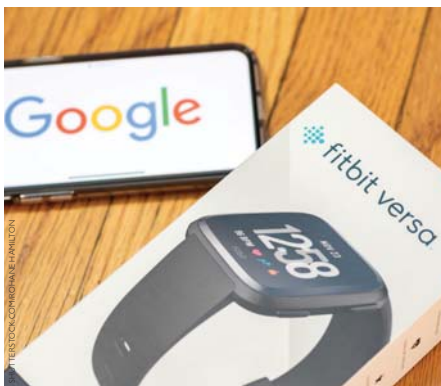
According to Rick Osterloh, Google's senior VP of devices and services, the deal was "about devices, not data".

More: http://lei.sr/Y7f4V_H



The deal to acquire Fitbit is about devices, not data

Rick Osterloh



The deal took more than a year to be approved by authorities

Dogs share risk of type 2 diabetes with their owners

A Swedish study has shown that people with type 2 diabetes are much more likely to have a dog with type 2 diabetes when compared with pet owners with healthy companions.

A team at Uppsala University compared data from 208,980 dog and 123,566 cat "families" and discovered that people with type 2 diabetes are 38 more likely to have a dog suffering from the same condition.

The study shows that personal and socioeconomic

circumstances could not explain the link.

No shared risk of diabetes was found between cat owners and their pets.

This means the unhealthy behaviour traits – such as inactivity and bad diet – of the owner could be the cause for both their and the dog's diabetes.

It has been previously shown that diet and obesity can influence the risk of type 2 diabetes in both animals and humans.

"In this large cohort study, we found that ownership of a dog with diabetes was associated with type 2 diabetes in the dog owner," the report reads.

"Potential underlying mechanisms for our findings on diabetes in owner-dog



A shared lifestyle can lead to diabetes in dogs and humans

pairs possibly include shared health behaviours such as level of physical activity.

"Dietary habits of the dog owners might influence their

pets' diet and risk of adiposity, through portion control and frequency of feeding."

More: http://lei.sr/h3x8K_H



We found that ownership of a dog with diabetes was associated with type 2 diabetes in the dog owner

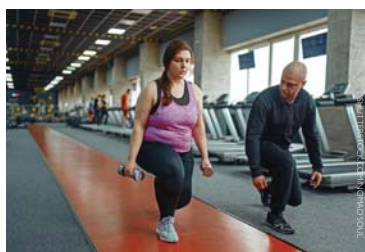
70 per cent of UK adults 'want to get healthy' in 2021

An England-wide survey of over 5,000 adults found that 80 per cent of people aged over 18 have made the decision to change their lifestyle in 2021.

Of those, 70 per cent want to become healthier and fitter due to the threats posed by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Among the most popular changes that people want to make is to exercise more (41 per cent of all respondents) and to lose weight (39 per cent). Two in five (40 per cent) want to eat more healthily.

Evidence in the study – published by Public Health England – shows that being obese significantly increases



Nearly half of English adults want to exercise more in 2021

your chance of being admitted to intensive care with COVID-19 compared to those with a healthy body mass index (BMI).

Compared to last year (beginning of 2020), nearly

half of the population (43 per cent) now feel more motivated to make changes to their life in January.

The survey also revealed that the impact of the

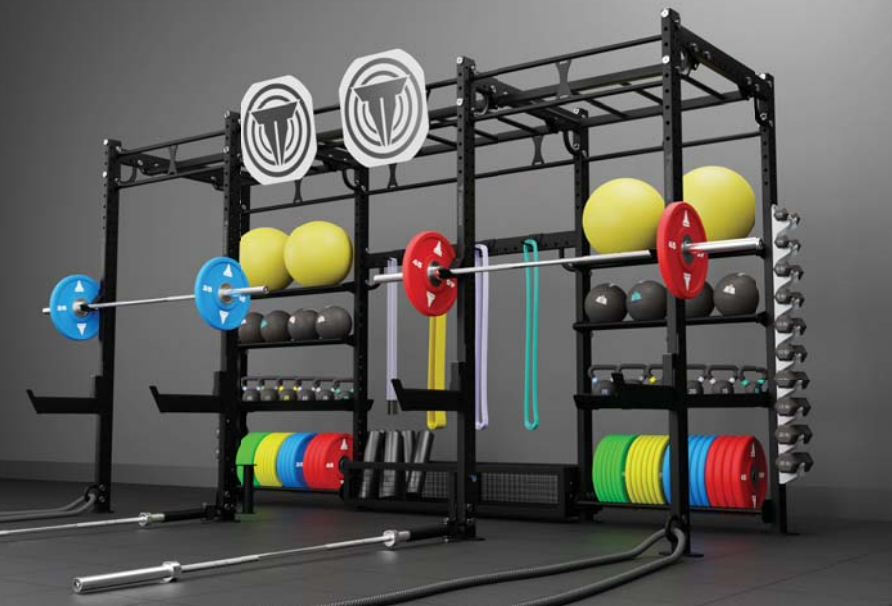
pandemic saw people's behaviours become more unhealthy during 2020.

Nearly a third (30 per cent) said they were exercising less in the latter half of the year, while 29 per cent of smokers agreed they smoked more since the second national lockdown.

The research is further evidence of the role played by the sport and physical activity sector – and gyms in particular – in keeping people healthy and fit.

Gyms were among the first businesses ordered to close on 23 March 2020 and among the last to be allowed to re-open.

More: http://lei.sr/v6d4K_H



PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF YOUR FUNCTIONAL TRAINING SPACE

The Throwdown XTC Standard Rig series has been expertly engineered to maximize training zones, enabling groups of members to train simultaneously. Tricked out with everything from squat stations to target training, these rigs are ideal for functional training. PLUS! The XTC comes available in 14', 24' and 34' lengths to accommodate various facility sizes. No matter your space, we've got you covered!

REQUEST A QUOTE TODAY!

VISIT [COREHEALTHANDFITNESS.COM/THROWDOWN](https://corehealthandfitness.com/throwdown)

Richard Darwin

COVID survival strategies, growth plans, and a belief that government is finally recognising the value of the fitness sector. The Gym Group CEO speaks to Kate Cracknell

What's your response to the third national lockdown?

I think it was inevitable once the new variant was identified and it became clear how quickly it was spreading. However it is a big blow to the entire sector to miss the important Jan/Feb months and to our members, many of whom rely on the gym as an important part of their daily routine. All eyes now are on the speed of the vaccine rollout – the big difference with the previous lockdowns is that we can see some light at the end of the tunnel – the vaccine should reduce transmission rates of the virus and enable restrictions to be removed and gyms to reopen.

What do you think of the government's announcement of additional grants of up to £9k per site?

Any government support is helpful and once again the Treasury has moved quickly in announcing this additional support for individual properties. However it's very clear that the government needs to go further.

Some immediate things they can do are to extend the rent moratorium, extend the timing on the VAT payment scheme and extend rates relief for at least an additional six month period. This last one – a bit like the property grant – has the best transmission mechanism to get cash and rebates to those properties that have been forced to close.

I don't think the government should wait until the budget in March to make these further announcements – businesses need the ability to plan and the more visibility we have while we're closed, the better.

It was all going so well!

Yes, before the third lockdown started, we were open in all 183 sites that we operate across the UK.

We launched our Oxford Street club on 2 December – a club we acquired from easyGym and have since redesigned and refurbished. As with all city-centre sites, it's been a bit constrained by the number of people coming into their offices, but I'm confident it will be a really good site for us in the future.

The home working trend hasn't put you off city centre sites?

COVID only accelerated an existing trend: we were predominantly locating new sites outside the centre of big metropolitan areas anyway – in residential areas on the edges of towns and cities as well as in some of the smaller commuter hubs.

While a third of our estate is inside the M25, only five clubs are in central London Zone 1, and across the UK, only 18 of our 183 clubs are city centre. Even when we do locate new clubs in city centres, it's generally because we think they'll be good student sites.





“

Our ‘Live It’ membership tier allows you to work out close to home and close to the office. I think we’ll see even greater take-up of that product as a result of flexible working patterns

Richard Darwin became
CEO of The Gym Group
in September 2018



All that said, one of the benefits of having scale in our business is that, if people do more permanently adopt a hybrid working model – home a couple of days a week, in the office for the other two or three days – we can offer multi-site access in a very affordable way. Just £4.99 extra a month puts you in our Live It membership tier, allowing you to work out both close to home and close to the office. I think we'll see even greater take-up of that product moving forward as a result of flexible working patterns.

Tell us about your COVID journey so far
 COVID-19 wasn't something anyone was properly prepared for. However, we realised we had to make some decisions really quickly to ensure the business was in good shape to weather the crisis and emerge successfully from it.

First and foremost, that meant raising money. When we went into that first lockdown, we obviously didn't know how long it would be. What we did know was that liquidity would be key. We used the fact that we're listed on the London Stock Exchange to raise £40m from our shareholders; we've always had a really supportive shareholder base. We also extended our debt facilities by another £30m.

Meanwhile, we'd frozen all memberships and had virtually no revenue, so we made some cost reductions, as well as taking advantage of government schemes such as furlough and rates relief. For the first time in the history of the business, the cost cuts sadly included some head office reductions.

And of course, while we were closed, we designed our COVID-secure procedures to enable us to reopen.

Once we were open, between the end of July and the end of October, we were profitable and

cash-generative. Our listed status helped here, because we don't have much leverage at all, meaning cash generated can be retained in the business. That's really important in terms of being able to say we were both profitable and cash-generative in the three months we were open.

We did lose members though. The reality of the low-cost model is there's no contract, so people can leave at any time. Meanwhile, new member acquisition is more limited in lockdown periods: who joins a gym when the business is closed? By the time we got to 31 October, just before we closed again, we had around 639,000 members. That's about 80 per cent of where we were at the end of 2019.

But the members who stayed with us were active. After the first lockdown, average visits per member initially fell below the levels of the same period in the previous year. However, it caught up after about six or seven weeks and ultimately slightly exceeded previous levels. It stayed around that higher level until the third lockdown kicked in. That's partly because there's less for people to do at the moment, of course, but I do also think it demonstrates the growing importance of health and fitness in people's minds.

Was the second lockdown any different from the first?

Interestingly, our members seemed more vocal around the importance of their gyms being open second time around. And I think the sector as a whole was much better at communicating its value to government during lockdown #2. We've been able to articulate how important health and fitness is to the whole nation, and how important gyms are to the over 10 million members of health and fitness clubs. ukactive has also presented



The group is trialling virtual group exercise classes, along with its live instructor-led classes

It speaks volumes that the very first time we went for Investors in People, we came out with a gold rating. Our culture is very important to us

compelling data to show that gyms are safe. We need to continue this work in lockdown 3.

It's taken time, but I feel as though government has understood the importance of physical activity for our members and the beneficial impact that gyms being open has on people's mental as well as physical wellbeing.

How did you prepare for the third lockdown?

We have the framework now to deal with a closure period: we know what to do and we know how to do it.

With the vaccine roll-out, there's also light at the end of the tunnel; it does now feel that it's just a matter of time before normality returns. But I do think it's important that gyms are allowed to open as soon as possible, as maintaining good levels of physical activity is part of the solution to a health crisis.

Let's talk about the projects you were working on before all this happened...

One of the first things that happened, in the first year I took over, was the roll-out of a project already started under the leadership of John Treharne, [Gym Group founder and former CEO]. This was our New Gym Team model, where we put around 1,500 of

our PTs on contracts for 12 hours a week, calling them Fitness Trainers. Outside of those 12 hours, they're self-employed and pay rent. This initiative has set the business up to deliver great member service and gives us a proposition that attracts the best PTs.

As it turned out – not that we had the benefit of this foresight, of course – it's also meant we've been able to support our team through COVID, by putting Fitness Trainers on furlough.

I wanted to make sure we could accelerate our expansion, too, and we did a piece of work with PwC to define the market potential for low-cost gyms. At that point, there were around 700 low-cost clubs in the UK and it was felt the market could double in size, to around 1,200–1,400 locations. I wanted to ensure The Gym Group would take its share of that market growth opportunity.

To do so, we realised we couldn't just rely on the large box model – the 15,000–16,000sq ft format we'd been rolling out up to that point. We also needed a small box model, so we could go into smaller towns with catchments of fewer than 70,000 people.

We therefore created a small box concept in 2019 – around 8,000sq ft in footprint – and launched two sites that year, followed by a third at the beginning of 2020.



We're finding some great sites, assisted by the structural issues the retail sector is facing



Richard Darwin **milestones**

Richard Darwin joined The Gym Group as CFO in 2015. Since then it has grown from 63 clubs to 183

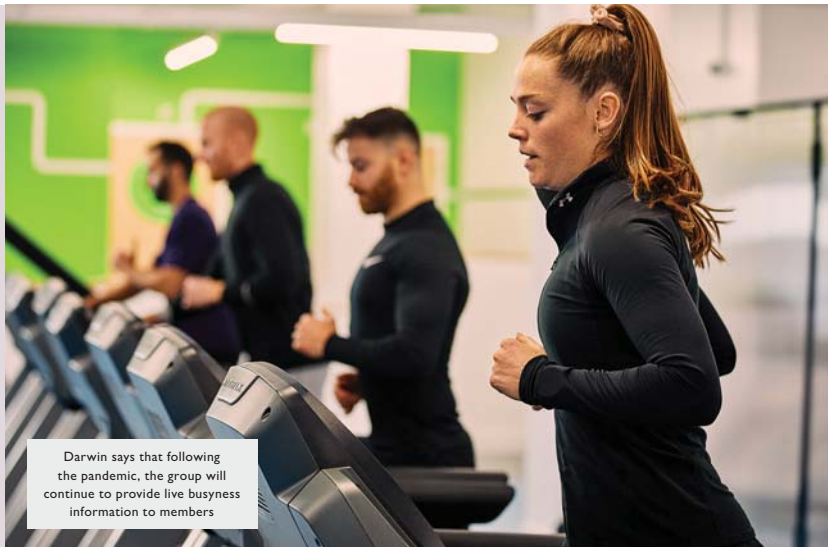
● Joined as CFO in 2015 "predominantly because The Gym Group was considering doing an IPO, which we did in November 2015, but also because I knew enough about low-cost gyms – and how quickly they were growing – to know this was an opportunity I shouldn't turn down".

● In 2015, The Gym Group estate was 63 clubs strong. "It has since grown to 183 – a fantastic achievement – both through organic roll-out and three acquisitions: four sites from Fitness First, 18 from Lifestyle, and 13 from easyGym."

● "Other things I see as highlights, because they've put us in a position to really go again after this crisis in terms of growth, are the things we've done to build the underlying strength of the business: the quality team we've assembled, tech developments and a new member management system, for example."

● Became CEO in September 2018. "It was a natural move and gave the business continuity. John [Treharne, Gym Group founder, former CEO and now founder director] was a pretty light-touch CEO anyway – his approach has always been to hire great people and give them the space to do the job – so I was already leading many of the projects. He and I always had a really good relationship and that has just continued since I took over."

● "Of course, John is one of the best-connected people in the sector, so that's why we created the role of founder director: to make good use of all those contacts and his understanding of the market. He sat on the working group to develop our small box concept, for example, and was instrumental in helping us formally define the culture and values of the business, so this remains intact even as we continue to grow."



Darwin says that following the pandemic, the group will continue to provide live busyness information to members

I also wanted to give a renewed trading focus to the business, making sure we were focusing on the right metrics: not just how many new members we recruit but, for example, how engaged our people are in the business and how satisfied our members are. And then financially, looking at how successful we are at translating the members we have into profit, by staying true to our low-cost ethos and not allowing cost-creep to come in. This proved very successful in 2019, when we delivered strong financial results that put us in a robust position as we went into the COVID crisis.

And the other notable project: we began to raise our profile, doing TV advertising for the first time as part of our January campaigns.

But underpinning all of this, we worked hard to maintain the culture of the business. As we grow, it's important that we hold on to what's unique about The Gym Group. I think it speaks volumes that, the very first time we went for Investors in People, we came out with a gold rating. Our culture is very important to us.

Any initiatives for post-COVID?

Something we were working on already, but that we'll be pushing ahead with in 2021, is the development of our group exercise offering.

To date, all our classes have been live instructor-led, but we have a virtual GX trial going on in Tottenham White Hart Lane and in Oxford Street, to sit alongside the live offering. We've done a deal with Fiit – an online fitness provider in the App Store – to provide virtual content in those two locations, and in time we'll look to roll this out further.

We also offer Fiit to our members to use at home, through their app, for an additional £7.99

a month. But increasingly, we expect people to come and enjoy the Fiit product within our gyms, so we're also trialling Fiit Pods: just connect your phone and follow the on-screen workout, in your own space but within the gym environment.

In terms of our live classes, as we reopen, we'll be looking to introduce a bit more conformity in the classes we offer, as well as how we train our PTs and Fitness Trainers to deliver them. We're aiming to have a core set of classes, plus some specialist classes in the clubs where that's feasible: the 30 clubs with a separate studio, for example.

