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engages the whole population” p36**





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Rite of passage

Most consumer-facing sectors have standards to reassure customers on matters of safety and quality. Now it's the turn of our industry to go through this rite of passage

In the summer of 2006, I had an important conversation with Cliff Collins, who was then running the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs). We discussed an initiative being devised to raise awareness among consumers of important quality control work being done within the sector to ensure all exercise professionals were registered and qualified.

The plan was to run a consumer-facing campaign under the strapline "Our REPUTation is your guarantee", with health clubs displaying the quality mark.

Although the initiative was absolutely necessary and could have given the industry a massive boost, the sector was simply not ready for this level of scrutiny or mature enough to be able to deliver on the vision and so the campaign didn't generate the level of impact needed to land it.

Fast forward 15 years and today, the time has finally come to realise this vision, with the launch of the new Europe-wide industry accreditation scheme, Fitcert.eu, which has been led by Cliff Collins and developed in partnership between Europe Active and the European Committee for Standardisation.

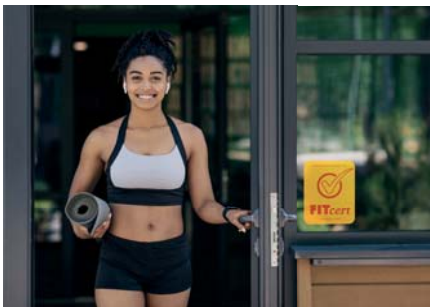
With a pilot already underway, Fitcert.eu is giving operators the opportunity to register their facilities and be assessed on a quality scale to achieve levels of accreditation that can be publicly displayed in every club.

The aim is for Fitcert.eu to act as a quality mark, giving consumers confidence in health clubs and studios, so they can see the sector is taking standards seriously.

Writing in this issue of *HCM* (page 54), Collins says: "We have standards mainly because they reduce risk, and in the case of the fitness sector they're all about risk reduction for our customers, for our employees, and for operators themselves."

This is absolutely the right time to bring this initiative to market – it's been widely acknowledged since the start of the pandemic that we must work to secure our reputation in the corridors of power and a very significant part of this will be demonstrating that we're a professional and credible sector.

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Fitcert.eu is a consumer-facing quality mark

It's been widely acknowledged since the start of the pandemic that we must work to secure our reputation as a sector

We urge all operators across Europe to take Fitcert.eu seriously and to sign up to the scheme, so we have a new industry-wide standard to gather around and promote to consumers and policymakers.

We're extremely fortunate that Cliff Collins has continued to champion this work and that he's still helming this initiative all these years later.

The complexities involved in establishing this kind of scheme are vast and require diligent work and endless rounds of diplomacy, for which we owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

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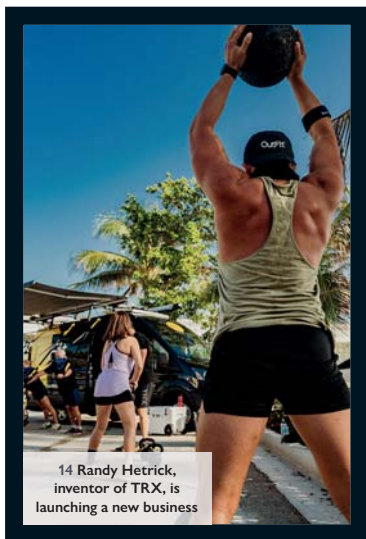
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PHOTO: OUTFIT

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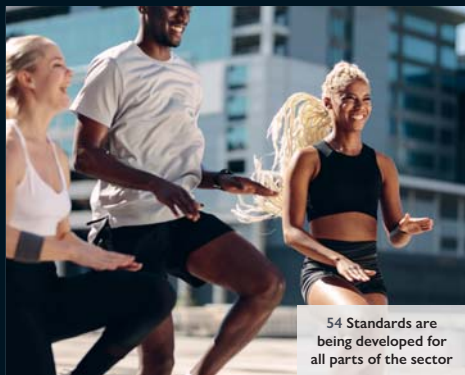
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Do what you can to give people exceptional, memorable experiences that support their health

Jamie Groves Denbighshire Leisure

As an industry, the pandemic has made us reconsider whether we're truly driven by customer needs. We should celebrate this unprecedented opportunity to innovate the quality of our offers as it could play a huge part in creating a more meaningful industry – if we embrace it.

The pandemic has forced us all out of its habit of building offers driven by products and supply chain. I think we can all agree this was an outdated practice and certainly one that didn't serve our customers.

Consumer habits and values have changed. We need to create experiences that reflect what people really want from their leisure providers. And we must show members that everyone in the business has bought into these efforts.

We've made a conscious shift from just showing up as a leisure provider to being a true partner for people's health and wellbeing. A massive amount of our marketing team's time



PHOTO: DENBIGHSHIRE LEISURE

is now focused on giving value and checking in with members – all the softer stuff we as an industry perhaps neglected before the pandemic.

And by making sure our staff were looked after right through the crisis, we gave members a familiar and highly-motivated workforce to come back to.

We're anticipating being back at pre-COVID levels of membership by January 2022, but there are more important things than the numbers – it's about developing industry-leading experiences.

We found that going the extra mile reaps rewards. This can be seen at



Club Nova (above) and X20 are both delivering growing returns

our Club Nova and X20 sites which are giving us the biggest membership growth and from the results of investing in our restaurants and cafés – including setting up partnerships with Costa and other brands – which has created the fastest-growing revenue stream in the company.

Our members are highly engaged and have confidence in our promise to them. We achieve this by making a big commitment to them and to our staff and our messaging.



PHOTO: CYBERTREK/STUDIO L&S

I appreciate that every operator's situation is different, but I stand by my belief that this is an exciting opportunity to shift focus and become more customer-led.

We all have the ability to listen to customers and to have those conversations at various touchpoints, to gather better data through social media and online activity.

We can all put efforts into understanding what the public truly want now from fitness and leisure

providers. It's on us to set aside our assumptions and old ways of doing things, and to create offers that meet people where they are now.

For example, outdoor cycling has had a huge spike in interest in our local area, so we invested in creating an exceptional indoor group cycle experience with Technogym Bike, to cater for cyclists over the winter. We've also seen a big uptake in indoor cardio, and we'll be remodelling our gyms to make

more provision for strength training and functional kit. And we know lots of our members had got a bit nervous about going "out out", so we invested in Clubbercise – lots of these things we wouldn't have predicted two years ago!

The world has changed, and we need to evolve. It starts by listening and understanding, then doing what you can to give people exceptional, memorable experiences that support their health. ●

HCM people



I don't want to compete with gyms, I want to complement them. We're going to places where they're not – parks, schools and cul-de-sacs

Randy Hetrick

Founder of TRX and OutFit

With TRX already a global phenomenon, where does the motivation come from to begin again?

I'm a start-up guy. I like creating something which wasn't there yesterday, working out ideas, vetting them and building a team to bring them to fruition.

TRX has become a pretty big machine and I'm not a guy who grew up in big, corporate management structures, so I've brought in some folks who, I hope, can scale up my "big kid", so I can go over and work on the new baby.

What is OutFit?

A fleet of world class gyms rolling through neighbourhoods like Amazon delivery vans, meticulously designed so you can set up a class for 30 to 40 people in 10 minutes.

Each van has enough gear to train up to 100 people: suspension trainers, rip trainers, ladders, strength bands, bandits, slam balls, kettlebells, heavy ropes, jump ropes and ground mats. In addition to our TRX-style HIIT classes, we've partnered with Zumba and will also be launching OutFit's Yoga Under the Sun classes this winter.

This network of mobile gyms is coordinated by an extremely sophisticated technology platform, which is

Hetrick launched his new fitness franchise model OutFit in April 2021

PHOTO: RANDY HETRICK/OUTFIT





Each OutFit van has enough gear to train up to 100 people

essentially a proprietary mash-up of similar capabilities to Uber and Mindbody, all wrapped up in a subscription business model like Classpass. It's a powerful technology suite that, like Uber, has both a consumer-facing and an operator-facing app and a web portal.

Where did the idea come from?

It's been bubbling for a long time. About 10 years ago TRX ran a brand activation programme called TRX on Tour, where we'd fill a van full of training gear and we had racks from the roof where we could hang 10 or 12 suspension trainers. Our master instructors would take turns on the magical mystery tour, hitting cool outdoor events and doing activations for our key club partners.

Although the response was insanely positive, it wasn't the right time to launch because the technology to manage it hadn't really evolved yet. But I kept thinking about the concept and then along came geo-location and social media, which were the tech tools I needed to support the logistics.

I'd been working on OutFit in earnest for about a year when COVID-19 arrived and the appetite for outdoor fitness exploded. I knew the time had arrived.



Outdoor fitness is booming

When did you launch?

We launched in April 2021. We've spent the past seven months proving the concept in Fort Lauderdale, with two mobile training vehicles and an Outpost – the 10 feet by 20 feet containers which act as a billboard.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with the initial platform memberships already filled more than halfway to full capacity. We've also signed a great franchise partner with a long track record of success who will be developing the entire area between Palm Beach and Miami.

What's the target market?

The people who don't belong to gyms. It used to be about 80 per cent of the US population, but this has increased as a result of the pandemic.

I don't want to compete with gyms, I want to complement them. We're going to the places where they aren't: the parks, the schools and the cul-de-sacs.

Why does it appeal to people?

It's very visible and visually appealing. Most of our early membership has come from people driving by and seeing the classes in progress. It's outside in the elements, which is pretty awesome and appeals to those who feel wary about being inside at the moment.

The pandemic has helped to motivate more people to exercise outdoors. We set up a test lab in Erie, Pennsylvania and feared we may struggle because of the weather, but we found people who live in cold climates are hardy folks who are used to the elements, so we've consistently had 20 or 30 people in classes, even in the snow.



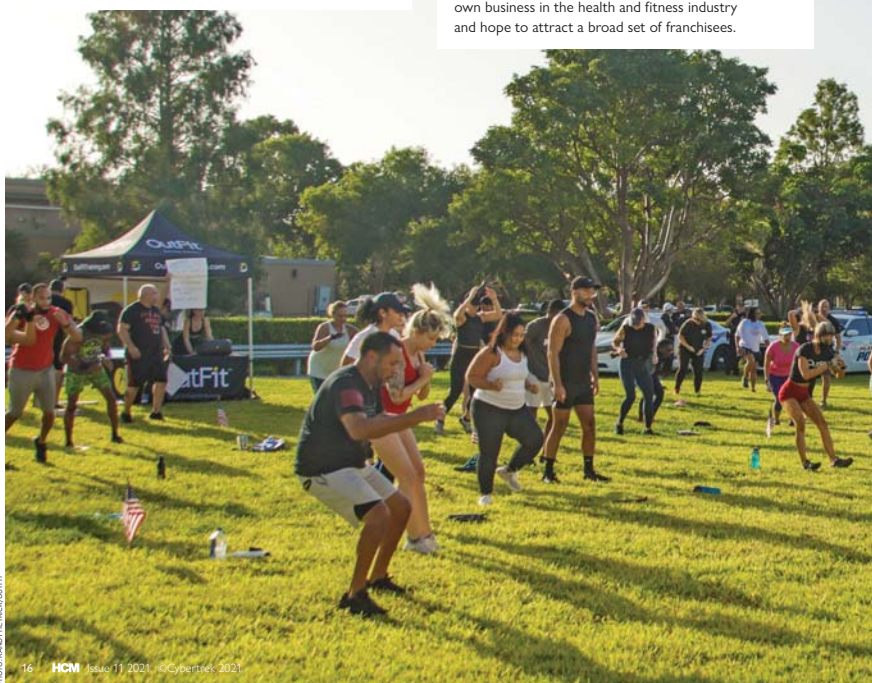
The goal is to enter select markets in Europe with OutFit in 2023

How much does a franchise cost?

If you wanted to prepay everything for the first year: the van, the gear, the territory, the marketing, technology, class programming support and lead generation, it would be about \$140,000 (€120k, £102k). And a big portion of that is financeable through Ford.

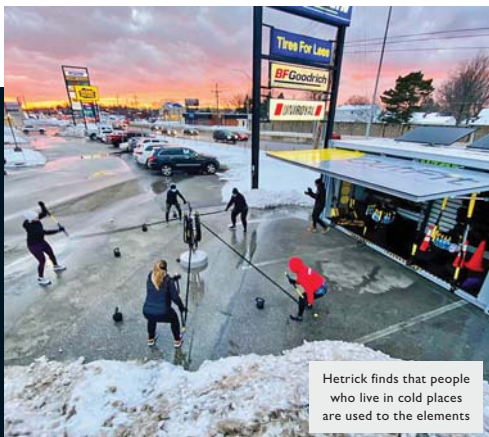
We're selling a great business in a box, but we will also feed business into that box. At HQ, we'll do all the big picture marketing and give the tools and playbook to our franchisees to manage local promotions. If you run it as it's been designed you will be successful. That's what we're proving now in Fort Lauderdale.

We believe OutFit is sufficiently low-cost and flexible enough to democratise who can have their own business in the health and fitness industry and hope to attract a broad set of franchisees.





OutFit is a year-round business-in-a-box



Hetrick finds that people who live in cold places are used to the elements



The outdoor concept targets people who do not belong to a gym



I'd been working on OutFit for a year when COVID-19 arrived and the appetite for outdoor fitness exploded. I knew its time had arrived

Randy Hetrick: THE BACK STORY

Randy Hetrick was a Navy SEAL Squadron Commander – one of the most elite fighting forces on the planet – who came up with the idea for TRX suspension training while on deployment in 1997.

Looking for a way of keeping in peak condition, with limited space and resources, he hit on a way of using a length of parachute webbing and a jiu-jitsu belt to create a body weight harness.

On leaving military service, he completed an MBA at Stanford and learned how to bring his innovation to market. Now TRX's suspension training workout has become a multi-million dollar fitness phenomenon and is offered in more than 50,000 clubs globally.

How much does it cost to be a member?

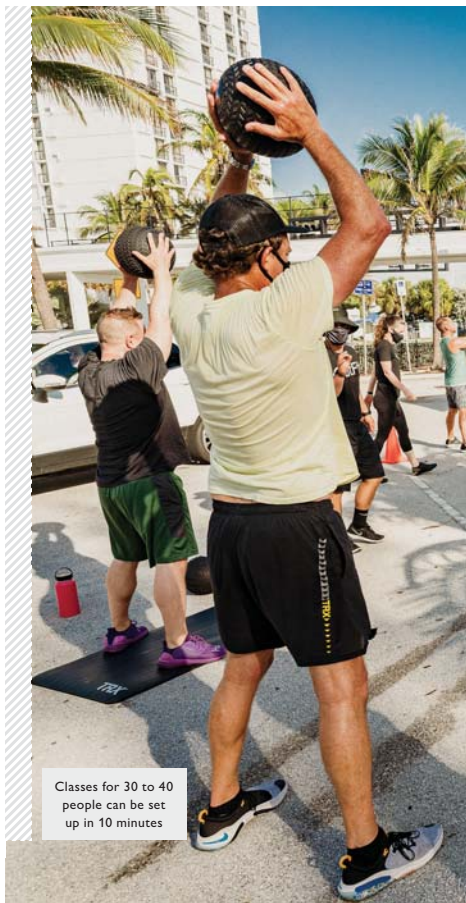
There are two tiers of membership: Open and Private. Private can be done individually or with others at an additional cost per person. The smaller the group size the higher the price. For Open (large group) membership costs US\$99/month (€87, £74) for unlimited individual access and US\$129 (€114, £96) for unlimited family access. Private PT is US\$80 (€69, £59) an hour on average, and always includes a 'plus one' at no additional charge. Additional members can join to form a private group for US\$50 a head (€44, £37) and the van comes to you.

What are your expansion plans?

The goal is to enter select markets in Europe in 2023. We learned some lessons with TRX on the challenges of going global too early so we want to have the staffing and support in place to launch from a strong base.

Final question – what's happening with TRX?

Throughout the pandemic we built a robust digital delivery platform for our content called the TRX Training Club: a direct-to-consumer content service which uses all our functional training products. It includes live group sessions, virtual PT and a huge library of on-demand classes. We've also taken our professional education and certification online. ●



Classes for 30 to 40 people can be set up in 10 minutes



PHOTO: RANDY HERTZ/OUTFIT

Two membership tiers are available



The fleet of vans act like travelling billboards to attract new members

PHOTO: RANDY HERTZ/OUTFIT



PHOTO: RANDY HERTZ/OUTFIT

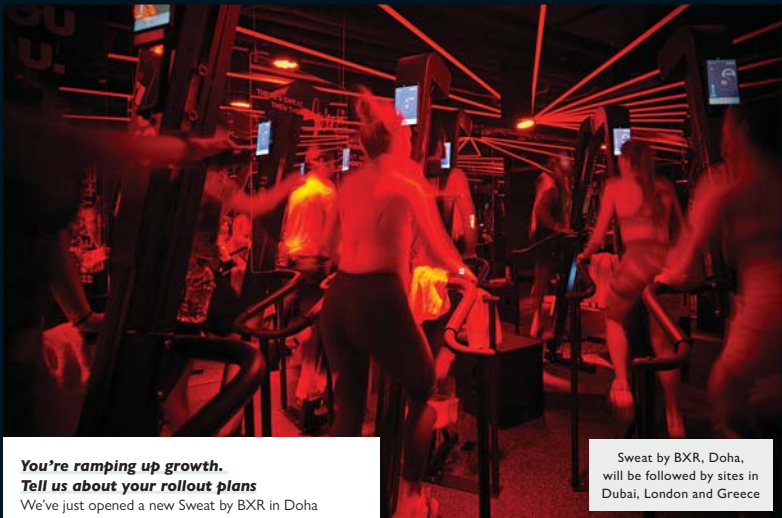
Nicholl says the Middle East has always been a target market



We were fortunate to be approached by Sheikh Mohammed – a Qatari entrepreneur – to develop the club

Alex Nicholl

MD, Sweat by BXR



**You're ramping up growth.
Tell us about your rollout plans**

We've just opened a new Sweat by BXR in Doha and over the next year we'll be opening four more BXR Gyms in London, Dubai and Greece, of which three will carry our Sweat by BXR model.

BXR City, which is opening in London in January 2022 will be located on the 25th floor of the tallest tower in the UK and Europe – 22 Bishopsgate – while BXR Battersea will see a BXR open late in 2022 within the power station – one of the most iconic landmark buildings in the city.

As our Middle East expansion continues, we'll be opening BXR Dubai – one of the most coveted cities in the region.

Finally, BXR Daios Cove will open in Crete, Greece within the five star super luxury Daios Cove resort.

This is our partner resort, where for the last three years we've hosted BXR Retreats and so building our gym there is the next step for this partnership.

In addition, we continue to look for more standalone Sweat by BXR sites.

Is Anthony Joshua still involved?

Yes, Anthony Joshua is a shareholder and will continue to be involved with BXR on an ongoing basis.

How did the new Sweat by BXR Doha happen? Tell us about the deal

For us it wasn't about where or when Sweat by BXR would open first internationally, it was about finding the right partners who could help us scale the brand without losing its core values, brand identity and integrity.

Sweat by BXR, Doha, will be followed by sites in Dubai, London and Greece

We'd always had a focus on the Middle East as a primary market, due to our brand recognition in the region as a result of Anthony Joshua's work in Saudi Arabia. This has been enhanced by the high levels of commuting that happen between the Middle East and London among our international clientele.

The Doha deal is a franchise – we're working with a local partner who's also the investor.

We were fortunate to be approached by Sheikh Mohammed – a Qatari entrepreneur, mountaineer, photographer and sportsman – to develop the club.

Why the location in the Burj Doha?

Burj Doha (previously known as Burj Qatar) is an iconic building in Doha, which is often how we recognise the city in a picture. It's an honour to have our first international site in such an iconic setting.

What's the target audience?

The club is located in a busy financial area where there are many younger professionals and expats – a demographic which is rapidly growing in Doha – who form the bulk of our target audience.

Sweat by BXR studios are also traditionally appealing to females, so we're targeting local female markets by running women-only classes throughout the day, due to the religious nature of the Middle East.



What have you built? Give us the details.

We have a full Sweat by BXR offering including three studios, changing facilities and a café lounge. Our studios are: a Versaclimber room featuring our signature class – Climb to the Beat – a boxing room featuring three class types, including Sweatbox and Strengthbox and a mobility room offering everything from yoga and Pilates to stretch and TRX classes.

This is the third Sweat by BXR – tell us about the creative process behind the development of the model

Versaclimbing and Climb to the Beat are distinguishing elements of Sweat By BXR. It's become our lead studio in terms of attendance and popularity.

We accept and appreciate this is a brand new cardio concept for the audience, who are unfamiliar with the machines. As the creators of this class and the first company in the world to bring group training on a Versaclimber into franchising – especially in the Middle East, this was always going to have its challenges.

In order to make sure the class is delivered and taught with the same skill and performance as in London, we have a team of three of our best UK trainers working in Doha. They're there not only teaching the class to clients in the region, but also developing the Doha team and local trainers.

We've been doing this for three months now, making sure all our classes are delivered at an exceptional level.

We're targeting local female markets by running women-only classes through the day

Why have you chosen to open with a pay-to-train model rather than a membership?

Sweat by BXR is a pay-to-train concept so it follows suit, however we do have some memberships within our pricing models which are now being taken up in Doha as well as being very popular in the UK.

