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P40 >>>

A background image of a Les Mills fitness studio. Several people are performing a group exercise, possibly a burpee or a similar movement, while holding a large, colorful resistance band. The studio has a dark floor and walls, with bright red and blue lights illuminating the scene. The Les Mills logo is visible in the top left corner.

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*Source: 2021 Global Fitness Report, Les Mills



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The economics of wellness

Governments are largely blind to the economic implications of an unhealthy population when it comes to productivity and GDP. Now's the time to be focusing on this important issue

Policymakers are only just waking up to the fact that the key to economic success and productivity is a fit and healthy workforce.

This subject has been in the news recently, due to statements made in the UK by Andy Haldane, former chief economist at the Bank of England.

Speaking at The Health Foundation's Real challenge lecture, Haldane said the declining health of Britons is stalling the nation's economic growth. "We're in a situation for the first time, probably since the Industrial Revolution, where health and wellbeing are in retreat," he said. "Having been an accelerator of wellbeing for the last 200 years, health is now serving as a brake on the rise of economic growth and the wellbeing of our citizens".

Policymakers need to understand that in order for countries to run effectively, they need healthy, fit, engaged citizens with mental and physical resilience and vitality and that everything that reinforces this – such as supporting the physical activity sector – is to be encouraged, while everything that diminishes it is to be robustly tackled.

We've been arguing for some years that in addition to being part of sports portfolios, the health and fitness and physical activity sector should fall into the portfolios of departments for business and health within governments, on the grounds that all economic activity ultimately benefits from a fit and focused workforce and fit, healthy consumers who are capable of working.

Most governments seem to have lost sight of their role as nurturers, laying increasingly onerous tax burdens on citizens and failing to recognise or support the fundamentals that underpin economic success, such as prevention and exercise and healthy living initiatives.

When was the last time you heard a politician talk about the personal wellbeing of citizens? Policy too often just creates a downward spiral of negativity and stress, rather than an upward spiral and health and energy.

Wellness policy is an emerging area of political life in its own right and in the vanguard, the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has launched *Defining Wellness Policy*



PHOTO: XANTHOPRODUCTIONS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Politicians need to understand the value of a fit workforce

Policy too often creates a downward spiral of negativity and stress, rather than an upward spiral of health and energy

(www.hcmmag.com/wellnesspolicy), the first of a series of research studies looking at the political landscape as it relates to policies that impact personal wellbeing.

The GWI found a direct correlation between spending on wellness and longevity and levels of happiness among entire populations, reinforcing the need for a greater focus on this vital area of public life.

With the world facing so many serious challenges, now's the time to present evidence that the sector is already contributing to economic success and GDP and that this could be accelerated with the right political support.

Liz Terry, editor
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Uniting the world of fitness

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PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/JANIS ASH PILLIS

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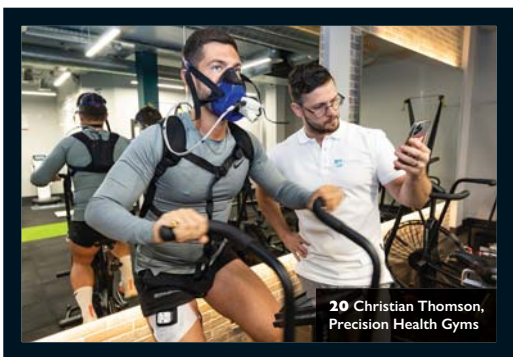
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Evidence shows that remaining as active as possible helps with the management of cancer

Swimming during and after cancer treatment

Andrew Power, Swim England

Swim England has teamed up with the University of Nottingham to create a fact sheet explaining how people can benefit from aquatic activity during and after cancer treatment.

The initiative comes as figures suggest one in two people in the UK will develop some form of cancer throughout their lifetime, with 375,000 new cases in the UK every year. However, improvements in detection and treatment mean half will survive for 10 years or more.

It used to be the case that resting during and after cancer treatment was thought best, but there's plenty of evidence to suggest that remaining as active as possible helps with the management of a range of symptoms and improves both physical and mental health.

Dr Dominic O'Connor, assistant professor in physiotherapy and sport rehab at University of Nottingham, who was involved in developing the fact sheet, says the physical and mental benefits of swimming are



Andrew Power

important, helping the management of symptoms such as pain and fatigue.

Dr Fiona Moffatt, associate professor and director of postgraduate research at the University of Nottingham and a member of Swim England's Swimming and Health Commission, says she hopes the fact sheet will be used by healthcare professionals, leisure providers and the public to help those living with cancer get into the water.

Swim England is also continuing to develop fact sheets for different conditions, such as arthritis. More: www.hcmmag.com/cancerswim



Swimming can help cancer recovery

A raft of energy-saving measures are in place

David Lloyd Leisure is the first health and fitness club in the UK to gain a water self-supply license

DLL is aiming to be carbon net zero by 2030

Russell Barnes, David Lloyd Leisure

As we review the impact of COP27 and consider the challenges presented by climate change, David Lloyd Leisure has set a target of becoming carbon net zero by 2030 – 20 years ahead of the current UK target – by establishing five key areas to help us deliver the company's goals.

We're making changes throughout our operations, including generating renewable energy on site, reducing indirect emissions in the supply chain, reducing overall water and energy consumption, using sustainable modes of transport and reducing plastic use and waste.

The company has invested £20m in energy efficient technology, including low-energy LED lighting on tennis courts and overhauled heating and cooling systems. Solar panels are being installed in a number of clubs



Russell Barnes

which will result in the generation of 20 per cent of the energy required. We've switched to green energy, with 100 per cent of our UK electricity now coming from renewable sources, and are the first health club in the UK to gain a water self-supply license.

We're always striving to make a positive impact on the environment

and the communities in which we operate, and the steps we've taken so far have resulted in a reduction of 10,000+ tonnes of CO₂, which equates to over 10,200 flights to New York and back.

There's so much more to be done and we'll continue to prioritise tackling climate change across all our clubs.

Further actions we're going to be taking over the next 12 months include trialling energy efficient showers, rolling out solar panels to other clubs, and installing air source heat pumps to remove 70 per cent of club carbon emissions, while fitting EV charging points across our clubs.

We'll also be reducing single-use items and placing recycling bins in every club and launching a 'lights off' initiative to reduce energy waste.

People will be able to access warm spaces for free

“

As a charitable social enterprise, GLL is offering some of its leisure centre cafes and libraries as dedicated warm spaces this winter

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/PRESSMASTER

GLL provides warm spaces

Gareth Kirk, GLL

Leisure facilities play a crucial role within local communities, not only facilitating physical health but also offering somewhere to socialise, interact with others and improve mental health.

With inflation and utility prices surging, despite some Government support, this winter will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging for our industry. It's also presenting real hardship for many of our customers, particularly those on lower incomes.