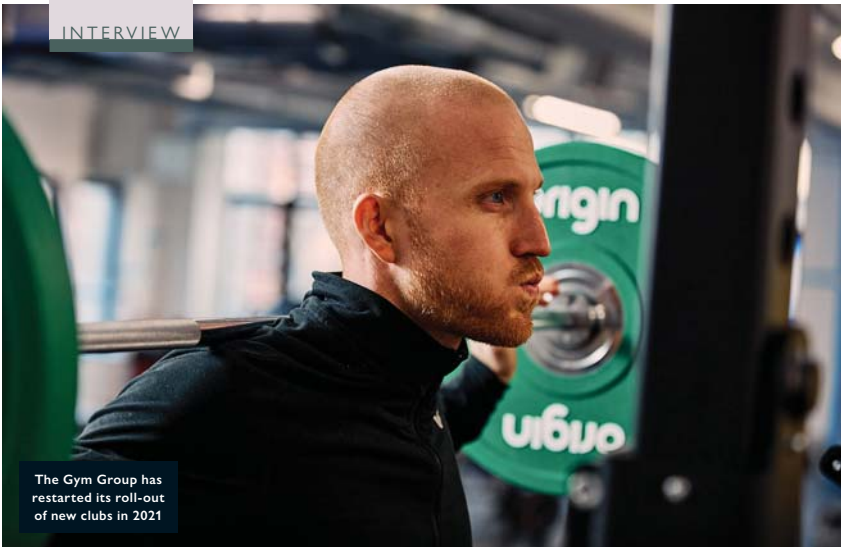
Are you expecting any long-term changes as a direct result of COVID?

I don't think we're ever going back to a world where we take out the blue paper towels, the sanitisers, the ability to wipe down machines. There's been good member acceptance and take-up of that.

Equally, the busyness of gyms has become a focus thanks to government restrictions on the number of people allowed in at any one time. We've put more information into our members' hands in this respect: you can see how busy your chosen gym is right now, just by logging on to the app. At the moment, this is vital information because we have capacity constraints. However, I think it's something we'll always provide now: it's just good information that helps members plan when to work out.

Tell us more about your tiered membership structure

We pride ourselves on offering a really competitive price point, even compared to other low-



The Gym Group has restarted its roll-out of new clubs in 2021

cost brands. Our base membership, Do It, averages about £18.50 across the country, with the maximum being £34.99 in places like Oxford Street and Monument. That gives you 24/7 access to your chosen gym – at least, it will once COVID restrictions are lifted – as well as access to our group classes, and I believe it represents excellent value.

Then there are optional add-ons, so members can build the exact product they want. For an additional £4.99, you get our Live It membership: multi-site access to the whole estate, the option to bring a friend up to four times a month, and access to FitQuest body composition and fitness testing.

Live It was launched around three years ago and has been very successful for us.

Then there's Fit access, which you can add for £7.99 a month, and YANGA sports water, which costs an extra £3.99 a month. At some point in the future, as we develop our group exercise offering, we may also offer an upgrade for some specialist classes.

What's your development pipeline?

We launched 20 clubs in 2019, including two small box sites, but obviously paused our roll-out when the pandemic hit: we opened eight sites in 2020, but that's nowhere near the 20–25 we had planned.

Moving forward, though, I'm bullish about the growth prospects in the low-cost sector, and our own growth and positioning within that.

We've restarted our roll-out programme – we're on-site in York, Chichester and Sydenham – and we're actively looking for other sites. We haven't announced a projected number of new

openings for 2021 yet, but we aren't sitting on our hands. We're actively building our pipeline.

The opportunity is very, very clear for us and we're finding some great sites, assisted by the structural issues the retail sector is facing. We're being offered great locations on retail parks, for instance, at affordable rents that work for our business model and our economic model. The new club in York, for example, is being built in an area of the city that we've been looking to get into for the last eight years or so. Suddenly a site has become available at an acceptable rent and we've been able to take advantage of that. There'll be more sites like that.

Any plans to go international?

As we emerge from this crisis, there's huge opportunity in the UK market and we're in a strong position: we're number two in terms of market share and the best capitalised business in the sector. We have the ability to expand rapidly. Our immediate focus is therefore to recover the business, in terms of membership numbers, and ensure we take advantage of the UK roll-out opportunities.

I'm sure there will be international opportunities in the future, but we feel it's about doing things at the right time.

Any plans to sell the business?

The Gym Group plc is the UK's only listed health and fitness operator and our job is to create value for our shareholders, all of whom have been extremely supportive over a five-year period. I can see us being on the market for many years. ●

myzone®

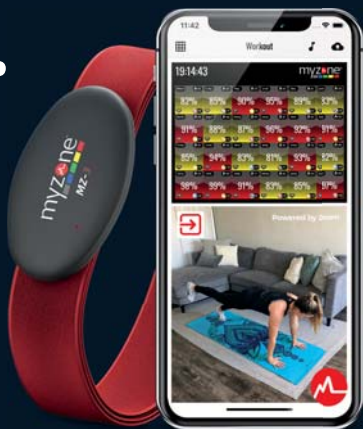


Digital done right.

Your class experience to be enjoyed by everyone, at the same time.

In the gym, at home or outside, with MZ-Remote we're stronger together.

myzone.org/mz-remote



Training comes alive

EXCITE LIVE

Welcome to the world of creative fitness, where exercise and fun merge to change the way we train

Technogym is here to inspire you to offer members the best workouts and experience, making sure they have a great time.

The way people train is changing as the demand for content and experience has exploded and this will shape the next evolution of training. Technogym is leading the way with exciting new training experiences delivered by the innovative cardio range, Excite Live.

A seven-piece cardio range, Excite Live has revolutionised training thanks to the Technogym Live platform which uses artificial intelligence technology and immersive content to give training an advanced level of personalisation.

Excite Live is designed around four key pillars – tailored training variety, connectivity, space-savvy design and sustainability – to offer a meaningful, engaging and personalised training experience.

Tailored training – personalise the experience

Technogym Live, the new and advanced digital user interface, empowers Excite consoles. In a fun and motivating way, it inspires people to embrace exercise and make it a part of their daily lives to achieve results.

Excite Live offers a new level of personalisation with Technogym Coach, a feature that will entice and capture members' attention and support them in achieving their workout goals.

Using the power of artificial intelligence which they have at their fingertips, members have access to all their favourite apps, training stats and preferences, all in one place, providing a personalised experience as unique as them.

Mobile connectivity – your world with you

Members can go about their daily life while exercising: browse the

internet, connect with friends on social media or watch an episode of their favourite Netflix series.

Logging in with the Mywellness app, Apple or Samsung smartwatch opens their favourite apps, offering suggested workouts and training stats.

Not forgetting the smartphone universal wireless charging – a much-needed feature for on-the-go members.

Space-savvy – rethinking design

The Excite line offers the best ratio of floor footprint to user training space, giving members more room to move freely and achieve their full potential.

The Excite Live Run has a redesigned deck, providing greater stability, as well as 13 per cent more space for running and exercising. This groundbreaking new design involves everything members love about running while taking up 30 per cent less space.

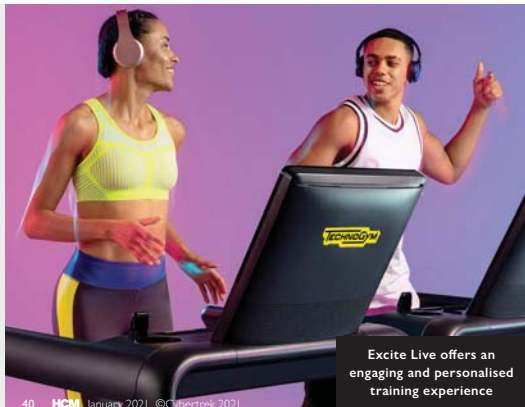
Energy savvy – friends with the planet

The new Excite line represents the next generation of sustainable equipment. The fully-connected Human Powered models are the first generation of smart equipment that doesn't require electricity or batteries to run the 10" LCD touchscreen, complete with wi-fi, Bluetooth and onboard innovative content.

The equipment in the line is made of recyclable parts. A more compact design which requires fewer raw materials, helps to reduce its carbon footprint.



To discover more and for free digital consultancy, contact Technogym: www.technogym.com/HCM
Tel: +44 (0)1344 300236



Excite Live offers an engaging and personalised training experience

Engage your members with Excite Live



Technogym Sessions – train with a pro

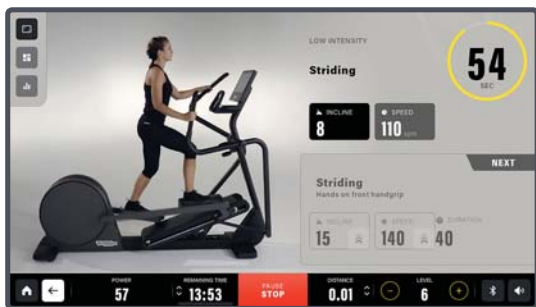
Providing the opportunity for members to enjoy a personalised training experience designed around their personal training goals, the Virtual Trainer will guide users through a one-on-one session, offering encouragement and suggesting the level of intensity, which members are free to follow or change.

A choice of six sessions in each goal-based training series give members a unique and tailored personalised training experience.

Technogym Routines – challenge yourself

Excite Live offers Technogym Routines, enabling members to achieve more by stepping out of their comfort zone with advanced HIIT workouts.

Each Routine contains a variety of movements and exercises, whose intensity is automatically set up by the equipment. They can still enjoy the variety of entertainment content while on Routines, thanks to the pop-up messages providing guidance while they train.



Outdoors – train anywhere in the world

Members can explore breathtaking scenic locations that will inspire them to go the extra mile. Let natural and urban landscapes captivate them while they work out with the Technogym Excite Live cardio range.



JOIN THE PARTY!

CLICK TO
PLAY VIDEO



CASE STUDY

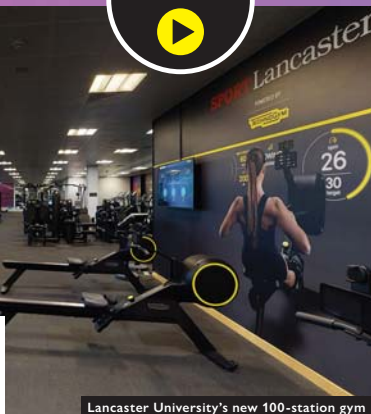
Lancaster University

A MAYOR INVESTMENT TO DELIVER ADVANCED TRAINING FACILITIES

An extension to Lancaster University's Sports Centre has just been completed, which doubles the capacity for indoor sports, featuring a wide variety of Technogym products, including the new Excite Live range.

Sport Lancaster is a partnership with Lancaster University and Students' Union which brings together all sporting opportunities. The new fitness suite includes a split-level 100-station gym with an extensive range of cardiovascular and resistance equipment.

"We had a complete refit of the fitness suite, which



Lancaster University's new 100-station gym

included not only a huge upgrade in our equipment, but also a total marketing rebrand of the facility," said Jo Hardman, director of commercial services at Lancaster University.

"We chose the Technogym Excite Live cardio range so we could deliver our staff, students and the local community the most advanced training experience possible. The Excite Live console brings an exciting digital platform to our members and has greatly enhanced the way they work out. It gives our facility a real wow factor."



Excite Live has proved popular at Hamilton's Honour

CASE STUDY

Hamilton's Honour

DELIVERING EXCITE LIVE FOR MEMBERS AT EVERY LEVEL

Hamilton's Honour, a new boutique health and fitness club, offers the highest standard of service and facilities in a welcoming, home-feel studio.

The club's membership runs from beginners through to elite athletes and with Excite Live, offers something for everyone.

"Excite Live is the most advanced and innovative product out there," says owner, Louis Hamilton. "It's perfect for members of any level, because it works with the user to guide them through a pre-set programme."

"Beginners can join in with live sessions, and advanced athletes can push themselves with the huge range of programming options. The equipment does everything for them. It's amazing, and feedback has been incredible. People have never used anything like it."



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

TECHNOGYM

More than two thirds of adults in the UK reported feeling somewhat or very worried about the effect COVID-19 is having on their life

Everyone's talking about Mental health

Most of the world is dealing with some form of disruption to daily life, work life and finances, as well as navigating an uncertain world. Even those who enjoy robust mental health are finding themselves suffering from stress, anxiety, low mood and insomnia.

What can the health and fitness industry do to help? Kath Hudson reports

Mental health disorders already account for almost a quarter of the total burden of ill health in the UK, but according to The Health Foundation, it is well-documented that mental health problems increase following disasters and viral outbreaks, as more people are exposed to stressors, lose their coping mechanisms and access to mental health treatment.

The pandemic is widening the pre-existing health inequalities, as well as affecting people who have not previously experienced poor mental health.

According to a survey in May, taken by the Office for National Statistics, more than two thirds of adults in the UK reported feeling somewhat or very worried about the effect COVID-19 is having on their life. The biggest concern, felt by 63 per cent, is worry about the future; while 56 per cent feel anxious or stressed and 49 per cent feel bored.

The UCL COVID-19 social study of 90,000 UK adults monitored mental health symptoms throughout lockdown one and found levels of anxiety and depression improved in early June when lockdown measures began to lift. However, they remained highest among young people, those with lower household income, people diagnosed with mental illness, people living with children and those living in urban areas.

Mental health charity Mind found that almost a quarter of people who tried to access mental health services during a fortnight in April failed to get any help. The Royal College of Psychiatrists reported that almost half of psychiatrists saw increases in urgent and emergency cases during lockdown 1, but there was a fall in routine appointments, prompting fears that there will be a flood of untreated and exacerbated mental illness cases after the pandemic.

The UK government's report *Analysis of the health, economic and social effects*

of COVID-19 and the approach to tiering, published on 30 November, expects there to be an increase in instances of anxiety disorders, depressive disorders and self harm in both adults and children, as well as a deterioration in physical health through reductions in activity levels and an increase in alcohol consumption.

Although the vaccines give hope that a return to normal life could be around the corner, the destruction the virus has caused will not disappear any time soon. Recovering from the losses and rebuilding lives, businesses and the economy will take time and mental health will continue to be impacted.

The industry is committed to rehabilitating the nation's health and fitness, but what about mental health? Do mental health programmes also need to become a standard part of the offering? And if so, what is appropriate? We ask the experts how health and fitness operators can best support their members' mental health...



Ophelia Yeung

Global Wellness Institute: senior research fellow

The pandemic has exposed the fragility of our collective mental health and the need to build resilience via multiple mental health pathways, therefore increasing demand for mental wellness solutions. Companies in some segments of the mental wellness market have reported increases in demand, such as meditation apps, functional foods and beverages and brain supplements – as consumers become more concerned with their health and immune systems.

The finding of our latest study, *Defining the Mental Wellness Economy* showed the global mental wellness industry – not including fitness and sport – is worth US\$121bn: solid evidence that consumers are seeing this category as

a need and not a want. This number includes spending in four categories: senses, spaces and sleep (\$49.5bn); brain-boosting nutraceuticals and botanicals (\$34.8bn); self improvement (\$33.6bn) and meditation and mindfulness (\$2.9bn).

The market is extremely diverse in terms of age, gender, income and other demographic characteristics. The need to reduce stress and anxiety, improve sleep, protect brain health and prevent cognitive decline, the search for fulfilment and happiness are universal desires whether you are a business executive, teenager, senior, working parent or unemployed.

Some tech sector companies have been winners during the pandemic, as consumers turn to apps, digital interfaces,

The fitness industry is a great vehicle to introduce consumers to mind-body and mental fitness practices

virtual meetings and contact-free solutions. In particular, meditation and mindfulness apps have become popular. In April this year, first time downloads of Calm jumped to 1.6million: an increase of 36 per cent from January 2020.

Health and fitness operators should focus on what they do best – providing fitness and exercise services and solutions, while stepping up efforts to increase consumer awareness that physical activity can support mental health as well as physical health. It's important to recognise that fitness is not merely a physical activity, but has many mental health and wellness benefits, offering participants the opportunity for growth and mastery, for human connections and to find a sense of belonging. The fitness industry is also a great vehicle to introduce consumers to mind-body and mental fitness practises, such as yoga, tai chi, Qigong, breathwork and meditation.



Yeung says consumers are increasingly seeing mental health products as essential



When we set physical targets, people often give up because they take too long to achieve. If we focus on mental wellbeing, results are instant

Graeme Hinde

LFX Network: founder

Health and fitness operators are already doing a great deal to support the mental health of their members, but this is largely going unrecognised. For decades we have only talked about physical goals, often in relation to weight loss, but we should be asking members how they feel before and after their workouts. If we change our approach and language, I believe our industry will grow.

When we set physical targets, people often give up because they take too long to achieve, while if we focus on the

mental wellbeing, the results are instant. For example, if I suggest to a friend that they join me for a workout because they'll feel good for doing it, they will. If I invite them for X number of workouts in order to lose a stone in three months, they will be less enthusiastic.

I decided to build a new initiative – MH1 – as a movement which starts inside the fitness industry. I've seen friends lose their jobs and it's frightened me how their mental health has deteriorated as a result, so I've been working with the support of Matrix Fitness to create something for the industry.