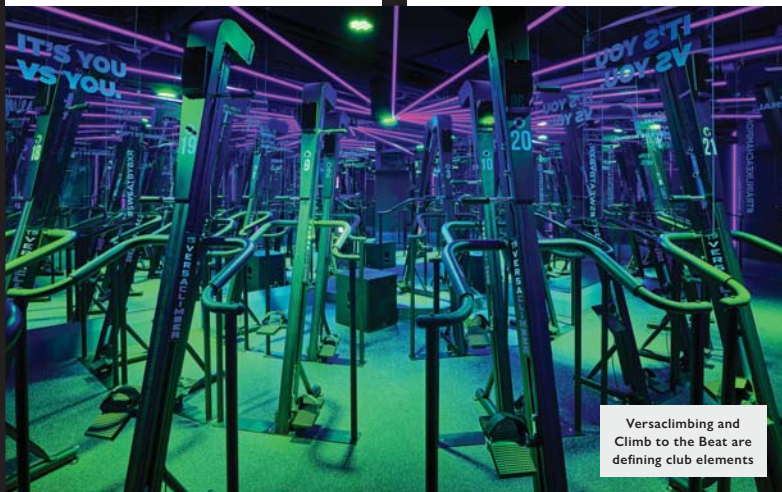
The pricing seems very reasonable for such an affluent country. What's the thinking?

Our services and product list are the same as in the UK, but the pricing is in line with other pay-to-train studios across the Middle East.

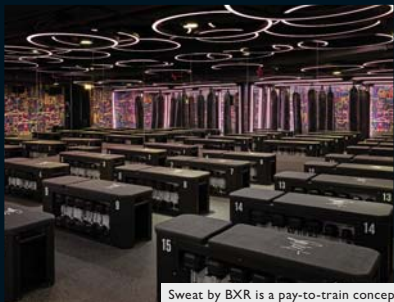
Our pricing is high for single visits, but for those who show commitment and visit frequently – buying larger packs and memberships – the pricing becomes more reasonable.

Tell us about the F&B

We have a full café and lounge serving pre- and post-workout shakes, coffees, teas and so forth. We're also working with a local partner to offer healthy take-away food.



Versaclimbing and Climb to the Beat are defining club elements



Sweat by BXR is a pay-to-train concept



BXR London was the original concept, with Sweat by BXR an evolution of the brand



Nicholl (left) with the team at Sweat by BXR, Doha

The club features high end interiors



What member-facing tech are you using?

In our studio we feature the latest TS Versaclimber, the most tech-updated climber, which is equipped with a wifi/Bluetooth touch screen.

This enables climbers to record and save workouts, view graphs of feet-per-minute, stroke length and strokes per minute and see total sessions completed. They can also see feet climbed, heart rate and average feet-per-minute and compete for rankings on leaderboards. We encourage them to share their successes on social media.

BXR is currently building a new app and website, with both launching in January 2022. The app is being created by Swift Studios (www.swiftstudio.co).

In terms of this new tech, we'll be using the Mindbody API – customising it and interfacing it directly with the BXR app.

Key features will enable members to log-in and create an account, choose a home gym location, purchase workout packs, book PT sessions and schedule classes. It will feature a home screen where we can promote everything that's available within the BXR world.

The BXR app for members and the workouts will also be available on the BXR InstagramTV channel, with this being run in-house.

What back of house tech are you using?

At Sweat by BXR international locations we use ZingFit as the operational back of house tech. It is arguably one of the leading software platforms for class-based studio management.

How have you future-proofed the concept?

Bergman Interiors, who have designed all our gyms for both the BXR and Sweat by BXR brands, continue to do so as part of our international and franchise models. This keeps all our product lines, standards and visuals in line with our brand.

As we work exclusively with them for our gyms, every year and on each new build, we work at pushing the boundary of our interiors and offering to give our clients the best possible environment and product to enjoy. ●



We've never wanted to be the biggest, just the best

Paul Ramsay

MD, 3d Leisure

Tell us about 3d Leisure – what was the spark that started the business?

Our founder, Mark Bremner, was a founding director of local authority contractor, DC Leisure.

During his time there he saw that the market for hotel health clubs and gyms was growing, but no one was coming forward to operate these new facilities, so he launched 3d Leisure to fill that gap.

Now, 30 years later, we run 120 sites and have expanded beyond hotels into other sectors, such as the education market and the corporate wellness sector. We've also recently purchased our own gym franchise brand – YourZone45 (www.yourzone45.co.uk).

Mark is still actively involved in the business in his role as chair and offers a wealth of experience to our team.

Our current portfolio is made up of approximately 50 hotel contracts, 25 corporate sites, 30 high street gyms, 10 education locations and 5 franchised sites.

I'm especially enjoying our growth in the corporate sector, as it offers a lot of variety in the type of facility and demographic of members. Hotels are commercial entities and compete with each other and this means we've had to turn some contracts away as they're in the same catchment as existing clients.

There's a board of six, with me as MD, Mark Bremner, Andrew Deere – the FD – operations directors Paul Dickinson and Dan

Glue, as well as business development director, Mandy McCracken. The shareholders are me, Mark, Andrew and Paul Dickinson.

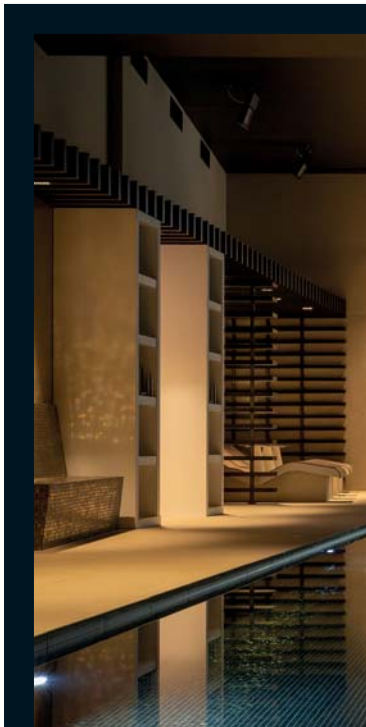
You're celebrating 30 years of the company. How are things going?

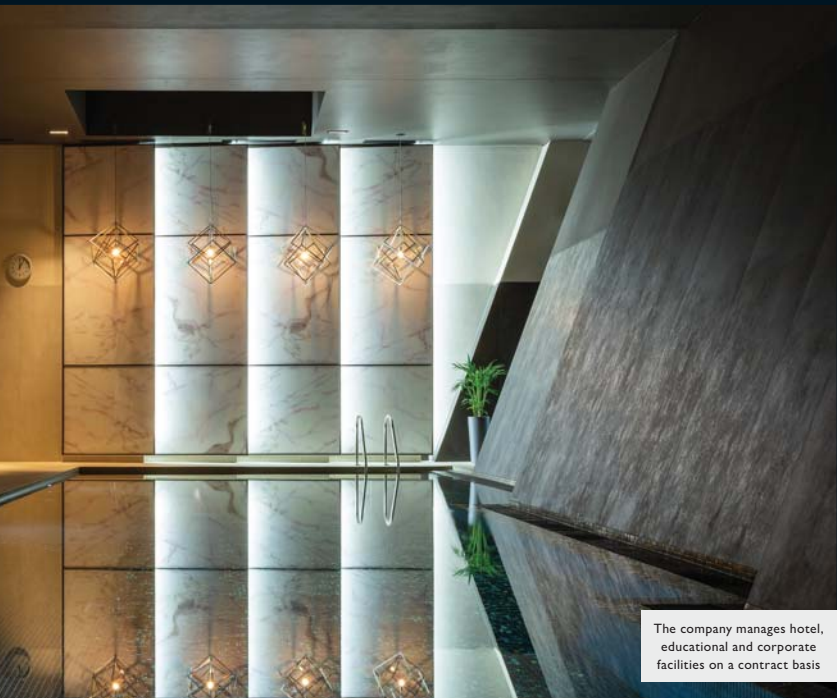
Very well at the moment – I'm almost embarrassed to say, but we've actually grown during the pandemic.

One of our competitors, SLS, ceased trading as a result of the pandemic, and we were able to take over a number of its educational contracts.

In addition, we won a contract to win a new-build corporate wellness facility and because there was some consolidation in the hotel sector – and we have great relationships with our hotel clients – this area also grew, as they looked to outsource more.

When it comes down to it though, our success is as a result of the people we employ. We employ nice people and we spend a lot of money on supporting and training them and that creates a close-knit company ethos.





The company manages hotel, educational and corporate facilities on a contract basis

Do your hotel contracts operate under the same brand?

No, we customise IPs for clients on a bespoke basis. We've created 50 different brands over the years – we develop the brand, do the IP registration, the graphic design and identities and develop the website, so each hotel has its own gym, spa or wellness brand.

We've upped our game over the last five years in terms of the detail and professionalism of our service. Our clients get the backing of a fitness and wellbeing-specific head office team of 10-15 experts, which is a powerful offering for a single site operator. For day-to-day contact they get a dedicated regional manager, who pulls together the central support team with functions such as marketing, health and safety, finance and HR.

How do the finances work?

Some are operated commercially on a profit-share basis, while the corporate sector contracts generally run on a straight management fee. On the franchise side, we charge standard franchise fees.

We expect to make an average of £15k - £20k profit per year per site after meeting costs such as staffing and we look for a five per cent profit margin on our total income.

Very few sites are operated commercially, however, as they're mainly run on management contracts.

How's the pandemic impacted you?

The furlough scheme was obviously a lifesaver for everyone, but we were also able to access some grants and worked with our landlords where applicable.

Membership was down 45 per cent across the group when we opened again in April 2021 and now we're approx 20 per cent down. We're forecasting for all sites to be back to normal again by March 2022 after the New Year sign-ups.

I'm immensely proud of how we pivoted online during COVID. A week before lockdown we'd already noticed that usage was dropping off, as we have an older demographic (aged 40 - 50), meaning they were more cautious. As a result, we went to our teams and asked them to put together an online offering.

This meant we started the ball rolling four days before lockdown and actually launched our first class on the Friday night as Boris Johnson was announcing lockdown.

We ran 100 classes a week with staff working voluntarily and opened it up free of charge to anyone who wanted to take part – not just members. Our team really took hold of what we were doing and it developed into a real lockdown community with cooking demonstrations, quiz nights, hair cutting demos – to be honest, whatever you needed while locked down, was there!

We did two million views over the duration of the first lockdown and it's still going strong now, but as a subscription service.

Two of our online instructors were diagnosed with breast cancer during the lockdowns and so we did 24 hours of classes in November 2020 and raised £5k for a breast cancer charity.

What did you get up to while facilities were closed?

We used the lockdowns to re-evaluate and look at how we could improve the business. All the conversations were around what can we do better and how can we improve things.

We put in place online training and overhauled all our systems. We expected to have to cut back as a result of the pandemic and wanted to make ourselves more efficient to be able to cope.

As it turns out, we haven't had to cut back, but we've still had the benefit of the efficiencies.

We also put all our corporate managers through mental health first aid, which was invaluable.

We used Facebook to keep in touch with staff to reassure them, as well as doing things such as staff quiz nights and issuing newsletters.

As a result, 86 per cent of staff said the company had offered great support during the lockdowns to help them manage their mental health.

Are you targeting new markets now we're open?

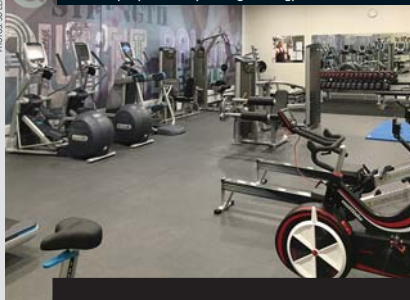
Spa and wellness are booming for us and within our 50 hotel sites, around 20 now have spas and are on full-service contracts with us.

As a result, we now have a group spa manager and for corporate clients we have a product called Wellness 360 which is a package of all the elements of wellness – mind-body, fitness, rewards etc and each corporate client can decide which elements they take.

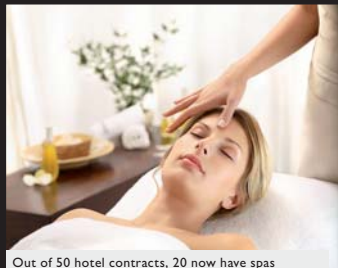


The 3d Leisure team is celebrating 30 years' in business

The company currently manages 120 gyms across the UK



Management contracts also span the corporate and hotel sectors



Out of 50 hotel contracts, 20 now have spas



We've had approaches from people who want to buy the business, but there's no desire within the team to sell. Hopefully we've got 20 years still to work

What's happening in the education market?

Mark Bremner went to the US 10 years ago and did a study on how exercise helps children with their education.

Since that time we've offered gym sessions to kids as part of our schools contracts – they can take place at lunchtime or after school and get kids engaged with exercise. All our education sites are offered this as a free service.

For example, for a school in Weymouth we ran a 10-week course where the kids wore Myzone belts to track their performance.

Would you change anything looking back?

We've learned some major lessons over the 30 years – we should have diversified earlier and got into franchising five years ago, but we didn't see it taking off as well as it has.

In the franchise market generally, an awful lot of businesses fail and close down. I've seen too many people who've invested life savings and then failed and we just couldn't do that.

As a result, we struggled with the franchise model initially, as it didn't sit well with us offering a franchise and not giving full support, but we've

worked through that and done it in our own way.

We don't believe in selling a franchise and then just giving them a manual and leaving them to get on with it, so our franchisees get the same head office support as all our other contracts.

We have to believe in the locations too, so we'll only sell a franchise in a location we believe will be a success – it's not just a question of selling 'pins' in a map.

Our commitment is always to give the franchisee the support to make it a success. In spite of this, we want to get a full proof of concept of our franchise model before we roll out any more.

What's the end game?

We've had approaches to buy the business, but there's no desire within the senior team to sell.

Hopefully we've got 20 years still to work – we want to continue to enjoy what we're doing and to grow the company. We'd all like to work a little less one day, however, so we're building infrastructure that will run the company with less reliance on the key players and then we'll keep on growing it, although when it comes to size, we've never wanted to be the biggest, just the best. ●

Nuffield combines fitness with GP services

Nuffield Health has reopened the historic Barbican health club in London, as part of ambitious plans to establish its first wellness "health campus" in the UK.

Nuffield Health Barbican – the 114th health club in the health charity's portfolio – features a high-end fitness offering, including a fully refurbished pool, running track, NuCycle studio, athletic zone with athletic track and a gym floor fully refitted in partnership with Technogym to include the Skill Line range and functional zone.

In addition, it offers an on-site medical centre, with physiotherapy, private GP services and access to things such as emotional wellbeing therapy, physiotherapy, health assessments, pathology, travel consultations, cognitive behavioural therapy and counselling.

The club is the first of two large projects to open as part of Nuffield's plans to create a holistic health and wellbeing offer, as the Barbican club

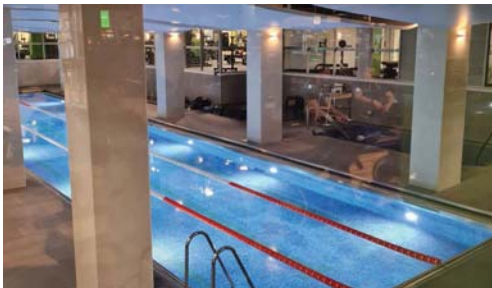


PHOTO: NUFFIELD HEALTH

The club is the first of two large Nuffield projects focused on holistic wellbeing

will be joined by Nuffield Health at St Bartholomew's Hospital in early 2022, with the new hospital being less than 500m away from the club.

Martin Friend, COO, said: "[The Barbican] is the largest Medical Centre in our portfolio.

"With our newest hospital around the corner and Nuffield Health

at St Bartholomew's opening in January, we can truly provide total healthcare support for the residents and workforces in this part of the City, to both get well and stay well."

The club will deliver a digital customer journey via the Nuffield app.

More: http://lei.sr/u5H4E_H

Therme plans £100m health & wellbeing facility



PHOTO: THERME GROUP

Therme Scotland is expected to be around 320,000sq ft in size

Global developer and operator of wellbeing destinations Therme Group has inked a deal with Peel L&P for a new location in Glasgow called Therme Scotland.

Headquartered in Austria, Therme has announced it aims to submit planning permission to Glasgow City Council in 2022 for the 320,000sq ft facility which will be home to a health, fitness and wellbeing centre as well as extensive thermal pools, a spa, and an indoor waterpark.

The organisation anticipates the project will cost roughly £100m to develop and build.

If the application is successful, Therme Scotland will be the organisation's second wellbeing destination in the UK, joining the £250m (€295.5m, US\$335.8m)



LINDENSTRAE JACOBI

The primary purpose of Therme projects is to benefit the communities they serve

Stelian Iacob

Therme Manchester project scheduled to open in 2023, also on a site owned by Peel L&P.

Stelian Iacob, CEO of Therme Group UK, says: "The primary purpose of Therme projects is to benefit the communities they serve."

More: http://lei.sr/5f7t3_H

Countries ranked by cost of staying healthy

Denmark has been identified as the cheapest country in the world to live a healthy life according to a new study.

Researchers at budget operator, Pure Gym, using Numbeo analytics (www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living) investigated close to 100 countries, looking at things such as the average costs of healthy food, price of a gym membership and cost of activewear.

Costs were then weighted against national average earnings to reveal how affordable it is to follow a healthy lifestyle within each country.

While Denmark was crowned the most affordable place on the planet to stay fit and healthy, Iran – with a low average income but incredibly high healthy living costs – was at the other end of the



PHOTO: NUMBEO/STEPHEN ROWE

Keeping fit is an important part of a well-rounded lifestyle and can have huge benefits for mental wellbeing

Stephen Rowe

scale, deemed the most expensive location to maintain healthy habits.

Pure Gym's Stephen Rowe said: "Keeping fit and healthy is an important part of a well-rounded lifestyle that can also have huge benefits for our mental wellbeing."

More: http://lei.sr/N9y3K_H



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MAREK

Copenhagen is the healthiest city

Benefit Systems acquires Total Fitness Poland

Polish corporate wellness platform Benefit Systems has taken over a majority stake in club operator Total Fitness Poland.

Benefit Systems has acquired an 88 per cent stake in the gym chain, which currently runs 14 clubs in Warsaw (10), Gdańsk (3) and Radom (1).

Total Fitness Poland opened its first club in 2011 in Ursynów, Warsaw.

According to Benefit Systems, the deal will be worth PLN75m-85m (£13.9m - £15.7m, US\$18.4m - US\$20m) with the transaction



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DAVID

Benefit Systems plans to complete the acquisition of Total Fitness Poland by 2024

being finalised by 1 April, 2024.

Ultimately Benefit Systems plans to acquire 100 per cent of the shares.

Benefit Systems offers a range of corporate benefits across health, fitness, culture and hospitality under its MultiSport card scheme.

Aleksander Wilewski, co-founder of Total Fitness, said: "Joining the Benefit Systems Group is an important event

for us and an opportunity to further develop the offer of Total Fitness clubs together with a strong, reliable partner and contribute to the improvement of the wellness of Poles and the development of the fitness industry.

"Our clubs are characterised by positive emotions and

More: http://lei.sr/p5k9f_H



PHOTO: WIELKOLANIEC.PL

"Joining Benefit Systems gives an opportunity to develop our offer with a strong, reliable partner"

Aleksander Wilewski

Rio Ferdinand and Gym Group launch youth scheme

An initiative set up by the Rio Ferdinand Foundation in partnership with The Gym Group will see young Londoners being offered career opportunities in fitness and sport.

The new Find Your Future scheme will see up to 150 young people in South London benefit from an employment skills programme and the Community Sports Leadership Award – an accredited training programme.

Working together with the Foundation – which was set up by



PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP

The Gym Group will support students and work together with the foundation



We will support young people in developing the skills they need to secure meaningful careers

Bintou Crookes-Martin

the former Manchester United and England star in 2012 – The Gym Group will support students by utilising the skills of its managers and support teams as ambassadors to deliver both practical and theory-based knowledge of fitness and develop employability skills in the leisure industry.

Bintou Crookes-Martin, chair of the Rio Ferdinand Foundation, said: “The partnership with The Gym Group will support young people in developing the skills and experience they need to secure meaningful careers in the sports and fitness industries.”

More: http://lei.sr/m9y4x_H

Crunch franchises beating pre-pandemic numbers



PHOTO: CRUNCH FITNESS

Crunch franchise sites have exceeded 128 per cent of pre-pandemic levels

Fitness operator Crunch Fitness says it's continued its recovery from lockdowns, with membership levels across its franchised estate now exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

Crunch said its franchise sites exceeded 128 per cent of pre-pandemic membership levels by early November.

The brand also revealed it's set to reach a milestone in February 2022, when it opens its 400th club.

Headquartered in New York, US, Crunch has gyms in 30 US states as well as in Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Portugal and Spain.

CEO Ben Midgley said: “We're proud of reaching the 400th Crunch gym milestone and the momentum we've maintained, despite the



The significant growth we experienced is a testament to our commitment to members

Ben Midgley

many challenges that the pandemic posed on the fitness industry.

“The significant growth we experienced is a true testament to not only Crunch's leadership, but also to our ongoing commitment to our members and their safety.”

More: http://lei.sr/F3P5H_H

Exclusivity defines Third Space Mayfair

Luxury health club operator, Third Space, has opened the doors to its latest club in Mayfair, London.

Designed by Virgile & Partners Architects, the club is Third Space's seventh site and the operator's most technologically advanced yet, with a face recognition entry system and UV-treated fresh air among the smart features.

The club has five training areas, with the main space having a full range of assault bikes and SkiErgs, as well as Woodway and Technogym Skill Run treadmills.

There's also a stretch and mobility area with myofascial release services, a performance Wattbike Zone offering intelligent cycling, a strength area, a 12m sled track and a functional training rig.