As a charitable social enterprise, GLL is committed to making a difference and supporting local people. We've, therefore, decided



Gareth Kirk

to offer some of the leisure centre cafes and libraries we operate as dedicated warm spaces this winter. Anyone – not just our leisure centre or library members – will be able to visit our nominated leisure

facilities to keep warm, use the free wifi, charge their phones and even to have a hot shower, while our libraries will provide free books, newspapers and magazines, along with the use of computer terminals.

At a national level we're supported by Age UK and have partnered with our catering supplier Brakes, which has generously agreed to donate tea, coffee and biscuits to this initiative. At grassroots level we're working with our local authority partners and other organisations, such as Citizens Advice and food banks, so together we can support the most vulnerable during these extraordinary times. ●

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A man and a woman are shown in a gym setting, performing a squat exercise. The woman is on the left, wearing a black tank top and red leggings, with her hands on her knees. The man is on the right, wearing a dark blue tank top and grey shorts, with his hands on his thighs. They are both looking down at their feet. The background is a blurred gym environment with various equipment.

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HCM people



PHOTO: SPORT FOR CONFIDENCE



People living with long term health conditions don't want to be constantly reminded of it, they want an experience like everyone else

Lyndsey Barrett

Sport for Confidence

Tell us about Sport for Confidence

We place occupational therapists (OTs) in leisure centres to work collaboratively with sports coaches to make the spaces more inclusive to marginalised groups, particularly those with disabilities and long term health conditions. We're also currently looking to help refugees and asylum seekers.

There are 37,000 OTs in the UK, but I was the first to work out of a leisure centre. Since 2015, Sports for Confidence has created physical activity opportunities for more than 3,000 individuals each month who face barriers to exercise.

What benefits can an OT bring?

Trained to degree level in mental health and physical disability, OTs take a whole-person approach, which

enables them to support individuals to achieve their full potential. In a leisure centre setting, OTs join the dots to make the environment more inclusive, helping clients to overcome personal barriers, as well as adapting both the activity and the environment to include them.

What are the main barriers marginalised groups have to deal with?

Lack of opportunity is one of the biggest. Data from Activity Alliance shows there's a widening gap around people accessing physical activity, but we're seeing demand increase daily at Sport for Confidence sites, so we know the motivation is there, but the right opportunities aren't always.

Cashless leisure centres are a backwards step for inclusion, as 1.3 million people in this country are

Barrett with Sport for Confidence coaching lead, Jack Edgar





PHOTO: EDWARD STARR PHOTOGRAPHY

unbanked. If you don't have a bank account, or you have a learning disability and someone else is managing your finances, or you're an older person who prefers to use cash, digitally excluded, or a young person with pocket money, it now makes it impossible to access cashless facilities. Cashless also removes the experience of going to reception and paying, which can be powerful skill development for certain individuals.

Accessibility of the environment, communication not being inclusive, or information not being accessible are common barriers, but there are many personal ones as well, such as being unsure of what to wear.

How can operators remove these barriers?

It's all about taking a personalised approach. Everyone has a personal experience with physical

activity and we need to ask them how we can help. Adapting a regular session to accommodate marginalised individuals widens their choice and gives them the opportunity to integrate.

The industry is keen on using labels, creating Stroke Survivor Groups, Mental Health Sports Groups, Cardiac Rehab Groups. It's how funding is allocated and how outcome measures are targeted, but labels dilute the experience for the end user. From the outset I wanted Sport for Confidence to be a 'no labels' model.

If you're in Cardiac Rehab you arrive with a label, staff respond differently, the individual responds differently and can't transcend that label. People living with long term health conditions don't want to be constantly reminded of it, they want relief from their condition and to have an experience along with everyone else. ▶

Leisure centres should be safe, inclusive places

PHOTO: EDWARD STARR PHOTOGRAPHER

► Operators could assess what they're already offering and look at how that could be opened up to be fully inclusive. For example, don't create a Disability Zumba class, but ask the individuals how to make it a good experience for them. People are usually very clear in articulating what they want. It might be minor adjustments, such as coming through the turnstiles earlier than others to allow more time to get changed, or having a five minute chat with the instructor at the start of the session so they know what to expect.

At Basildon Sports Village, where I'm based, we've changed Dementia-Friendly Swimming to Sensory Friendly Swimming. These sessions are quiet: no whistles or unpredictable stuff going on, no jumping in.

How can private sector health and fitness operators make facilities more accessible?

By avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach and being responsive to individual needs.

They can also grow to become more accessible by listening and learning from people with lived experience and involving them in the design and development of what they offer. For example, any new session we deliver originates from a participant need that we weren't able to meet with our original offer. Being aware of reasonable adjustments and flexible in problem solving will enable all facilities to become more inclusive and valuable asset to local communities.

What are the advantages for operators who take this approach?

There are huge advantages: bringing in new members, along with their carers, family and friends and the

associated secondary spend. It makes the leisure centre a hub, with a reputation for being a positive place that anyone can visit, giving more populations the confidence to get over the threshold, and attracting those who often feel excluded.

It also has massive advantages for the individuals, allowing them to develop skills which can be used in other areas of their lives, giving them a sense of belonging, opening up new horizons, changing how they feel about the future and providing a safe place where they can get support.

In recognition of your work, you've been awarded an honorary degree and a British Empire Medal. What impact will this have?

The future is about having conversations around doing it better, challenging inclusion and creating opportunities to really empower people. Being given the degree by Writtle University College will allow us to work with the education sector more closely and look at how we can influence the curriculum being undertaken by occupational therapists in the future, as well as building a community and sharing good learning to advance education.

For the next five years we're a system partner with Sport England, which will allow us to do important work: challenging operators to be more inclusive, while amplifying the voices of the people we work with, and strengthening the relationship with communities, sport, physical activity and health and wellbeing. We'll also be working with national partners such as Disability Rights UK and NGBs to produce more evidence-based guides, especially to specific activities. ●



The aim is to attract people who often feel excluded

Occupational therapists deliver exercise programmes to people from all backgrounds



Operators could assess what they're offering and look at how it could be opened up to be fully inclusive

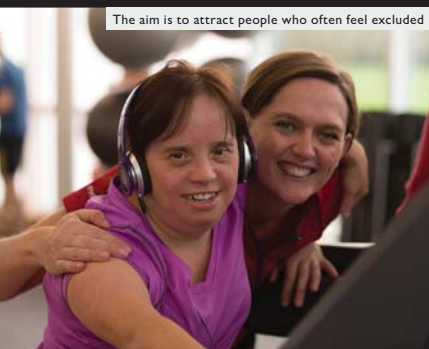


PHOTO: EDWARD STARR PHOTOGRAPHER



Operators need to be responsive to individual needs



Barrett works closely with participants



*Our mantra is
'test, don't guess'*

**Christian
Thomson**

**Co-founder,
Precision Health Gyms**



Thomson is a
former world
champion kickboxer

Tell us about the new venture

Precision Health Gyms offers members hi-tech full body laboratory-grade testing for everyday people, not just elite athletes. This includes biomechanics, physiological, metabolic and biochemical testing that helps build a precise physiological picture of the individual.

What's the package for the member?