MH1 will initially comprise three elements: a suite of campaign materials available free to fitness operators and individuals. The campaign will be simple and designed to work across different platforms. Two communities: one on Facebook and one on LinkedIn to provide the opportunity to share ideas and resources. Thirdly, in collaboration with clinical colleagues in the NHS, we are developing a Mental Health PARQ. The final version will include guidance notes and useful tips and tools and will be made available to the industry.

Thanks to the support provided by Matrix, this will be free. Ultimately, I hope MH1 will grow to become the go-to place for industry professionals and members because, since my announcement of the launch, the response I've had from frontline fitness professionals has been extraordinary.



Graeme Hinde has created a new mental health initiative for the fitness industry

People don't want to be labelled, advises Barrett

Lyndsey Barrett

Sport for Confidence: director

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we've seen an increase in people suffering from depression, anxiety, social isolation and loneliness, so going forward further interventions that support mental health will be much needed and health and fitness operators can play a key role in this.

When reaching out to this cohort, operators need to be aware that one size does not fit all and, very importantly, people don't want to be labelled. They want a life, not a service. They want to feel part of a community and the same as anyone else, they want to be in a safe place, to experience success, be given choices and opportunities and feel listened to. They don't want to be herded into "exercise for depression" but to be supported into being physically active.

Reaching out to individuals prior to their first visit can ease anxiety: for example an instructor calling to introduce themselves and brief people on what to wear, what to expect, to address any concerns they may have,

as well as ask about their goals and how they would like to be supported.

A culture of belonging and inclusion should be fostered, so everyone who works at the facility, including catering and cleaning staff, should add to the welcoming and inclusive environment. Placing occupational therapists into leisure centres – which is the work Sport for Confidence specialises in – can help to achieve this, by identifying reasonable adjustments, mentoring staff and developing inclusive opportunities.



Placing occupational therapists into leisure centres can help members' mental health by identifying reasonable adjustments, mentoring staff and developing inclusive opportunities



Offering personal appointments with members can be beneficial, as goals can be discussed and a positive mindset formed around them



Dan Glue

3d Leisure: operations director

Mental health has always been on our radar, as it is so closely linked with physical health – you can only achieve physically what your mind will allow you to do – but the pandemic has certainly brought things to a head, and prompted 3d Leisure to implement mental health first aid services at some of our corporate fitness facilities, which will be rolled out to the rest of the estate in 2021.

Through this programme, staff are being trained to spot signs of mental health issues and be equipped to help deal with them. Initiatives such as Take 5 have also been introduced: encouraging people to take five minutes throughout the day to destress with breathing exercises and some movement. 3d@home has been brought in to support people to exercise at home: as well as live classes and on demand content, this offers health and wellbeing talks and nutritional and wellbeing information.

Fitness instructors and PTs will become more involved in total wellbeing coaching, says Glue

In the wake of COVID-19, I think we will start to see the role of the fitness instructor/PT evolving into more of a wellbeing role, covering more topics in the sense of mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing and positive lifestyle changes. We were heading in this direction anyway and COVID has sped it up.

There are a number of easy interventions operators can make to support members' mental health. Enrolling staff on a mental health first aid course is a good start: empowering them to look for signs of poor mental health in members and building awareness of the importance of looking after mental health and various ways of doing this. Offering personal appointments with members can also be beneficial, as goals can be discussed and a positive mindset formed around them. ●

Katie Lewis and Lindsey Simpson

Co-founders: Workplace Mental Wealth

The mental health of the sector's workforce has been tested to the limits by the pandemic and while there's light at the end of the tunnel, thanks to the roll-out of the vaccine programme, we still have a way to go until we can return to any semblance of normality.

Members of the fitness industry workforce have shown incredible resilience and determination in tackling the many challenges that have emerged, however, they are not superhuman and on a sector-wide scale, we have no idea how our talented workforce is really coping, because we haven't asked them.

On January 18, our organisation – Workplace Mental Wealth – launched two national surveys. The first: *Fitness and Active Leisure Workforce State of Mind 2021*, explores how individuals at all levels of the workforce feel about their mental health and their experiences at work. The second: *Employers' 2021* survey seeks to understand organisational approaches, capability, capacity and provision to support employee mental health in the health and fitness sector.

We're inviting anyone working in, supplying or educating the active leisure sector, including people who are self-employed, to share their views by completing our surveys.

Both the workforce survey and the employer survey only take about six minutes to complete and we want to hear from as many people as possible.

We hope the survey will enable us to present valuable insights that can be used to drive positive change, for the benefit of our people, organisations, our sector and those we serve.

In recognition of the importance of this piece of work, CIMSPA has partnered with us to drive engagement from individuals and employers.

Once the data has been collated and analysed, results will be available for download from the website.

What many organisations feel they're doing and what their people experience can be very different. We want to explore this in the fitness and active leisure sector, gauge what's working well and where action might be needed. ●

www.workplacementalwealth.com



The new survey will seek to establish the mental health status of people working in the fitness industry

“

We've evolved from content creators into a multi-facted health engagement company

Geoff, Anthony and Ian Whittington have turned a personal journey to health into a greater mission

Anthony Whittington

CO-FOUNDER: FIXING DAD

When Geoff Whittington started to see his life unravel as a result of diabetes, his sons Anthony and Ian gave up their jobs to help him change his lifestyle. This resulted in a new lease of life for all of them.

Anthony Whittington, co-creator of BBC documentary, Fixing Dad, speaks to HCM's Kath Hudson about the journey the family has been on, their mission to inspire others to engage with their health and the launch of new initiative, Fixing Us

We were at Chessington World of Adventures when my Dad collapsed and was later diagnosed with charcot foot, a complication of type 2 diabetes, which could lead to amputation," explains Anthony Whittington. "It was at that point that me and my brother, Ian, realised that we needed to step in to save his life."

And so, in 2013, the Fixing Dad mission was born. Anthony, who worked in finance, and Ian, a freelance cameraman, gave up their jobs to support their dad, Geoff, in transitioning to a healthy lifestyle, hoping to reverse his condition. Without backgrounds in health they educated themselves through googling and seeking out experts.

Working on three areas – fitness, nutrition and mindset – they set goals in each. Cycling 100 miles and cooking a meal for the family aimed to focus him on fitness and diet. But the key to changing Geoff's mindset was convincing him that he still had a lot to live for. The tipping point for this was the family taking him on a roadtrip to France and Spain where they took part in adventures like white water rafting and sky diving.

To fund the project, they raised £25k on Kickstarter, thanks to 86 backers and the Paula Carr Diabetes Trust, in return for making a documentary of the journey. "We sent a three minute film to every media outlet we could think of which led to appearances all over the media," says Whittington. "Thousands joined the Facebook page – which became key in motivating Dad – and the BBC commissioned the documentary, which was aired in 2016."

Geoff Whittington's diagnosis of type 2 diabetes led his sons to quit their jobs to help him change his lifestyle



“

People identify with the challenge. They often see themselves in the fears, barriers and pitfalls; in the family arguments, the late-night doubts – the bits we don't see in most of the media success stories

More than 1.7 million people have now watched *Fixing Dad*. Still available on YouTube, it's an inspirational story, which sees Geoff go from being on crutches with a number of illnesses – Type 2 diabetes, kidney cancer and atrial fibrillation – to taking part in the Prudential 100 mile RideLondon event in August 2014 in robust health, and becoming an advocate for lifestyle change, which has involved speaking at global health conferences. “We still get thousands of messages a month from people saying how the film has inspired them to change their health, or support a family member to change theirs,” says Whittington.

The Fixing Challenge

The dual success of saving Geoff and creating a popular film led to Anthony and Ian turning their passion project into a business called *Fixing Us*, to tell more stories and inspire more people. “It took a while to create a viable path and to find ways to do it on a large enough scale, but now we've evolved from content creators into a multi-faceted health engagement company,” says Whittington.

Over the past few years they've worked with a number of major brands, including London Marathon Events, NHS England, AstraZeneca, Roche, Nestlé Health Science, Ascensia and Novartis, creating content and virtual events which help companies to engage with their clients and inspire them to take control of their health.

Their latest film, *The Fixing Challenge*, was aired by the BBC in September 2020 and received an even greater response than *Fixing Dad*. This time Geoff was a mentor. Made in



By August 2014, Geoff was in robust health and taking part in the Prudential 100 mile RideLondon event



The group's second film followed four people in their quest to improve their health and take part in RideLondon

*Inspiring
people to
engage with
their health
together*

More than 90 per cent of the world's population have a health problem and over 71 per cent of all deaths globally are preventable via dietary and lifestyle choices.

As an organisation, Fixing Us taps into the power of people to help inspire others to engage with their health.

The organisation creates video and television content, patient

journeys, events and virtual engagement forums to inspire.

If you or someone you love are suffering from critical conditions including Type-2 diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, mental illness, heart failure, respiratory illness and cancer, or if you need help engaging with your health, Fixing Us might be able to help: www.FixingUs.com



Ian (L) and Anthony (R) hope to develop their brand by collaborating with the health and fitness industry

“

Having achieved success with a number of global brands in healthcare, the Fixing Dad team is keen to partner with the health and fitness industry

association with Prudential, the sponsor of Ride London, it followed four people, all with serious health conditions, in their challenge to complete the 100 mile mass cycling event. All of them had unsuccessfully tried to lose weight in the past, but had given up and almost resigned themselves to their fates until they were inspired by *Fixing Dad* and applied, along with some 2,500 hopefuls, to take part in the challenge.

The films show that willpower and exercise alone is not enough to impact major lifestyle change, but rather a holistic approach is needed. It shows the importance of changing the relationship with food and using different reward systems, as well as addressing lifestyle stress and coming to terms with past traumas. Also the support of a significant other as well as the community of other fixees – who clearly bonded as a team – was paramount in keeping them accountable and motivated. The results are truly heartwarming.

Collaboration opportunities

The Fixing Dad initiative is all about inspiring and empowering people to engage with their health and not to give up on themselves. Whittington says that watching normal people overcoming health challenges is a powerful motivator to others in the same situation.

“People identify with the challenge. They often see themselves in the fears, barriers and pitfalls; in the family arguments, the late-night doubts – the bits we don’t see in most of the media success stories,” he says. “People tend to empathise and engage with

the journey rather than the outcome. We find that it’s often less important for people to complete a challenge than it is for them to attempt that challenge in the first place. By watching the whole process viewers can relate to specific moments in the journey itself.”

Having already achieved success with a number of global brands in healthcare and pharmaceuticals, the Fixing Dad team are keen to partner with the health and fitness industry. “There are a few different ways in which we would like to collaborate,” says Whittington. “Firstly, by engaging older people to engage with their health as a way to overcome isolation. In partnership with operators, we could do this by creating content and programmes which help people with health conditions to tackle or reverse a range of conditions. Secondly, we would like to work with fitness organisations to build a complete health engagement programme encompassing fitness, diet and holistic living, via virtual content, events and forums.”

Exciting times are ahead for the Fixing Dad team, with a managing director, Rohin Malhotra, now on board to take the brand global. Projects are underway in the US, Canada, Russia and India and more is in the pipeline, including a potential television series. With lifestyle diseases becoming ever more of a problem, the world is in desperate need of more initiatives like this one.

● Both *Fixing Dad* and *The Fixing Challenge* are on YouTube and at www.FixingUs.com

If you haven’t already seen the films, take a look, but have some tissues handy.



Red light therapy has been found to increase cellular energy production and decrease inflammation

See the LIGHT

Offering red light therapy to your members can create a valuable source of secondary spend, while also supporting them with their recovery and delivering improvements to mobility, circulation and muscle soreness, as Karen Maxwell explains

What is 'red light therapy'?

Red light therapy, also known as low-level laser therapy or photobiomodulation, is a zero-touch, non-invasive therapy.

It harnesses the natural healing properties of red and infrared light to stimulate an increase in cellular energy production and a reduction of inflammation throughout all the systems of the body.

How can this benefit health club users?

Health club users will gain many benefits from every red light therapy session. These include a boost in energy, a more efficient circulatory system, improved mobility, a decrease in workout recovery times, increased muscle development and reduced muscle soreness.

The therapy also stimulates collagen production to help improve skin conditions and can help to balance hormones to regulate the user's sense of wellbeing. It's also effective in improving brain health.

What treatments benefit each member demographic?

Members of all ages and fitness levels can benefit from red light therapy. Older,

less fit and fatigued members, whose cellular energy production may have slowed, can experience a big boost to their feeling of wellbeing, as the therapy will reinvigorate their body's energy production processes, leaving them with a marked increase in energy and vitality.


Members who suffer from joint pain, such as arthritis, also receive immediate and ongoing relief with red light therapy and every gym member will particularly appreciate an improvement in the condition of their skin, hair and nails with regular use of the therapy.

Why do Red Light Rising products and services stand out?

Our brand is fast becoming known as one of the best in the industry, with founders Bryan Gohl and James Strong being very visibly active in the international health and wellness space and walking the walk while talking the talk.

Red Light Rising products are of superior quality and are the biggest and the most powerful red light therapy devices on the market. We're constantly innovating to ensure our products fit with the demands of our customers.





Red Light Rising panels can be floor or wall mounted to optimise space

Red light therapy reinvigorates the body's energy production processes, leaving users with a marked increase in vitality

How can products be integrated into health clubs and what business benefits do they offer?

The health club businesses we work with have been able to increase their monthly secondary spend revenues by offering bespoke red light therapy packages to existing members and have attracted new club members by promoting the therapeutic benefits to their potential target audiences.

Effective doses of red light therapy can be achieved across the entire body in as little as 10 minutes per session. Clients can use the panels or hand-held devices before they start gym sessions or wellness treatments, while other specialists, such as massage therapists, physiotherapists, osteopaths and chiropractors are already using red light therapy devices to improve outcomes for their clients, again, with only 10-minute treatment times.

What's the ROI?

Red Light Rising offers a product range for the home user and a range for commercial environments. The Advantage Series, for commercial use, come in different sizes with prices that range from £1,250 to £12,000 depending on the exact configurations. A full premium set-up can take up 1m x 1m of floor space, while a wall panel set-up will take half that space.

Suggested treatment prices range from £25 to £55 per session, depending on the product being used, and times vary from five to 10 minutes, depending on product configuration.

On average, panel lights last around 55,000 hours and come with a three-year extendable warranty. No additional consumables are needed for use within the gym environment, except for the gym's standard cleaning equipment, and any repairs and replacements will be dealt with quickly and efficiently by Red Light Rising.

● Find out more: www.redlightrising.co.uk

Building Communities

More than 1,700 industry professionals from 47 different countries joined the virtual Retention Convention recently, making it one of the sector's largest online events of the year



Iknew we couldn't replicate the Retention Convention in its traditional way, so we didn't try," says Paul Bedford. "The event was a mix of pre-recorded and live material designed to be more like an extended webinar, with our speakers sharing their know-how on turning customers into communities."

The event kicked off with Bedford playing an emotive video from Magna Vitae, demonstrating how the trust had created a true, family-like community within its facilities. Bedford said as an industry we need to showcase this type of content more widely, to demonstrate what we do and prove to the outside world that we are not just about hard-core training, but that we're health care providers that contribute massively to society.

Spreading the love

Award-winning Australian studio owner Amanda Bracks from Soulful Fitness opened the convention with her session, *'Making people feel as though they belong'*.

She explained how her techniques, which work on both mental and physical health, can be used across any size of club or studio, and showed videos of members describing the importance of their Soulful Fitness community. "For some people the gym is a place they go. For others it's a place they belong. This is what you want," she said.

Bracks advised giving something tangible to new joiners, so they instantly feel part of the community. Soulful Fitness gifts a branded t-shirt and yoga mat, which have been a big hit on social media, as well as two key tags; enabling a friend to support the member during their first week.

Bracks' top tips revolved around getting members to attend. She said: "Use any excuse you can to get them into the club. We even arrange little gifts and tell members it will be at reception next time they come in."

Events such as Community Month, where staff encourage members to introduce themselves to each other; Crazy Pants Month, with a prize for the brightest leggings, and regular workshops, such as mindfulness, support the community feel, as well as in-class experiences such as Monday Mat Fundamentals for older people – a session where 70s and 80s music is played.

"These all create an atmosphere where people feel as though they belong, because they're with others who like the same things," said Bracks. "Everything is about inclusivity and encouraging people to attend as much as possible."

"We run Mates Mondays and Free Friend Friday – loads of events to get friends and family to buy in to what their partner loves," she said. "We want them to be supportive and encourage



Paul Bedford

It's all based around the context of building a community by getting people to visit



Amanda Bracks

Use any excuse you can to get them into the club. We even arrange little gifts and tell members they'll will be at reception next time they come in

their loved ones to attend; not to say 'why are you going to the club again?'

Offering free meditation and yoga for local students during their exam period has also been a big hit with local parents, who are grateful and feel part of the community before they even join.

Soulful Fitness's postcard programme was a big winner with delegates, who loved how such a simple, traditional gesture could make all the difference.

'Thank you for joining', 'gratitude for touring', 'congratulations on your achievement', 'thinking of you' or 'sorry to see you go'; all with a handwritten note, so they feel like a loved member of the community.