Third Space Mayfair will epitomise exclusivity and personalisation

Colin Waggett

The main studio hosts Third Space's class offering and has Myzone heart rate connectivity for members.

Colin Waggett, CEO of Third Space, said: "Third Space Mayfair will epitomise exclusivity and personalisation."

More: http://lei.sr/B3w3j_H



The club houses five training areas

Sport England will target investment to level-up

Sport England is introducing "new and innovative" ways to increase participation in England, by doing a better job of listening to local communities and networks to understand their needs.

The grassroots body says it will disproportionately target its efforts and investment to 'level-up' places and improve accessibility and opportunities for the communities and people that most need to be active.

The pledges have been made in Sport England's new implementation plan,



Sport England says it will listen to communities to better understand their needs



Over the next three years, we'll introduce new, innovative ways to increase participation

Tim Hollingsworth

which covers the first three years of its 10-year strategy, *Uniting the Movement*.

Sport England said the publication of the plan follows consultation with thousands of partners, adding that it must understand local and community priorities, as well as what works best and where investment is most needed.

Tim Hollingsworth, CEO of Sport England, said: "The publication of this

implementation plan is an important moment in our *Uniting the Movement* strategy and an exciting step for the sport and physical activity sector.

"Over the course of the three years, we'll introduce new and innovative ways to increase participation in activity," he said.

More: http://lei.sr/F5E7T_H

Madrid to invest €100m in wellbeing hubs

The City of Madrid could become one of the healthiest in the world if plans by the council come to fruition.

The local government has revealed plans to develop wellbeing infrastructure for the next generation, including significant investment in new facilities, to include the creation of 14 new wellbeing hubs – mixing sport, fitness and other activities – over the next six years.

Located across the city, the hubs will create an enhanced network of facilities as part of a strategy to connect each and every citizen to better health and wellbeing.

Each will be built by public-private collaboration with more than €100m being allocated for the creation of the hubs – but without taxpayer money.

The model will see private companies build the facilities, in return for the right to manage them for 25 years, while the city retains ownership of the buildings.



PHOTO: GO FIT

Madrid City Council has worked with operator Go Fit

Three of the centres are set to be built and completed by the end of 2023.

Madrid City Council earned plaudits during the pandemic for its strong support of the rights of people to access sports and fitness facilities.

The authority designated facilities as essential services that have remained

open under restrictions since the end of the first lockdown in 2020.

Madrid is also home to Iberian operator Go Fit, the wellbeing company with 20 wellbeing hubs across Spain and Portugal – eight of which are in Madrid.

More: http://lei.sr/F7Y4t_H

Study will assess gender diversity and equality



SHUTTERSTOCK/NOVA CREATIVITY

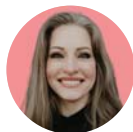
The WIFA research will act as an ongoing monitor of gender diversity

The Women in Fitness Association (WIFA) is partnering with Sport Alliance to undertake a survey on gender diversity, equity, equality and inclusion in the fitness industry. The results will be published in the second quarter of 2022, with the study also acting as a monitor on an ongoing basis.

Participation is anonymous, free of charge and open to anyone employed in the fitness industry.

"This study on gender diversity and equity will be a living project," says Jennifer Halsall-de Wit, COO of WIFA. "We plan to continuously collect data to monitor developments. Every voice counts."

While the fitness industry is increasingly positioning itself as a health provider, says de Wit, other



UNIQUE/JENNIFER HALSALL-DE WIT

This study on gender diversity and equity will be a living project

Jennifer Halsall-de Wit

socially relevant topics, such as gender diversity and equity, are not regularly addressed by the sector.

"Gender equality and an open approach to these issues is a relevant part of our modern civil society," says Artur Jagiello from Sport Alliance.

More: http://lei.sr/V9M5T_H

Grndhouse raises £1.5m to set up studio

Grndhouse has raised a £1.5m financing round led by venture capital firm Passion Capital.

The online platform will use the investment to launch a 4,500sq ft studio and filming facility, along with a community-centric app in early 2022.

Launched earlier this year by five former Barry's UK trainers, Grndhouse is looking to establish itself as the first online platform to focus solely on strength training.

It offers a structured daily strength and resistance-based programme via more than 400 on-demand classes.

Designed to build strength, endurance and confidence, each Grndhouse class has a specific goal-based focus and offers progressions and regressions to cater for all levels of fitness.



PHOTO: GRNDHOUSE

This investment enables us to expand our online presence offline with a physical studio

Louis Rennocks

Louis Rennocks, Grndhouse co-founder, said: "This investment enables us to level up our offering and expand our online presence offline with a physical studio. We believe a community will be a key part in our growth."

More: http://lei.sr/F3C6W_H



PHOTO: GRNDHOUSE/ATENDOMY

Grndhouse is opening a studio

Exercise prescribed for depression in new guidelines

People suffering from mild depression should be offered exercise, mindfulness, therapy or meditation before medication, such as antidepressants.

New draft guidance, published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends that a "menu of treatment options" – including physical activity – should be offered to all patients before medication is considered.

A number of studies have suggested that exercise can be used as an



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Studies suggest that exercise can be used as an effective treatment for depression

effective treatment for depression. Earlier this year, the *Move Your Mental Health* report – which summarised data from 1,158 studies and reviews 20+ types of physical activities in relation to mental health outcomes – found that people with depression should be prescribed exercise and then monitored for the first 12 weeks of their regime.

Dr Paul Chrisp, director of the centre for guidelines at NICE, said: "The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the impact depression has had on the nation's mental health.

"People with depression deserve the best treatment, which is why this guideline is urgently required."

More: http://lei.sr/F2t3t_H



PHOTO: DR PAUL CHRISP

People with depression deserve and expect the best treatment

Dr Paul Chrisp

Report: swimming faces a diversity challenge

A “significant majority” of the UK’s swimming teachers and aquatic professionals feel that swimming excludes some groups and communities.

The finding comes from a study by the Swimming Teachers’ Association (STA) and ukactive, which sought to examine inclusion across the swimming teaching workforce.

According to the *Inclusion in the swimming industry* report, swimming teachers feel that those from low socio-economic backgrounds, some



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANNEBRIK MORA

85 per cent of swimming teachers are committed to learning about inclusion



This study was important for us to understand perceptions, incentives, and motivations

Dave Candler

religious groups, ethnically diverse communities and people with disabilities are being excluded.

Only 51 per cent felt that there is diversity in swimming, however, the workforce’s attitude towards inclusion is hugely favourable, with 85 per cent saying they feel positive about inclusion.

STA CEO, Dave Candler, said: “This study was important for us to understand perceptions in the swimming teaching community.”

● Read HCM’s interview with the Black Swimming Association at: www.hcmmag.com/BSA

More: http://lei.sr/A4M9z_H

New initiative to get neurodivergent people fit



PHOTO: INCLUSIVE FITNESS

The funded activities will take place at the Inclusive Fitness club in Boston

Inclusive Fitness Boston, a health club created specifically for those with disabilities and their families, is launching a new programme to provide greater access to fitness programming for neurodivergent people – those with conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia.

It’s estimated that about 40 million Americans have an intellectual disability or delay (IDD) and research has found that by nine years of age, most are much less active than their neurotypical peers. By the time they are 18, most get almost no daily physical exercise.

Inclusive Fitness has partnered with Doug Flutie Jr Foundation for Autism to help tackle the issue.

A pilot has been set up to raise awareness of the importance of

having fitness options available to the neurodiverse community and to generate financial support for those impacted by the lack of access to effective fitness programmes.

The programme will include a scholarship fund offering monetary assistance to families in need, removing the financial barrier to access to fitness classes and activities.

The funded activities will take place at the Inclusive Fitness club, which offers an accessible and sensory-friendly training environment, specially trained coaches and evidence-based adaptive programming.

Open initially for people in the Boston area, the model could be expanded to other parts of the US.

More: http://lei.sr/E4E2y_H



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We talk about our clubs being welcoming places with a joyful atmosphere. That sense of joy is key if we want everyone to enjoy the benefits of working out

Sondre Gravir

SATS is on a mission to help people of all ages become healthier and happier, with a focus on creating a product where the barriers to entry are low and the value to society high. Its CEO speaks to Kate Cracknell

What's the SATS vision?

Ever since SATS was founded 25 years ago, its philosophy has been to make fitness available to everyone.

We talk about our clubs being welcoming places with a joyful atmosphere. That sense of joy is key. If we want everyone to enjoy the benefits of working out, we have to take on the role of inspirer. We have to create low barriers to entry and a product that's fun.

Fitness isn't about the very trained, very fit young people you still see in commercials across our sector. It's about offering a product that really engages and activates the whole population, and that's what we aim to do at SATS. We want to help everyone, of all ages, become healthier and happier.

This vision has implications for our product offering, of course, which has to be very diverse to ensure we're a great choice for the super-fit 25-year-old guy or girl in the city centre of Stockholm, as well as for the 77-year-old who wants to stay active and in good physical shape as they age.

It's also vital that our vision is strongly embedded in our culture, because in a people business like ours, the customer experience is reliant on the engagement and dedication of employees. We work hard to ensure our vision is lived in our clubs every day. If you go into any SATS club and ask even a part-time employee, he or she will really give strong examples of our vision in practice.

Where are your clubs located?

We operate in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland (see The SATS estate). Within those markets, we're very focused on creating strong footprints in the capitals and other large cities where we operate. This will continue to be our strategy moving forward: we will not be a single-club, single-city operator. We want multiple clubs in each city.

This cluster strategy is important, because our member value is based on our people using multiple clubs. A typical SATS member regularly works out in at least two or three different clubs. In our Stockholm city centre cluster, as an example, that number would be closer to four.

We want there to be a club close to where you live, a club close to where you work and a club close to where your friends live. We want the barrier to enjoying a great training experience to be low.

The other part of our cluster strategy is that across these clubs, you should be able to enjoy the whole product experience. Let's take group training as an example, which is a central part of our offering; around 50 per cent of our member base are group class members, which is possible thanks to our flexible, modular membership.

In a typical week in Stockholm or Oslo, across the cluster you'll have around 3,000 classes on the schedule. It's a massive offering and – even though our clubs are typically around 2,500–3,000sq m with one or two group exercise studios, a separate ▶

Gravir says it's vital the SATS vision is embedded into club culture



yoga studio, an indoor running zone for running classes and a functional area for HIIT strength classes – we can't offer everything in every club.

We can, however, make sure members have access to the whole product portfolio across the two, three or four different clubs they use. So, we look at our member data – at how members are using our clubs – and we distribute our product offering to ensure everyone has access to all products. This is a key part of our strategy and fundamental to the member experience.

Can you detail your flexible memberships?

The sector's traditional model – one membership, one price, with a binding 12-month contract – just isn't very member-friendly. We want to offer far more flexibility.

At SATS, you can therefore design your own membership and pay just for what you want. Do you want access to just one club, the full cluster, all clubs in the Nordics? Do you want a contract or not? Which of our products do you want access to? If you change your mind at any point, you can digitally upgrade and downgrade your membership – self-service – as you go along.

At some point, of course, you'll be better off opting for our full-access membership. Because it isn't like some other European markets where you pay €120 just to access one decent club. SATS full-access membership costs just €60–65 a month, and

The SATS estate

Currently sitting at 254 clubs across the Nordics – growth that has been achieved both organically and through acquisition – SATS streamlined its branding over the course of 2018–19.

The majority of its clubs now operate under the premium SATS brand. It is only in Finland that ELIXIA, always a strong brand in this market, continues to operate. However, as CEO Sondre Gravir explains: "We operate all clubs in all four markets as one company. The operational procedures, the business model, the product offering, the programming, the colour schemes, the staff education, the flexible memberships, the app... It's the same everywhere. The only thing that's different is the brand name in Finland."

The estate currently comprises 80 SATS clubs in Norway, 84 SATS clubs in Sweden, 30 SATS clubs in Denmark and 30 ELIXIA-branded clubs in Finland. In addition, 30 low-cost Fresh Fitness clubs operate in Norway, as well as two standalone HiYoga studios in Oslo; other HiYoga studios exist as 'clubs-in-club'.

All figures correct as at 20 August 2021.



**At SATS, you
can therefore
design your own
membership
and pay just for
what you want**

The focus is on
great classes and
inspiring instructors

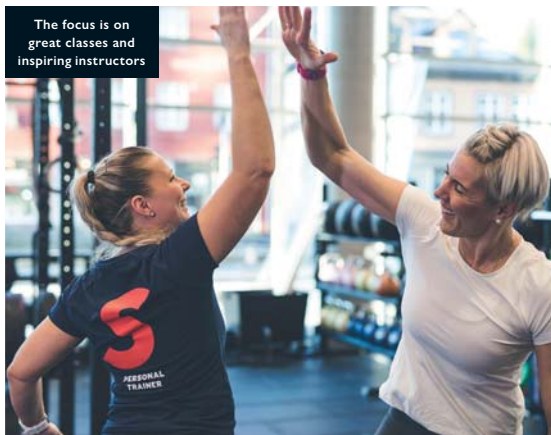


PHOTO: SATS

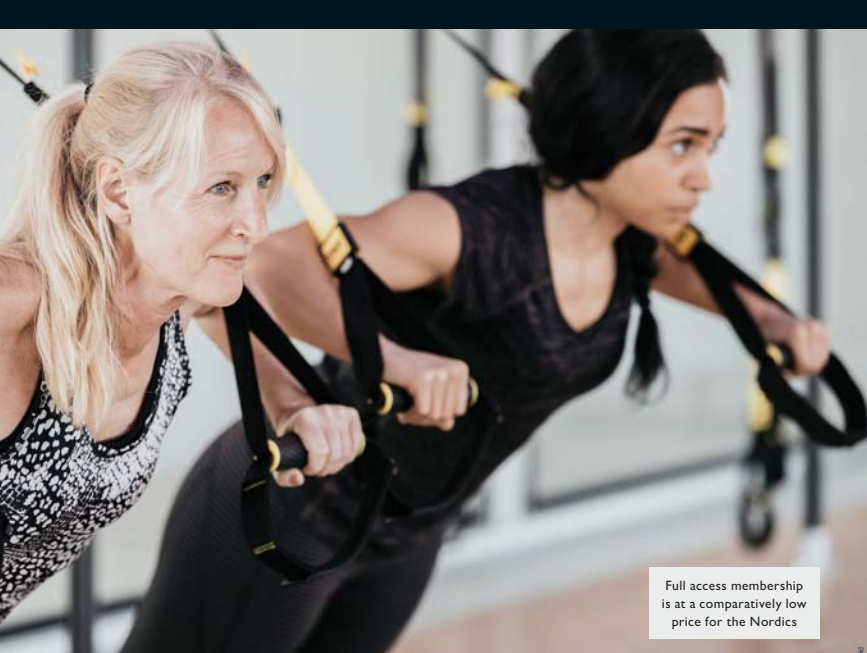


PHOTO: SATS

Full access membership is at a comparatively low price for the Nordics

for that you get access to every one of our premium clubs, including all our classes. It's a pretty low price point compared to the purchasing power of Nordic society and the pricing of other consumer goods.

Of course, it's then up to us to ensure we have such a good offering – including such great classes and inspiring instructors – that people want to keep using it and paying for it. We know that 75 per cent of the members who leave SATS are inactive. If they're active, they don't leave. One of our KPIs is therefore number of visits per member per week, and we work hard to keep people coming. For me, that's a much healthier approach than binding people into contracts.

Tell us more about your customer data use

This is crucial for the whole industry and a path all operators must go down if they haven't already started. It's about being customer-centric, basing decisions on what your members are actually doing – their preferences, needs and desires – not on what you think is best for them.

I already gave the example of our group fitness programming: which clubs get which classes and which concepts, at what point in time during the week. This isn't dictated by the club manager or by instructor availability. It's truly based on

the data: historical data, member feedback, the ways in which members are using our clubs.

The same goes for new product development: we use data to understand what types of new product we should launch, we do a lot of piloting, we do a lot of AB testing of both our digital and physical member experiences.

We're starting to become quite a data-driven company, with a strong technology and data insight team, which is great because it's basically making our product offering better.

What are some of your latest product innovations?

We already had a decent digital offering going into COVID: we were already well aware of the need for a great digital experience as well as a great in-person one, and the need to invest in technology to deliver this.

But of course, we've stepped up during COVID, providing members with lots of live classes, digital PT solutions, home training programmes, nutrition advice, mental health classes and so on – all for free during memberships freezes. Because ultimately, if our vision is to make people healthier and happier... well, that vision doesn't stop just because clubs

PHOTO: SATS



SATS plans to launch a treadmill and a bike for connected home training

are closed, does it? The more we can activate our members and help them train at home, the better.

In 2020, there was a 400 per cent uplift in the volume of digital content we produced, with thousands of classes on offer and 700,000 members working out with us online. I think it's probably one of the main reasons why our member numbers held up pretty well throughout lockdowns compared to many other operators.

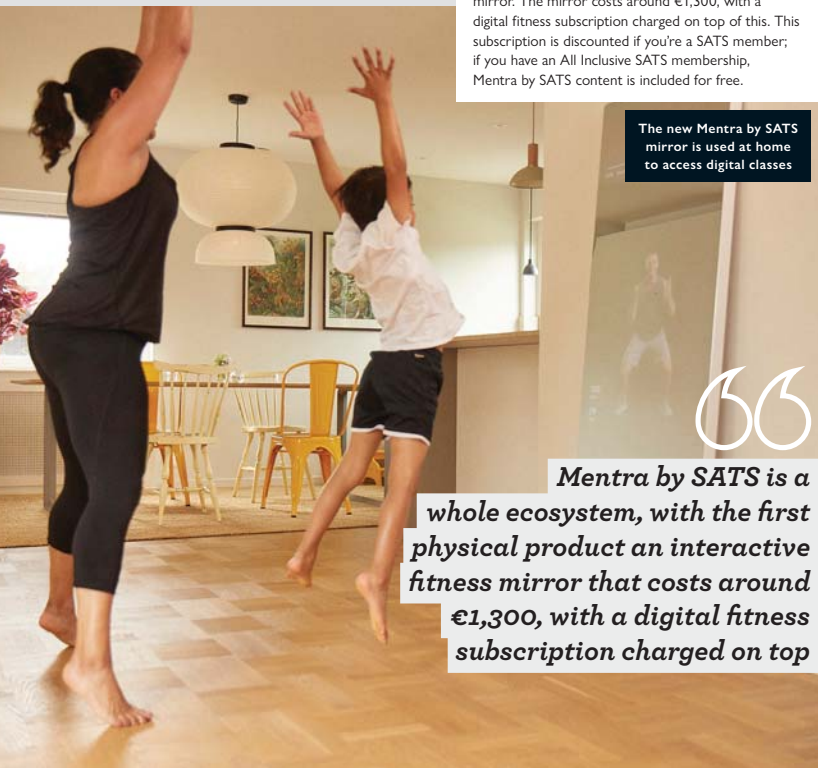
Now we've taken the next step in our digital product offering, with the recent launch of a completely new home training solution: Mentra by SATS.

What is Mentra by SATS and who's it aimed at?

Mentra by SATS is the name of the whole ecosystem, with the first physical product an interactive fitness mirror. The mirror costs around €1,300, with a digital fitness subscription charged on top of this. This subscription is discounted if you're a SATS member; if you have an All Inclusive SATS membership, Mentra by SATS content is included for free.

The new Mentra by SATS mirror is used at home to access digital classes

PHOTO: MENTRA BY SATS



“

Mentra by SATS is a whole ecosystem, with the first physical product an interactive fitness mirror that costs around €1,300, with a digital fitness subscription charged on top



Post-COVID overall member activity levels are expected to rise

We absolutely believe the market is there. In fact, further down the line, our ambition is to also launch a bike and treadmill for connected home training. Across the whole of Europe, as well as in markets like the US, people are now showing they're willing to invest more and more in living a healthy lifestyle.

How will your clubs and home workouts co-exist?

Obviously there's a lot of discussion around how the industry will change, how consumer behaviour will change, as a result of COVID.

At SATS, we believe people will work out more at home and outdoors than they used to, but that they'll also work out more in-club. We truly believe overall activity levels will increase across society and that we have an important role to play in contributing to this.

Once again, it comes back to flexibility and making sure the barriers to activity are low: some days, members will want to come to the club for the joyful experience of working out with others; other days, when they can't make it to the club but still want to do their class, we'll make it possible for them to do that from home.

We're therefore optimistic both for our physical clubs – where we've seen visit levels recovering post-lockdowns – and in terms of the rise in digital and home training.

Of course, digital is also a way to extend our product offering into geographies where we aren't present with physical clubs, as well as to reach those in our existing geographies who don't want to attend a physical club. Both of these are very interesting opportunities.

How is SATS performing?

Club closures are very challenging from a financial perspective, in spite of our strong measures to control cash burn rate. If you look at the share prices, we IPO'd in October 2019 at NOK 23.50, which over the next six months rose to NOK 30. Then came COVID and brought the price down to NOK 12, so it was a massive hit.

In spite of Omicron, we're back to trading between NOK 19 and NOK 24, so we're at or close to IPO level.

We also took a decision early in the COVID crisis to use this special situation to come out as a strengthened company. We've, therefore, doubled down on expansion, not only of our digital presence, but of our physical club network too. During 2020 and 2021, we'll have opened 30 clubs. Compare that to just a handful of openings in 2015 and 2016, for example.

Our focus will remain on the Nordics for now; new countries may come in the future, but that isn't something we're focusing at the moment.



We want there to be a club close to where you live, a club close to where you work and one close to where your friends live

We're continuing to invest in our product, too, including new class concepts and selective expansion of our offering: a branded clothing line, nutrition, and physical therapy treatments in some of our markets which is picking up pretty well. I think there are several interesting opportunities for further brand expansion, either on our own or in partnership, to offer a more holistic health experience for our members.