Plans start from £212 per month and include one-to-one personal training, as well as small in-person or online classes. Precision Health Gyms reassess members' bodies and health every 90 days using technology to identify any changes that may require the plan to be adjusted.

What makes it so special?

Precision Health Gyms is no regular gym, as it's one of the first in the country to offer individuals a type of medical testing and fitness training which is usually only reserved for professional sportspeople. Our cutting-edge methods help in the formulation of highly-personalised plans that deliver a detailed roadmap for nutrition, exercise, lifestyle and supplementation. Precision Health Gyms' mantra is 'test don't guess'.

What do you offer in terms of equipment?

We partner with tech companies, including health test provider Omnos, metabolic testing specialists Pnoe and body composition analysis experts In Body.

We also work with Diers – which supplies a pressure-plated treadmill and advanced imaging technology that captures 240 images per second to deliver a



Members are assessed for what type, volume and intensity of exercise they should be doing

functional analysis of the musculoskeletal system with 99 per cent accuracy when compared to X-Ray.

The high-tech testing includes members undergoing biochemical blood tests, which are taken by a registered nurse. By looking at biomolecules circulating in the blood, the team can assess the function of, among other things, the liver, kidneys, gut and endocrine system, using tech from Omnos.

Are you using tech for diagnostics only, or also to deliver exercise interventions?

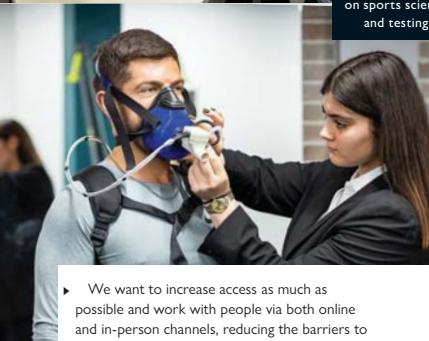
The difference in how we approach exercise is defined by the precision with which we recommend the type, volume and intensity of exercise, due to the information we collect via our testing protocols. ▶



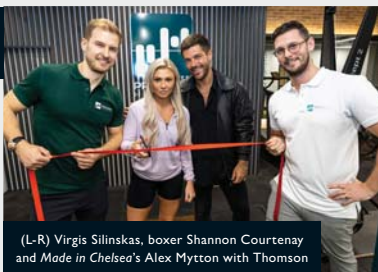
Members undergo biochemical blood tests using tech from Omnos, which are taken by a registered nurse



The gym focuses on sports science and testing



We're looking to invest more in technology to stay at the forefront of scientific advances in fitness



(L-R) Virgis Silinskas, boxer Shannon Courtenay and Made in Chelsea's Alex Mytton with Thomson

ALL PHOTOS: PRECISION HEALTH / SHUTTERSTOCK

- ▶ We want to increase access as much as possible and work with people via both online and in-person channels, reducing the barriers to engaging with exercise as much as possible.

Current exercise strategies are very effective when applied at the right time so we don't believe there's a need to reinvent the wheel here, so we focus our use of technology on assessments and not delivery.

You're offering a technical service, do you see this as a way forward for the sector?

Personalisation is the future for many markets, including the health and fitness industry. As technology advances this becomes more accessible and affordable, as well as delivering ever-increasing knowledge in both customers and coaches, which drives up standard in the industry as a whole.

We want to show people in the sector what's possible when we bring more companies and experts together, rather than continuing to work in silos.

How many sites are you planning and in what locations?

We officially launched our first physiology and fitness studio in Whitechapel, London, recently, but we plan to roll out others across the city and eventually, the rest of the country.

Our brand is Precision Health Gyms, with the emphasis on 'gyms' – so more than one. We look forward to opening our second location in due course.

Will you franchise the concept?

We're not interested in a franchise model, as what's important to us is to allow our employees rapid development through the ranks as we open new facilities.

What's your dream for the business?

To trigger an international revolution that sees the industry follow suit and make personalised health the expected model. For too long we've settled for over-simplified messages that create confusion and lead to people giving up on their health due to a lack of results.

Will you add more biohacking tech?

Yes, we already partner with other facilities and companies that help improve our clients' health through advanced therapies. We're looking to invest in more technology where appropriate and to stay at the forefront of scientific advances for health and fitness.

Tell us about your backgrounds

I'm a former world kickboxing champion – I retired in 2011 but have since launched several businesses and believe the time is right to launch Precision Health Gyms.

Co-founder Virgis Silinskas is a body transformation coach with a decade of professional industry experience. He's helped his clients discover their strengths, regain confidence and live happy and pain-free lives. ●



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Pure Gym signs deal for 130 gyms in MENA

Pure Gym says it will open more than 20 gyms across the UAE, with the first three of these opening in Dubai this year. This builds on the company's expansion in Saudi Arabia in partnership with Ektimal, leading the companies to sign a Regional Development Agreement for the opening of 130 gyms across the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) by 2027.

According to Pure Gym CEO, Humphrey Cobbold, Egypt is likely to be the next market for Pure Gym

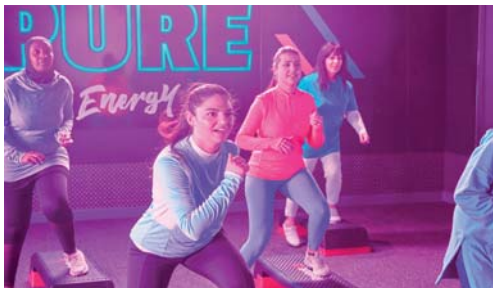


PHOTO: PURE GYM

Pure Gym and Ektimal have signed a Regional Development Agreement



PHOTO: PURE GYM

Egypt is likely the next market for us, with Kuwait and Oman also possible targets

Humphrey Cobbold

in this territory – it has a population of 100 million and only 1 per cent market penetration for gyms.

Cobbold says countries such as Kuwait and Oman – those in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – are also potential targets for expansion. Other countries in the GCC are Bahrain and Qatar.

"We successfully launched in Saudi Arabia last year and are more than satisfied with the response from members," said Cobbold. "We're pleased to be making a positive contribution to the rapid development of the society in Saudi Arabia."

More: http://lei.sr/M9t4e_H

Armah Sports launches luxury Optimo brand



PHOTO: ARMAH SPORTS/OTTO

The first Optimo features a wealth of high-end facilities and services

The first Optimo-branded health club has opened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The club is a new concept combining high-end hotel design with upscale fitness facilities. Two further sites will open in the next three to six months.

Optimo is run by Armah Sports, whose co-founder and CEO, Fahad Alhagbani, co-founded the Fitness Time chain in Saudi Arabia in 2007. By 2018 it had reached 150 clubs and, after going public with a value of €700m (US\$724), Alhagbani left to establish Armah Sports and started to develop Optimo and sister brand B_Fit.

On offer at Optimo are strength and cardio areas, personal training, outdoor cycling, pilates and yoga studios, a boxing area, functional training and a swimming pool.



PHOTO: ARMAH SPORTS/OTTO

Optimo presents a spacious fitness facility in a hotel context within a smart tech environment

Fahad Alhagbani

Equipment providers include Technogym, Life Fitness and Reaxing.