Lockdown Lessons

The Soulful Fitness community came into its own during lockdown, when members interacted through a Facebook group, sharing images of their activities, their

pets joining in, and their home-cooked recipes. "We ended up with communities within communities," said Bracks. "On our social media platforms the images are all of people having fun. It helps prospective members understand who we are."

One nifty trick Bracks shared was a way to give to charity and draw potential members into the studio at the same time. She explained: "Schools often ask if we can donate fundraising prizes, but we give them more than that; cards to sell to the local community offering three classes for \$10. We get the leads and they get valuable income!"

Wrapping up, Bedford said: "Everyone is telling us the whole world has moved to digital, but how much of what Amanda does is traditional? It's all based around the context of building a community by getting people to visit, and we know the more people visit the longer they are likely to stay."

Member to employee

énergie Fitness' learning and development manager, Lauren Moate, told us about her journey from énergie member to énergie employee in her session: 'Creating a community, not just a club'.

The Australian former scientist said she understood customer service from working in a pub: "Ask anyone in a pub if they have a local and they'll all say yes. Gyms are the same, we all have our local."

As part of énergie's 'Take the stage' training course, franchisees learn the énergie promise; five things all built from service:

1. Here to wow you – wowing customers by getting to know them.
2. We play – make it fun. Customers must sweat and smile if they're to keep coming back.
3. A place for you – a home from home where everyone's welcome.



Gillian Reeves

**I have a
fascination
with connection
– what it is to
have meaningful
relationships that
encourage and
uplift others**

4. Got your back – what do they need and how do you support them.

5. It's personal – celebrate victories along the way. When they win, we win.

"Delivering the *énergie* promise is about members feeling they belong. When a member cancels, take it personally. They are actually breaking up with you. You've stopped motivating them to want to be there," said Moate. "I've literally lived 'a place for you'. I once sold a membership to a girl called Andrea. She's now my best friend and I was a bridesmaid at her wedding. We are changing people's lives."

Moate also shared her super six tips: 1) a world-class VIP welcome, every visit; 2) daily dialogue with members to create a deep and meaningful relationship; 3) every shift is showtime, so put on your best performance for the members; 4) go tribal by promoting group exercise, as members that work together stay longer; 5) yes, it's personal, get to know each member so you can deliver an experience on their terms and; 6) until next time – no one wants to leave someone they love, so find out when they're back and start all over again.

Summing up, Moate said: "If members aren't getting good customer service it's because you're choosing not to give it to them. Embed this in your team as a non negotiable as this will create a community and that will inspire members to stay."

Unsung heroes

Gillian Reeves delivered a thought-provoking session around *'Building communities: the difference between big box and boutique'*. Reeves, who owns the Yoga Hub studio, was previously responsible for Virgin Active's group exercise, as well as doing a stint at EMD

UK as head of instructor development.

Reeves encouraged delegates to close their eyes and remember how they felt the first time they stepped into a gym or studio, reminiscing about the elation she felt after her first ever aerobics class, which led her to volunteer at the Croydon YMCA, interacting with customers on the gym floor.

She said: "I have a fascination with connection – what it is to have meaningful relationships that encourage and uplift others. How do you feel when you think about a good relationship you have with another person? This is how you want customers to feel when they come to you."

"Have you asked your customers how they feel about their experience with you? Do you know their names? Why they come? Where they're at in life? It's really easy to set business values and a mission statement, but it's harder to live by if it doesn't come from the heart."

Reeves revealed Virgin Active's mission to be the most loved health club in the world, and to treat others as you want to be treated, which staff bought into because the leaders exuded those values themselves.

She said: "Real staff featured on our posters, on bus stops next to George Clooney's next film release. Our staff and members felt proud; they had a sense of belonging to something and we found members stayed longer because they connected with us."

Reeves quoted EMD UK research which showed that people crave a social experience that can't be replicated virtually, and she explained how loneliness can be more harmful than smoking or obesity, telling the audience that we need to create a vibe in our

facilities where people feel safe.

She touched on something many clubs have experienced; that members follow their favourite instructors. She explained the popularity of indoor cycling at Virgin Active and how important it was for self employed instructors to feel valued as part of the company. "These teachers had amazing rapport with the members. They were the unsung heroes. We ran a Pedal to the Medal Guinness Book of Records event and got instructors involved from all around the world. It was just 10 minutes of cycling, but people still remember that now. The instructors felt part of something bigger, not just someone who turns up twice a week. It's so important to engage with your team. They're the ones in front of the customers. Ask them what they need and what they like too."

At Yoga Hub, Reeves no longer has the budget of a big club, but has been creative, budding up with others, such as local bloggers, to help promote her studio for free. "Connection with the local community is everything," she explained. "I worked with a charity that had already built the trust of inactive women – those who wouldn't usually come to a yoga



The people who succeed are those who have soft skills and can interact with members, said Gillian Reeves

class – and created a successful, virtual 12-week programme for them.”

Summing up, she said: “You can have all the qualifications in the world, but the people that succeed are those who have soft skills and can interact. Good community builders simply love people.”

In it together

The all-female cast for 2020 included Stacey Seward Vandiver, owner and CEO of US-based group fitness education and subscription brand, SoulBody Fitness. Vandiver showed videos of health club owners using SoulBody Fitness classes to demonstrate ‘The Power of Community through group fitness’.

One advocate, Carrie Kepple, who is IHRSA chair as well as owner and CEO of Styles Studios, explained their ‘best of boutique’ concept, which sees four unique studios offering completely different experiences, all within one big club.

She said: “We’ve flipped the traditional model. We have a village of studios in one big space and classes are king. The gym floor is just a nice-to-have. We use a lot of technology to make the member experience as frictionless as possible and hashtags such as #neverboredagain



Stacey Seward Vandiver

and #allstyleswelcome to break down barriers and welcome everyone. All this helps us keep members engaged; they don’t have to go all over town to fulfil their exercise needs.”

The club had only been open eight weeks when lockdown hit. But they had secured 500 members and were determined to keep them. “If you were with family when a disaster struck, everything would be about protecting them. We did the same with our 500 members. We set up private Facebook groups, with classes every day, virtual PT, mental fitness and good nutrition

Get emotional about your customers. Love them up and create opportunities for them to be a community

habits, etc. Our members survived a crisis together and now they all talk to each other,” she explained.

“We actually grew our membership to 720 during a pandemic, and 90 per cent of those were from referrals. Get emotional about your customers. Love them up and create opportunities for them to be a community. Protect your core and those that love you will sell it for you.”

Jeni Morrison from Dallas YMCA talked about the difficulties of serving 16 very different communities, saying: “COVID has helped us prove that



Encourage staff to follow and tag members on social media



Marisa Hoff

The key word in social media is social. It's not about selling, it's a place for engagement and consistency is vital to success

group exercise drives traffic and builds member retention. In every location we had to look at who we're serving, and what they want. Adaptability was key to success. In some areas we have a big Indian community, who are not ready to come into the club, no matter what's on the schedule, so I started virtual sessions with their favourite instructors.

"In another area we have a strong yoga and barre community and so I had to create the same experience and emotional connection outside as we do in the studios. The pandemic has forced us to evolve and move forward and we will never go back to the way it was."

Socially engaging

Named one of IHRSA's Women Who Inspire in 2019, Marisa Hoff didn't disappoint as she talked about building communities through social media.

Hoff stated the similarities in social media marketing across all industries, explaining how her brother-in-law wanted to connect with old school friends and managed to create a 15k-member Facebook group within just two months. "He did something right," she said. "He wanted to build a community."

Hoff fell in love with social media and marketing when she was general manager of a successful Californian health club.

Now, as the director of operations for fitness consulting firm Empower Group, she's working with Be Military Fit (BMF) to bring the brand to the US.

"The key word in social media is social. It's not about selling, it's a place for engagement, and consistency is vital to success," explained Hoff, as she worked through her three top tips:

1. Recruit – follow complementary businesses, run events together to reach people you might not otherwise meet. Follow and engage in meaningful interactions with competitors' top fans, and offer them a free trial.

Make time to engage every day, commenting and liking, to help with your organic reach. Respond to queries quickly. Answering a complaint on social media can increase customer advocacy by 25 per cent. Forty per cent of people expect brands to respond in the first hour, 79 per cent within the first day. Most brands aren't doing that well enough! Response times for leads should be within five minutes. After that conversion decreases significantly; you need to get people when they're really motivated.

2. Retain – encourage staff to follow and tag members; engagement should go beyond your walls. The more

people interact, the more your posts will be seen and your organic reach boosted. If you're worried about staff interaction on social media they shouldn't be part of your team anyway.

Keep your audience in mind and keep an eye on what works; the most popular posts always feature staff or members. You can sell your business without making it obvious. Engage followers in discussions.

3. Refer – user generated content is a great tool for referrals. Create spaces in and around your club that encourage people to post; perhaps a feature wall with a logo. Offer prizes for members checking in and tagging you, using a branded hashtag or posting about why they love your club. It's the little things that make a difference. Don't forget the power of testimonials and repurpose your NPS scores and Google reviews on social.

More to watch

Two further presentations are available online; Catherine Edmunds, a specialist in equality, diversity and inclusivity, and Super Monkey in China, which Bedford described as a very successful business that has built a community and member trust despite the volatile environment. ●
For a copy of the event details, email paul@retentionguru.co.uk



**There's only one
studio like yours.**



**There's only one
software like ours.**

Everything you need to run—and grow—your business.

To book a demo or learn more, visit uk.mindbodyonline.com



***Life isn't about waiting for
the storm to pass, but about
learning to dance in the rain***

German Proverb



The US member journey in the age of COVID-19

Stephen Tharrett, co-founder, ClubIntel

For the US health and fitness industry, 2020 was a year framed by the unrelenting, random and often exponential growth of COVID-19, and the spillover of disruption and destruction this has caused for fitness operators, employees, and members.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc on the fabric of the industry and since March 2020, national and local governments have mandated one or more rounds of temporary facility closures, with some as short as 60 days and others lasting six months or more.

For some US operators, these closures resulted in Chapter 11 bankruptcy filings and/or permanent business closure. By some estimates, 20 per cent or more of US health and fitness businesses met extinction in 2020 due to COVID-19.

However, it's the consumer who is the ultimate arbiter of our industry's survival and as a result, it behoves us as operators to dive down and understand how COVID-19 is influencing member behaviour and perceptions with respect to their fitness journey and their return to the gym in the US.

Understanding the member journey

In June 2020, ClubIntel launched a longitudinal study of the member journey. The initial study explored the behaviours, experiences, and sentiments of 2,000 members over the age of 18, balanced by gender, generation, and geographic region within the US.

The results of that study were released earlier this year in a report entitled *What Members Say Matters*. In early November, ClubIntel launched a second survey of these same members that explored how the attitudes, behaviours, sentiments, and perceptions of this member population had changed since the earlier survey.

The goal of these two surveys was to garner a greater understanding of the member journey and how it might frame

the types of changes fitness operators need to consider if they want to prevail and succeed in this era of COVID-19.

This article will begin by highlighting some of the key findings from the study, then offer some thoughts on what they mean for the industry going forward.

At the time this article was written a vaccine was rolling out in the US and UK. The roll-out will take at least a year. During that time, other steps will continue to be taken by communities to stem the tide of COVID-19.

Fitness operators will still be touched by government restrictions and low consumer confidence around the safety of returning to a fitness facility. As a result, understanding the dynamics of the member journey can help operators reframe their business approach and hopefully enhance their survival rate. In the end, it's not just about dancing in the rain, but being the best dancer in the rain.

Those who seek a more in-depth look into the information and insights are welcome to visit the ClubIntel website at www.club-intel.com and download a complimentary copy of the full report.

“Fitness operators who seek to pull through this random and cruel era of COVID-19 will need to embrace change. Not cosmetic change, but deep-down foundational change”

A note from the editor – Stephen Tharrett

Stephen Tharrett, a much-loved member of the global fitness community, died on December 22 from a heart attack.

A few days before his untimely passing, Steve penned this article for HCM, saying he had great faith in the sector, given its resilience in facing the challenges of the pandemic.

We publish it to honour his life and work and his invaluable contribution to the industry – with his trademark proverbs firmly in place. Steve was a huge supporter of HCM and as a team, we are grateful to have been blessed with his wise counsel, kindness and encouragement.

Liz Terry, editor, HCM

Boomers in the US were significantly more likely to return when compared with younger people



DOORSHAW/ISTOCK

KEY FINDINGS

70% of US gym members either agree or strongly agree their facility is properly addressing their safety concerns around COVID-19 in the way it is operating

Approximately 60% of US members said their gym offered digital fitness content or fitness video on demand

Women in the US are almost twice as likely as men to be using the video on demand content provided by their facility

44% of members reported using their gym's video on demand service in addition to exercising at the gym

68% of US fitness facilities have reopened, 32% have not

18% of US members say their facility has permanently closed. This means 56% of reported closures were permanent

Boomers in the US (56 to 74 years old) were significantly more likely to return to their fitness facility when compared with Gen Z or millennials. Boomers were also the least likely to have cancelled during closure, although they displayed the lowest level of confidence in the safety practices being implemented

34% of members have returned to their former facility, another facility, or engaged with a digital middleman. 26% returned to their former facility, representing 76% of returns

Of those who returned, 44% returned the first week their facility was open

66% of members have yet to return to the gym. Approximately 48% of these are due to the facility not being open

20% of members have stopped exercising altogether

57% of non-returning members say the reason they haven't returned is a lack of confidence in the pandemic being sufficiently under control

28% of non-returning members indicate they're not confident fellow members will abide by proper safety policies

27% are not confident gym managers will adhere to safety procedures

82% of members said they're not aware of a member and/or staff person testing positive for COVID-19, with 18% reporting they ARE aware of there having been a positive test

US Women were twice as likely as men to have heard of a member or staff person testing positive for COVID-19

US Women were significantly less confident in the steps their facility is taking to address their safety concerns

In the US, women are marginally more likely to have cancelled their membership during closure, and marginally less likely to have returned to their facility (23% vs 29% for men)

Gen Z and Millennials in the US were the least likely to report returning to their former facility after lockdown and when they returned, were the most likely to engage with the facility's video on demand

Key ways of providing a COVID-19 safe environment are seen by gym members in the US as: facility management being transparent in communicating to members if staff/members have recently tested positive; gym staff conducting daily temperature checks; management confronting and removing users that do not comply with safety policies; staff disinfecting equipment after each use by members; and staff wearing protective gloves

More thoughts: A Darwinian challenge

W Edward Deming famously exclaimed “Change is optional, because survival is not mandatory”. The survival of the fitness industry, as well as many fitness operators, is, therefore, not mandatory. Fitness operators who seek to pull through this random and cruel era will need to embrace change. Not cosmetic change, but deep-down, foundational change.

What are some things operators may need to consider to avoid extinction of their brand?

Returning to pre-COVID-19 membership levels will be a challenge

Until consumers in the US are confident the pandemic is under control, only the most ardent will return. Few things an operator can do will overcome this dynamic. As a result, some US fitness operators will need to adjust their value proposition to garner more revenue from fewer members.

Operators need to view women, as well as Gen Z and millennials through a different lens

Prior to COVID-19, women represented a larger portion of industry memberships than men, Millennials represented the largest segment of membership, and Gen Z – the largest generation in U.S. history – was emerging as the audience of the future.

These groups had the highest cancellation rates, the lowest return rates, the least confidence in what operators are doing safety-wise and are the most inclined to use video on demand, so getting these populations to return and remain will require a paradigm shift within the US fitness industry.

The days when operators could depend on non-users and low users for revenue are quickly fading
Business models that garner profit from having 50 per cent or more of dues-paying members never showing up are in for a rough ride. The pandemic has put a major hurt on the ‘pay and no play’ business model.



Stephen Tharrett

Transparency and trust are the currency of success going forward

Going forward, especially among women, Gen Z and millennials, transparency and trust will be an important currency for survival.

Practices such as auto-renewal, billing during closure, excessive small print, onerous cancellation policies, restrictive freeze policies, and treating members as hostages rather than royalty all played a role in the low rate of return among some members, especially women and the younger generations.

Digital video on demand is the new monetisation platform

A larger percentage of members in the US, especially women, Gen Z and Millennials are now embracing the regular use of video on demand, compared to small group training and personal training. The rate of VOD uptake among returning members is two to three times higher than those former revenue stalwarts – personal training and small group training. ●

About the author

Stephen Tharrett was a co-founder, along with Mark Williamson, of ClubIntel a brand insights firm serving the health/fitness industry. Stephen was a former CEO of the Russian Fitness Group and former President of the IHRSA Board



Leisure-net Solutions
surveyed 33,000 people
across 771 facilities run
by 64 different operators

“

Over a third of customers said they felt significantly more comfortable about returning to the gym than to other public places

Lockdown insight

Tracking consumers' sentiment in relation to lockdowns gives valuable insights into members' priorities. Leisure-net surveyed the first two UK lockdowns and is currently working on the third. Dave Monkhouse reports on results from the lockdown 2 survey

As health clubs and leisure centres in the UK prepared to re-open in December 2020, after nearly a month in lockdown, Leisure-net Solutions followed up its initial *Post Lockdown Recovery Survey* – undertaken in June 2020 as the UK prepared to come out of its first lockdown – with a follow-up survey to gauge consumer confidence about returning again to their exercise habits.