And of course, short term the focus is on getting our membership back to pre-COVID levels. We went into COVID with around 700,000 members and currently have around 600,000, so although numbers are recovering, we still have a way to go.

Are you concerned by digital competition?

Being market leader in the Nordics, people often ask if we fear competition from new concepts, boutique operators, new digital offerings and so on. To be honest, we don't. It's not that we're naïve – we're aware there are a lot of great new offerings out there that could compete very well with us. It's simply that we see ourselves as part of a growing market.

Penetration is a bit higher in the Nordics, but look across Europe. We're talking maybe 10–15 per cent population penetration. Our job isn't to compete with each other, fighting over the same members, but to expand the market together, bringing more people into physical activity. And there are so many opportunities to do this, which is why I see the innovation happening in the industry as a good thing. It's what will bring more people in. And I think we, as a sector, have a responsibility to do this.

It's why SATS has focused on UN SDG #3, which is all about health and wellbeing. We believe our sector has a vital role to play in improving physical and mental health across society, by increasing activity levels. As an example, SATS had around 40 million member visits a year before COVID, and rising. Those 40 million visits... that's a whole lot of public health.

But there's still a lot of work to do to ensure governments, other decision-makers and society in general really understand the value of what we do. We can't sit and complain about this, though. If ours was one of the first industries to be locked down in many countries, it's because we haven't yet told our story well enough. We have to take responsibility.

Over the past 18 months, we've seen more collaboration across the sector and we need to keep this going, working together to get the message out there about the contribution we can make to society.

What do you love about working in fitness?

In other industries, you might stand on stage one day and talk about vision to your employees, but the next day it's back to talking about financials. In our industry, the two are inextricably linked. Of course, as a listed company we have to deliver our financial results, but our vision of making people healthier and happier... If we deliver on that – if we focus on the member experience, on bringing people into activity and on keeping them active – the financial results will come. ●

A brief history of SATS

1995

SATS launches in Norway by re-branding eight existing fitness clubs.

1998

SATS, by this point operating 49 clubs, is acquired by US-based 24 Hour Fitness Worldwide.

1999

SATS acquires Swedish Sports Club and establishes operations in Sweden.

2000

Expansion continues, including an entry into the Danish market, to reach 100 clubs in the Nordics. SATS becomes the first chain in the Nordics to offer personal training.

2001

Launch of Elixia, reaching 16 clubs in Norway and Finland by year-end.

2002

Private equity investor Nordic Capital and the Norwegian founders of SATS acquire SATS from 24 Hour Fitness Worldwide.

2003

SATS opens its first clubs in Finland.

2006

The company is acquired by Tryghedsgruppen SMBA.

2010

Fresh Fitness launches as a low-cost alternative in Norway and Denmark.

2011

Elixia is acquired by private equity investor Altor (Altor Fund III).

2013

The Danish Fresh Fitness clubs are divested.

2014

Merger of SATS and Elixia creates the largest fitness chain in the Nordics.

2016

Launch of online training and niche training concepts including HiYoga, Build 'n' Burn and martial arts.

2017

Launch of a modular membership structure, allowing members to tailor their own package. SATS acquires Aquarama Trening and Bromma Träningscenter.

2018

All Elixia clubs in Norway, plus 22 Fresh Fitness clubs across the Nordics, are rebranded to the SATS concept. New member app launched with social network

functionality. Acquisition of three Balance clubs. Sondre Gravir, a member of SATS for 20 years, becomes CEO, bringing with him a background in strong consumer brands and a belief in the vital role fitness plays in society.

2019

SATS acquires fitness DK's 39 clubs to re-enter the Danish market. SATS ASA lists on the Oslo Stock Exchange; Altor and Tryghedsgruppen remain key investors.

2020

SATS opens 15 clubs, closes one and divests nine clubs in Denmark outside the Greater Copenhagen cluster. Six Bare Trening clubs in the Greater Oslo area acquired and rebranded to strengthen the Fresh Fitness Oslo cluster. The COVID-19 pandemic forces two waves of temporary club closures.

2021

Growth continues, with 30 new clubs and continued expansion into the digital arena.

Gravir, a SATS member for 20 years, became CEO in 2018

Fitness First Germany *super-charges* with Funxtion

Fitness First Germany has upgraded its members' gym floor training experience with the rollout of Funxtion's Multiscreen Virtual Player



This upgrade highlights to members the commitment to the ongoing enhancement of their experience

Ernst De Neef, CEO, Funxtion

Funxtion's Virtual Player is a digital platform housing thousands of beautifully shot and perfectly executed video exercises, workouts and virtual classes.

Multiple screens (provided for Fitness First Germany by Funxtion) connect to the Virtual Player and are strategically positioned in functional training spaces to optimise the member experience.

Constant visual excitement

The exercises featured can be programmed to run concurrently, creating a circuit of digital instructors that provides every member with constant visual prompting. The Virtual Player and digital fitness content are fully custom-branded and display Fitness First's own backgrounds, fonts and logo.

"Digital instruction is the next phase of evolution in gym floor training," says Martin Seibold, CEO of LifeFit Group, the owner of Fitness First Germany. "Providing our members with access to high-quality, digitally-streamed exercise demonstrations empowers our gym floor trainers to focus more on mentoring and coaching. This creates opportunities to deliver a much more personalised experience for members, creating an environment where every member is progressing towards an individual goal."

"We're constantly assessing the market to ensure our offer remains relevant to the lives, expectations and needs of our members," says Seibold, "while also maintaining our position as one of the sector's innovation frontrunners."

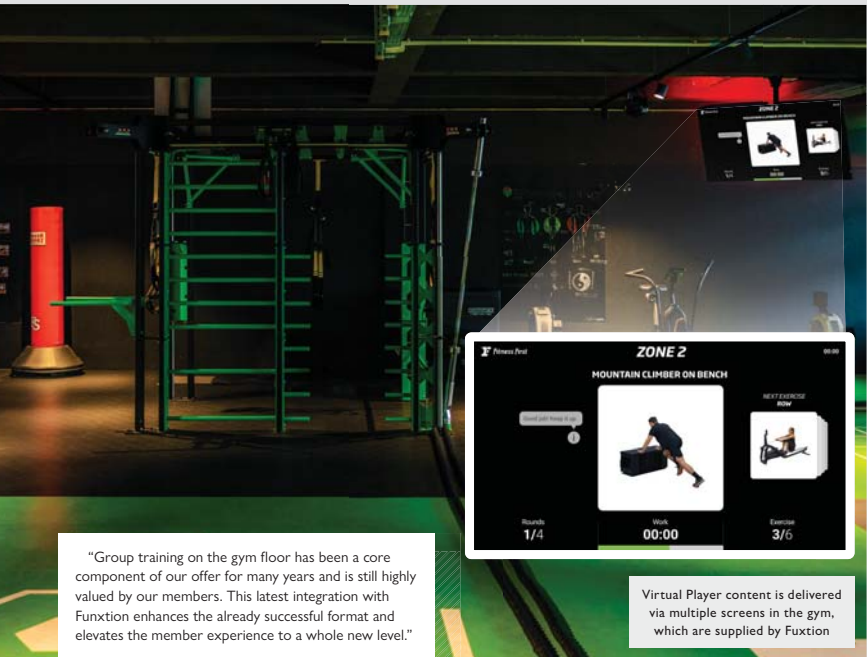
Staff control the digital content via a dashboard



PHOTO: FUNXTION/LIFE FIT GROUP

PHOTO: FUNXTION/LIFE FIT GROUP





"Group training on the gym floor has been a core component of our offer for many years and is still highly valued by our members. This latest integration with Function enhances the already successful format and elevates the member experience to a whole new level."

Virtual Player content is delivered via multiple screens in the gym, which are supplied by Fuxtion

Rolling out the tech

The rollout, which began during lockdown at the end of 2020, gives all the brand's members access to the new experience across 50+ clubs.

Ernst De Neef, CEO of Funxtion, says: "Fitness First has been sharing our content via its member app for a while, so all the exercise demonstrations displayed by the multi-screens in its clubs will already be familiar. This demonstrates a strategic digitalisation journey and provides a valued continuity, highlighting to members the brand's commitment to the ongoing enhancement of their experience."

Seibold concludes: "Digitalisation is enabling gyms to create inspiring, customer-centric experiences that could not have been imagined even a few years ago."

"In-person coaching by our rockstar trainers will remain a core component on our gym floors, supported by a growing arsenal of digital tools. Funxtion is leading the charge in the creation and implementation of quality fitness content, all of which can be custom-branded, so the partnership makes perfect sense."

● To find out more about Funxtion's Multiscreen Virtual Player solutions, visit www.HCMmag.com/functionvirtual



PHOTO: FUNCTION/LIFEFIT GROUP

Digitalisation is enabling gyms to create inspiring, customer-centric experiences that could not have been imagined even a few years ago

Martin Seibold, CEO, LifeFit Group

Is flexible pricing the way to get members back to the gym?

Everyone's talking about Pricing

Despite the renewed interest in health, a proportion of people remain nervous about going back to health clubs because of infection levels in the wider community. Would making adjustments to pricing help overcome these barriers? Kath Hudson investigates

As reported in *HCM* issue 10 2021, Fitness First is one of the first UK health club operators to change its membership options in the era of COVID.

The company is offering a flexible membership with no contract and no joining fee, giving members the option to access all its 45 clubs.

Members opting for the new Fitness First FFX flexible memberships are signed up on a rolling contract, which can be cancelled at any point with a month's notice. The estate has been divided into seven pricing tiers and members can use any club in their tier or lower. Membership rates have also been

refined, with the price for the highest tier, which gives access to 35 gyms in London, having been reduced from £139 to £99.

Fitness First UK MD, Lee Matthews, says this is to allow flexibility and not put limits on members' access to fitness.

Will others follow suit? We ask this month's *HCM* panel...

Flint says Evolution Wellness has found flexible pricing effective

Simon Flint

Evolution Wellness

From a business perspective, a subscription model is still highly desirable, due to its high visibility, the relative consistency of future revenues and the relative simplicity of automatic billing.

Having said that, providing the customer with a choice is usually the best approach, rather than just a binary buy/don't buy decision.

Presenting good-better-best options, such as a pay-as-you-go and pre-paid, is a great way to look at it.

Dynamic yield management models are absolutely the golden chalice if they can be implemented intelligently in order for operators to generate maximum returns on investment.

In general, in Asia, where capacity restrictions still remain, the 'effective value' of a spot in busy times has risen significantly, so measures that reflect value through yield optimisation will be even more important.

However, at the present time, peak-time spots in central business district clubs are not as premium as before the pandemic, due to the work-from-home hybrid pattern.

It does seem illogical to offer a discount to overcome consumers' hesitancy over safety, but we have seen evidence that it does play a part in the extrinsic motivating factors to get people back to good habits.

Some of this is born from a few operators offering very attractive price-based incentives, which tends to mean others will need to follow suit to maintain market share – in this scenario, strength of brand is a big factor in being able to hold onto yield while also driving volume.



PHOTO: EVOLUTION WELLNESS

Providing the customer with a choice is usually the best approach, rather than just a binary buy/don't buy decision

In Asia, post-lockdown confidence is varied and seems to be lower than North America, Europe and Australia. Several factors appear to sit behind this, specifically governments placing us last in the queue to reopen, which indicated an implicit concern over gym safety, despite evidence to the contrary.

Some families live with three generations together in Asia, so there's concern for children and especially elderly relatives. This has meant some customers have de-prioritised their return to the gym through an abundance of caution.

The relative lack of government assistance – such as furlough schemes and job-keeper programmes – also means some have tightened the purse strings for a period, compared to other parts of the world, where

significant government assistance has preserved spending power to a larger degree than in Asia.

These are all challenges we have to deal with, however, pre-pandemic we undertook measures to widen our appeal, with a range of new prices and a lower entry point based on utility. This is something we'll continue to do as we recover.

In all parts of the world we can see people placing a higher value on health, so there's an underlying impetus which will assist the trajectory of the recovery in the coming months.

We see the recovery as a steady climb rather than a bounceback and it's my personal hope and belief that by the second half of 2022, most markets will be adapting to live with COVID-19 and the trajectory will steepen.

Frequent price changes can erode consumer trust, says Lawler



If we reduce our cost-to-serve too far we deny our responsibility and duty to help our members retain an exercise habit

Sophie Lawler

Total Fitness

The subscription model is still the best for the industry. Members benefit from a lower monthly subscription, and gyms benefit from surety over future revenues, giving a more solid foundation from which to invest back into their products and services, from which members benefit again. It's a win:win.

If members need more flexibility, then that should absolutely be an option too, but it may need to be a premium option so it stays viable for the business, as well as the member.

Dynamic pricing is something we may start to see, but we would need to employ it in a way that best serves our members. The gym sector is one that could be better trusted than it currently is, and pricing is always an influencing factor. On this basis, dynamic pricing should be approached with care, to ensure it's used to enhance transparency and trust and never in a way that risks that.

If it's used at membership subscription level, and/or at a frequency where prices change

too sporadically, then trust will erode. If it's used at product/service level to reward greater numbers of participants as part of a shared service – ie, more people share the same cost – then I think it can increase transparency and trust.

When it comes to heavy discounting, if ever there was a time to demonstrate the value of what we do, it's now. Never before have we experienced an awakening to the importance of physical fitness such as this one and my view is that it's time to stand proudly behind our purpose. We should also recognise that serving members meaningfully and meeting their efforts with our own, means we should always be operationally leveraged – we have costs that we need to cover and need to charge a premium for the service.

If we reduce our cost-to-serve too far we deny our responsibility and duty to help our members retain an exercise habit.

Our focus should always be on how to meet our members' efforts with the right level of value to reward them.



If you make it about price, so will the customer.
It always seems like a quick fix until you do it

Dennis Mathias

RTS

The subscription model is the best in any business and especially for our industry. It hasn't changed in 40 years and I doubt it will.

Give people too many options and they won't pick any, which is why it's best to keep it simple with a flat rate membership, rather than using surge pricing or yield management techniques.

If you give people options to pay less for off-peak periods, or to use less amenities, they'll pick the lower option and worry about the restrictions later. Or, they won't pick any unless they get the lower option with the higher value.

After 40 years' in the industry, I've seen it go down the rabbit hole of discounting multiple times. The same thing happens every single time. First, it negatively impacts current members, which creates attrition. Second, if it works at all it has a short lifespan and then you're back to pulling teeth but getting less from each sale.

Third, if you really push it to drive numbers it's very hard to come back from. The team gets used to selling at that rate and new members get used to buying at that rate, so

most clubs that discount get stuck there. Honestly, it can signal the beginning of the end for a club.

Fourth, it's never the price. I know membership sales people say everyone who doesn't buy tells them it's a price objection, but it's not. So discounting creates more problems than solutions. Fifth, there are now multiple low entry point clubs everywhere, so price discounting isn't what it was in the old days when everyone was around the same rate.

Sixth, in the past, when we discounted it often started a local

landslide and everyone else dropped as well. If that happens, your drop gets buried in with everyone else's and clubs simply devalue themselves. The word gets out that shopping for clubs in that area is like car shopping. Prospects won't pay full rate and closing becomes a price negotiation, not a needs and value-based sale.

If you make it about price, so will the customer. It always seems like a quick fix until you do it. My advice is, avoid it at all costs and try to find out why you need to do it and fix that problem instead.

PHOTO: RTS



Price is rarely the real reason people don't buy, says Mathias

PHOTO: RTS



Repeated discounting can train customers to wait for the sales, further eroding pricing power over time

Jeff Bladt

Classpass

For most operators, direct discounting is a money-losing proposition – immediately and in the long-term. For a 25 per cent discount to merely break even in the short term, sales need to increase by 33 per cent.

But, without significant marketing spend, what most often happens is that an operator ends up primarily selling discounted packages to the same set of leads and customers who were prepared to pay full price.

The marketing that's needed to reach new audiences only pushes the break-even point higher. Tactics such as limiting discounts to first time users can help, but conversions from discounted first visits can be very low, making the marketing costs hard to justify. Moreover, the monitoring of discount fraud is time consuming, and never ends. Repeated discounting can also train customers to wait for the sales, further eroding a business pricing power over time.

A better way to maximise revenue is by selling at full prices to direct customers who have a higher willingness to pay, while working with an aggregator to target a more price-sensitive audience and clear remnant inventory with a different offer. That way the spots

which otherwise wouldn't be sold can be sold to customers the club wouldn't usually be able to reach.

Studios should ideally skip a direct discount-driven sales cycle, and instead focus on getting as many direct customers through the door at full price, while providing them with the best possible studio experience.

These customers will be willing to pay more in exchange for reserving their favourite bike and guaranteeing they get booked into their favourite class. Whatever spots are left – often at less popular times or with lesser

known instructors – can be opaquely cleared on the aggregator platform.

This two-channel approach allows a studio to serve two different audiences, while maintaining their direct pricing power. Eighty per cent of our customers have never been to the studios they visit with us, meaning nearly every dollar or pound they spend is incremental. Moreover, less than five per cent of customers will ever end up switching their booking behaviour from direct booking to our service.



PHOTO: CLASSPASS

A two-channel approach is more effective, says Bladt



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Rethinking exercise

Leisure operators should embrace activity to engage members says Jenny Patrickson, managing director of Active IQ



The difference between 'activity' and 'exercise' lies not just in the physical manifestation of a chosen pastime, but also in people's mentality and approach. Herein lies an opportunity for leisure operators to expand their offering – and workforce – to extend the opportunity to engage and attract members.

Renowned paleoanthropologist Daniel Lieberman is known for his mode of thinking that differentiates exercise and activity. Lieberman's stance is that humans aren't naturally programmed to exercise in the way we understand it – such as going to the gym, joining a group exercise class or training for a specific sport.

While these can all be good for our physical fitness, they're not the only route to wellness and wellbeing, which is good news, because while some people are committed to doing regular gym sessions, classes and sports-specific training, others don't like exercising in these ways.

As people aren't very good at sticking with things they don't enjoy, those in our communities who dislike traditional exercise forms can end up not very active at all. This can be a problem for them, but perhaps also an opportunity for operators.

By engaging beyond our four walls we can encourage more people to take up physical activity and then to engage with other pursuits inside our facilities



Lieberman believes we're hard-wired to be physically active if a) it's necessary (such as 'hunting and gathering') or b) when it's rewarding (enjoyable).

On that basis, the secret to getting more people to be physically active lies in engaging them in something they actually want to do. And that's where activity comes into play.

Opportunity for operators

The pandemic saw many people venture outdoors for activities and exercise, as indoor facilities couldn't open. Tapping into people's new appreciation of being active outside provides a good opportunity for leisure operators who can adapt to offer more than just traditional exercise options. Embracing activity is a chance for operators to expand their offering to engage with more people in different ways. It's a chance to go beyond the traditional walls of a facility and to create activity hubs.

Bringing activity alongside exercise and fitness makes perfect sense – people who keep fit and well are more likely to enjoy an alternative activity outside the gym and studio. Likewise, people who start with outdoor activities may soon seek a fitness programme to give them the strength and endurance they need to enjoy their outdoor pursuits more fully.

The new Active IQ courses train people to deliver a wide range of outdoor activities



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/NAIPOINT

Outdoor Pursuits

There really is a huge variety of options available to people to be physically active and enjoy the outdoors.

At Active IQ we've just launched our Level 3 Outdoor Activity Instructor apprenticeship standard. This trains people in how to supervise and guide children and adults in outdoor activities and pastimes as diverse as canoeing, sailing and climbing, surfing, cycling, hillwalking and archery. It also covers bushcraft, rock pooling, geology and plant identification, as well as habitat and wildlife walks.

We're working with training providers to deliver this qualification to learners aged 16+, making it an ideal first career opportunity for school and college leavers. Quite apart from the additional options it gives members, this new strand of activity can bring a new type of instructor into a facility to complement the more traditional fitness team members. The broader

Active IQ qualifications

Active IQ offers a range of End-point assessment standards for leisure sector apprenticeships. Just launched are the Level 3 Outdoor Activity Instructor and Level 4 Sports Coach. Active IQ will introduce its Level 2 Facilities Service Operative standard soon.

the offering, the wider the appeal, which can only be a good way to encourage greater footfall within facilities.

By engaging beyond the four walls of a leisure centre, we can encourage more people to take up physical activity and then, in turn, engage with other pursuits inside our facilities.

● To find out more about Active IQ's End-point assessment visit: www.HCMmag.com/endpoint

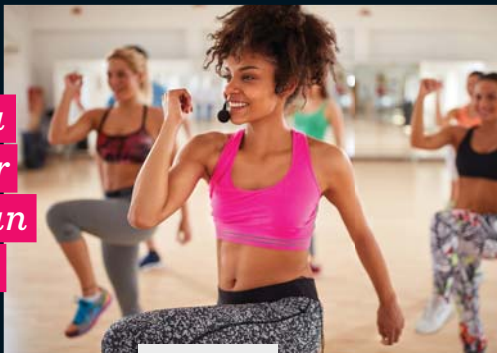
ELEVATING the industry

EuropeActive and the European Committee for Standardisation are launching new standards for a wide range of health club operations, as Cliff Collins explains





FitCert.eu is a game-changer for the European fitness sector



More standards are in the works for fitness instruction, launching in 2022

Standards define many parts of our lives, such as what we eat, the electrical appliances we use, the cars we drive, how we trade with other countries and the toys our children play with.