Describing the concept, Alhagbani said Optimo takes a "hotel-ic approach", adding: "It is a spacious fitness facility in a hotel context within a smart tech environment."

More: http://lei.sr/g3z8c_H

Record membership, shares up at Planet Fitness

Planet Fitness has reported record results, with 16.6m members globally, according to its Q3 results. Shares jumped 10 per cent on the news.

The company said 'system-wide, same-club sales' increased by 8.2 per cent in the quarter, leading to an increase in revenues of US\$90.1m or 58.4 per cent to US\$244.4m for the period.

This is up from US\$154.3m the previous year, indicating income of around US\$5 per-member per-month.

"We continue our steady recovery from the pandemic," said CEO Chris Rondeau. "We ended the quarter at an all-time record high for Planet Fitness. Member trends remained strong in the quarter with joins also back to pre-pandemic seasonality.



PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS

Member trends remained strong in the quarter with joins also back to pre-pandemic seasonality

Chris Rondeau

Members are continuing to visit more frequently, with cancellations lower than in 2019. "We believe this indicates that members are generally more committed to fitness," said Rondeau.

More: http://lei.sr/q2E3M_H



PHOTO: PLANET FITNESS

Planet Fitness is hitting record numbers

Spending on wellness linked to happiness

For every US\$800 (€806, £694) annual increase in people's wellness expenditures, happiness levels rise by 7 per cent and life expectancy goes up by 1.26 years, according to a study released by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI).

The figures were revealed at the Global Wellness Summit in Tel Aviv, Israel, recently and are the topline stats for GWI's new *Defining Wellness Policy* research.

The report, co-authored by GWI senior researchers, Katherine



PHOTO: GWI

The research was revealed at the recent Global Wellness Summit in Tel Aviv



PHOTO: GWI

The health of people should be paramount, just like the health of the planet

Katherine Johnston

Johnston and Ophelia Yeung, argues that wellness should be accessible to all – not just an elite few.

In order to bridge this gap, our industry needs to develop a 'wellness policy' that governments, civil servants, businesses and members of the public can all adopt and act upon.

This principle is the basis of the 40-plus page research report.

"As we dived into this research, it quickly became obvious that health and wellness should be embedded in the priorities for all policymaking," said Johnston.

"The health of people should be paramount, just like the health of the planet."

More: http://lei.sr/c7B4G_H

F45 to launch FS8 in the US, Canada and UK

F S8, the fitness concept combining pilates, toning exercises and yoga, from functional training franchiser F45, has opened its first London club.

Located in Oxford Circus, the company plans to launch more UK clubs, as well as expanding into the US and Canada over the next 12 months.

Since its launch last year, FS8 has opened 37 studios across Australia – with endorsement from surf star Mick Fanning as ambassador – as well as clubs in Thailand and Qatar.



PHOTO FS8

There's a whole demographic of people who understand the benefits of this style of training

Janina Czado



PHOTO FS8

FS8's first UK studio opened at London's Oxford Circus in October

The F stands for 'functional', a nod to its foundations in F45; S for 'style', referring to its mix of exercises; and 8 represents the number of elements the creators believe are necessary to form a healthy body and mind: cardio, mobility, posture, coordination, resistance, mental health, balance and flexibility.

"With the 'mindful movement' category, there's a whole demographic of people who understand the benefits of this style of training, but for a variety of reasons had not committed to a studio with these offerings," said Janina Czado, general manager at FS8.

More: http://lei.sr/H8s3p_H

Basic-Fit grows membership by 42 per cent



PHOTO BASIC-FIT

The chain has bounced back well from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

Basic-Fit is set to continue its ambitious growth and expansion plans in Europe, following a 42 per cent increase in membership since the beginning of 2022.

Offering its Q3 2022 trading update, the budget fitness chain said the total number of members at its clubs grew from 2.22 million to 3.15 million during the first nine months of the year (to the end of September).

During the same period, Basic-Fit opened 145 new clubs.

The chain has bounced back well from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It created revenues of €563m during the first nine months of 2022, compared with €186m in the same period last year – when pandemic disruption limited operations.



PHOTO BASIC-FIT

We will have 1,200 clubs by the end of 2022, with another 200-300 in the pipeline for 2023

Rene Moos

Rene Moos, Basic-Fit CEO, said the results mean that the chain will continue with its expansion push.

Moos said Basic-Fit will have 1,200 clubs by the end of 2022, with another "200 to 300" new openings in the pipeline for 2023.

More: http://lei.sr/K2g5P_H

First glimpse of flagship Blue Zones Center

The first Blue Zones Center is set to launch in Miami, Florida and showcase the next generation of longevity medicine.

The facility is underpinned by Blue Zones' research which has identified evidence-based ways to help people live longer and stay well. The company's work is rooted in explorations and research done by National Geographic fellow Dan Buettner, who identified the 'blue zones regions' around the world where people live extraordinarily long and happy lives.

The 13-storey Miami facility will combine medical care, predictive diagnostics and preventive medicine to optimise disease management outcomes and inspire advanced patient wellbeing and longevity.



PHOTO: NIKER/GETTY IMAGES

This location will feature world leaders in longevity and lifestyle medicine

Stephen Watson

Stephen Watson, co-founder of the Blue Zones Center, said: "This location will feature world leaders in longevity and lifestyle medicine and a place where personalised care, preventive medicine and rejuvenation treatments co-exist."

More: http://lei.sr/D7c5k_H



PHOTO: THE BLUE ZONES CENTER

The first Blue Zones Center in Miami

Xponential Fitness signs deal for Kuwait

Xponential Fitness has signed a Master Franchise Agreement with Kuwaiti real estate company Aqarat for brands Rumble, Club Pilates, Stretch Lab and Cycle Bar. The deal will see at least eight studios open in Kuwait in 10 years – with additional openings depending on market conditions.

"We're thrilled to be working with Aqarat to bring our world-class boutique fitness studios to Kuwait," said John Kersh, chief international development officer



PHOTO: XPONENTIAL FITNESS/CORBIS

The deal will see four of Xponential's brands, including Cycle Bar, enter Kuwait



PHOTO: XPONENTIAL

Aqarat's real estate is perfectly suited for our customer-focused brands

John Kersh

of Xponential Fitness. "Aqarat's extensive real estate and hospitality experience is perfectly suited for our customer-focused brands and they're well-equipped to deliver our immersive studio experiences to the Kuwaiti population."

Demand for boutique fitness is increasing in the Middle East and this growth is in line with Xponential

Fitness' goals for global expansion. According to a report from IHRSA, the MENA market has a 18.1 per cent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) and its relative immaturity is providing a raft of opportunities for fitness businesses to enter the market and grow as the sector develops.

More: http://lei.sr/g4U3e_H

Nuffield refinances to pursue long-term goals

Nuffield Health has completed a five-year refinancing package with NatWest, HSBC, Barclays and Santander UK. KPMG

UK advised on the deal which also included a longer-term financing solution for 10 hospital sites with Song Capital, in partnership with Alpha Real Capital.