Although gyms closed again in January 2021 for lockdown 3, the results of these two surveys yield valuable data about how consumer perceptions changed between the UK's lockdown 1 and lockdown 2, with significant increases in consumer confidence in the safety of gyms recorded.

This second piece of research, supported by Active IQ, questioned more than 33,000 people across 771 facilities run by 64 different operators, including private gyms, leisure centres, health clubs, schools and universities, to understand what had worked before and during lockdown 2, how customers planned to respond when lockdown 2 was reversed and what types of actions they expect from operators to keep them safe.

Leisure-net director Mike Hill says: "Once again we've had a fantastic response to our second lockdown insight questionnaire.

"Building on our original survey – carried out in June 2020 – these results offer considerable insight that will help inform challenging decisions around services and provision for the entire sector going forward in the new economic climate and inform decision-making in any future lockdowns."

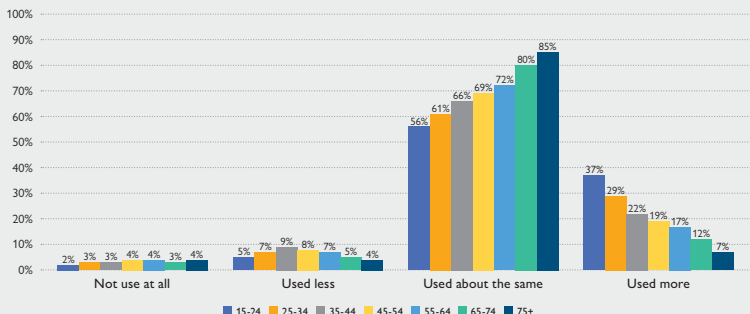
Customers eager to return

The research revealed consumer confidence about returning to facilities was extremely high, with just over three quarters (76.34 per cent) of members questioned saying they would return immediately when the doors to their health club or leisure centre opened, and a further 21 per cent saying they would return within three months; demonstrating the importance placed on getting back to indoor exercise.

The gender and age differences were also clear in the survey, with older age groups more cautious about returning than younger age groups and women more concerned about safety procedures and cleanliness than men.

Respondents indicated faith in their operator's ability to keep them safe while exercising, with more than 69 per cent of those who returned between July and November expressing great confidence in their facility's COVID-related systems, processes and practices. In fact, over a third of customers (35 per cent) said they felt

When facilities reopen, how will they be used? Shown by age



Swimming as a person's main activity rose by 8 per cent from lockdown 1 to 2

“Consumer confidence about returning to gyms was extremely high, with over three quarters of members saying they would return immediately and a further 21% saying they would return within three months”

significantly more comfortable about returning to their club or centre than to other public places, compared to the June results (17.9 per cent). Only 12 per cent said they were not at all confident.

“First of all, congratulations to our facilities on doing such a great job between July and November. The research very clearly shows a jump in people's confidence to return to their health club compared to other public places,” says Hill. “However, while this is a good news story, the sector can't afford to lose 12 per cent of its customer base going forward, so more work needs to be done to reassure the minority who aren't yet confident, particularly the older age groups, who are less at ease than younger people.”

This finding is in marked contrast with the findings of research in the US fitness market, where older people were more confident to return than younger people and where consumer confidence in the sector is far lower overall (see ClubIntel, p64).

Lockdown reduced activity levels

Leisure-net found activity levels dropped significantly during the November closures, with 69 per cent of respondents stating they had been less active, compared with 52 per cent during the first lockdown, and only 24 per cent of people who track their steps saying their step count had increased, compared to 38 per cent in June.

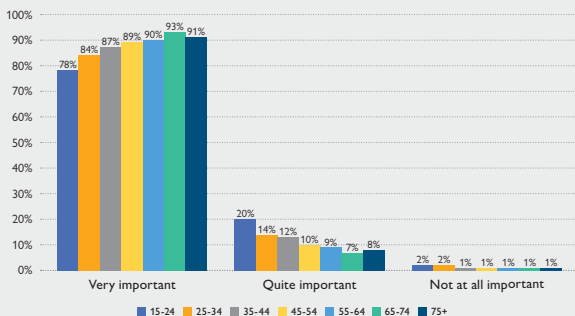
Analysis of the survey data needs to reflect the different age profiles of the two studies, with the sample from the first lockdown being from younger age groups than the sample from the second.

Younger people reported being consistent in the activities they participated in prior to the two different lockdowns, with the most popular activities being the gym, group exercise and swimming – in that order – while prior to lockdown 2, people in the older age groups used the gym and group exercise slightly less, but were swimming more, as confidence in that activity returned.



Older age groups said they would use facilities about the same amount

Importance of cleanliness. Shown by age



Older age groups were walking less prior to lockdown 2, but doing more online activities indoors, while those in younger age groups were running and jogging slightly more, likely due to the good weather.

The percentage of people across all age groups who said that they would be more likely to return to their local gym or leisure centre if it offered online classes as part of the membership, went down slightly during lockdown 2 when compared to lockdown 1.

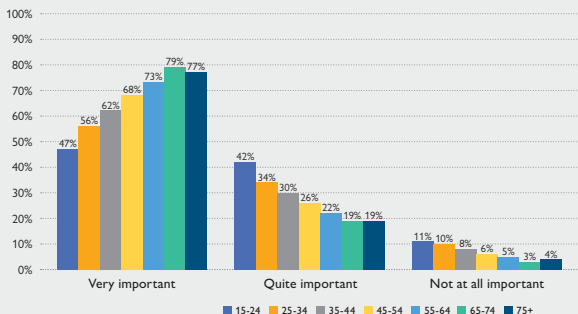
This may be because some have taken up separate options and are not relying on their gym for these or perhaps because they have tried and not enjoyed them. However, the difference was not significant.

Reasons for not returning to their facility related to reduced opening times or reduced programmes, as well as having less disposable income and fear of COVID-19.

In reporting home workouts, Leisure-net asked two questions: what activities did you do and what have you done more of?

In response to the first question, more people reported they had been doing home exercise in the second lockdown than the first, while in response to the second question – what have you done more of? – they reported they had done slightly less 'additional' home exercise – perhaps because this has now become part of their core routine.

Importance of new COVID-19 procedures and processes – by age



Prior to second lockdown, the number of people reporting group exercise as their main activity reduced slightly, potentially reflecting the reduced capacity of classes and the closure of group exercise in some areas.

An important element for people considering a return to their club was the staff, with 66 per cent rating the friendliness of staff as very important and 63 per cent stating the support and guidance of the fitness and group exercise team is very important.

"Leisure facility colleagues, gym and fitness instructors must be placed front and centre when the industry reopens its doors," says Jenny Patrickson, Active IQ MD.

"The value of soft skills can't be overstated – this report bears out the fact that we are a 'people first' industry and operators must ensure staff are given all the support and refresher training they need to return with confidence in their ability to fulfil their vital roles."

Leisure-net's survey results have been widely used to inform decision making, lobby local and central government and shape reopening guidance

by organisations such as Sport England, ukactive, CLUK and CIMSPA. Operators also used the results to inform their decisions and maximise the impact of re-opening. The new consumer confidence scores will be used by 4global to inform the modelling of new projections for the sector.

Utku Toprakseven, director of Sports Intelligence at 4global, says: "During the previous lockdown, the confidence score for return to activity was fundamental in the development of our recovery modelling that predicted sector visit rates with 98 per cent accuracy before the second lockdown.

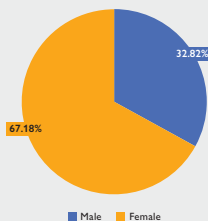
"We will use this new data to inform our predictive modelling and generate recovery curves taking the sector through 2021 and beyond. The depth of the data collected will allow us to adjust this model to reflect differing levels of social distancing measures and tiers of restrictions. ●

Find out more: www.HCMmag.com/Leisure-net2

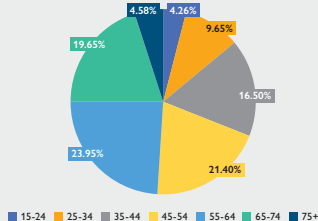
Sample demographics

This Lockdown 2 survey sample is very similar to our Lockdown 1 survey in terms of gender split, (ie. over representative of women), but is slightly more biased towards older age groups, 55 to 74 years old, than our June 2020 survey

Gender



Age





Run your facilities more effectively

**Delivering software, membership
payments and value-added services
– all powered by one platform**

**EMPOWERING YOU TO GROW
YOUR ORGANISATION**

w: legendware.co.uk

e: sales@transactionservicesgroup.eu

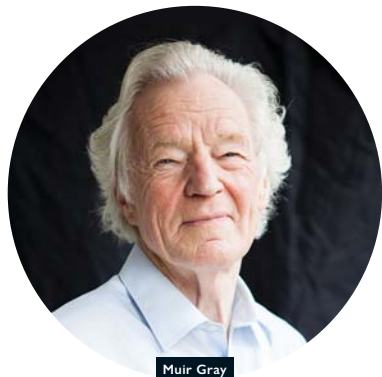
BC (before COVID)

THE FITNESS INDUSTRY

AC (after COVID)

THE WELLBEING INDUSTRY

*Muir Gray has a vision for a world
where exercise professionals help people
live longer, better lives into old age*



Muir Gray

Before COVID, we were preparing an article for *HCM* called the *Inverse Gym Law*. This was based on a famous article published in *The Lancet* fifty years ago called the *Inverse Care Law* in which the author, the late Julian Tudor Hart, demonstrated that the volume and quality of healthcare was inversely related to need.

Our argument was that *the fitness industry is also delivering a service that is inversely related to the potential for benefit*.

Most of the people working with trainers and using gyms and fitness centres are young people, whereas the benefit that can be obtained from these resources increases with every decade of life that passes.

This is because the fitness gap opens up for most people in their early twenties when they get their first job – usually a sitting job – and their first car and that gap grows progressively wider until it reaches a point when it means the individual will drop below what has been called *The Line*, namely the level of ability where they can no longer carry out crucial tasks such as getting to the toilet in time.



The normal biological ageing process does not cause problems until people are into their late 90s

The complicating factor is that the normal biological ageing process – which by itself does not cause problems until people are into their late 90s – does reduce resilience. This means that with each decade that goes by, fitness and ability are lost faster and are more difficult to recover.

However the evidence is clear that people of any age, no matter how many long-term conditions they may have, can close the fitness gap if they undertake the right exercise regime.

Although deprivation remains a huge problem, many older people are well off financially and so – pre-pandemic – represented an untapped market for the fitness industry, but then along came COVID-19.

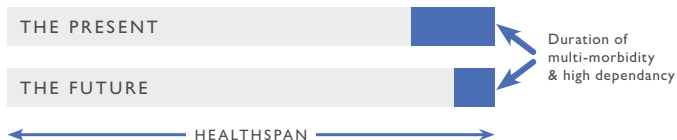
Learning from the pandemic

Older people are at greater risk from coronavirus infection and for this reason are advised to practice what was initially called socially distancing – namely to avoid interaction with other, younger people, although it was emphasised in the prime minister's first speech that getting out for exercise was very important.

“

The industry should change from being focused on fitness and mostly working in real estate, to being a wellbeing industry, working with people of any age or level of health, wherever is needed

Potential for better health in older age



COVID-19 has had a huge impact on older people in terms of fatalities, particularly in care homes, but what has emerged – more importantly – is the impact of lockdown on their health and this has been called the deconditioning pandemic, or the second pandemic.

The impact of this deconditioning is dramatically revealed in recent reports by AgeUK and the Centre for Ageing Better. One quarter of older people cannot walk as far and one fifth feel less steady on their feet and there have also been huge psychological impacts in terms of isolation and depression, which are both risk factors for dementia.

The need for reconditioning

Evidence shows people can regain lost ability, no matter their age or the number of conditions they have, but how can this reconditioning be brought about?

Social care bears a great burden as a result of deconditioning among older people, but is prevented from taking action by the current 'culture of care', which to most people means doing things FOR others.

This approach was laid down in 1948 in the *National Assistance Act*, which made it clear that younger people with special needs, "the crippled, deaf, dumb and blind", needed education to overcome their difficulties, whereas the aged simply needed 'practical assistance', either at home or in care homes.

As a result, a culture developed which assumed that every problem was due to ageing and could be solved by just doing things for people.

Persistent culture

The *Social Care Act* of 2014 was much more enlightened and Section 2 emphasises the need to prevent the need for social care, but the culture has not changed.

The NHS is, by definition, a health service but in practice it is a National Disease Service and of course it has a vitally important role to play in, for example, treating stroke and providing joint replacement – two examples of the miracles of the second healthcare revolution – the high-tech revolution. The first being the Public Health Revolution of the 19th century.



Exercise interventions can shorten the period of dependency at the end of life

The fitness industry can play a key role in promoting wellbeing in older people

JACOB LUND/SHUTTERSTOCK

With additional problems posed by COVID-19, it's unlikely the NHS will be able to rise to the challenge of reconditioning the elderly, which should actually be the first step in the development of a completely different approach and culture to help people live longer, better and have a shorter period of multi-morbidity and dependency at the end of life.

The opportunity

In a major project organised by the Oxfordshire Activity Partnership, seventeen Active Partnerships are working towards a common set of objectives to help people live longer, better and to change the culture from a culture of care to a culture of enablement – or perhaps we could even use the term coaching – based on a definition of coaching as being activities to help people close the gap between potential and performance.

The key workforce are PTs and this means that the sector formerly known as the fitness industry is playing a key role in promoting wellbeing.

The term fitness of course is an accurate term, but it is so deeply associated with younger people that to change the culture it is better to use another term, and wellbeing is probably the single best term to use.

I believe the industry should change its brand from being a fitness industry, mostly working in real estate, to a wellbeing industry, working with people of any age or any level of health, either individually or in groups – online as well as in buildings. ●

Muir Gray is director of the optimal ageing programme at Oxford, a member of Active Oxfordshire and an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine

Opinion

Kenny Butler – ukactive

Gyms, pools and leisure centres are essential places for the health and wellbeing of older adults, where they achieve not only greater physical activity levels, but also improved social connections, generating health, economic and social value.

The industry has proven these places are COVID-secure and that they're more important than ever in this new chapter in the fight against COVID-19.

These places deliver 66 per cent of cancer rehabilitation and all the nation's GP Exercise on Referral services. They're also where 17.1m people reach the recommended levels of activity each week – second only to walking.

The industry now has a partnership with NHS England through social prescribing, and has put itself forward to help with the backlog of rehabilitation for elective surgeries and other rehabilitation needs in an ever-growing deconditioning crisis.

This industry is an essential service in the prevention and treatment of disease, as well as enhancing the physical and mental health of the nation.



Kevin Cahill & Greg Whyte

The duo have joined forces to launch a free virtual 'couch to exercise' programme called RISE. They talk to HCM about what they've learned from collaborating on Sport Relief and how they're using this knowledge to deliver the new not-for-profit



Kevin Cahill (L) and Greg Whyte (R) teamed up on Sport Relief in 2005

“

The RISE programme will give people the physical literacy and a nurtured baseline of confidence to encourage them into other forms of exercise in gyms and leisure centres



How successful was Sport Relief?

Whyte: Sport Relief was instrumental in changing attitudes towards sport. When I first teamed up with Kevin, back in 2005, I was coaching David Walliams to swim the English Channel. At the time, open water swimming was seen as something very niche and out of the ordinary. David and I would be training in the river and people would ask if everything was OK. Had we fallen in?

You can clearly track the popularity of open water swimming from 2006; it literally took off from that point. Today open water swimming is for the masses. There are now thousands of venues and open water events around the country.

Cahill: Sport Relief's ultimate objective was to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged. Yes, to fundraise for these groups but also to inspire, encourage and motivate the most marginalised in our society.

The Sport Relief Mile was a great example of this. People simply had to run a mile. It wasn't a marathon or an extreme challenge, but it was tangible and engagement was high, with over 80,000 people taking part in its first year across the UK.

The Sport Relief Mile ran biannually from 2004 – 2016. The diversity of the participants was noticeable, year on year. Five-year-old children were crossing the finish line with their grandmothers. People of all fitness levels and demographic groups were represented. Its inclusivity is what ultimately made the challenge a success.

The most inspirational challenge – one people really identified with – was Jo Brand's.

Jo completed her 'Hell of a Walk' in 2016, when she walked east to west across the UK, a route of 135.7 miles. Although it wasn't the most physically difficult, what stood out was how Jo's challenge was relatable, believable and inspirational. Jo said she wanted to demonstrate that 'fat old women can walk!'



Greg Whyte, an expert in sports and exercise science, is well-known for his involvement in Sport Relief: since 2006 he's trained, motivated and successfully coached people taking part in 32 Sport and Comic Relief Challenges



Kevin Cahill has been CEO of Comic Relief since 1997. It was his idea to launch Sport Relief in 2002 and he played a key role in the Make Poverty History and Live 8 campaigns. After stepping down in September 2016 he was made an honorary life president of the charity

People came out to accompany her on sections of the walk, to cheer her on. Her supporters were often 'like' her; women of a certain age and fitness level. She looked like them and sounded like them. If Jo could do it, so could they!