We have standards mainly because they reduce risk and in the case of the fitness sector they're all about risk reduction for our customers, for our employees, and for the operators themselves. Most importantly, they describe and define what is currently considered to be a good practice model.

Standards are voluntary, and there's no legal obligation to apply them, but they're used by the legal profession and by insurers and as a result, they have a habit over time of ending up being written into national and European legislation and directives.

Country-specific standards exist – such as BSI in the UK – while at the European level, standards have a prefix of EN and internationally it's ISO.

The design, manufacture, and installation of stationary fitness equipment in our health clubs, for example, has been covered by standards for quite some time and today these are produced under the ISO20957 Standard.

It's not surprising, therefore, that now we have new European standards for the operation and management of health clubs, and these are known as EN17229. Even though they're only just launching, these standards already automatically apply to just about every fitness club in Europe and the UK – all 60,000 of them.

The FitCert.eu scheme will prove operators' commitment to raising standards

Industry-based standards

The new EN17229 standards are industry-based and have been written by more than 25 people – including health club operators and fitness experts – all working under the direction of the European Committee for Standardisation, otherwise known as CEN (Comité Européen de Normalisation).

Finally reaching consensus and achieving 'sign-off' by 35 national standards bodies has taken the CEN/TC 136 Working Group Two, which has been responsible for this undertaking, over six years and there are more standards coming down the track from this hard-working group.

It's fair to say that standards make for rather boring reading, and so it's important to understand what they mean in practice and this is why the new European Fitness Centre Certification Scheme has been launched. It's a game-changer for the sector because it moves the whole concept of self-certification (or Code of Practice) to a new, much higher level of independent conformity assessment and certification.

Two main components have come together to create the scheme, which is being called FitCert.eu. First is the support and buy-in from operators – this was mainly secured through EuropeActive's Presidents' Council of Operators – and second it needed a sponsor that could give it the quality assurance and recognition of status it needed to make it credible. In this case, the sponsor is the Netherlands National Standards Organisation (NEN).

NEN has been active in the world of standardisation for more than a hundred years, and already has experience of running other similar certification schemes in other sectors.

The third component needed comes from the 'conformity assessment' of clubs by international certification bodies, such as Veritas, SGS and TÜV.

All this work is done under the requirements of yet another standard – ISO 17020 – because, of course, there are even standards for how you use standards!

Launching FitCert.eu

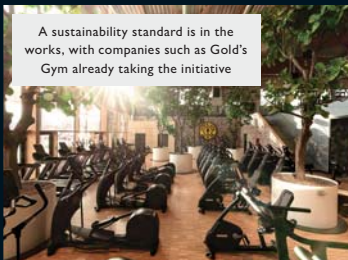
The FitCert.eu scheme was launched at the European Health and Fitness Forum in Cologne on 3rd November and the industry reaction has been extraordinarily positive. Timing is critical and the COVID-19 experience has shown clearly that fitness needs to better define itself in the eyes of politicians and public health officials, so we can differentiate the sector from other 'leisure' activities.

We want the FitCert.eu scheme to help level the market, enhance the performance of the sector, to help build confidence with our users and with health professionals. We're part of the solution and we can show through the FitCert.eu scheme that we're professional and committed to quality.

We've broken the FitCert.eu scheme into five main stages:

1. Aspiring clubs make a commitment to joining the scheme
2. They go through a self assessment process
3. Clubs achieve the EN17229 standard, and show conformity but at less than 100 per cent compliance
4. Full club certification is achieved to EN17229 through 100 per cent compliance
5. Revalidation takes place every three years

A sustainability standard is in the works, with companies such as Gold's Gym already taking the initiative



Outdoor exercise supervision will get its own standards

We want to make sure that clubs are supported at every step of the way and fully informed of what's expected of them. There are no tricks, and no intention to disadvantage any club that wants to work towards getting this new Charter Mark which – over time – should become the industry's trusted marque of quality assurance.

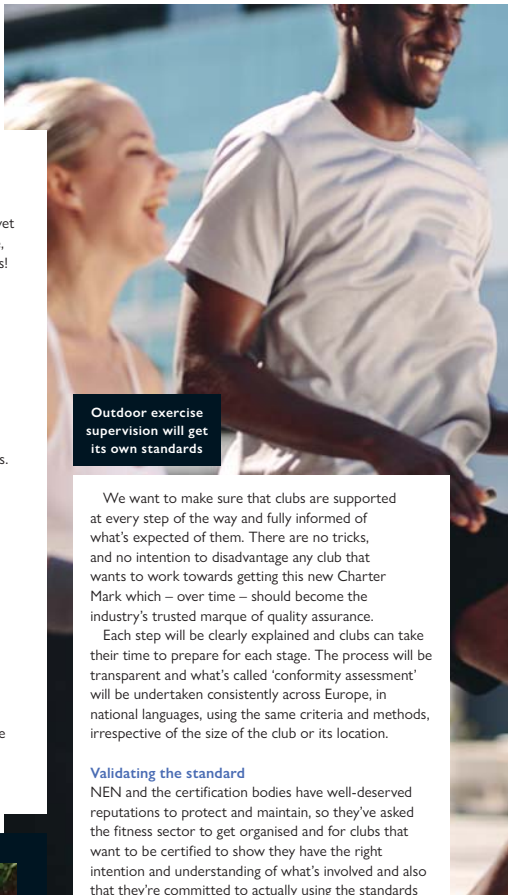
Each step will be clearly explained and clubs can take their time to prepare for each stage. The process will be transparent and what's called 'conformity assessment' will be undertaken consistently across Europe, in national languages, using the same criteria and methods, irrespective of the size of the club or its location.

Validating the standard

NEN and the certification bodies have well-deserved reputations to protect and maintain, so they've asked the fitness sector to get organised and for clubs that want to be certified to show they have the right intention and understanding of what's involved and also that they're committed to actually using the standards in the scheme once they have the accreditation.

This means stages 1 and 2 are being directed by EuropeActive as the preliminary checker of information and commitment, before the clubs can qualify to enter the NEN certification scheme. These first stages gather the basic information about the club, its name, location, size, website, contact details and so forth.

Stage 2 – which is also called 'lite entry' – is based around 10 questions covering the core operational aspects of running the club. This stage also briefs clubs on the information they will be expected to provide as proof of compliance. The information for Stage 2 can be provided by web links, uploading





*FitCert.eu will give health clubs
much more than a Google or
TrustPilot review could achieve*

documents, social media examples, photos and/or videos. The answers are checked by industry experts who want to be sure that the club is answering correctly and they may ask for further evidence to substantiate answers. This stage is all done online.

Health and fitness clubs that complete Stage 2 will be given a certificate to show that they're now a 'Recognised Club'. This validation will come from EuropeActive, together with the relevant national association (if they're a member). Clubs will also get window stickers to show members and users that they're in the scheme.

All this activity will be tracked through a public register of the participating clubs, so anyone can check and verify what's going on. We positively encourage the clubs to inform their customers that they're going through the FitCert.eu scheme.

Stage 3 is about conformity assessment to achieve the status of being a Compliant Club. There are 10 further questions to answer at this stage and assessments are done by an independent certification body, working with industry experts.

More detail required

This stage involves answering a further set of detailed questions that dig deeper into the operations and management of the facility. Assessors validate the information provided through online interviews and checks.

It's our expectation that as the scheme gets underway, the majority of clubs will initially stay at Stage 3, but we're a competitive sector and some will undoubtedly want to go to Stage 4, which we call the Gold Standard.

This stage is demanding, as clubs need to conform 100 per cent to all standards and the full certification process requires an on-site inspection conducted by the independent certification bodies. However – bearing in mind that the standards have been written by people in the industry – Stage 4 requirements are still entirely achievable.

Feedback from the scheme will help provide the evidence and information to make sure the FitCert.eu standards are really representative of best practice – this is why we have Stage 5 as part of the structure.



The working group is also developing standards for hybrid operations

All standards are subject to review, addition, updating or change as markets develop and Stage 5 will ensure that – whether clubs are being re-validated for either Stage 3 or Stage 4 – they're compliant with the standards prevailing at the time.

In terms of pricing, there will be two tiers of charges, with reduced price to make it fair and achievable for multi-site operators.

Individual rates will be €200 for a single site where the operator is a member of a national association and €300 where they are not.

Multi-site businesses will be assessed by sampling and there's an international standard for determining this which is based on a formula of either 10 per cent of the estate or the square root of the number of sites, whichever is the greater.

Using this calculation, a chain with nine sites would pay to have three sites assessed, while a chain with 1,000 sites would pay for 100. Sites in the sample are still paid for at the €200 or €300 rates.

Upcoming additional standards

The Working Group at CEN has also already developed a further set of standards that cover supervision in clubs – both operationally and for fitness instruction – and these will be live from the middle of 2022.

We also know that new standards will be developed for the club 'hybrid' model and for supervising users exercising in the outdoors. Another area of work coming down the track concerns environmental sustainability where, for example, clubs will be expected

to know and understand their current carbon footprint and to plan for reduction and better sustainability.

Clubs that are in the FitCert.eu scheme will be kept informed on the progress of new standards and changes, so they have a market lead.

Take part in the pilot

To get underway the FitCert.eu scheme has entered a test and trial phase for Stage 1 and Stage 2. This is to help us check our systems and software, and to get the scheme ready for a full launch in April 2022.

We're inviting 500 clubs to come into the test phase and to give us an evaluation of the process and they will be able to advance to Stage 3 and Stage 4 next year.

The response has been incredible, with clubs from Basic Fit, GoFit, Pure Gym, EVO, Fit for Free, Sport City and others, as well as from many hundreds of independent clubs and leisure centres already signed-up, so we're nearly at the target of 500. These clubs will have the maximum marketing opportunity as they will lead the sector forward into the scheme as it's rolled-out.

One thing that's already clear is that the FitCert.eu scheme is going to be successful, and will become the industry's recognised standard.

The expectation is that all clubs will – sooner or later – have to go through at least to Stage 3. It will be the quality standard that will give value to the clubs and much more meaning than a Google or TrustPilot review could achieve. In short, FitCert.eu is a game-changer for the European fitness sector. ●



MAGICLINE



DIGITALIZE YOUR GYM

Europe's leading gym software **FOR FREE**

Market leader in Germany and already used by more than 4,200 customers in Europe.



EMSLOUNGE



Street Smart

With a business model that fuses art, fitness and music, RSG's flagship brand – John Reed – has opened its first location in the UK, as Liz Terry reports

The opening in London's Liverpool Street comes after launches in LA and Rotterdam earlier in 2021



Large cities are a focus of our international planning, as they're the birthplace of new music and art genres and the centre of vibrant societies

Rainer Schaller, CEO, RSG Group

Health club brand John Reed is RSG Group's most high-end offering, sitting atop a vast fitness business that has 6.4 million members, 41,000 employees, 17 brands and 1,000 locations in 48 countries (and counting).

Speaking exclusively to *HCM* recently, RSG Group CEO, Rainer Schaller said: "John Reed is a very special and specific fitness experience for an audience that's inspired by music, art, fitness and lifestyle.

"At all our John Reed locations globally, we link the fitness environment inside the club to the vibe and ethos of the community around it, and all our new sites will also follow in these design footsteps.

"Large cities play a strong role as centres of vibrant societies, as well as being birthplaces of new music and art genres, and so they're a focus of our international planning."

True to this mission, the company is rolling out John Reed aggressively in major cities around the world, with London being the latest location, after openings in Los Angeles in March and Rotterdam in July.



These will be followed by developments in France where – says Schaller – RSG will open three clubs. “One will be in the 16th arrondissement of Paris and be exclusively for women. We’re working with a celebrity on this club and it will also have a large spa,” he explains. “It will set new standards in design, with contemporary African art pieces.”

The second is a 37,000sq ft site in the So Ouest department store – located in Levallois-Perret, near Paris. “This will adopt the theme of the Asian lucky cat and will include a lucky cat store, collaborations with artists to design individual lucky cats, and more,” he explains. The third location will be a John Reed Fitness Music Club in Lyon. All three are under construction.

The company will also start construction soon on a John Reed in Hollywood, LA, its second US club.

New location in London

Situated in Liverpool Street, London, at the heart of the financial district, the new John Reed takes full advantage of its high-profile location, with a retail store at street level and the club ranged around the first floor of the building above.

Few health club operators have aspired to this kind of premium real estate and the decision to go large and visible with the location signals RSG’s

confidence in the brand and its bold intentions for the new London operation – the 40th John Reed to open globally across 10 countries.

The retailing operation is a first for the company and is targeted at passing trade as well as members. “We know our members love to dress up for their workout,” says Schaller, “so for the first time ever we’ve integrated a unique fashion retail space in our flagship London club, creating a new shopping experience.”

Athletic brands such as Lapp by Leomie Anderson and Fabletics are available, as well as gear from RSG brand Gold’s Gym. Customers have the option of “testing the durability, flexibility and quality of the clothing” in a workout area on the retailing floor before purchasing, while products can also be QR scanned and ordered online.

Fitness fusion

John Reed is being promoted as ‘London’s first-ever Fitness Music Club’, with a strapline “More than a gym – it’s a living work of art”. A nightclub vibe is coupled with a backdrop of street art-inspired decor by resident artist Pref (www.HCMMag.com/Pref), while regular live music and DJ sets happen throughout the week and ‘playlist powered’ themed nights bring another dimension to the club (www.hcmmag.com/JohnReed).

“

The London club will be followed by Zurich and Istanbul, as well as France, where RSG will open three different club concepts



Graffiti by resident artist, Pref, adorns the strength training area

The street-level retail space is a first for RSG





© 2021 JOHN REED

The machine strength training zone (left) and luxury changing rooms (below). Members get a free towel service

A John Reed Radio station is also freely available via an app that can be downloaded from the app store.

Schaller says: "John Reed is designed for those who want to train hard and have fun, in an environment where music is the central element."

"We're disrupting the status quo with design – it's a gym you actually want to spend time in."

Launch offer

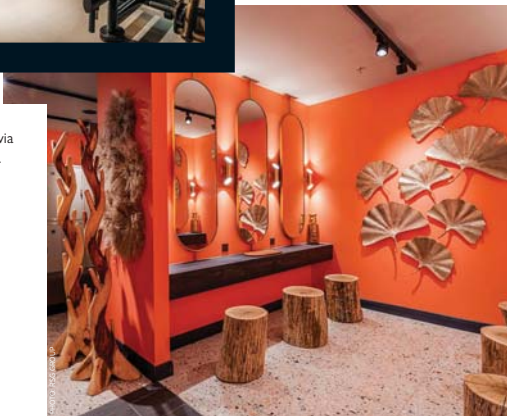
To celebrate the launch of the London club, John Reed partnered with Lapp by Leomie Anderson for a launch party to coincide with London Fashion Week. The collection was choreographed by celebrity dancer, Kash Powell, and guests enjoyed a performance from Hot Hot singer Bree Runway.

The brand has also been warming up the London market with a launch offer based on free trials which give potential members a taster of the John Reed experience and are enabling the company to collect contacts for ongoing membership marketing.

All memberships are then sold in two categories, with one-month rolling contracts at £140/month for a gold membership and £120/month for basic, while annual contracts are £100/month for basic and £120/month for basic flex.

There's a £100 joining fee and a four-week notice period to cancel on the annual contracts, past which time an additional year's membership is triggered. All contracts have a one-off sign-up fee of £100 – unusual for the UK market.

The nightclub ethos doesn't extend to the opening hours, however, which are a wholesome Monday to Friday from 6.00am to 10.00pm, Saturday from 8.00am to 8.00pm and Sunday from 11.00am to 5.00pm.



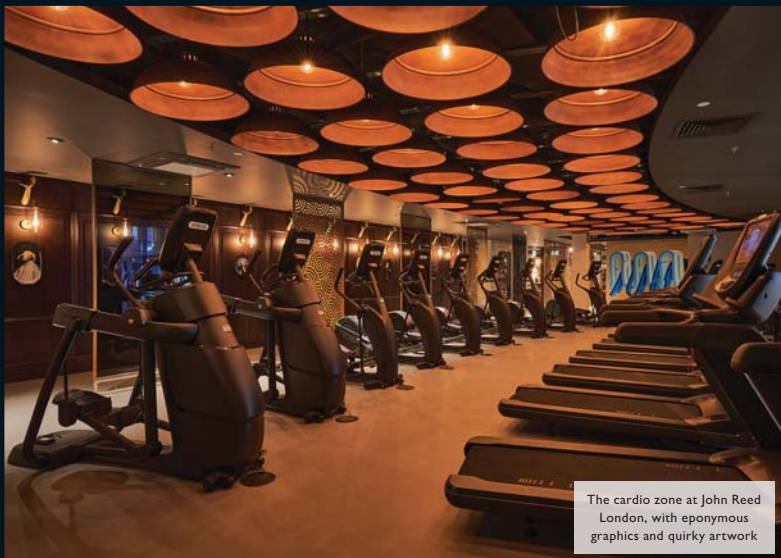
What's the core offer at John Reed London?

John Reed London has specially designed areas dedicated to key areas such as functional training, boxing and cardio, as well as a large free weights section and also machine strength training. The workout mix is completed by studios which are used for both class-based offerings and personal training.

Gym 80 and Precor are among the equipment partners of choice, while Magiline software from Sport Alliance has been installed to run the operation.

All club-based group fitness classes are choreographed in-house by John Reed's 'training conception experts' and accompanied by curated music playlists, while 300 virtual Cyberobics live classes, group workouts and hot yoga classes are also available to members every week.

On the wellness front, the club has a hot yoga studio and a specialist barre studio, as well as separate men's and women's saunas for post-workout relaxation.



The cardio zone at John Reed London, with eponymous graphics and quirky artwork

STYLING: JESSIE CLAPHAM

“A John Reed Radio station is also available via an app, that can be downloaded free from the app store

And the extras?

Every John Reed member is entitled to a free personal training session to explore potential programmes before committing and the club has a team of resident PTs to deliver this service.

Members also get a free towel service, as well as unlimited electrolyte drinks and body composition analysis.

Growth plans for the brand

So what's next for the brand once the current pipeline of clubs has been opened? Schaller says growth is being carefully considered: “We'll continue to look for opportunities to grow the John Reed footprint,” he explains, “however, although there are numerous locations that make sense at this point, we'll take our time so as not to compromise the authenticity of the brand or the experience, just for the sake of growth. We know we have to find exactly the right locations.” ●

THE LAUNCH

The RSG Group hit the health and fitness market hard with a high-profile launch for John Reed in London. Here's what was on offer:

- A choice of four free workouts including boxing, HIIT, Strong Barre and Rocket Yoga, against the backdrop of beats by Berlin DJs, Gunnar Stiller and Juliet Fox
- Post-workout CBD cocktails and mocktails by Intune drinks and cool-down treats from Pan-n-Ice ice cream (www.pan-n-ice.co.uk)
- Live art and the chance to take home exclusive limited edition T-shirts designed by resident graffiti artist, Pref (www.HCMmag.com/Pref)
- Free manicures with designs inspired by the gym's designer decor
- A Brick Lane Vintage Record retail pop-up

WHAT'S HAPPENING STATESIDE?

New research from tech firm Mindbody gives insights into the state of the US health and fitness market, as Lauren McAlister reports

Consumers and wellness brands have been surveyed to understand how the industry has shifted over the past year and a half and more importantly, where it's headed in the months to come. The data gathered has been published in two studies: the *Mindbody 2021 US Consumer Survey* which was compiled from 1,232 responses and the *Mindbody 2021 US Business Study*, which received 1,200 responses.

"For fitness operators, knowledge is innovation waiting to happen," says Mindbody CEO, Josh McCarter. "We hope these data points help inform operators' business strategy, at a time that calls for you to adapt more rapidly than ever."

Consumers are open to trying out something new in their routines

52 per cent of respondents shared that they're more open to new workouts than they were before the pandemic.

In the US, some consumers are reluctant to return

Some consumers are still reluctant to return to the studio. The top five reasons are cited as feeling uncomfortable knowing not all attendees are vaccinated (29 per cent), not being comfortable near others (24 per cent), not being vaccinated yet (23 per cent), feeling too intimidated because they are out of shape/gained weight (19 per cent) and having established a new at-home virtual routine (17 per cent).

Cost and location matter to consumers, but they're not everything

When it comes to choosing a fitness business, US consumers still cite location (37 per cent) and cost (36 per cent) as top considerations – and when motivating people to return, 37 per cent credit lower costs as a winning strategy. Unsurprisingly, cleanliness has also emerged as a key factor.

When it comes to other important factors, consumers also cite atmosphere (30 per cent), the time of classes (26 per cent), the variety of classes (25 per cent) and reputation (23 per cent), as well as instructors (23 per cent) and amenities (22 per cent).



The trend for bookings is upwards

Researchers found that studio bookings are recovering in the US. While the volume continues to vary considerably by state, the overall trend line for bookings is heading toward pre-pandemic levels and once restrictions were lifted or relaxed, state-by-state, pent-up consumer demand was, and continues to be, the driver for recovery.

Offering workout variety is a big advantage

69 per cent of men and 64 per cent of women stated they prefer a fitness studio or gym which have a variety of workout types available.

64% of women say they prefer clubs that offer a variety of workouts

Men are working out more than women, both in-person and virtually

59 per cent of men are attending in-person classes compared to 40 per cent of women in the US. Furthermore, 52 per cent of men are attending in-person classes at boutique studios versus 37 per cent of women.

As we see virtual fitness continue in popularity, men in the US are also attending virtual classes significantly more than women (59 per cent versus 43 per cent of woman).