In 2021, Nuffield Health supported more than 1.21m people across its network of 114 corporate fitness and wellbeing sites, 37 hospitals and numerous medical units. The financing



PHOTO: NUFFIELD HEALTH

Nuffield Health has completed a five-year refinancing package with four banks



PHOTO: NUFFIELD HEALTH

Sustainability is a core part of our purpose to build a healthier nation

Jenny Dillon

package will enable the charity to support its ESG (environmental, social and governance) goals. These include being carbon net zero by 2040, reducing the gender pay gap and social returns on investment. In 2021, the social return on investment was £18m (US\$21m). If the targets are met, the charity

will be eligible for a sustainability-related rebate on the interest rate.

"Sustainability is a core part of our purpose to build a healthier nation, so we're pleased to have agreed new ESG targets with responsible lenders," said Jenny Dillon, Nuffield Health's CFO.

More: http://lei.sr/9P3b3_H

Gen Z more likely to use employee benefits



PHOTO: GYMPASS

Gen Z-ers are much more likely to place importance on wellbeing at work

Corporate wellbeing platform Gympass has released a new report called *The State of Work-Life Wellness*.

After surveying more than 9,000 employees across nine territories (UK, US, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Italy, Spain and Germany) the report found that a new health economy has arrived where employees are placing greater emphasis on personal wellbeing – especially Gen Z-ers.

In the UK, 67 per cent of employees feel happy in their jobs and 70 per cent feel their work allows them time to take care of their wellbeing. Results showed that Gen Z respondents – those aged 18-24 in 2022 – are happier than the over-55s at work (75 per cent vs 60 per cent). The pursuit of wellbeing has also made



PHOTO: GYMPASS

The pandemic changed people's approach to wellbeing – especially younger workers

Luke Bullen

Gen Z-ers 20 per cent more likely to engage with employee benefits packages than older colleagues.

"The pandemic changed people's approach to wellbeing – especially younger workers," said Luke Bullen, head of UK and Ireland at Gympass.

More: http://lei.sr/y6V5c_F

MATRIX VIRTUAL TRAINING CYCLE

MATRIX

A NEW WAY TO RIDE. EVERY TIME.

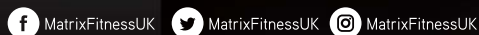


Now your members can ride the way they want to with the Matrix Virtual Training Cycle. They can take on exclusive programming, access instructor-led cycling classes and stream music, films and shows, all on a cycle precision engineered for intense sessions.

Explore the possibilities by bringing it to your facility today.



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24 hour fitness

“

Our vision is
to be Australia's
most-loved gym.
Love is key, because
gyms aren't
transactional

Series

PHOTO CREDITS: JETTS

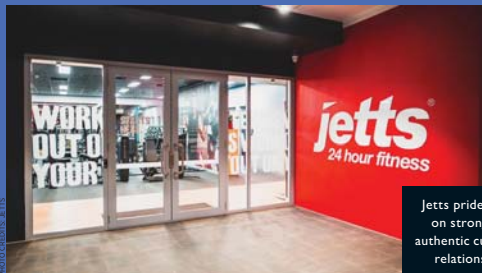


PHOTO CREDITS: JETTS

Jetts prides itself
on strong and
authentic customer
relationships



PHOTO CREDITS: JETTS



Creating great customer experiences is the key to the Jetts approach

PHOTO CREDITS: JETTS

ELAINE JOBSON

Tell us about your career to date

I've been in the fitness industry for 30 years. Born and bred in Yorkshire, UK, I was at Fitness First when the brand was in its very high growth phase in the UK. I worked quite closely with founder Mike Balfour and it was a super-exciting journey of almost 10 years, starting in a club, then into regional management, then a European role looking after sales in Italy, Spain, France, Holland and Belgium, then back to the UK to work on the new Fitness First for Women brand.

An opportunity arose to work for Virgin Active in South Africa, as COO. I loved the Virgin brand – as a child of the '80s, I grew up on all things Richard Branson – so I was really excited by this role.

Pre-Virgin Active, the South African business had had a chequered past; it ultimately went into liquidation until then-president Nelson Mandela reached out to Branson in a now legendary conversation, where Mandela called Branson

Having taken the Jetts Fitness business through an MBO its CEO is eyeing growth within Australia and internationally. She speaks to Kate Cracknell

while he was in the bath. They spoke about the problem, discussed how thousands would lose their jobs – people in townships who were the only breadwinners for many, many people in their families – and how devastating it would be. Still in the bath, Branson agreed to buy the business, and that's how Virgin Active came to South Africa.

When we opened our 100th gym in the country, in Mandela's township of Soweto, we created a mural of that scene: Branson in the bath taking the phone call from Mandela that created the company.



► Where did you go next?

The next move was to Kuala Lumpur, where I once again teamed up with Mike Balfour to help establish Jatomi – his new health club brand – in Malaysia and Indonesia. We got the first half-dozen clubs open, but then it was time to focus on family. I wanted my daughter, who'd been one when we went to South Africa, to be able to ride her bike in the street and realised that if we waited much longer, she'd be driving a car!

We were weighing up Canada and Australia but Australia was just nearer. At this point, Jetts Fitness was five years old and the founders – Brendon and Cristy Levenson – needed someone with a strong background in running gyms in a competitive environment to help them prepare for sale.

What was Jetts like when you joined?

We had around 110 clubs, all of which were franchised. One of the things we did in preparation for the sale was to buy some of them back, putting them into the company club portfolio. A multi-site owner had all the Jetts clubs



The Australian fitness market is increasingly competitive

SWEAT
SMILE
AND
REPEAT



in Adelaide, so we bought those and they became part of the deal when we sold the business.

Joining Jetts was an interesting transition for me. It wasn't just that I was moving into franchising. I was also going from 10,000+-member, full-service clubs to 1,000-member self-service clubs.

I spent the first month learning about the business: doing the club manager's role for a week, being a prospect going round all our competitors for a week, then spending time as a member going round some of our gyms. And what I saw was a very successful business that members loved, because there were no lock-in contracts and the clubs were open 24/7 – both USPs in 2013.

But the market was getting more competitive. Snap Fitness and Anytime Fitness had arrived and everyone was priced pretty much the same. We knew we needed to build a point of difference that couldn't be easily copied and we decided it would be our culture and as a result, culture became our competitive defence.

Tell us more

Our vision is to be Australia's most-loved gym. Love is key, because gyms aren't transactional. Retail is transactional: the customer comes in,

Jetts has had a Net
Promoter score
of 70 since 2017

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

“

*We knew we needed to build a point of
difference that couldn't be easily copied.
It became our competitive defence*

there's a financial transaction, the customer walks out and you don't know if they're coming back. We're different. We have a strong understanding of the relationship we have with our customer.

We break our member journey down – firstly, we don't do sales, we do flirting. Then the first 90 days we call falling in love, because it's an emotive time. You have your early hopes and dreams: I'm going to do this and I'm going to look so amazing, I'm going to go on that holiday, I'm going to feel so confident. It's a bit like when you meet your partner for the first time and you have those rose-tinted glasses on for the first three months.