What's the purpose of RISE?

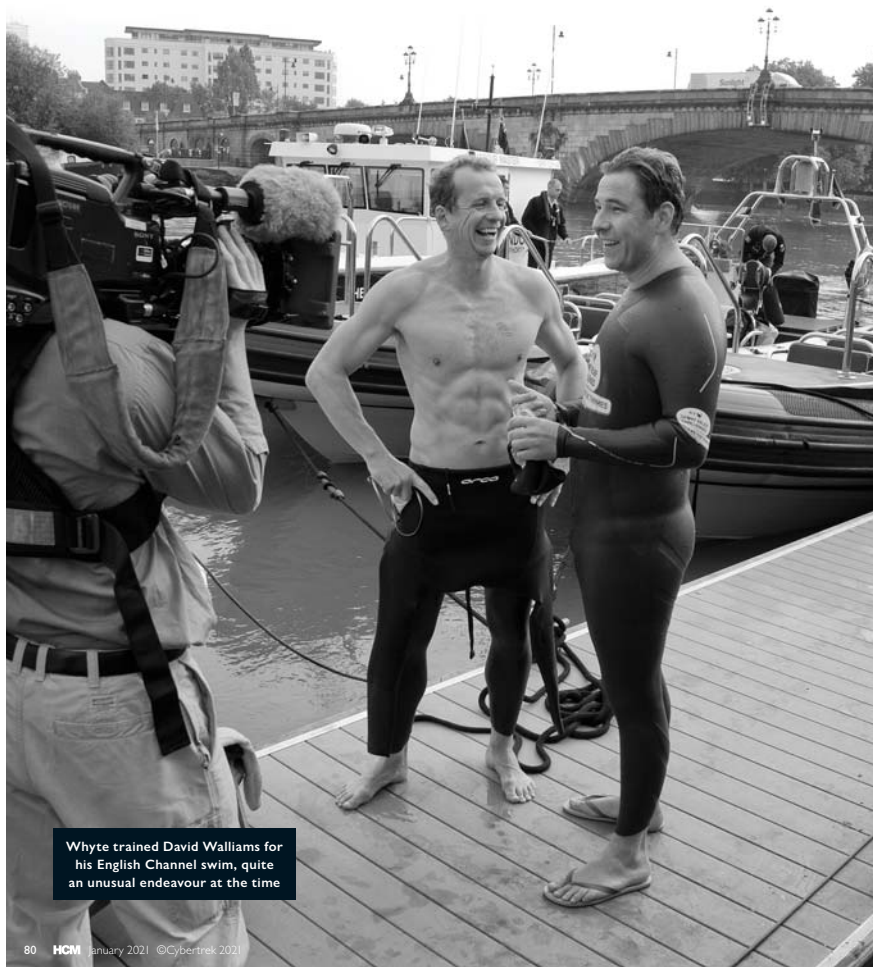
Whyte: RISE's objective is to reach and engage with people who are inactive. The sedentary population of the UK alone is 11.3 million people. That's a quarter of our population who are active for less than 30 minutes per week (WHO guidelines suggest 30 minutes on most days of the week for health).

Having previously collaborated on the Couch to 5k initiative, I realised even this assumes a level of confidence and physical literacy to take the steps to exercise.

RISE is different. Our approach starts with Couch to the Front Door for people who lack the know-how and confidence to pass even this basic threshold.

“

Sport Relief's ultimate objective was to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged... to inspire, encourage and motivate the most marginalised in our society



Whyte trained David Walliams for his English Channel swim, quite an unusual endeavour at the time

Whyte and Cahill say celebrities, such as David Walliams, can help to encourage and inspire



RISE doesn't assume its users have any pre-conditioning, any self-confidence or even self-esteem related to exercise. It really is taking a step back in order to move forward.

Cahill: So many gyms and online exercise programmes make the assumption there is a baseline level of fitness; that the user already has an interest in fitness or a particular sport. At our local gym you feel you need to be fit to be a member. RISE doesn't make such assumptions. The RISE programme will give its users a taster of what activity can look like, and aims to give them the physical literacy and a nurtured baseline of confidence that will ultimately funnel them into other forms of exercise, such as gyms and leisure centres.

The barrier to participation for the Sport Relief Mile was relatively low and RISE is also trying to remove those walls to participation, by making the programme free and by keeping the format simple.

One of our motivations for RISE is that the COVID-19 pandemic has and will continue to cause havoc to the wellbeing of our society. We will be feeling the aftermath of COVID, in the form of mental as well as physical health problems, for a long time.

As we know, exercise can help with the wellbeing of both our mind and body and an accessible programme needs to be in place to support everyone who needs it. A lot of people in the UK are going to be very damaged and will need something to help get their heads, bodies and emotions together. RISE will help them feel more centred and better about themselves.

How did you come up with the concept of Sport Relief and why was it successful, year on year?

Cahill: Sportspeople were becoming more iconic and internationally famous beyond sport; heroes such as Beckham and Federer crossed cultural

and geographical boundaries and I felt there was an opportunity to replicate what we'd achieved with our comedians by connecting with them.

Together with Steve Redgrave, who'd just won his fifth Olympic gold medal, we contacted sports stars and entertainers to join the Sport Relief campaign. The response was astounding. Sport Relief captured the heart of the nation. It was a win-win. The people who took part enjoyed it, the money raised went to good causes, the BBC got great programming.

The proposition of Sport Relief made sense; to utilise the power and passion of sport to do social good. Comic Relief certainly influenced the number of events that use sport for social change and Sport Relief was a breakout entity that drove this coming together.

What have you learned about harnessing the influence of celebrities?

Cahill: Our star ambassadors will play a critical role in promoting the RISE programme – simply talking about the scheme to help get the word out.

The trick with artists and celebrities is to get them to do things that don't take up too much time, but have meaningful impact, both for society and their reputation.

We hope that some of the comedians who worked with us on Comic Relief might help out again, to promote, encourage and inspire both the uptake and the completion of the programme.

Why do you think RISE will motivate people where gym operators have faltered?

Whyte: Leisure providers haven't failed. The 11 million inactive people are difficult to identify, tricky to connect with and harder to get started. RISE is the bridge between inactivity and regular activity. It's a launching point to physical wellbeing.



Jo Brand's walk across the UK inspired many people who related to her journey

RISE is removing the stumbling blocks to entry into physical activity – firstly, it's free, secondly, time isn't an issue, as people can take part at their own convenience, and thirdly, they don't need any equipment and can do it in the privacy of their own home.

It's web-based, so people won't need to download any apps or have a smartphone to take part. It's delivered via a simple, user-friendly, web platform that's been designed, created and donated by the team at Venueserve Fitness, a company that currently offers a white-labelled, virtual exercise platform to health club operators.

RISE consists of three six-week programmes and has gentle and targeted progression in each stage. Block one is chair-based exercise. Block two is very low intensity interval activity, and Block three is low intensity interval activity. Our team of instructors, who were filmed at the Marlow Club, are middle-aged men and women who have the expertise to give the user the confidence in the programme. We also have a yoga-based programme, focussing on agility and a mindfulness programme.

Getting people to this point is a powerful tool. By completing the three phases, the participant will gain the prerequisite level of fitness, and confidence to commence other activities, such as a 'mainstream' class, other virtual online exercises or even Parkrun.

Ultimately, RISE will give people the confidence to start something new; to incorporate physical activity into their daily life.

Why RISE and why now?

Whyte: Although RISE isn't directly linked to the pandemic, I think COVID-19 has forced us to look again at social inequalities, and how deprivation impacts at every stage of life, including their experience of COVID-19.

The pandemic has normalised online connections, from business Zoom meetings to Facetimeing with



In 2012, John Bishop (L) completed a 290-mile triathlon for Sport Relief

granny over Christmas. The RISE programme wouldn't have been achievable even a year ago; the pandemic has made us all more comfortable with virtual and remote interactions.

RISE is being funded through donations and sponsors – effectively it costs one pound to put one person through the programme. RISE is about social good for all.

How will success be measured?

Whyte: Our goal is for RISE to reach one million people. However, it's not just about getting a million people to sign up, we want a million people to complete the 18-week programme.

This isn't about money, it's a not-for-profit scheme and we're actively looking for sponsors and partners to help us deliver the programme – it's about people getting on board, enjoying it, keeping at it. This can have a profound knock-on effect on many sectors, including health and fitness. We want those who have completed the programme to feel ready to move on to their next set of wellbeing goals. ●

Find out more: <https://riseexercise.com>



Flooring for Sport & Leisure Facilities

- ▶ Point elastic and area elastic sports surfaces for indoor multi-use facilities.
- ▶ Hard-wearing, sound-deadening flooring for weightlifting areas.
- ▶ Porous and non-porous surfaces for outdoor tennis, basketball and netball courts.
- ▶ Vibration control and acoustic isolation in gyms, cinemas and bowling alleys.
- ▶ Sound-absorbing wall panels for sports halls, offices and meeting rooms.



Contact us now:

T: +44 (0) 1706 260 220 E: Sales@TVS-Group.co.uk
www.TVS-Group.co.uk



TVS GROUP

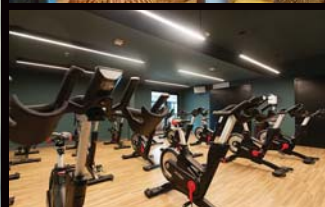
SPORT | FITNESS | PLAY | ACOUSTICS

A portrait of David Gutstadt, a man with short dark hair and a beard, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light pink shirt. The background is a blurred cityscape.

David Gutstadt

Founder **Fitler Club**

Fitler Club is Philadelphia's newest private lifestyle club, boasting premium health and wellness facilities, along with a hotel, workspaces and refined culinary venues. Steph Eaves talks to the club's founder about his creation



Guidstadt envisioned Fitler Club as a second home for a new generation of leaders



Our 24/7 work/stay/play atmosphere is unlike anything else in the world and it's led by the best in the business

What was your original vision for Fitler?

When I first envisioned the dream that was to later become Fitler Club, it was a second home for a new generation of leaders. A space with a fresh focus on diversity and culture, and where all needs could be met under one roof, with amenities like world-class health and wellness facilities, elevated dining options, co-working space and much more. I wanted to enlist professionals who are renowned in their field.

In what ways is the club designed to enhance wellness and fitness?

The Field House at Fitler Club unfolds over 25,000 square feet and is one of the best equipped gyms in the US. It offers a multitude of fitness classes, private training – all trainers

have earned college-level degrees in exercise science – and the best fitness equipment members could want, all under one roof.

We have state-of-the-art studios for spinning, meditation, Pilates and other cardio classes, a climbing wall, a 75-foot three lane lap pool with hot and cold plunge pools, HD golf simulator, giant turf training area and a lounge. A fully equipped spa and salon also reside in the Field House, offering body work and men's and women's grooming services.

Which equipment suppliers have you chosen to use in the fitness centre?

The Field House is equipped primarily with Life Fitness, Peloton, Concept 2 and Woodway equipment. We have a state-of-the-art 'connected'

spin studio with 'Coach-by-color', a boxing studio and a fully outfitted turf training area with sleds, battle ropes, kettlebells and more.


What makes Fitter stand out from the competition?

We present The Club as what the city looks like today, with a focus on diversity and culture. The Club reflects a new generation of urban sophisticates who don't want to separate social life, work and wellness. Our members can find everything they're looking for here, from a weekday morning workout class to a weekend date night at The Dining Room followed by our speaker series.

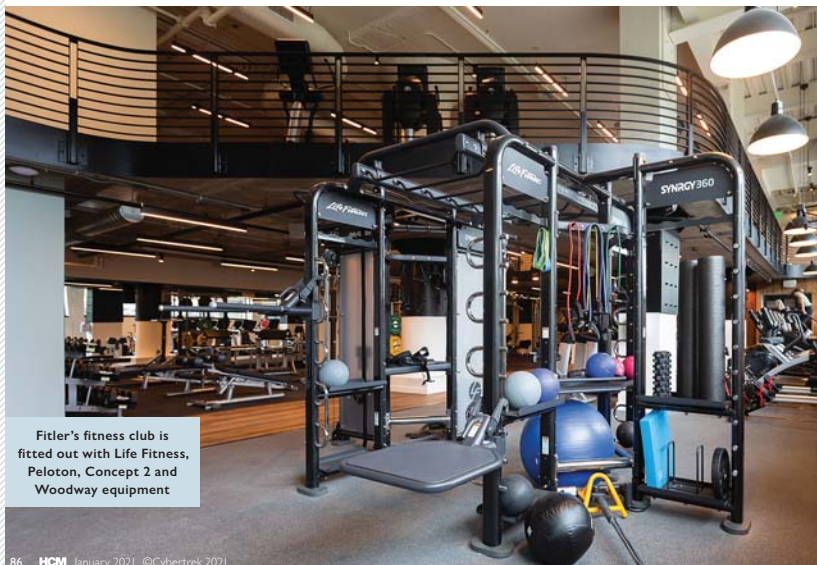
Our 24/7 work/stay/play atmosphere is unlike anything else in the world and it's led by the best in the business, like internationally-renowned chef Marc Vetri who oversees our culinary programme and certified personal trainer and nutritionist Jayel Lewis who spearheads the extensive health and wellness programming.

Your membership fees increase with a member's age – why?

Our target audience isn't so much a demographic but a psychographic. We're looking for individuals who are seeking a community and who live a modern-urban lifestyle. Younger



The three-lane lap pool is available for those learning to swim and athletes training for a triathlon



Fitter's fitness club is fitted out with Life Fitness, Peloton, Concept 2 and Woodway equipment



Our membership process is intentional and deliberate to ensure our community is diverse in background, profession and thought

applicants often fit the bill for membership, but don't have the financial means for it. Our decision to offer a cost break is to allow them an equal opportunity for membership.

This is part of a larger Fitler Club initiative to help people who should be a part of the community but don't have financial means. We are constantly looking for ways to bring people in from the community for mentorship and job opportunities. Our most recent initiative is our Artist in Residence programme, which features work from 19 artists who have strong ties to Philadelphia.

How many members will you take on?

We reached our initial membership goal in under six months and currently have a waitlist of applicants that we are starting to review. Our membership process is intentional and deliberate to ensure our community is diverse in background, profession and thought, and includes established



Gutstadt designed Fitler Club to offer everything members could want

leaders, emerging leaders, up-and-comers and intriguing, high-achieving people. The membership process starts with an online application and includes an in-person meeting as well as an orientation with other prospective members.

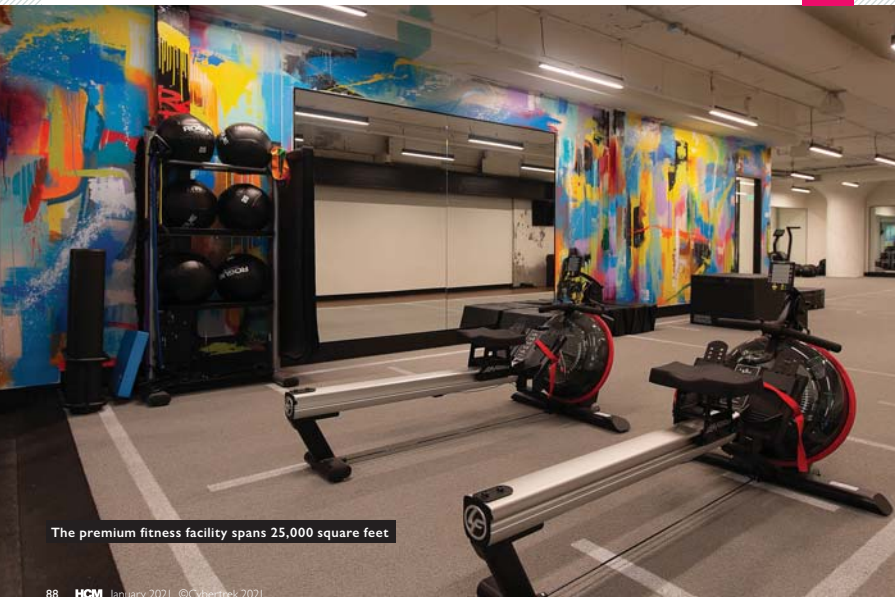
How are you dealing with the pandemic?

We launched several initiatives under the 'Fitler Comes To You' umbrella to keep our members engaged and connected. These programmes offer continued value by creating a 'community beyond the club'. They include extensive virtual programming – including culinary events, fitness classes with our trainers, speakers series, kids programming, etc. There's also Fitler To Go, which is take-out dining, and Field House To Go, which provides our members with weights and other exercise equipment to keep them moving during this time. Our team continues to develop content and look for creative ways to stimulate participation through email as well as through our social media platforms.