Operators are adding new services, with the top five being wellness, nutrition, massage therapy, physical therapy and meditation

The industry is clear about the challenges it's facing

Franchise organisations state their top three obstacles to growth as learning how to more effectively optimise their business (45 per cent), getting new/more customers (45 per cent), and 'keeping, engaging and retaining existing customers (43 per cent).

Similarly, non-franchise organisations reported that their largest roadblocks are getting new/more customers (54 per cent), learning how to more effectively optimise their business (42 per cent) and optimising their use of technology and software (39 per cent).

Reinstating growth is a vital part of recovery

31 per cent of business owners said their goal is to maintain the business for the foreseeable future and 44 per cent say they're ready to start growing again.

Diversifying services is key

88 per cent of fitness businesses have already added something besides fitness classes or training sessions to their roster of services. The top five supplemental services are wellness (45 per cent), nutrition (40 per cent), massage therapy (36 per cent), physical therapy (35 per cent) and meditation (31 per cent).

31 per cent of health clubs have added meditation to their roster of services

Technology continues to become more fundamental to success

The majority of franchise and non-franchise businesses have implemented, or plan to implement the following tech: livestreaming, video on demand, custom mobile apps and AI chatbots.

Drilling into the numbers (Table 1) shows a difference of approach to technology between non-franchise and franchise operators, with a total of 86 per cent of non-franchise operators using or planning to use livestreaming and a higher number – 92 per cent of franchise operators going down this road.

Video on demand is also more popular with franchise businesses, with 85 per cent of non-franchise operators using or planning to use it, vs 94 per cent of franchise operators.

The opposite is true of custom mobile apps, with 94 per cent of non-franchise operators using or planning to use them vs 86 per cent of franchise operators.

The adoption of AI is further behind the curve, showing the potential for growth in this area. Again franchises showed greater interest, with only 77 per cent of non-franchise operators saying they are using or planning to use AI chatbots, against 86 per cent of franchise owners. ●

TABLE 1

What technology do US health and fitness operators plan to use?

Livestreaming

Non-franchise organisation



Franchise organisation



Video on demand

Non-franchise organisation



Franchise organisation



AI chatbots

Non-franchise organisation



Franchise organisation

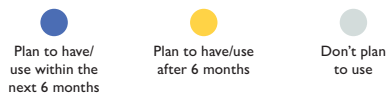


Custom mobile app

Non-franchise organisation



Franchise organisation





The ties that existed between physical training and healthcare have been cut and healthcare and fitness have become separate industries. This has to change

Physical trainers as health workers

Florence Nightingale played an important role in the fitness industry and if she were still with us, she'd certainly be campaigning for fitness trainers to be fully involved in combating the effects of lockdown, says Muir Gray

Florence was horrified at the state of health of British soldiers in Crimea, where more died of the effects of their poor conditioning than from bullets. After the war she took action and 12 "instructors" – at that time primarily focused on how to shoot and fight – were sent to Oxford.

They were sent for two reasons, the first was that Regius Professor of Medicine, Sir Henry Acland, had made it clear he was very willing to help the army improve the health and wellbeing of the soldiers. The second, more important reason, was that one of the world's first gymnasiums of the modern era was based in Oxford.

This gymnasium was run by a Scotsman called Robert McLaren, who himself had studied physical training in Paris and brought fencing and a range of gymnastic opportunities such as rings to the Oxford undergraduates. The building can still be seen today



Muir Gray

at the corner of Blue Boar Street and Alfred Street and is quite reminiscent of the German Gymnasium in London's Kings Cross, with its solid brick construction.

McLaren went on to fund one of Oxford's best known schools – Summerfields – as well as developing the fitness industry in Oxford in the 1860s.

The 12 instructors, renamed the 12 Apostles, went back to the army after their training and embarked on a mission to improve the health, wellbeing and conditioning of British soldiers.

The rise of the PTI

Physical training instructors – or PTIs as they were also called – found a place outside the army when their days in service were over and physical training became a key part of healthcare in the 19th century, in part because there were so few effective medical interventions available.



The NHS needs 55,000 PTs to help people with long-term conditions

In the 20th and 21st centuries the number of effective medical interventions available has increased astonishingly – in the last 50 years alone we've seen transplantation, hip replacement and chemotherapy, to name but three.

However, important though these are, there's an increasing recognition that everyone with a long-term condition needs to receive activity therapy as well as drug, operative or psychological therapy – a recognition epitomised in the 2015 report from the Academy of the Medical Royal Colleges called *Exercise, The Miracle Cure* (www.HCMmag.com/AOMRC).

But today, the ties that existed between physical training and healthcare have been cut and healthcare and fitness have become separate industries – at least in the UK – although the pattern is different in other countries, notably Germany, where there remains greater integration.

Today the NHS desperately needs 55,000 trainers to help people deal with the effects of long-term conditions – particularly those who don't reach the specialist NHS rehabilitation services – probably about 12 million people in all. There just aren't

enough physiotherapists and health professionals in the NHS to reach out with support.

The Living Longer Better Programme (www.livelongerbetter.uk) is now working with 20 branches of Sport England via activity partnerships and the experience of people from the health service when meeting trainers or people with Sport Science degrees is often one of surprise, because their culture is so close to that of clinicians. A simple and wide definition of coaching is, "to close the gap between performance and potential" – exactly the same as the mission of rehabilitation.

What's needed now is to mobilise 55,000 trainers and deploy their commitment, skills and experience to resolve individual long-term conditions, including Long-COVID and the increasing challenge of multi-morbidity, but how is this to be done?

Recruiting trainers

One of the lessons of the pandemic has been that when we use the term 'resources' we need to think of more than money. Furthermore, lack of money is not the principal constraint and the health service is now ▶



We need to ask the Department of Health and Social Care to meet with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport – perhaps somewhere near the statue of Florence Nightingale on Pall Mall – and reach agreement that the time is absolutely right for the rebirth of the physical trainer as a health worker, just as Florence Nightingale planned, predicted and produced



► clear that a much more important constraint is the time available to the workforce, as there are not thousands or even hundreds of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, exercise physiologists and sports and exercise medicine doctors waiting to be employed.

A second constraint is space and although much attention has been paid to the lack of space in intensive care, Helen Salisbury, a highly respected GP who writes weekly in the British Medical Journal, pointed out that even without social distancing the amount of space in health centres is also very limited.

For physical trainers, however, this is not a major issue. They're used to finding a village hall, church hall or some other space to work in and are increasingly confident about managing digital sessions in groups, as well as delivering face-to-face interactions with individuals who could benefit from closing the gap between potential and performance.

Money sometimes remains an issue, but there's a potential solution to this in England in the form of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS), under which NHS England is providing funding for 26,000 new roles to create bespoke multi-disciplinary teams, (www.england.nhs.uk/gp/expanding-our-workforce).

Reducing the pressure

Hospital services will be under intense pressure in the next few years, not only meeting new needs but also coping with a backlog of cancer treatment and elective surgery.

This, in turn, will increase pressure on primary care services, where health professionals are already coping with the implications of social distancing, the loss of staff who are self-isolating and the increasing tension of people seeking help who tend to take their frustration out on primary care staff, rather than on those who are responsible.

Nightingale
commissioned the
training of the first
PTs to support



Most PTs are not merely focused on helping 'young people in lycra'



A simple and wide definition of coaching is “to close the gap between performance and potential”, and that is exactly the same as the mission of rehabilitation

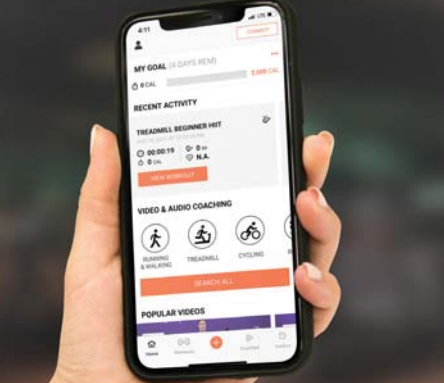
ARRS was introduced to help primary care teams recruit key staff such as physiotherapists, nurses and podiatrists, but although health and wellbeing coaches are on the list, there's no mention of trainers, in spite of the fact that they could make a contribution by supporting people whose problems have been increased by the pandemic.

There are many trainers who have additional qualifications in supporting people with things such as Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease and other common causes and consequences of both disease and inactivity.

ARRS funding will be administered by The Primary Care Networks, of which around 1,200 are already in place. They're well organised because they relate to local communities and of course understand the social prescribing opportunities that are available in local gyms and fitness centres, which is all hopeful.

We must ensure they understand the terrific contributions trainers could make and we also need NHS England to understand that most trainers are not fully focused on 'young people in lycra', with many having a longstanding commitment to supporting people with their health improvement and the skills and competence required to make a difference.

We need to ask the Department of Health and Social Care to meet with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport – perhaps somewhere near the statue of Florence Nightingale on Pall Mall – and reach agreement that the time is absolutely right for the rebirth of the physical trainer as a health worker, just as Florence Nightingale planned, predicted and produced. ●



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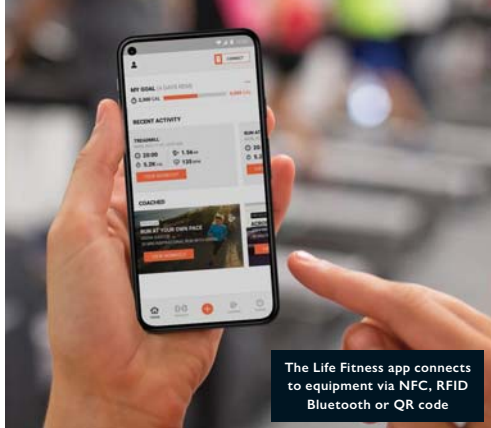


PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

Life Fitness has launched a new mobile app, called Life Fitness Connect, to provide the ultimate workout experience

While exercisers often seek new ways to get the most out of their workouts, operators want to do the same with their investments; introducing Life Fitness Connect, a free-to-download mobile app for Apple and Android devices designed to help members maximise their experience using Life Fitness and Cybex equipment.

Designed specifically around the needs of the user, Life Fitness Connect is easy to use and requires no training or setup. It connects to equipment via NFC, RFID, Bluetooth or QR codes, while the in-app scanner allows exercisers to scan QR codes on Life Fitness equipment to log in or see videos explaining correct technique, alternative exercises and workout options.

Its advanced workout tracking capabilities allow users to sync the

data with compatible wearables and heart rate monitors to track workouts in one place, while access to on-demand classes helps exercisers stay motivated on and off Life Fitness and Cybex equipment.

"Consumers want variety in their fitness routines, with access to compelling and personalised classes and seamless connectivity that allows them to take their workouts anywhere," says Dan Wille, global vice president of marketing and product development at Life Fitness.

"With Life Fitness Connect, we're bringing the workout to the exerciser – whether in the gym or at home – with easy-to-use tracking features that sync with equipment and wearables and a large library of on-demand and audio coaching classes to keep workouts fresh and exciting," he says.

To get the most out of their workouts, premium subscribers



PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

With Life Fitness Connect, we're bringing the workout to the exerciser and keeping workouts fresh and exciting

Dan Wille, Life Fitness

can also choose from a range of Life Fitness On Demand studio-style classes and adaptive audio coaching classes. Built with PEAR (www.pearsports.com), the app's premium adaptive audio coaching classes utilise heart rate-based training and users' biometric data to adjust workout cues in real-time. Users also have the option of adding custom music playlists or selecting symbiotic music from the app during any workout.

● For more information, visit www.lifefitness.co.uk and search for Life Fitness Connect

Get Started with Life Fitness Connect

- On-demand and adaptive audio coaching classes are available as a premium subscription service for £5.99 per month
- New users can claim a free 14-day trial with access to premium on-demand classes by downloading and registering for the app



PHOTO CHRIS RONDEAU/PLANET FITNESS

Rondeau says investors can remain confident in the future of clubs

Planet Fitness has
2,193 locations
across five countries

PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS

CHRIS RONDEAU

'People are choosing bricks and mortar, and they're coming back faster than we've ever seen.' The CEO of Planet Fitness speaks to Kate Cracknell

Across the US, 22% of gyms have closed permanently. I'm thrilled to say that we haven't had one permanent closure or bankruptcy

“All the winds are blowing in the right direction and the sails are wide open,” says Planet Fitness CEO Chris Rondeau. It's a fair summary of the franchise operator's bounceback from COVID lockdowns, with its Q3 2021 results making for impressive reading.

Planet Fitness ended the third quarter with total membership of more than 15 million – 97 per cent of its pre-pandemic high of 15.5 million and a performance Rondeau says represents “the highest sequential net member growth of any third quarter in company history”.

Meanwhile, quarterly revenues reached US\$154.3m, up 46.4 per cent on the same period in 2020, with the portfolio reaching 2,193 locations across five countries.

This performance led Planet Fitness to raise its outlook for the full year ending 31 December 2021, forecasting revenues of US\$570m–US\$580m and adjusted EBITDA of US\$210m–US\$220m – all assuming no significant worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic as result of variants such as Omicron.

Shares hit an all-time high, as investors continue to favour wellness investment, although the situation with Omicron has subsequently led to adjustments.



We're seeing around 40% of our joiners being first-time gym members, which is slightly higher than the norm in more recent years

Investor relations

The message to investors is one of confidence, says Rondeau: "It's about reassuring investors that – in spite of home fitness – people are coming back to gyms as we move to the other side of this.

"People want to be around people," he says, "the variety and quality you get in a true fitness centre is unparalleled and does not equate to anything at home. And with regards to the economy, the value of Planet Fitness is that people can afford it."

With all US locations now re-open, Rondeau's predictions are now being borne out across the estate: "We actually picked up acceleration in the second quarter: it was the best second quarter in our history, with twice the net member growth of Q2 of 2019 and more member growth than the first quarter. That never happens," he says.

And the positive momentum is being seen across the board, not just in new clubs that are ramping up. "Generally, our mature stores [clubs] add a lot of members in the first quarter, even through April, but really for the second and third quarters they can actually pull backwards a bit," he says. "Not so post-lockdown: "We saw mature locations gaining members even in the third quarter, which never happens."

He adds: "It reinforces what we had explained was going to happen, and it continued to build confidence in the model, the brand and the future of Planet Fitness in the months and years ahead."

If anything, Rondeau now sees the opportunity today as being even bigger than pre-COVID: "For decades, we've all been told we have to exercise and take better care of our health, but unfortunately too many people ignored it. Coming out of the COVID lockdowns, as tragic as it was, people are walking away with a heightened appreciation of the importance of taking better care of themselves.

"This wellness boom will continue to gain traction – I believe it's a trend that will last for many years – and fitness is part of that.



Home fitness can't match what's on offer in a quality club says Rondeau

"And people are choosing bricks and mortar businesses. They're coming back faster than we've ever seen. Gen Zs are joining faster than we've ever seen. We're stronger now on the other side of the lockdowns."

Membership make-up

Diving deeper into membership growth, Rondeau explains: "We're seeing around 40 per cent of our joiners being first-time gym members, which is slightly higher than the norm in more recent years: in 2017, 2018 and 2019 it was sometimes as low as 35-36 per cent.

"But the thing that's really encouraging is that we're seeing re-joins at higher levels than we've ever experienced – people who've been members in the past and who have come back to us.

"Normally about 20 per cent of the people we sign up are re-joining. Right now, it's 30 per cent. People are coming back faster than we've ever seen.



PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS

"Even if you just look at the 2020 cancellations – the people who cancelled in the first year of COVID – the percentage that have come back this year is slightly higher than the 2018 cancels who joined in 2019."

Impact of free app content

The audience for Planet Fitness is also growing significantly, partly thanks to its app. The company made free workout content available to members and non-members throughout lockdown to engage more potential members and there's still some free content on offer. "It's been a way of introducing people to fitness and to the brand, and hopefully get them to feel confident to come in and try to exercise in the clubs," says Rondeau.

Planet Fitness has also launched PF+, a full digital subscription charged at US\$5.99 a month. "We have a lot of app users who are non-members and former members, and what's been interesting is that about

40 per cent of PF+ subscribers have gone on to buy a club membership," says Rondeau. "It's really turned into a gateway, which is great because there's only so much you can say in a 30-second commercial!"

"This tech didn't exist for us two or three years ago, so it's interesting to think about this new world and how we leverage digital to expose the brand to more people, and hopefully drive more acquisition for the clubs."

Changing behaviours

"We've also definitely seen the digital world integrating into the clubs beyond digital workouts," he says. "For example, if you look at 2019, about 30–35 per cent of our join-ups were done digitally and mostly through our website. Now it's about 70 per cent and it's done via the app as well as via the website. People are also using the crowd meter in our app to adjust their workout schedules, too, so they can avoid crowds in the club."



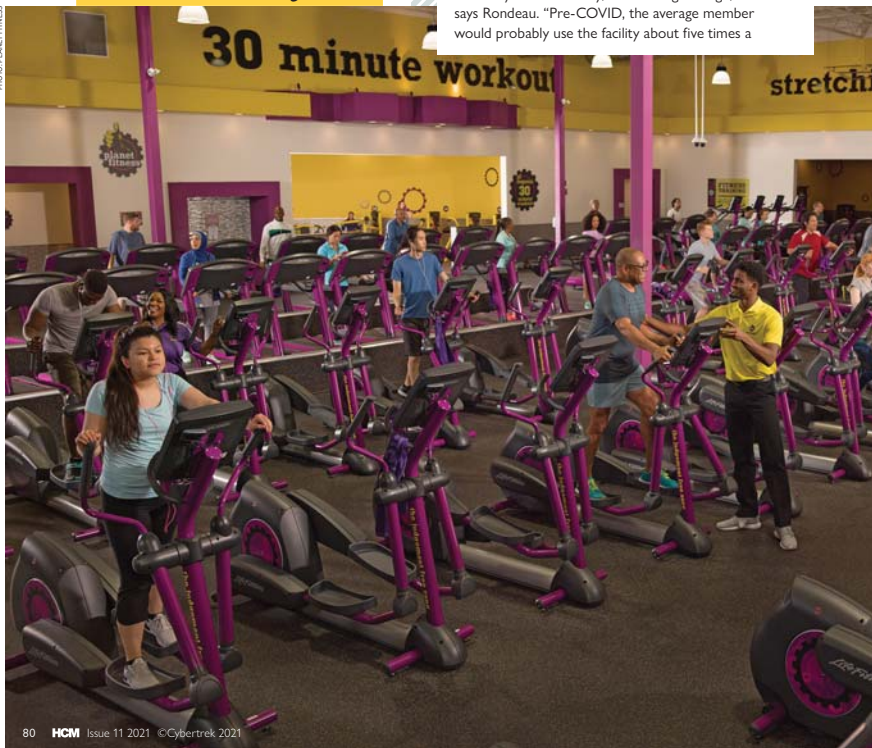
People will increasingly adopt digital as a way to interact with physical clubs, which means we can be in contact wherever they are

"Generally, I think people will increasingly adopt digital as a way to interact with physical clubs, which means we can be in contact wherever they are. That's really interesting and something we've never had before, and it's one of my most interesting learnings from COVID so far: the pandemic has accelerated our digital focus by five to 10 years."

The profile of members also makes digital an invaluable addition for Planet Fitness. "Forty per cent of our members have never gone to a gym before in their entire lives, so they don't know where to start. It's one of the big barriers to giving fitness a try, and it's why we already offer free training in our clubs. With digital, we're able to offer even more, and at any time of the day."

And what about in-club? Are people's behaviours changing in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdowns? "We're seeing people using the facility slightly more than they did historically, which is a good sign," says Rondeau. "Pre-COVID, the average member would probably use the facility about five times a

PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS



month. Now it's about six, which – when you scale it up over 15 million members – is significant.”

Meanwhile, Black Card – Planet Fitness's premium membership, which includes additional services and guest passes – is now held by 62.5 per cent of members, “up slightly from the same period last year”.

Strength of the system

On the point of membership bounceback, Rondeau clarifies: “If you look at a per-site basis, membership is not quite back to pre-pandemic levels, but we've opened more locations – 130 in 2020 – and we're on track to open between 110 and 120 in 2021.”

That might be fewer openings than usual – “put 2020 and 2021 together and it's almost a normal year”, he says – but interestingly, more than 95 per cent of the franchises sold in 2020 went to existing franchisees.

And their confidence seems well placed. Rondeau explains: “Across the US, 22 per cent of all gyms closed permanently as a result of COVID. Within the Planet Fitness system, I'm extremely thrilled to say that, out of all our franchisees, we didn't have one permanent closure or bankruptcy. We didn't lose a single one.”

“I think it's testament to the brand, the strength of our model and the strength of our franchisees. If this

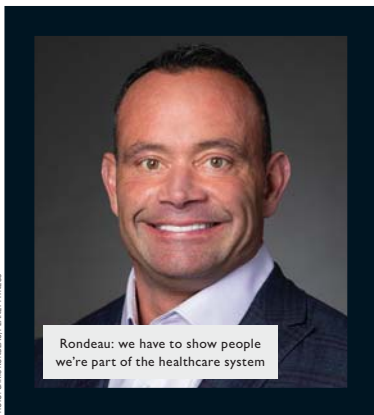


PHOTO: CHRIS RONDEAU/PLANET FITNESS

Rondeau: we have to show people we're part of the healthcare system

had happened 10 years ago, I'm not sure we could have weathered it quite as well as we did, but we've been franchising for almost 20 years' now. Ours is a strong group of sophisticated franchisees who could weather a storm like this and get to the other side.”

They weren't left to battle through it alone: “We have an independent franchise council who we worked with weekly, going through the obstacles people were having and putting together playbooks. We also had monthly Zoom calls with franchisees, because in some states, they were already operating and had a lot of learnings we could redirect to people in the rest of the system.”