We understand this is period when we have the opportunity to connect with our members and help them get into the habit of

exercise. Because at some point the rose-tinted glasses are going to come off. And at that point, just like in a relationship, some of the bad habits will get noticed. You realise you have to transition through the early glow and into something more meaningful.

We have different strategies to help members do that, because we've unpacked the relationship in a lot of detail. We understand how to give our members what they need, when they need it.

When they first start, for example, they don't need much motivation. They need direction and to be told what to do. Once they've been with us for a long time, it's like a marriage: they don't want to be taken for granted. Just because a member comes every Tuesday ▶

► afternoon at 2.00pm, doesn't mean she's always going to be coming. We need to ensure we give her what she needs, when she needs it.

So, there's a total understanding of our member relationship and the concept of love sits at the heart of it. That's been ingrained in our language and our DNA for years.

Tell us about your good profit philosophy

We don't have contracts, which means we have no choice but to be beholden to good profit practices. We can't do what some other gym chains do, putting in sneaky things such as coaching fees and T&Cs that allow them to take

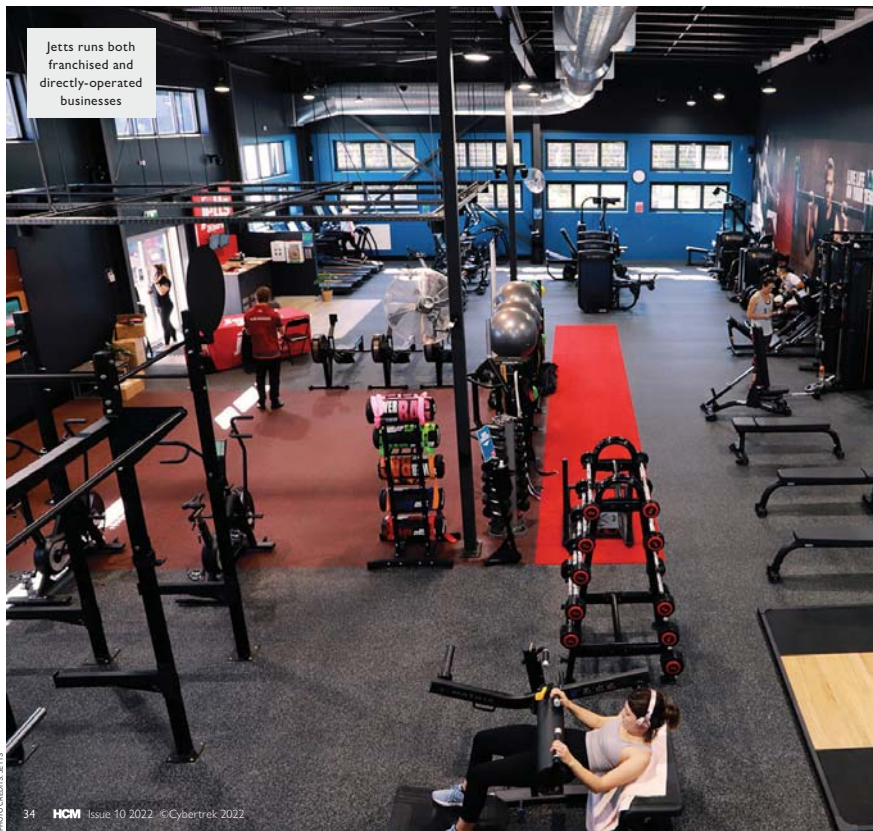
money – perhaps to the detriment of the member. At Jetts, we have to earn our member back every single visit, because they can cancel at any time.

How do you measure success?

Our Net Promoter Score is over 70 and has been since 2017. Meanwhile, from an employer perspective, we've been Top 25 in Australia's Best Place to Work awards for the last five years.

In the last two years, we've also come seventh place among the big companies, up against the likes of Apple, eBay and Google. We're the only franchise business in the list and the only gym chain.

Jetts runs both franchised and directly-operated businesses

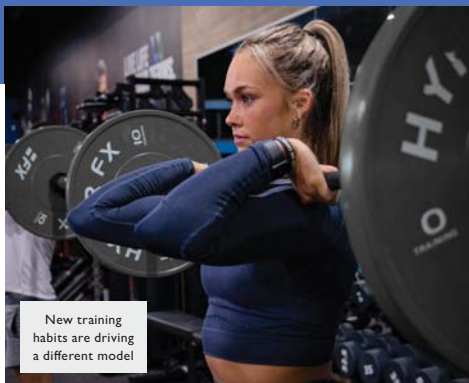


We've invested a lot in this and made it our point of difference: our franchise network and our customer loyalty are really strong, as are our people happiness and retention scores. And that really has been the reason why 15 years on we've survived everything so far... the competitive environment, the economic crises and COVID.

You were acquired in 2016...

Yes, we sold the Jetts Fitness business to Quadrant Private Equity, which in turn was creating Fitness and Lifestyle Group (FLG). It was at this point the international strategy was launched.

One of the first things we did – Greg Oliver, CEO of FLG Group and I – was negotiate to buy back the international master franchise rights in Thailand, bringing in Mike Lamb as CEO of FLG Thailand. At that point, there were only two or three Jetts clubs open in Thailand. There are now almost 40.



New training habits are driving a different model

PHOTO CREDIT: JETTS



We have to earn our members back every single visit, because they can cancel at any time

How did it work out?

There were significant benefits to being part of a larger operation – much better partner terms and so on – which then cascaded down into the franchise network. There was support and investment to grow our network of corporately owned clubs. And of course, through COVID lockdowns, it was very good to have the security and private equity backing of being part of a much larger group.

I also enjoyed working with Greg. Our Jetts business owners were often in locations where they directly competed with other FLG brands, so we put up a lot of Chinese walls to protect the integrity of the franchise business. It took a lot of maturity and collaboration for Greg and I to navigate the franchise network through that ownership structure, but I think we did a pretty good job of it – of keeping them separate but still having crossover and benefits. Greg was hugely respectful of that.



The company now has freedom to do things differently says Jobson



PHOTO: GREGORY J. BISS



We like to compete and we like to be entrepreneurial – that's the DNA we came from and we wanted to get back to that

- ▶ Between 2016 and 2022, we continued our organic growth with a focus on our existing owner group – people who had already proven themselves and who understood the brand and the culture. Australia has a fast-growing population, with lots of greenfield locations coming up, and we've been able to cherry-pick those for our franchise network.

We also sold master franchises for the UK and the Netherlands, where we currently have 11 and four clubs respectively.

Then this year, you led an MBO...

In September 2022, we completed a Management Buy Out of Jetts Fitness which was led by COO Mark Hollis, CFO Cheryl Ling and me. The deal excludes New Zealand, Vietnam and Thailand – where FLG retains full ownership of its Jetts Fitness brand and operations – but covers the rest of the world.