The team is focused on supporting employees and our members to get through lockdown with initiatives such as the Fitler Club Family Food Pantry, which we launched



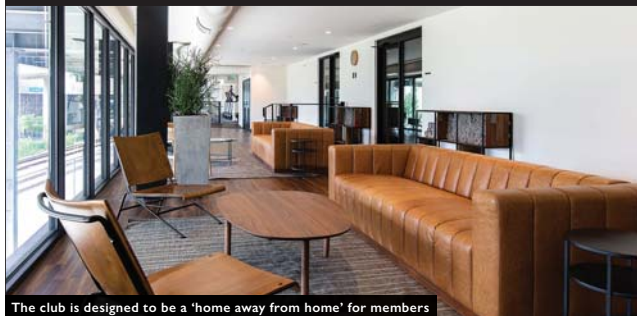
We've launched several initiatives under the 'Fitler Comes To You' umbrella to keep our members engaged and connected



The premium fitness facility spans 25,000 square feet



Members can train in the club before working or taking a meeting



The club is designed to be a 'home away from home' for members

to alleviate the financial burden of groceries for both current and laid off employees.

The programme provided employees with a US\$100 credit every two weeks to use at The Pantry. They could shop hundreds of at-cost items on the pantry website, ranging from produce to dairy and everything in between. Thanks to the at-cost prices, this was comparable to over \$200-worth of

groceries at a traditional grocery store.

Once their orders were placed online, they could schedule to pick up their groceries from The Pantry (which we set up in Fitler Club's Ballroom) within a four day window.

The first pantry pick-up had over 160 people who placed orders. The programme was designed and regularly reassessed to see how best to support the community.

INTERVIEW



Art from local artists is featured in the club



FITLER FACTS

Location: Philadelphia

Opened: 2019

Gym and spa: The Field House, a 25,000sq ft facility

Hotel: The Rooms at Fitler Club (14-key)

Coworking space: 34,000sq ft, including private office suites

Restaurants: The Dining Room restaurant, The Back Bar, the Bar & Lounge

Art @ Fitler Club: exhibitions which are updated each month



The contemporary style of the club aims to appeal to its young, diverse demographic



6

Our members can find everything they're looking for here, from a weekday morning workout class to a weekend date night



Members are drawn to the premium look and feel of the club





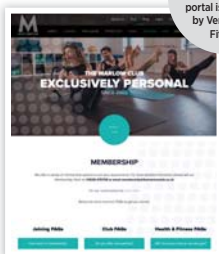
Fitness is evolving the future of blended memberships

- ▶ **Venueserve Fitness** keeps your fitness brand and your members working out together, no matter where they choose to train. 24 hours a day.
- ▶ **Venueserve Fitness** brings you a fully brandable white label fitness platform for live streaming and pre-recorded workouts.
- ▶ **Venueserve Fitness** has been built to protect your revenue, make your membership more flexible and to help retain existing members and attract new ones.

Memberships are evolving. People may not train at the gym or in your class; some may never physically come to your club, but they still want to be part of your community.

Venueserve offers flexible ways for members to participate and have a positive experience of your club, from afar. Your fitness brand will travel with your members. Working from home – no problem. Too busy to get to the gym – no problem. Working away on a business trip – no problem. Training whilst on holiday – no problem.

The Marlow Club's branded online membership portal is provided by Venueserve Fitness



Why is Venueserve Fitness a good fit for your customer?

- ▶ Authentic live streamed classes with the instructors they know and love
- ▶ Access to a huge bank of pre-recorded virtual classes
- ▶ Branded content that looks and feels like your club
- ▶ Maintain relationships and customer engagement at a safe distance
- ▶ A secure platform to give your customers and instructors digital peace of mind
- ▶ A live streamed alternative when classes are full

Why is Venueserve Fitness good for your business?

The rise of streaming is an opportunity, not a threat to your revenue. Venueserve Fitness allows you to capture these new incomes from a new type of customer, adding value to your overall offer.

- ▶ Simple, affordable and adaptable - simply plug and play
- ▶ Protect your existing income by offering current members a blended membership, including online and in-person training
- ▶ Convert leavers to a digital-only membership to protect revenue
- ▶ Tempt new members with a 'try before you' buy digital taster
- ▶ Generate valuable customer insights



The River Bourne club is creating online sessions for different demographics



Clubs without walls

Venueserve Fitness is working with the Health Club Collection to drive its digital customer engagement



The Health Club Collection, a group of boutique health clubs operating in and around London since the early 1990s, has collaborated with Venueserve Fitness to develop its live streamed and pre-recorded online content to fulfil its long-term strategy of delivering clubs without walls.

The Health Club Collection includes the Bankside Fit Hub, the River Bourne Club and Rize. Each club has its own unique brand and client base, but all have benefited from using the white-label digital workout platform provided by Venueserve Fitness.

Heidi Blackburn, operations director at The Health Club Collection says: "We introduced the online platform as a way to connect with our members during lockdown. However, we always had the belief that online wellness was something we wanted to provide; it was inevitable for the leisure sector.

Fast to market

"The pandemic simply sped up our implementation of this strategy. We needed to be fast to market with our virtual offer, and the content had to be authentic, meaningful and ensure our instructors had online security built in. We wanted to be able to offer our members a round-the-clock 'lifestyle'

experience, and Venueserve Fitness helped us to fulfil our desire."

The Health Club Collection's River Bourne Club in Chertsey has a suburban demographic, and is now creating bespoke training schedules for some of its niche markets, as Blackburn explains: "We have a lot of members who are retired. We can provide comprehensive, bespoke training plans for this group online; something that's costly in person. For our prime-time customers aged 65+, our inspirational instructor Dee, who is 70 years old herself, has created some fantastic lower impact, age-specific sessions.

Creating content

"At first we wondered if this age group would engage with the online technology, and we filmed some short 'How to' instructional videos, but they've tuned in and turned up. Now we're creating more content for other demographics, including post and pre-natal.

"The fantastic thing about virtual wellness is we can provide a vast range of content cost-effectively. We're also considering online teenage/young sessions, prehab and rehab sessions, weight loss with nutrition programmes and long-Covid recovery support."

The platform creates an opportunity to grow the business, according to the Health Club Collection's group sales

"We wanted to be able to offer our members a round-the-clock 'lifestyle' experience, and Venueserve Fitness helped us to fulfil our desire"

**Heidi Blackburn,
The Health Club Collection**

and marketing manager, Ian Hassett, who says: "Virtual provision naturally creates flexibility and extends our membership offer. As the Venueserve Fitness platform is white-label, we can customise it to look and feel like our own brands, so our customers feel connected to our clubs.

Customer engagement

"Brand loyalty is important for customer retention. Members can use the online platforms should they be working from home, away with business, on holiday or too busy to get to the club itself. The reports created by the platform show both pre-recorded and live streamed sessions are popular. What we've learned is that choice and convenience is important to customers."

Find out more:
<https://fitness.venueserve.com>

DIGITAL IS THE NEW PERSONAL!

Business solutions
to revolutionise the service
you provide for your members,
trainers and management
teams adapting to
'the new normal'.



ASK FOR YOUR FREE DEMO TODAY!

- ▶ REALTIME BOOKINGS & PAYMENTS
- ▶ LIVE-STREAMING & ON DEMAND
- ▶ ASSESSMENTS & PROGRAMMING
- ▶ STAFF MANAGEMENT & EDUCATION
- ▶ REPORTING & BUSINESS ANALYSIS
- ▶ INTEGRATION & CUSTOM DEVELOPMENT

fisikal™

<https://fisikal.com/club>



Added value

Third Space members embrace new digital app, viewing 75,000 workouts in just three months

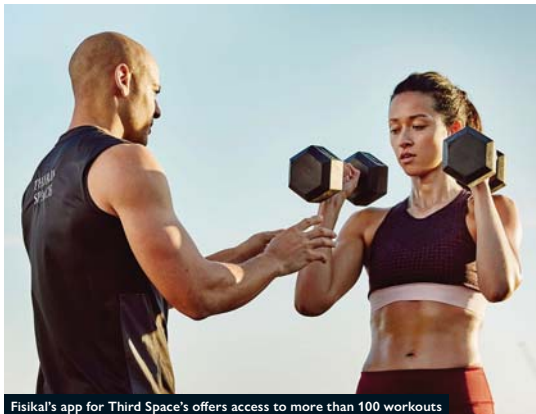
In 2020, while the UK was still locked down, Third Space launched an app giving its members exclusive access to a wide variety of on-demand and live streamed classes. The move was the result of a two-year partnership with Fisikal to enhance member experience through its digital provision.

"Since the on-demand platform went live in March 2020, we've recorded 65,000 views, with a further 10,000 views of our live streamed classes." Explains Richard Carroll, senior brand manager at Third Space. "While digital provision was in the planning long before COVID-19, the imposed closure of our facilities fast-tracked the launch, providing our community with a means of maintaining a connection to our services and support, despite physical restrictions. I'm pleased to say, Fisikal was able to respond to our new, critical timeline and worked tirelessly to get the app up and running."



"The app delivers vital exercise content to members – a means of connectivity with the club and feedback for the Third Space team"

Rob Lander, Fisikal



"When restrictions eased, the app continued to serve as a vital service, not only providing added-value to members who returned to our clubs to train but also to members who were 'on freeze'.

Despite the mounting evidence that gyms are safe, not everyone was ready to return. We maintained a connection to 'frozen' members through the provision of our digital workout programme. Access was free, enabling members to remain a part of our community until they were able to return to the gym."

Third Space commission

Third Space commissioned Fisikal to develop the fully branded app back in 2018, recognising a growing consumer demand for anytime, anywhere access. In addition to class content and bookings, the app enables the scheduling of and payment for PT, with access to 350 exercise demos and 100 workouts.

Carroll continues: "Digitalising our bookings has not only enhanced the experience for our members, it has also provided better user flow analytics, giving clarity on member habits and behaviours, enabling us to make programming and operational adjustments to better align to needs. This has resulted in evidence-based decisions which have had a profoundly positive commercial effect.

"This new app enables us to understand the habits and behaviours of members better, removes geographical barriers and enables us to extend our luxury brand influence into the lives of members wherever they happen to be in the world.

This is not the end. In our next development phase, we intend to refresh the front end design and work with



"Digitalising our PT and class bookings has resulted in evidence-based decisions which have had a profoundly positive commercial effect"

Richard Carroll, Third Space

Fisikal to create an in-app two-way communications channel. Our ambition is to provide members with an intuitive, single access point for all information, coaching and training support. We'll continue to invest in our digital provision, viewing it as a vital complementary service to our in-club provision."

Rob Lander, Fisikal CEO comments:

"Having recognised the importance of a digital provision, the Third Space team were primed for the rapid digitalisation turnaround we delivered.

"Now, months on, the app continues to deliver vital exercise content to members, a means of connectivity with the club and feedback for the Third Space team to analyse what members are enjoying most. We look forward to working with Third Space on the next phase of its digital innovation journey."

Find out more: www.fisikal.com

Product innovation



Steph Eaves rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

Pulse Fitness' Classic Strength Line offers a stripped back aesthetic, says **Chris Johnson**



The Classic Strength Line includes 15 stations

Bringing strength equipment back to basics, Pulse Fitness has launched a Classic Strength Line which includes 15 stations of selectorised strength machines.

The range has been created with the aspiration of combining the company's British design aesthetic with performance, comfort and durability at an affordable price.

"We're excited to launch our Classic Strength Line. Our inspiration for the range came from taking a look back over some of our very first designs, and recreating them with a modern twist" says MD, Chris Johnson, managing director at Pulse Fitness.



"Inspiration came from some of our very first designs"

Chris Johnson

The design includes an enclosed weight stack, easy-to-clean carbon covers and smooth-feel handgrips, as well as workout instructions and illustrations as to which muscles are being trained.

All equipment comes complete with QR codes to allow members to scan and track their workouts.

The strength range is available in Sand Black with double-stitched upholstery options in blue, red or midnight black.

"Our design team has done a fantastic job creating a stripped-back version of our premium machines, while retaining the same durability and high performance which we believe is synonymous with Pulse Fitness," said Johnson, in announcing the range.

fitness-kit.net/keyword

PULSE FITNESS

KLAFS InfraPlus allows targeted thermal radiation therapy for individuals, says **Thorsten Bichler**

Sauna specialist KLAFS has developed InfraPlus – a product which quickly turns a classic sauna into an infrared sauna.

Attached to the wall, the system works with KLAFS' radiator control technology – SensoCare.

As every skin type reacts differently to heat and absorbs it in a different way, the intensity of the radiation automatically adapts to suit the individual.

The InfraPlus measures the temperature of the skin remotely during the entire course of the session and then uses algorithms to emit the correct intensity of thermal radiation, protecting against burns

and ensuring safe, health-promoting use of the device.

Thorsten Bichler, director of international sales for KLAFS, says: "Infrared therapy has many roles in the human body, including boosting the immune system and lowering blood pressure. We strongly recommend this kind of thermal experience when designing a wellbeing area."

"The biggest benefit KLAFS infrared solution offers is its multifunctionality. It can be delivered via free-standing infrared chairs or even backrests, in addition to the equipment being installed in existing saunas."

fitness-kit.net/keyword

KLAFS



"Infrared boosts the immune system and lowers blood pressure"

Thorsten Bichler



The InfraPlus measures skin temperature and adjusts heat levels



It is essential for providers to adopt digital technology to keep their members engaged and revenues flowing

Hugo Braam

PRO+ enables gyms to generate revenue while closed, as Hugo Braam explains

Virtugym, provider of fitness technology for gyms and trainers, has announced the launch of PRO+, a new solution that enables operators to generate revenue by offering members a turnkey digital membership experience through their club's mobile app.

PRO+ is composed of a wide array of content, including weekly community group updates on nutrition, training and wellness, 200+

virtual trainer workouts, monthly prize challenges, 1,000+ licensed workout videos and a library of audio meditations to enable members to build an holistic wellness experience.

"When clubs are closed, it's essential for providers to adopt digital technology to keep their members engaged and revenues flowing," says Hugo Braam, CEO of Virtugym. "However, offering a rich and engaging



PRO+ offers hundreds of workouts

digital content subscription that people are willing to keep paying for is not easy and requires a lot of resources – that's why we developed Virtugym PRO+."

Braam says app usage among Virtugym customers accelerated in 2020, with

fitness providers quickly adapting to the 'new normal' and adopting tech to drive their digitalisation forward.

PRO+ is now available for gyms and studios globally.

fitness-kit.net/keyword

VIRTUGYM

Precor's new Preva Mobile app helps operators to connect with members, says Steve Carter

Precor, which is currently being acquired by Peloton, has launched a mobile app for its networked fitness solution, Preva.

The app has recorded almost a billion workouts to date and is used in

more than 11,000 fitness facilities worldwide.

The member-focused Preva Mobile app, which can be white-labelled to match operator branding, has been designed to act as a springboard to stronger

member engagement by enabling operators to connect with customers both inside and outside their facility, as well as integrating with other apps and services members are already using.

Steve Carter, managing director of Precor UK, says: "We understand that the strength of the connection between operators, their staff, their facilities and members is vital to success."

"The havoc COVID-19 has created in preventing people working out inside fitness facilities, means it's more important than ever that operators have ways to connect with members and offer ongoing support, wherever they're exercising."

In a world where seamless, experiences are now normal, Preva Mobile helps operators strengthen and expand the connected fitness experience their facility offers."



"Preva Mobile helps operators strengthen their connected fitness experience"

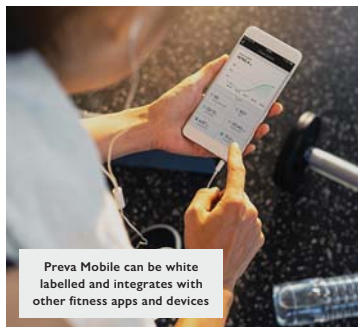
Steve Carter

The app is designed to empower exercisers by capturing data from other sources, such as Apple Health, Fitbit, Garmin, MyFitnessPal, Polar and Strava. Members can also use it to set goals, join group fitness challenges, earn Preva badges for reaching milestones and monitor overall progress.