“And then financially, we weren't charging any royalties. We also gave franchisees a one-year extension on new site development commitments and an 18-month extension on their re-equip schedule: we're normally pretty adamant that stores are re-equipped every five to seven years.”

“In actual fact, our franchisees are back to opening locations ahead of schedule and are re-equipping their clubs ahead of their obligations. The business is back and the memberships are coming through, so franchisees are confident to begin to get back to previous growth plans.”

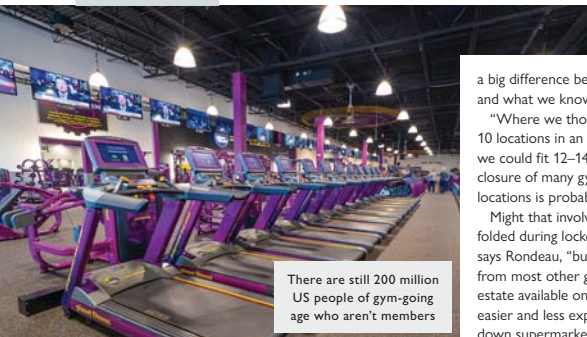
More growth to come

So how big can Planet Fitness get? “Pre-COVID, all our market analysis indicated the domestic potential here in the US to be 4,000 units. Of that, over 3,000 are already committed. Over 1,000 are sold to our current franchisees for development, on top of the 2,200 stores we already have open.”

“But we sold a lot of area development agreements seven or eight years ago, and there's



The domestic potential for Planet Fitness sites is 'at least 4,000'



There are still 200 million US people of gym-going age who aren't members

a big difference between what we thought then and what we know from the data today.

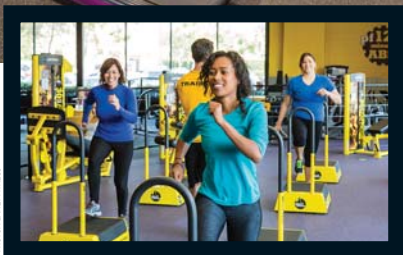
"Where we thought there might be demand for 10 locations in an area, for example, we now know we could fit 12–14 – especially with the recent closure of many gyms in the US – so I think 4,000 locations is probably our floor and not the ceiling."

Might that involve taking over clubs that have folded during lockdown? "We do that occasionally," says Rondeau, "but our model is so different from most other gyms and there's so much real estate available on the market, most times it's easier and less expensive to go into a closed-down supermarket and re-open it as a gym than to take on an existing club and try to convert it."

And how about internationally, with Planet Fitness already present in Canada, Mexico, Panama and Australia? What plans are there for international growth? "We're looking to build up in those countries and maybe, from there, go to Asia," he says. "However, with the US potential as big as it is, we don't want to get distracted and take our eye off the ball here. The US will continue to be our main focus."

"And we have a lot of work to do. As great as it is to have 15 million members, there are still 200 million people in the US who are of age to join a gym but haven't."

PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS



A JUDGEMENT-FREE MODEL

When Planet Fitness was founded by brothers Michael and Marc Grondahl in 1992, it looked like a fairly typical gym: heavy free weights, juice bars, group exercise classes, daycare and so on – "a place where the fit got fitter".

In 1993, the Grondahl brothers hired Chris Rondeau to work on the front desk, and the three quickly identified an opportunity to serve a much larger segment of the population.

Together they completely changed the gym environment, both in its attitude and its format.

The result was the Judgement Free Zone – a non-intimidating model with an emphasis on the cardio, circuit training and light free weights they felt first-timers and casual gym-goers actually wanted.

Out went group exercise, daycare and heavy weights – and with it, the intimidating behaviours of muscle-bound members in the free weights zone. In came even more space for cardio equipment, meaning no time limits had to be imposed on popular equipment.

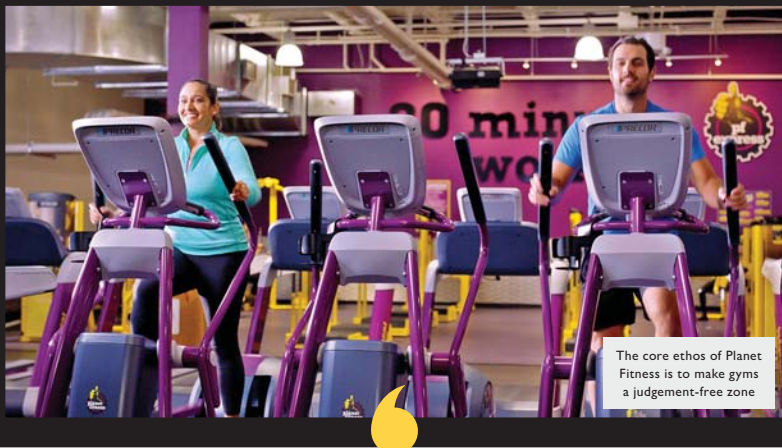
"We believe anyone, of any fitness level, should feel accepted and respected when they walk into a gym," says Rondeau. "Our non-intimidating, welcoming environment fosters a sense of community among all members and encourages them to work toward their health and fitness goals – no matter how big or how small."

But it wasn't just about cutting away the fear factor around gyms. Standard membership fees were also cut to

US\$10 a month, so joining a gym genuinely became an option for all.

Ultimately a second membership option was added – the PF Black Card, now priced at US\$22.99 a month – that offers benefits such as reciprocal membership, massage chairs and the option to bring a guest for free at any time. The response was so strong, with memberships rising dramatically, that the decision was made to franchise the business.

Today, Planet Fitness has become one of the largest and fastest-growing franchisors and gym operators in the US, by number of members and locations, with franchisees in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as Puerto Rico, Canada, Panama, Mexico and Australia – in total, around 2,200 locations at the time of writing.



The core ethos of Planet Fitness is to make gyms a judgement-free zone

Members are coming back faster than we've ever seen. Normally about 20% of the people we sign up are re-joining. Right now, it's 30%

A vital need for advocacy

This observation brings Rondeau to what he identifies as his biggest learning from the pandemic so far: "That the industry needs to do a lot more work around advocacy. We're so close to our work, we probably didn't realise the rest of the world looked at us as a vanity business rather than a health business.

"That came to light at the start of the pandemic, because when the shutdowns began, we were lumped in with hospitality and leisure – casinos and restaurants and nightclubs.

"If people had really understood what we do as an industry, things might have been different. Because let's face it, the crux of the problem with COVID-19 is that too many people were out of shape and not taking care of their health. When you look at who was affected most, it was the obese, the overweight and those with pre-existing conditions.

"Whether it's COVID or another illness, your ability to fight it – the strength of your immune system – comes from working out and taking better care of your health. But we had never really pushed people to understand that the gym industry is preventative healthcare. What we really do is make people's hearts healthier, help them take

better care of their obesity, help them lose weight, reduce stress and anxiety and sleep better.

"Going forward, the industry has to push the world to understand what we do – to hire lobbyists to drive advocacy in the future – as well as focusing even more on mental health.

"I'd like to make all this part of my legacy, making sure the government – and everybody else – see us as part of the healthcare delivery system, not just as a dumbbell gym. I'm in pretty close contact now with the American Heart Association and other health organisations here in the US, which pre-COVID I was never able to do," he says.

"With every new statistic showing the relationship between being severely ill or dying from COVID and the condition of your health going into it... people are listening. The door is open to talk to them, but people have short memories and that door might close again in a couple of years, so I believe the time is now to get a foot in the door and have them listen.

"So I'll continue to support my franchisees to open more stores – democratising fitness and making it more accessible to more people and getting more people off the couch. But I also want to make sure everyone realises what this industry really means for people." ●

Getting UPGRADED

PART
ONE

PHOTO: CAUDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

The pandemic brought business as we knew it to a standstill. But not for long. Software companies were quick to provide solutions to help clubs adapt and now these are here to stay. Suppliers tell HCM how the pandemic is changing the industry for the better

3 The pandemic forced the hand of a lot of operators who had previously thought their members would not like booking online



PHOTO: EZRUNNER

Shez Namooya EZRunner

The pandemic forced numerous brands to fast forward their digital/on-demand programs.

The biggest opportunity the pandemic created – if I could describe it like this – was the mindset of ‘what have you got to lose’ for health clubs. The one thing I have always read is that ‘it’s better to fail than to never try’. Even when you fail, you learn.

The pandemic forced the hand of a lot of operators who thought their members would not like booking online, or would not be comfortable booking their swimming lanes or classes. Certain brands had already made their mind up that their membership base would not be comfortable using apps. The

key is, you don’t really know until you try.

Brands would say members preferred interacting with staff. While that may be true on some level, for customers, managing their gym use online proved far more convenient. What brands discovered was that member satisfaction increased. Members were now in control of when they could book certain activities, book swimming lanes and be almost guaranteed a great experience as clubs would use their software to control the capacity.

Think about how you watch TV, you choose what you want when you want – very much the Netflix generation – convenient and simple. As a business we saw a huge demand for more options online. It showed that you do not lose the human interaction.

There's been a noticeable uplift in features that enable a fully contactless experience

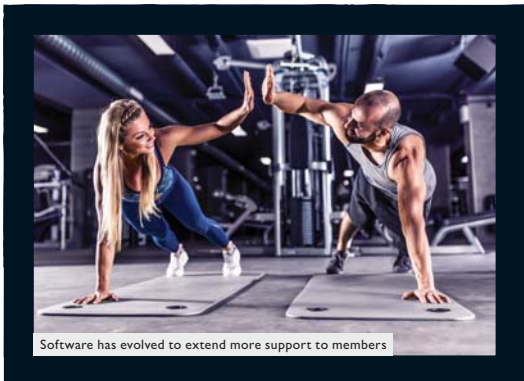


PHOTO: PREMIER SOFTWARE

Oliver Cahill
Premier Software

The pandemic has changed the way we act, the way we interact and more importantly, the way we engage in a virtual world and gym software has had to transition quickly to meet the need for a socially distanced experience.

In a world where there is still uncertainty, Core's features flex to a business's needs and we are now seeing new, flexible memberships, such as

pay-as-you-go, as well as an increase in data streaming to ensure marketing is closely aligned to the user experience.

There has also been a noticeable uplift in features that enable a fully contactless experience, such as fast track entry and access control for hygiene safety and the ability to track and trace members who utilise the facilities.

The ability to complete medical consultations prior to arrival and the use of digital signatures support this contactless experience.

We're seeing a consistent decrease in the number of weekly live classes being streamed

Conor O'Loughlin
Glofox

In the past eighteen months we've seen an overall 25 per cent increase in on-demand content being consumed. Live online classes have been essential to maintain member engagements throughout lockdowns. However, we're seeing a consistent decrease in the number of weekly live classes being streamed (down to 6 per cent of weekly classes held globally). This indicates that operators see the importance of complementing their in-person experience with on-demand content that members can consume at their own convenience.

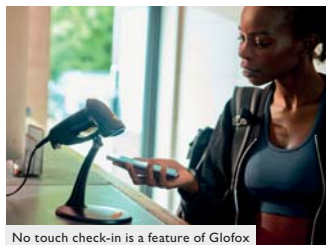


PHOTO: GLOFOX

Operationally, the pandemic has heightened the importance of capacity management solutions and no-touch check-in tools. We've also seen a shift in how operators are looking for alternative ways to engage and ultimately other ways to monetise their member base, for example, personal training and membership add-ons such as nutrition.



The right software solution enables the extension of brand reach beyond the physical walls of a facility



PHOTO: FISIKAL

Emma Excell

Fisikal

Digital solutions have become the main differentiator in the market. Operators now need to successfully integrate a digital offer and deliver an out-of-club experience on a par with an in-club experience.

Access to branded, community-focused fitness content anytime, anywhere is the new baseline in consumer expectation and as operators have started to generate revenue again, an ability to instantly access operational and financial performance data has been critical to business recovery.

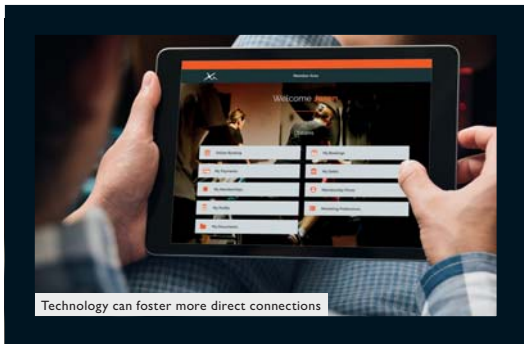
The right software solution enables the extension of brand reach beyond the physical walls of a facility to keep members connected directly to a brand's support, culture, services and community at just the touch of a button. This extended, wraparound provision helps operators justify membership fees despite physical access restrictions, maintaining a valuable income stream.

Meanwhile, the wider introduction of digital functionalities such as live streaming, virtual PT sessions, online marketplaces, personalised messaging via a dedicated in-app channel, all ensure members stay connected, unrestricted by location and are an absolute must-have for any gym, studio or operator.



Offering digital services helps clubs to better justify their member fees

Dual or hybrid membership and streaming solutions are clearly part of the future now



Penny Southwood

Xn Leisure

One of the biggest shifts across the population over the last 18 months is the adoption of technology with a further focus on self-service and agility. The positive news is that the fitness industry has definitely followed this path.

Like everyone, I've been able to reflect on my personal priorities, carbon footprint

and how I spend my spare time. Dual or hybrid membership and streaming solutions are clearly part of the future now that most gym-goers have been able to create setup at home. My team has been able to adapt quickly, allowing our partners to offer streaming services.

Moving forward, I can also see that health and wellbeing, community and direct connections with loved ones will be bigger than ever.

There's been an evolution towards a more enhanced holistic health offering, with the support of technology

Hugo Braam

Virtuagym

An exciting shift is at the heart of more hybrid approaches to fitness that seamlessly blend the physical and the digital.

One notable change in this area is in the use of online video workouts. Fitness providers can give their clients the flexibility to work out when, where and how they want. This improves engagement and positively impacts retention.

Another evolution has been towards a more enhanced holistic health offering. Where before a fitness business would focus on physical training, with the support of technology, clubs can now relatively easily add services such as meditation, sleep



tracking and nutrition coaching, all integrated into one seamless mobile app experience.

The final advancement is around the approach to wearable technology, which has become integral to our gym experiences. Wearables can now be easily synced with club fitness apps, enabling instructors to provide far more personalised training and content. Being able to easily monitor a client's health provides a far more complete perspective, informing realistic goals and the strategies to reach them.

Digital transformation is consumer-led and we need to exceed customer expectations for seamless convenient interactions

Peter Croft

Perfect Gym

The digital transformation that we see currently taking place in the fitness industry is an acceleration of existing trends.

We've observed that clubs that dropped contact-based access control and fully committed to using the mobile app for contactless entry saw member engagement go up to 100 per cent, resulting in more streamlined customer communication through push notifications.

By adopting this feature, clubs' important messages are not only being

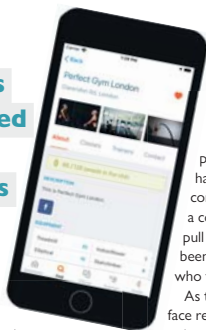
Communicating via an app can greatly boost customer engagement

delivered but also read by their members at higher rates.

When operating during the pandemic, one hurdle the industry had to overcome was efficient contact tracing. The ability to run a contact tracing report that can pull data of all members who have been at the facility with someone who tested positive was a must.

As the industry continues to face restrictions, mass freeze and capacity management allow owners to quickly react, freezing all memberships at once or remotely restricting both class and facility capacity.

Digital transformation is consumer-led and we need to meet, if not exceed customer expectations for seamless and convenient interactions. We're excited to see the direction digital transformation takes the fitness industry and to support our customers as they evolve their digital offerings and use of software.



We're able to rapidly deploy third party services, enabling members to connect to new digital experiences via apps

Michelle Ripley

Evolution Wellness Solutions

The pandemic hit shortly after work began on building mobile apps for our clients, Celebrity Fitness and Fitness First, dramatically changing the game. Suddenly, having a user mobile app to facilitate a safe return to the gym became critical.

Having a very robust platform such as Circuit allowed us to significantly fast-track the development build for these apps, catering to pandemic-related needs such as class bookings and gym floor access, and providing information such as which clubs were affected by lockdowns.

Instead of having to manage different platforms for different purposes across the value chain, we were able to leverage the benefits of our single interface to

effectively support end-to-end membership administration and management.

Because Circuit has been built for scale, besides ensuring the digital hygiene factors were in place for a new operating model for clubs, we were also able to rapidly deploy third party services, enabling members to connect to new digital experiences via the apps, such as virtual classes and virtual PT.

We've created a one stop shop platform for our clients and their members, both in-person and online, and brought all the data into one central place, allowing all teams – whether in-club or part of the support function – to understand behaviours and personalise communications and services to members' needs.

Fast forwarding, we want to further build on our omnichannel communications, keeping all types of users connected.



PHOTO: QUOOX

A giant sequoia grove is a new Quoox initiative for the environment

Jessica Pitts-Brennan

Quoox

During a stressful 18-months, Quoox customers have understood the need for a cohesive approach towards content delivery, with our member microsite, Fitness Hub, providing a central place where members could access all their wellbeing services.

While many facilities found themselves needing to subscribe to multiple software products, Quoox's unified approach, along with our clients having their own curated Fitflex video channel and Xrcize on-demand programs as part of our core platform, provided a smooth transition for members between different methods of program consumption.

Recent times should have caused pause for every provider in our industry, along with a renewed evaluation of our collective purpose and responsibilities. For Quoox, this has included revising



We've revised our core product pricing to make it accessible to all

our core product pricing to make it accessible to all – providing tools and resources to help our customers thrive – and a longer-term commitment to the environment, with the planting of a giant sequoia grove in Abergavenny, Wales.

We are proud of the resilience that our clients have shown through their hard work and stamina in traversing a difficult time, and it is now that they will start to reap the rewards for their efforts.



Members now tend to prefer self-service opportunities and digital membership signings via the website or app

Maike Kumstel

Magiline

The pandemic accelerated the evolution of technology and digitalisation in our industry. The momentum towards a much more digitalised and connected workout environment was already building – COVID-19 just forced us to move more quickly.

We found that even studios and clubs that hesitated to provide online offerings in the beginning, quickly appreciated the fact we integrated solutions to provide virtual classes and keep revenue streams flowing.

Also, it became state-of-the-art to offer flexible workout opportunities – whether in the gym, at home or on the go. The usage of our MySports app, which gives operators the chance to provide their members with individual on-demand workouts, increased dramatically during the lockdown and will

stay popular in the future. The app as the digital extension of gyms also serves as an additional communication channel to build a community and loyal member base.

We also noticed a change in members' booking and purchasing behaviour. They now tend to prefer self-service opportunities and digital membership signings via the website or app. This is why a professional online presence that stands out is increasing in importance. Especially because gyms nowadays need to compete in a market that also includes players such as Apple, Google and Peleton with their fitness offerings.

In order to support our customers with this challenge, we developed easy-to-implement, professional and completely customisable landing pages that are fully integrated with our gym management software and make lead generation and online conversions easier than ever.





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As we wrap up 2021,
flooring suppliers share their
most exciting projects and
launches from the past year

FIVE STAR FLOORING

Physical Company
installed specialist flooring
at Rise Bournemouth

Paul Farrell
Physical Company
Project: Rise, Bournemouth
www.physicalcompany.co.uk



When the founders of new studio brand, Rise (R1SE), set out to bring a London-style boutique experience to England's south coast, they knew they needed a premium fit-out.

Channelling their backgrounds in nightclubs and hospitality, the team created an attention-grabbing combination of lighting, music and design that was unique to the Bournemouth marketplace – then approached Physical Company and Technogym for a fit-out to match the high expectations already being set by the new brand.

Physical Company was appointed specifically as the flooring expert and handed a brief to install functional, easy-to-maintain flooring that also addressed noise concerns: it was important that activities in the small, high-end upstairs gym didn't drown out the ground floor café and studio space.

The solution was to first install a layer of rubber shock pad across the weights and functional training areas. On top of this came sound- and shock-absorbing Ecore smash tiles in the weights area and in the functional zone, a 1.5m x 11m area of custom turf with the company logo fully woven in. Additionally, four Ziva landing pads – heavy-duty portable pads designed to absorb

the impact of weights dropped from a height – provide additional protection that can be moved around the gym as required, including for slam ball training.

The gym's cardio zone features 8mm Everlast flooring, as does the downstairs studio, where it provides a durable foundation for HIIT training.

"Rise Bournemouth opened in the summer of 2021, making a bold entry into a market that hadn't yet seen anything like it," says Physical Company account manager Paul Farrell. "It has already been very successful and we look forward to partnering with the team as they roll out their model across the south coast."

Andy Roberts
TVS Group
Project: Build-to-rent development, Manchester
www.TVS-Group.co.uk



Earlier this year, TVS Group was approached to source, supply and install a range of floor finishes and acoustic solutions for a gym in a new build-to-rent residential site in Manchester's Chapel Wharf.

In the area designated for weightlifting, TVS installed its heavy-duty impact-resistant Sportec Style Tiles, offering protection to the concrete sub-base and a reduction in potential structure-borne noise, often associated with weightlifting activities.

In the stylish cycling studio, the company supplied a polished, concrete-effect vinyl floor with a high resistance to static and rolling loads. The surface is ideal for environments where fitness equipment is regularly relocated and repositioned before and after use.

Comfort and user safety were prioritised in the stretching area, where a P2 category sports floor was fitted with a high level of shock absorbency and antibacterial properties. To further reduce structure-borne and footfall noise on the first-floor level, TVS also installed a high-performance acoustic underlay beneath a decorative wood-effect vinyl floor covering.