The Jetts Generation 4 club model is results-based with more functional training



The key point is that it's business as normal for our network, with around 95 per cent of the team coming across with us. We've effectively run the business independently within FLG anyway, so the transition has been seamless and the points of contact for our business owners are unchanged.

The main thing that's changed is the freedom we now have to do things a bit differently. I think we're better being the underdog in some ways. We like to compete and we like to be entrepreneurial – that's the DNA we came from and we wanted to get back to that.

Any evolution in your product?

Our product continues to evolve, as everyone's does. We now have what we call a Generation 4 club: our Training Gym model. It's results-based with more functional training – our J Series concept – and the clubs themselves are a little bigger. It's a response to the newer training habits

we're seeing in the market and it's a very sexy product. However, we've managed to get a lot of cost-efficiencies through, so we can deliver it for a very similar price to before: AUS\$14.95 a week.

We'll continue to build out this Training Gym model, including introducing new revenue lines as 'premium economy' add-ons: products and services that can help members get better results and help business owners with their revenues. Things such as J Series, personal training, more nutritional products, more results tracking, that kind of thing.

The model differs slightly in the UK, because the big box budget club space is far more competitive there than in Australia. We've positioned Jetts as slightly more premium in the UK: the clubs are bigger, they're very service-orientated and things such as J Series are included in the membership. The value proposition is different and the clubs are performing really well. ▶

- In the meantime, the membership reciprocity we've always offered is still in place and as a Jetts member, you can visit any other Jetts Fitness club in the world, including in New Zealand, Thailand and Vietnam.

What are your growth plans?

Now we're coming out of the woods with COVID, we're going to get back to growth in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands. We'll also be looking seriously at other global markets for franchising.

Within Australia, we'll grow the franchise network as well as our own company-owned portfolio. We have two clubs in pre-sale at the moment that are corporately owned by us, so they'll be first out of the gate, but we'll be doing a lot more of these in the future.

In five years' time, I'd hope to have reached over 30 corporately owned clubs. From a franchise perspective, I don't like to give numbers – it becomes egotistical and feels like you're either underestimating or overestimating – but the network will definitely grow into new territories in Australia and we'll have entered a new international market for franchising, too. We'd also like to win the Best Place to Work award.

What drives you personally?

I care deeply about the business. From a leadership perspective, I consider myself the current custodian of Jetts.

My job is to keep us in the game. Sometimes you're up and sometimes you're down, but Jetts has already celebrated 15 years and has many, many years ahead of it.

I won't necessarily be CEO in another 15 years' time, but right now I'm committed to all the stakeholders in the business, from the recent investors, to the mum and dad whose ownership of a Jetts club in regional Victoria is their superannuation, to the team here on the Sunshine Coast who come and do this every day because they believe in what we do.



Gen Z won't tolerate contract tie-ins and hidden fees



Jetts is focusing on growth across its global portfolio



*Over the next decade, the industry
will realise that consumers ultimately
always get what they want*



I never take that for granted and I bear the weight of that responsibility and that's why I'll always play the longer game of good profit and investing in our people and our culture, because that's what keeps you successful long-term. I don't play the short-term game.

And your predictions for the sector?

I think there'll be a lot of change now. The rules have been torn up since the start of the pandemic and I think the concept we've spoken about for so long at Jetts – about being a 'good profit'

business – is on the cusp of becoming the norm. Gen Z aren't used to contracts or hidden fees and they won't tolerate them.

Over the next decade, the industry will realise that consumers ultimately always get what they want. The practices we as an industry haven't been very proud of – pressure selling and sales techniques, misleading marketing and hidden fees and all of that – are going to be challenged. As a result, I believe we'll end up in a much stronger position, in an industry we really can be proud of. ●

INTRODUCING BIOSTRENGTH

Technogym's Biostrength offers training innovation for everyone, enabling users to enjoy strength gains that fit their personal goals

Strength training has made a huge comeback in recent years featuring in the lives of many, regardless of ability, age or gender.

The rise in strength training among females has been a refreshing and welcome addition to strength training areas on the gym floor which have historically been dominated by male powerlifters and body building enthusiasts.

The popularity of strength training has naturally been linked to aesthetics, muscle definition and appearance,

Biostrength training

A programme for everyone

Biostrength has been designed to work with all types of muscular strength:

● Maximal force

The maximum amount of strength people are able to express with a single repetition. Corresponds to the highest weight we're able to lift by performing a single movement.

● Explosive force

The ability to express a peak force in the shortest amount of time, for example in a sprint or a jump. This demonstrates the body's neuromuscular ability to adapt quickly to a stimulus.

● Strength endurance

This represents our body's ability to withstand a prolonged workload and resistance – for example, during sports performance – that are not short in duration. Examples include cycling and rowing.

Biocircuit is backed by over 30 years of biomechanical research

however, there's now greater awareness and understanding of the many significant benefits gained by including strength training in exercise routines. It can boost bone density, muscle endurance and texture, regulate metabolism and improve general posture. Ligaments, tendons and joints also benefit, as do the health of the cardiovascular and nervous systems.

In addition to balancing body composition, strength training also enhances sports performance and can support prehab and rehab.

However, common mistakes can be made when strength training, which is where Technogym Biostrength comes in.

Remove guesswork with aerospace tech

Thanks to its Artificial Intelligence, Biostrength adapts and guides users every step of the way, ensuring up to 30 per cent better results in the same amount of time, when compared to traditional training.

Biostrength enables users to train with the correct workload, range of motion, posture and speed of execution while even indicating the number of sets and repetitions, as well as optimal recovery times.

The patented Biodriven system which sits at the heart of the Biostrength range, uses aerospace technology, offering six different types of resistance



“Thanks to AI, Biostrength ensures up to 30% better results in the same amount of time, when compared to traditional training”

and improving the effectiveness of exercise execution in line with the goals users want to achieve.

Biostrength offers four programmes which can be chosen to enable the user to achieve specific goals – developing muscle mass, boosting power, increasing strength and toning the body.

Biodriven recognises when users are beginning to fatigue and its 'spotter function' automatically kicks in to reduce the load, enabling users to complete the set, boosting motivation and encouragement to continuously improve.

Free to get on and go

In addition to delivering a personalised training experience, Biostrength users can jump right into their workout with Free Training mode. They simply adjust the seat, select the weight, and start training and Biostrength will measure their range of motion and provide real-time feedback.

More: www.technogym.com/hcm1

Biostrength

A training experience like no other

● **Correct Posture**

Following initial setup, Bioposture automatically customises the seat and range of motion.

● **Optimal workload**

Bioload determines the optimal workload for each person and progresses over time.

● **Help for the hardest reps**

Biodriven recognises when fatigue sets in and automatically reduces the resistance.

● **Enhanced motivation and engagement**

With Biofeedback, users get precise, real-time guidance on range of motion and tempo.

● **Advanced workout parameters**

From Pyramid training to drop sets, Biostrength has six additional training options for advanced users.

St Sidwell's Point
has been built to
Passivhaus standards



Everyone's talking about Green tech

Investment in green technology and best practice is a pressing priority.