The app is also integrated with Advagym by Sony.

fitness-kit.net/keyword

PRECOR



Preva Mobile can be white labelled and integrates with other fitness apps and devices

HCM directory

ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS

zynk | INTERIOR
ARCHITECTURE
& DESIGN

zynkdesign.com

WWW.ZYNKDESIGN.COM

COMPUTER MEMBERSHIP SOFTWARE

**RUN YOUR FACILITIES
MORE EFFECTIVELY**

- Comprehensive software
- Member payments
- Value-added services

sales@transactionservicesgroup.eu

legendware.co.uk

Legend
a TSG solution

WWW.LEGENDWARE.CO.UK

COMPUTER MEMBERSHIP SOFTWARE

BrightLime
a TSG solution

**SHARPER WEB BASED
CLUB MANAGEMENT**

0844 493 3696
info@brightlime.com

WWW.BRIGHTLIME.COM

DIRECT DEBIT COLLECTION

**Membership
payments
without the
heavy lifting**

DFC

Revenue Management
Solutions | dfc.co.uk

Get in touch today

w: debitfinance.co.uk

e: sales@transactionservicesgroup.eu

WWW.DEBITFINANCE.CO.UK

FLOORING

GYM FLOORING & ACOUSTIC SOLUTIONS



Contact us now:

Office: +44 (0) 1706 260 220

Email: Sales@TVS-Group.co.uk



TVS GROUP

SPORT | FITNESS | PLAY | ACOUSTICS

www.TVS-Group.co.uk

WWW.TVS-GROUP.CO.UK

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING / FLOORING



TARAFLEX
SPORTS

High Performance Fitness Flooring
Recognised Brand Trusted Quality

www.gerflor.co.uk

Gerflor
the flooring group

WWW.GERFLOR.CO.UK

**To book your advert call the sales team on
+44 (0)1462 431385**



To book your promotion, call the sales team on +44 (0)1462 431385

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING / FLOORING

 **REGUPOL**

Gym Flooring
www.regupol.com

WWW.REGUPOL.COM

LOCKERS & INTERIORS

FITLOCKERS

Quality Affordable Locker Room Solutions

T: 01923 770435

sales@fitlockers.co.uk www.fitlockers.co.uk

WWW.FITLOCKERS.CO.UK

LOCKERS & INTERIORS

- LOCKERS
- BENCHES
- PADLOCKS
- CUBICLES
- VANITIES
- SERVICING

Contact us today for further information

T: 0203 451 1500

E: info@safespacelockers.co.uk

www.safespacelockers.co.uk



SAFE SPACE
THE CHANGING ROOM EXPERTS

WWW.SAFESPACELOCKERS.CO.UK

LOCKERS & INTERIORS



CROWN
SPORTS LOCKERS

More than just lockers

Tel +44 (0)1803 555885 Email sales@crownsportslockers.co.uk

WWW.CROWNSPORTSLOCKERS.CO.UK

PERSONALISED CLOTHING

YOUR BRAND,
OUR SERVICE

 **Instyle**
Clothing

Branded uniform, PPE
& Sportswear

instyleclothing.co.uk

WWW.SERVICESPORT.CO.UK

SALES & MARKETING

GET MEMBERS...



memberdrive

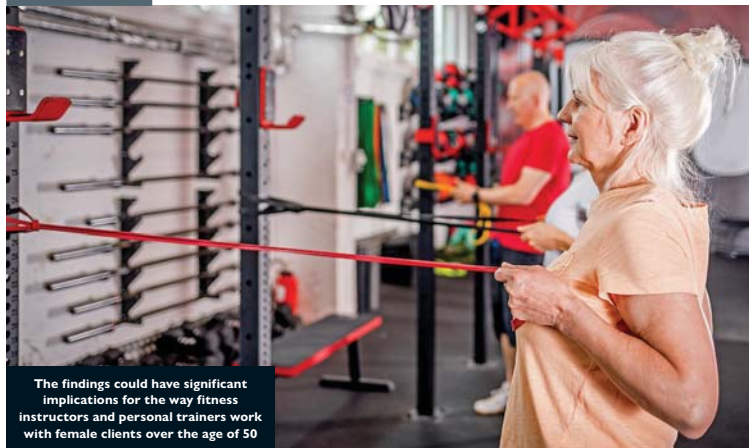
...KEEP MEMBERS

myzone



0115 777 3333 WWW.CFM.NET

WWW.CFM.NET



LEONARDO CASARIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

The findings could have significant implications for the way fitness instructors and personal trainers work with female clients over the age of 50

Sex equality

Resistance training is just as beneficial for women over the age of 50 as it is for men, according to a new study from the University of New South Wales

Research from the University of New South Wales, *Sex differences in adaptations in muscle strength and size following resistance training in older adults* – published in *Sports Medicine* – shows that when undertaking resistance training, both sexes benefit when over the age of 50.

Although men over 50 are likely to gain more absolute muscle size, the gains relative to body size are on a par with women.

For the study, researchers compared muscle mass and strength gains in 651 older men and 759 older women, across 30 different resistance training studies.

The participants were aged between 50 and 90, with most having no prior resistance training experience.

"Historically, people have tended to believe that men adapted to a greater degree from resistance training when compared to women," said Dr Mandy Hagstrom, senior author of the study. "However, we found no sex differences in changes in relative muscle size or upper body strength.

"The differences we did find, primarily relate to how we look at the

“It’s important for fitness instructors and personal trainers to understand that older women benefit just as much as men from resistance training, in terms of relative improvement, compared to their baseline

data – that is, absolutely or relatively.

"‘Absolute’ looks at the overall gains, while ‘relative’ is a percentage based on their body size."

Hagstrom adds that the findings could have significant implications for the way fitness instructors and personal trainers work with female clients over the age of 50.

"It's important for trainers to understand that women benefit just as much as men in terms of relative improvement compared to their baseline," Hagstrom said.

"Older men tended to build bigger muscles when looking at absolute gains and were also more likely to see greater absolute improvements to upper and lower body strength, however, when it came to comparing

relative lower body strength, older women saw the biggest increases.

"Our study sheds light on the possibility that we should be programming differently for older men and women to maximise their training benefits."

The team also conducted a sub-analysis of the literature to see which resistance training techniques gave the best results for each sex.

"Older men might benefit from higher intensity programmes to improve their absolute upper and lower body strength," says Dr Hagstrom.

"But older women might benefit from higher overall exercise volumes – that is, more weekly repetitions – to increase their relative and absolute lower body strength." ●

pulsebeat

There's no denying that 2020 was a turbulent year for the industry, that no one could have predicted. As we start the new year, I feel hopeful for what lies ahead both at Pulse and for the industry as a whole.

It's certainly been a year of change for us at Pulse, but we have some exciting projects in the pipeline. Whilst we had to delay the launch of our new app, **TRAKK**, it afforded us time to develop it even further. We look forward to bringing this ground-breaking content platform and activity tracking app to market this year as it will transform the way both operators and gym goers are able to track and log workouts. Gyms are not the only place for fitness. As an industry, we need to do a better job staying connected with members regardless of where they

are, throughout their day to day lives. We believe **TRAKK**, does this better than anything else.

Coming into 2021 we expect to see operators looking for even better deals on equipment. With this in mind our design team has been able to create a new range of strength equipment that combines the very best in high performance and design, at an affordable price. I'd also like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that The Pulse Group has one of the largest range of support services on offer. Whether that's financing or funding requirements on a build project or refurbished equipment, there are lots of different options available. We are committed to helping the industry get back on its feet.

Finally, as a British company who design and build equipment in the UK, we know only too well how important it is to support our workforce and our manufacturers in these challenging times. I would like to encourage the industry to really consider their options and support British businesses in 2021.

Best Wishes
Chris Johnson,
Managing Director



NEW 'CLASSIC' STRENGTH LINE TO BE LAUNCHED

Bringing strength equipment back to basics, Pulse Fitness is proud to launch its Classic Strength Line.

The line will launch with 15 key stations of selectorised strength machines. The range has been created to combine the best in Pulse Fitness' British design, high performance, comfort and durability with a *beautiful aesthetic look* and *all at an affordable price*.

The ultra-modern design includes an enclosed weight stack, easy to clean carbon covers and smooth feel handgrips, as well as clear workout instructions and illustrations as to which muscles are being trained.

The range will be available in a Sand Black frame colour with options in upholstery of **Reef Blue**, **Rosso Red** or **Slate Black/Midnight** and the choice to add extra weight plates to the Weight Stack Tower. Each machine will also come complete with a QR Code to allow members to scan and track their workouts.

"We're excited to launch our Classic Strength Line. Our inspiration for the range came from taking a look back over some of our earliest Strength machine designs, and recreating them with a modern twist. Our design team has done a fantastic job creating a stripped back version of our premium machines while retaining the same durability and high performance synonymous with Pulse Fitness," says Chris Johnson, Managing Director for Pulse.

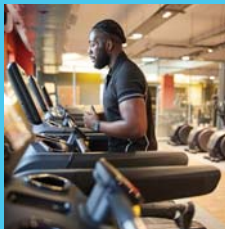


NEWS IN BRIEF

Lockdown 2.0 sees iGym London transformed

Using the downtime from forced closures due to COVID-19, Pulse Fitness has completely upgraded the fitness facilities at iGym London. The refresh comes at the halfway point of Pulse Fitness' 10 year partnership with Imperial College London, where they act as the operator for the site.

The gym is now home to £200K worth of new equipment from Pulse Fitness' Premium Cardio range including the Pulse Airbike and the curved treadmill. With 35 new stations in total, other equipment installed includes the Run Treadmill, the Step Mill, the X-train, U-Cycle, R-Cycle and L-Train. This equipment comes with touch screen consoles, providing Wi-Fi, Netflix and social media access – perfect to engage its tech-savvy student demographic.

**£1.5m to be invested at Waterlane Leisure Centre**

Waterlane Leisure Centre is currently undergoing a significant transformation thanks to a £1.5m investment from East Suffolk Council and its Strategic Leisure Development Partner, The Pulse Group. Pulse Fitness will completely update the gym and equipment as well as give the entire facility a £1m aesthetic makeover.

In the gym, the facilities will boast over 160 stations of the latest cardio, strength, plate loaded, free weights and functional equipment from Pulse Fitness. There will also be items not typically associated with local authority leisure facilities, such as the curved treadmill, the Cross Climb and the Step Mill.

The site closed on 15th October to facilitate the transformation and will officially reopen to the public in early 2021.

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT: FITNESS TRENDS FOR 2021

The Coronavirus pandemic has shaken up the entire fitness industry. As a result, both suppliers and operators have had to change forecasts and adapt to evolving demands. As we start a new year, members are of course looking for new ways to revive their workout routines with the latest industry trends, classes and techniques. Pulse Fitness' Commercial Sales Director, Richard Sheen, presents his top five fitness trends operators need to be mindful of this year.

**Trend : Connectivity**

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that we are wanting to be more connected than ever before. The area of Fitness Connectivity has been developing at a rate of knots over the last five years and COVID-19 has shown us how important it is that operators, suppliers and member products communicate with each other to provide the best service, functionality and operational data.

This year, we are going to see further growth within this area and the digital space. Which is why we are delighted to be launching our new app **TRAKK** to market. The app has been designed to support further engagement between members and the operators by connecting wearables and mobile devices with all aspects of access control, payments, interaction with equipment, bookings and much more to aid retention and increase secondary spend angles. Operators, now more than ever before, want to know what members are doing at all times.

Trend : Specialist rehab

Another huge area for growth we see here at Pulse Fitness is specialist rehabilitation. More gyms will have specialist areas, programmes and equipment to deal with Long Covid and the aftermath of those catching the virus. Physiotherapy wards in hospitals can only go so far and we see there being a huge opportunity for rehabilitation to be pushed into the fitness and leisure sectors.

Trend : Greater emphasis on Hygiene

What had previously been an afterthought to many in the industry is now a number one priority. Operators are currently obsessing over this and rightly so in the middle of

the pandemic. 2021 shows no signs of this slowing down and there will be an even greater emphasis on hygiene while we await the full implementation of the vaccine. We cannot let our guard down yet.

Trend : Outdoor fitness and training facilities

One of the largest areas for demand from members over the next few years when it comes to their club offering will be some form of outdoor fitness. But it's not just about outdoor fitness though, bootcamp numbers always drop in winter months so what we will see this year is creativity and a rise in operators providing weatherproof outdoor facilities, with the correct canopies and flooring surfaces. People have had their movements restricted over the last 10 months and are now placing a high value on being outside. We are already seeing this from the likes of David Lloyd and Serco to name a few. Here at Pulse we are working with Denton Leisure Centre to create an outdoor functional training space on the roof. Operators who are able to go beyond the four walls and take advantage of outdoor space will be well placed in 2021.

Trend : Specialised flooring

When designing a gym, we are now seeing a demand from operators for three very distinct zones. Typically a gym might be split into 33% functional and strength training, 33% cardio and 33% free weights. Each of these areas needs its own specialist flooring and over the next 12 months we are going to see a greater demand for different flooring types to support the demand in free weights and functional training. Expect to see even more types of flooring on the market to support specific types of training.

PULSE CARSHALTON BECOMES FLAGSHIP FOR *TRAKK*

PULSE CARSHALTON HAS RECENTLY UNDERGONE A COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION OF ITS FACILITIES THANKS TO A £400K INVESTMENT.



The facility is now home to a state-of-the-art gym which includes top of the range lines from Pulse Fitness and will also become the flagship facility for Pulse Fitness' brand new app **TRAKK**.

Members at Pulse Carshalton will be the very first to try out this ground-breaking content platform and activity tracking tool. Through the app, PTs can set workouts for members to follow. They can also track their progress, devise their own workout plans and use ready-made workout plans dependent on their fitness goals.

TRAKK will also allow the fitness team to set personalised goals for members and keep 'track' of how they are performing both in and outside the gym.



FOCUS ON ARMED FORCES AND RAF

SUPPLYING TO THE ASCENSION AND FALKLANDS ISLANDS

Over last seven years, Pulse Fitness has been a proud official supplier to the Armed Forces and RAF.

The team is currently undertaking one of its most challenging projects to date as they completely upgrade fitness equipment across the Ascension and Falkland Islands. This project has been three years in the making as they look to **upgrade all fitness facilities across 22 different and remote locations.**

The team has had its fair share of challenges along the way including, of course, the pandemic which led to delays that no one could have predicted. From a logistics perspective alone, the team has dealt with personally shipping a total of 21 containers by sea freight to some of the most remote locations in the world.

Once arrived, the team worked with the Army and RAF to install the new equipment across a range of sites, with some even on the sides of a mountain!



Pulse Fitness has now successfully and safely delivered 154 stations of CV equipment, 42 Bikes and mixture of 47 stations of strength and plate loaded equipment as well as 77 free-weights and accessories.

As well as installing all the new equipment, the team is also responsible for ensuring all the old equipment has been safely removed and packed back on to ship containers to Pulse HQ.

The new equipment is starting to be installed and has already received excellent feedback on reliability and durability. All equipment is leased over a four year period and comes with a warranty and service package.

To ensure a continued high level of service, despite the remote locations, Pulse Fitness has two dedicated service engineers available in the area to maintain the equipment if required.

FIVE STRATEGIES TO BUILD INTEREST AND DEMAND FOR NEW EQUIPMENT

You've made a significant investment in new equipment at your club. How do you ensure your members are actually going to use it? How are you going to excite and engage members in what you are offering and ensure that your new equipment is reaching its full potential?

1. Engage your staff

It's vital that all members of your team get behind any new piece of equipment. Make sure your PTs and gym instructors are fully trained and know exactly how to operate the new piece of equipment. If they are onboard, they are far more likely to encourage members to get involved too.

2. Think about equipment placement

Make sure your new equipment is placed front and centre within the facility. There's no point having a shiny new functional training rig if it's hidden in a corner. Create a buzz so that members stop and take a look.

3. Create bespoke workouts

Creating a bespoke workout that specifically uses any new equipment is another great way to engage members. This could be done either digitally if your club has an app or perhaps you have instructions next to the equipment with workout plans.

Depending on what new equipment you installed, you could even create a whole new small group training class that incorporates some of the very best pieces of equipment. Also consider offering a Workout of the Day that members can do in their own time.

4. Set up a small demo area

If your club is going through a major equipment upgrade it's well worth speaking to your equipment provider and seeing if you could have one or two pieces of equipment set up in the reception area. Having a small demo area can be a great way to pique members interest before the equipment event arrives.

5. Organise member induction evenings

Finally, organise specific sessions where your PTs run induction members one on one. This is particularly great for less confident members, or those new to fitness who might feel unsure about using new products.

Andrea Oliver, Regional Sales Manager, Pulse Fitness

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

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

REGISTER
FOR FREE NOW!

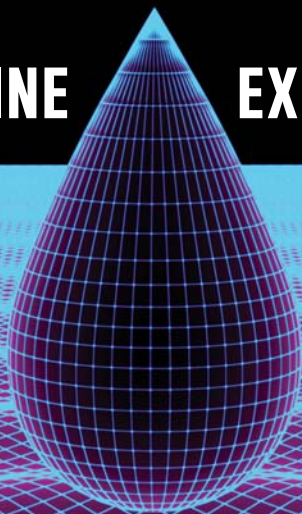


SPATEX VIRTUAL

THE POOL, SPA & WELLNESS SHOW

TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY – THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2021

AN ONLINE EXHIBITION



MAKING RIPPLES - FEBRUARY 2021

SPATEX represents all sectors of the wet leisure industry from pools, spas, saunas to hydrotherapy, steam rooms and play equipment, in both the domestic and commercial arena. Enjoy all your favourite SPATEX experiences but in a digital environment in 2021.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR FREE VISIT:
WWW.SPATEX.CO.UK OR CALL +44 1264 358558

LIVE & ON-DEMAND CLASSES ALWAYS WITH YOU



CLICK TO
PLAY VIDEO



Deliver unparalleled training experiences by streaming Live & On-Demand classes to your community. Your customers can now perform their favourite classes anywhere, anytime with MYWELLNESS APP 5.0.

It's streaming - Your way.

DISCOVER MORE AT: www.technogym.com/hcm2