Acoustic underlay was installed beneath a wood-effect vinyl floor

Finally, at ground floor level, Sportec Color-15 sheet rubber was selected and installed and line markings applied to match with the various training zones and equipment. A sled track was also integrated within the gym space.

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GYM FLOORING



Pavgym's Endurance floor offers durability and the best aesthetics

Marcos Requena

Pavgym

Project: Castle Royal Golf & Country Club, Berkshire
www.pavgym.com

Castle Royal Golf and Country Club in Maidenhead relied on Pavgym to carry out the refurbishment of its health club.

The cardio area was covered with Pavgym Endurance, guaranteeing durability and the best aesthetics. Markings were included in the flooring to create a group training space while facilitating the distribution of users – important in times of social distancing. Another solution, Pavgym Extreme S&S, was chosen for the free weights area.

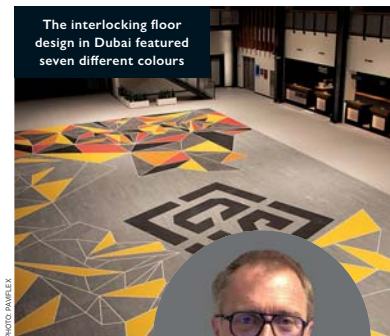


This product, a blend of virgin and recycled rubber, not only provides maximum protection against impact from dropped weights, it also reduces noise and vibrations in high-impact areas.

Finally, the club needed a small functional area, which we brought to life with Pavgym Turf, a comfortable and real-looking artificial turf. Suitable for use both outdoors and indoors, and also available with training marks, its density ensures maximum grip and resistance to all types of functional and strength exercises.

With these solutions, the Castle Royal Golf and Country Club now has a personality of its own and is perfectly adapted to the needs of its users.

The interlocking floor design in Dubai featured seven different colours



Manuel Martínez

Paviflex

Project: Skydive Dubai
www.paviflex.co.uk

Paradoxically, one of the facilities that Paviflex is most proud of in 2021 is Skydive Dubai, where they don't work on the ground, but in the sky.

Paviflex installed a large multifunctional surface with their corporate design where everybody can practice the exercises on land, and group activities can take place.

Manuel Martínez, Paviflex executive manager said: "Making the client's idea a reality, no matter if it seems impossible, is what makes us different from other companies".

"The difficulty of the project was capturing the visual graphic identity on a 'puzzle interlocked' surface with the combination of seven colors of our Premium floor tiles," he says. "The preparation, organisation and installation of each piece was undoubtedly the most laborious part of the job, but the final result rewarded all the effort."

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A better journey

Fitronics' new member journey software is supporting the University of Oxford in improving its services for users

Fitronics' brand The Retention People (TRP) has launched a new, improved version of its automated member journey software.

Called Digital (www.trpcem.com/digital), the upgraded member journey software now sits alongside TRP's industry-leading member feedback software, Insight, (www.trpcem.com/insight), allowing the two modules to be used more effectively together.

Existing Digital users have been upgraded to the new system free of charge and new customers will be given access as standard going forward.

Digital allows operators of health and fitness facilities to build automated communication journeys for their members via integrations with their member management systems.

For example, new member onboarding or at-risk member re-engagement emails and text messages are triggered by fully customisable combinations of member attributes and behaviours. This tailored yet scalable approach to member communication enhances their experience, drives visits and improves retention.

The key differences between the new system and its predecessor are:

A user-friendly interface with a vastly improved email editor

Fitronics has overhauled the look and feel of Digital, making it significantly easier and more enjoyable to use. The star of the show is the new email editor that allows users to create beautiful, responsive email templates via an intuitive drag-and-drop interface. The email editor also benefits from a wide selection of pre-built templates which users can customise and a built-in stock image library with thousands of free pictures and photographs that can be added to emails in just a few clicks.

Improved member management & segmentation

The ability to effectively manage and segment members is key to getting the right message, to the right people, at the right time. The new Digital system allows users to quickly and easily segment their membership base through the application of filters including age, gender, membership type, join date, last visit date and risk of dropout, then save these targeted audiences for ongoing future use.



PHOTO: AZRA SAWITRISOCK

This upgrade to the system takes it to a new level; making it easier to use and allowing us to deliver better looking messaging with more accuracy

Stuart McCarroll,
University of Oxford

An enhanced reporting suite

Fitronics has vastly improved the usability of Digital's reporting suite with the addition of graph and pie chart visualisations which make data analysis significantly easier and less time-consuming. The ability to measure the effectiveness of communications sent via the software is a key aspect of Digital, allowing users to optimise their marketing and improve results.

Stuart McCarroll, finance and business development manager at the University of Oxford and an early adopter of the new system said: "The core principles of the TRP Digital software and the experience it allows us to provide our members has always been great.

"This upgrade to the system takes it to a new level, making it easier to use and allowing us to deliver better looking messaging with more accuracy. "If you're not working with Fitronics and its TRP products yet, I'd highly recommend having a look to see how they could help you, as they help us."

● To learn more about Digital and how it could support the success of your business, go to www.trpcm.com/digital and request a demonstration today.

Text messages are sent to at-risk members with the sending triggered by their behaviours

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Over the coming months, Fitronics will be running a series of behaviour change webinars with its experts focusing on the challenge of change for the industry in 2022 and how the performance of teams can have an impact on the health and fitness of your customers.

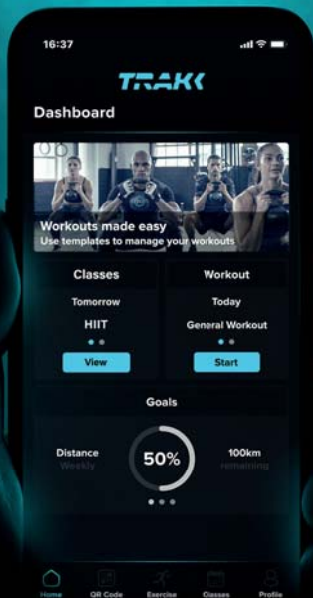
Webinar 1

The Challenge of Change

Date: 14 December 2021

Time: 11.00 - 11.45am

Register: www.hcmmag.com/fitronics



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Pulse Fitness created the new club's branding and its gym layout



PHOTO: PULSE FITNESS/PAUL GYM + FITNESS

The premium touch

Premier Gym + Fitness, based in Newton Abbot, Devon, has opened its doors to the public thanks to the help and support of Pulse Fitness

After spotting a gap in the local market, Stuart McDowell and his investors had a vision to create a premium, high end club for the area. They turned to Pulse Fitness for support and were highly impressed by the design skills and technologically advanced equipment on offer.

The facility has been designed by Pulse Fitness to the highest standards, with a striking black and green aesthetic. Pulse Fitness was responsible for branding and creating 3D designs of the facilities, as well as the layout of the gym.

The club has been kitted out with equipment from Pulse's premium cardio and strength lines in sand black. These come with 18-inch touch-screen consoles. The club is also home to a dedicated functional training space with a bespoke rig.

Members are able to enjoy the atmospheric, nightclub-like spinning studio, complete with state-of-the-art Pulse Fitness spin bikes and fluorescent green lighting in keeping with the space.



The team at Premier Gym + Fitness share our passion for quality and innovation

Richard Sheen, Pulse Fitness

A connected solution

Part of the reason Pulse Fitness was awarded the contract was due to its fully connected fitness offering. McDowell and his team were impressed to see that members are able to log and track their activity in the gym, as well as being able to use the internet, watch Netflix, stream online workouts and log into social media while exercising.

They also now have access to Trakk, the new Pulse Fitness app, which enables them to monitor their progress and devise their own workout plans in pursuit of their fitness goals.

Trakk also enables the team to improve interaction on the gym floor, thanks to its simple colour-

coded system that identifies at-risk members and provides a summary of previous contact.

Through Trakk, the Premier Gym + Fitness team can also send personal or automated messages, to help engage members.

"The team at Premier Gym + Fitness share our passion for quality and innovation and it has been a privilege to supply them with our market-leading equipment," says Richard Sheen, commercial sales director for Pulse Fitness. "Our team has worked hard to bring Stuart's vision to life which has resulted in a fantastic high-end club for the local community."

● www.pulsefitness.com

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ENGAGING INSIGHTS

Code Fitness has partnered with body composition experts Tanita to put analysis at the heart of its programmes

Code Fitness launched in Newark in 2013 with a mission to help more people get results.

In 2018, co-owners Steve McClory and Luke Watson, invested in a purpose-built gym to extend the offering.

Members have a variety of programmes to choose from with defined processes to help them achieve their desired goals and can choose and switch between them.

Integral to the business is the Tanita Body Composition Analyser which enables members to measure and understand their progress.

It's one of the essential parts of Code's 'Premier' membership and is also popular with health seekers who choose to be active elsewhere, but come to Code for their measurements and to get advice, coaching and motivation.

Monitoring and motivating

"The Tanita Body Composition Scales are not only brilliant for monitoring progress, but are also

great as a conversation starter, says McClory. "Having so much information from the fast analysis means we can focus on different things with different people."

The results of the analysis can be a focal point for workouts, depending on the desired results.

"We tend to use five main pieces of information for each of our membership types," he says. "For example, with our Good Health Membership, we focus on metabolic age, visceral fat, phase angle, muscle mass and body fat percentage.

"Although there'll be a crossover with other membership types, these aren't the same results we'd focus on with members on other systems."

Opening up new markets

The Tanita Body Composition Analyser gives Code Fitness the opportunity to target people that many would not view as traditional gym members, such as those looking for prevention and wellness advice.

The Tanita Body Composition Scales are not only brilliant for monitoring progress, but are also great for a conversation starter on a variety of things

Steve McClory, Code Fitness

Tanita's Body Composition Analyser gives a wide range of health insights

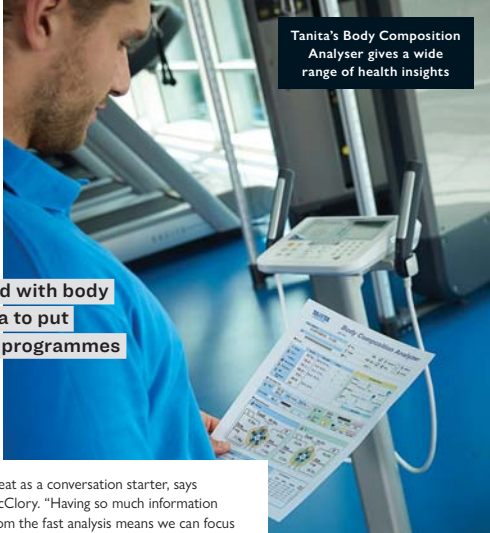


PHOTO: TANITA

"Our health membership attracts members whose sole focus is health improvement," says McClory. "This has helped us grow and develop as a business while allowing us to stand out as a gym that offers and delivers a far more personalised solution.

"For example, members on our Health Membership love seeing all their results change, especially their metabolic age. No one in their 40s wants to see their metabolic age in the 60s, but they love it when it starts to come down and even more so when they get the age below their actual age!

"The scales create the potential to develop different revenue streams, including for one-off use, regular monthly check-ins and as part of a gym membership. We've seen a significant improvement in compliance and retention off the back of this approach.

"We chose Tanita because they're at the forefront of this technology. I'd highly recommend them to any gym owner, as they're always extremely professional and supportive with everything we need."

● www.tanita.eu

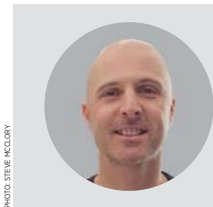


PHOTO: STEVE MCCLORY



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The new floor is the first in the UK by Robbins

PHOTO: TVS GROUP

University's new court has star appeal

TVS Group installs new world class facilities at the University of Kent in partnership with Robbins

Students at the University of Kent can now practice and play on one of the world's finest basketball courts after learning a lesson from stars of America's popular NBA.

Kent is the first UK university to have an MFMA PUR certified and EN14904 compliant Robbins solid maple wood floor installed by its UK-based partner TVS Group.

Choice of supplier

Robbins, which was founded in 1894, is a preferred supplier of competition and training surfaces to a significant number of teams in the billion-dollar NBA – 22 of the last 27 NBA Championships were won by teams who play and train on Robbins courts.

"After around two decades of use as a multi-sport facility, the university's old court was badly in need of an upgrade," explained TVS sports surfacing specialist, Jason Lewis-Lamb. "A survey revealed issues with the sub-floor which had caused failures in the existing floor and needed to be rectified prior to the installation of the new court."

The TVS/Robbins partnership was chosen after an exhaustive evaluation by the university, with quality and longevity being major factors in the final decision, along with the need to meet stringent international and UK sports standards.

The new court is expected to last 50-75 years, with benefits including the reduction of injuries and player fatigue through the Robbins maximum vibration protection patented system.

The sub-structure work and the new flooring installation, using northern hard maple from the USA and Canada, was completed by TVS Group within six working weeks.

As well as basketball, TVS added markings for netball and badminton to ensure the new court could continue to be used as a multi-sport facility.

Raising standards

Double Olympian Mel Clewlow, director of sport at the university, said: "To be the first in the UK to install this system is an honour. Too often as a university we're looking enviously at our competitors' facilities. Hopefully this time they're looking at us!"



PHOTO: TVS GROUP

To be the first in the UK to install the Robbins MVP flooring system is an absolute honour

Mel Clewlow, director of sport, University of Kent

"Installing this flooring shows the university's commitment to its students and to providing the best facilities we can. We've already received fantastic feedback from them, as well as interest from local clubs.

"I can't thank TVS Group and Robbins enough for trusting us to showcase this product. Throughout this entire process TVS has been world-class and its customer service from start to finish has been exemplary."

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Product innovation



Steph Eaves rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

AtmosAir technology provides healthy air for customers, says Gary Novak

Wolverton Leisure Trust has invested in Bipolar Ionisation, which actively and continuously disinfects indoor air and surfaces.

Wolverton Swimming and Fitness Centre is the first leisure facility in the UK to install this technology from AtmosAir, whose other clients include the likes of Google, Virgin and the Empire State Building.

Wolverton's Matt Leeder said: "I researched several technologies to help create



● Wolverton Swimming and Fitness Centre

a healthy indoor space for members, including fogging machines and ultraviolet.

However, the benefit of the AtmosAir Bipolar Ionisation technology is that it works 24/7 while the ventilation is running and this is a far better option for us.

"The technology is low-cost and low-maintenance, which will reduce our carbon footprint in the long-term.

"Members invest in their fitness with us, it's only right we invest in healthy air for them."

AtmosAir's Gary Novak added, "We know there's

a significantly higher breathing rate within these types of spaces and with the virus expected to be with us for the foreseeable future, Matt has created a healthy environment for his members to train in."

[fitness-kit.net KEYWORD](#)
Atmos Air



We know there's a higher breathing rate within these types of spaces

Gary Novak

We saw an opportunity to help the health club, leisure and spa markets simplify their software solutions, says Ricky Daniels

A new cloud-based spa and leisure software has been launched to simplify and improve spa and leisure businesses' operational efficiency.

Called Trybe (Try.be), the platform was co-founded by ex-Google employee Will Taylor-Jackson, Steve Porter and Ricky Daniels, who also conceived the nightlife discovery app Design My Night and UK hospitality discovery platforms Collins Reservation and Enquiry

Management Systems. Trybe features include:

- Live availability on customer bookings and rota management
- Streamlined inventory management to store, manage and maximise retail stock
- Emails, SMS and CRM all combined into one cloud-based tool
- Automated payment system at the point of booking
- Comprehensive analytics to drive data-backed decisions



● Trybe was co-founded by (left to right) Steve Porter, Will Taylor-Jackson and Ricky Daniels

- One central solution for memberships
 - Secure storage for digital intake forms
- The software is claimed to be one of the first integration-focused, fully

cloud-based software with an open API, designed to slot seamlessly into health club, leisure and spa operators' existing back-end systems.

[fitness-kit.net KEYWORD](#)
Trybe

Power Plate products enable operators to incorporate wellness into their offerings explains **Iain Murray**

Power Plate has extended its Black Edition range to enable health clubs and fitness studios to integrate vibration training into their facilities.

Many health clubs are starting to think differently about their fitness spaces, widening their reach to offer health and wellness solutions and provide new ways to get the best results for members.



PHOTO: POWER PLATE

Integrated wellness is an approach forward-thinking clients are starting to adopt

Iain Murray

● The range of products includes hand-held and platform vibration devices



PHOTO: POWER PLATE

Transition Zone London (www.transitionzone.co.uk) is integrating Power Plate full-body and targeted vibration products in new ways to invigorate one-on-one and group sessions.

Included alongside TRX, boxing, strength and PT, Power Plate is used, with Myzone, for an effective warm-up, to optimise the results of activity, and to accelerate recovery.

Black Edition products are available to health clubs in Pro 7, Pro 5, Pro 5HP and Move models, along with the latest range of targeted vibration products, enabling operators to incorporate recovery into their everyday classes and PT sessions.

Iain Murray, sales director at Power Plate UK says: "Integrated wellness is an approach that forward-thinking clients are starting to adopt and we're

thrilled to be able to offer a product range that is so versatile it works within any setting, and benefits all users, from deconditioned older adults right through to elite athletes."

Power Plate's whole body and targeted vibration training stimulates natural reflexes, increases muscle activation and improves circulation.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Power Plate

ShowerVision lifts the experience of the shower room to the next dimension claims **Rainer Rieger**

German wet area specialist Werner Dosiertechnik (WDT) has unveiled a new experience shower accessory consisting of a 75" HD screen and immersive nature visuals.

Called Shower Vision, the technology complements traditional sensory shower elements, such as chromotherapy, aromatherapy, audio content and water jets, which correspond to three different settings:



PHOTO: SHOWERVISION

Shower Vision lifts the sensual dimension of an experience shower

Rainer Rieger

Tropical Rain, Waterfall and Fog Shower.

With the activation of one of these programmes, corresponding nature visuals start simultaneously on the screen. For example, the Tropical Rain sequence begins

with big, smooth water drops, complemented by a fruity, lively aroma and the light in the shower changes from white to red. Next, the screen will project a soothing video of a tropical beach setting to totally relax the user.

Rainer Rieger, MD of WDT, said: "Shower Vision lifts the sensual dimension of an experience shower into the next level."

In combination with a WDT Experience Shower, Shower Vision is designed as an attraction for health clubs, spas and also for private homes. **fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**
Shower Vision



PHOTO: SHOWERVISION

● The screens synchronise with other sensory shower elements

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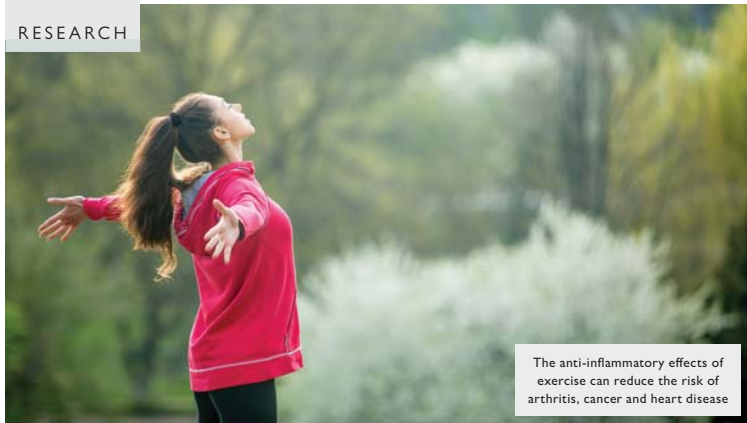
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The anti-inflammatory effects of exercise can reduce the risk of arthritis, cancer and heart disease

Exercise tames inflammation

Exercise has been found to power up the body's production of endocannabinoids and reduce chronic inflammation, explains Tom Walker

Exercise has been found to increase levels of endocannabinoids – cannabis-like substances produced by the human body – which in turn reduces inflammation and could potentially help treat certain conditions, such as arthritis, cancer and heart disease.

A team of researchers at the University of Nottingham in the UK, led by Professor Ana Valdes from the School of Medicine, tested 78 people with arthritis.

Thirty-eight of them carried out 15 minutes of muscle-strengthening exercises every day for six weeks, and 40 did nothing.

Increase in 'good' gut bacteria

Those involved in the exercise intervention had not only reduced their pain, but they also had more microbes in their guts of the kind that produce anti-inflammatory substances, reduce levels of cytokines in the body and increase levels of endocannabinoids.

The increase in endocannabinoids was strongly linked to changes in the gut microbes and anti-inflammatory substances produced by gut microbes called Short Chain Fatty Acids (SCFAs).

The study found that at least one-third of the anti-inflammatory effects created by changes in the gut microbiome were due to the increase in endocannabinoids in the body.

Exercise increases the natural secretion of the body's own cannabis-type substances, which can have a positive impact on many health conditions

Natural cannabis-type substances

The findings were published in a report titled *The anti-inflammatory effect of bacterial short chain fatty acids is partially mediated by endocannabinoids*, and published in the journal *Gut Microbes*.

Doctor Amrita Vijay, a research fellow in the School of Medicine and first author of the paper, said: "Our study clearly shows that exercise increases the natural secretion of the body's own cannabis-type substances, which can have a positive impact on many health conditions."

"As interest in cannabidiol oil and other supplements increases, it is important to know that simple lifestyle interventions, such as exercise, can also modulate endocannabinoids."

While the secretion of endocannabinoids by the body is a natural metabolic process, the use of medical and recreational cannabis is known to suppress the natural secretion of endocannabinoids by removing the need for the body to produce it, making people more dependent. ●

More: www.HCMmag.com/research11 Insight: www.HCMmag.com/endocannabinoids Research: www.HCMmag.com/Nottingham

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