Kath Hudson looks at some of the options available to operators

The time for action on energy has definitely arrived if more facility closures are to be avoided. Government support is a sticking plaster over a problem which won't go away any time soon and although the wholesale price of gas is now falling, this trend will take a while to filter through to the markets. In the meantime, volatility in the sector and skyrocketing prices are making green options more attractive than previously.

Exeter City Council has set a benchmark with its St Sidwell's Point Passivhaus leisure centre, a standard which the rest of the industry should aspire to for new builds, while other local authorities are investing in reducing carbon use with green energy tech.

After an £89,000 investment in a solar thermal system to heat the swimming pool at Easton Leisure Centre, Bristol City Council and Everyone Active are looking to do more installations across

the city, and Everyone Active is speaking to other partners about similar projects. Sustainability manager, Peggy Lee, says the solar thermal system reduced the centre's reliance on gas to zero in the summer and lowered energy costs and carbon emissions overall throughout the year.

If investment of this level isn't feasible for you at the moment, there are still alternative actions that can deliver savings. We ask the experts for more insights.



Christine Hartigan

S&P

Exeter Council in the UK has led the way in energy saving with its investment in St Sidwell's Point – built to Passivhaus standards, and the most energy efficient leisure centre in the UK – which is predicted to use up to 70 per cent less power and 50 per cent less water than a 'standard' leisure centre.

Passivhaus standards also require the presence of highly efficient heat recovery, high levels of insulation to the thermal envelope with exceptional levels of airtightness, high performance windows with insulated frames, thermal bridge-free construction and the use of mechanical ventilation.

The centre features energy-saving innovations, such as the water source heat pump used to recycle the waste heat from the backwash water to top up the water heating.

Once the heat is recovered, backwash water is also recycled to flush the building toilets, contributing to water savings.

A 40Wh/m³ energy target for the filtration system has been delivered through use of micro-filtration and considered pipe runs and sizes. In addition, all the pipework has been installed within the thermal envelope of the building to eliminate unnecessary heat loss.

This system of microfiltration has contributed to further energy savings, when compared to traditional sand filtration systems, because it requires less backwashing contributing to the water saving.

Increased thermal performance of the building envelope and elimination of cold bridges also enable an increase in pool hall humidity, reducing evaporative energy loss and replacement water heating costs, while also enabling reduced air change rates, as less dry air is required. Evaporation is reduced further by the overnight drain-down facility that has been installed under the pools.

Free energy generated by participants in the studios and gym is captured through polyvalent air source heat pumps and used to pre-heat water to the pool and showers. This is supplemented by heat recovered from backwash and discharge water. All these features ensure the building runs efficiently, with minimum energy loss or reliance on non-renewable sources.

The building was created with the vision of being 2080 Climate Resilient, which ensures it can



Free energy generated by participants in the gym is captured through air source heat pumps and used to pre-heat water to the pool

adapt to increasingly frequent weather extremes in the UK.

Built in line with standards defined by the Institute of Building Biology, the leisure centre provides a healthy hub for all users. Microfiltration technology in the swimming pools, for example, means that the water is of drinking quality.

Behaviour change
around energy usage can
generate large savings



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/GRAND PICTURE

John Treble

The Green Consultancy

We advise businesses to become an Energy Conscious Organisation (EnCO). This is a joint initiative run by Energy Services and Technology Association (ESTA) and Energy Institute (EI), endorsed by Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which has set up its own Behaviour Change Unit.

There are more than 140 behaviour change interventions that reduce energy consumption and in a recent decarbonisation plan, we identified 39 per cent savings – a massive cost and carbon reduction – without the need for any new technologies.

Alongside no-brainers like replacing lighting with LEDs, the quickest and least expensive win for saving energy is to study your consumption profiles and ensure everything is turned off when not needed. Changing behaviours to embed and maintain a good energy culture can make savings equal to, or more than, traditional technical improvements.

Most waste is invisible, but an energy audit by an independent energy consultant can identify and prioritise energy-saving opportunities, which need little capital investment. These savings opportunities can offer fast paybacks, sometimes instantaneous. It's necessary to optimise not just your Building Management System but also the complex systems it controls, many of which will be seriously inefficient.

Decarbonisation to reduce the rate of increase of climate change is, along with the energy crisis, a twin driver for energy efficiency. Every building requires a different combination of solutions, but the savings can be substantial.

As green technology goes mainstream, we expect it to get more cost-effective. Materials inflation and supply disruption are driving up costs, but energy prices are increasing more quickly, so payback periods are dropping, making now the ideal time to invest.



In a recent
decarbonisation
plan, we identified
39 per cent
savings without
the need for any
new technologies

Signify will supply lighting to all the UK's Everlast Gyms

Daniel Maskell

Signify

Designing gyms with LED lighting cuts the energy consumption by between 60 to 80 per cent, when compared to traditional lighting such as fluorescent or incandescent. Adding controls which create uniform light schedules for multiple sites from a single dashboard, can reduce operational costs by a further 10 to 15 per cent, as well as ensuring compliance and allowing efficient maintenance planning.

Our Interact connected lighting system includes multi-site management capability, providing centralised lighting control for all the gyms. The cloud-based platform collects data from all light points, via a connected lighting infrastructure displayed on a centralised dashboard. This enables better comparison, monitoring and management of lighting across multiple locations.

We've been appointed by Frasers Group to design and supply the



PHOTO: SIGNIFY

Connected lighting systems include multi-site management capability, providing centralised lighting control for a chain of gyms

lighting for all 69 Everlast Gyms across the UK. The lighting will add to the look and feel of the clubs, while boosting environmental credentials and cutting energy costs. Using different types of lighting to

create individual zones is an integral part of the upgrade. For example, soft light in some areas, and chevrons, lines and squares on the ceiling, which direct members to the different zones and identify individual areas.



The company is supplying all 69 Everlast Gyms

PHOTO: HOFER & CO PHOTOGRAPHY/EVERLAST GYMS

Buildings can be divided into energy microzones, says Pushmin

Vladimir Pushmin

Arloid Automation

One of the barriers to implementing energy saving measures is the significant capital outlay, however Arloid AI technology is available with no upfront costs.

A monthly charge – either based on the savings made or the size of the building – is applied once savings are evidenced, which usually takes a month.

The system brings about a reduction in energy use by designing a virtual building with identical construction materials, location, climate and personnel attributes as the real one. Once the digital twin is complete, the technology begins to learn. During this period, we run millions of iterations of a simulated year, gathering live data

on the correct response to different conditions and occupancy levels.

Buildings are divided into microzones and we work out a nuanced plan for each zone, reducing coolant, energy, and fuel consumption, minimising comfort

index deviation and aligning with carbon targets. We calculate current costs and the costs with AI implemented. The result is energy savings of up to 22 per cent in 60 days and a 30 per cent reduction in carbon footprint.



The system creates a digital twin of the building and then runs AI simulations to establish areas of energy saving

“

Around 500 solar thermal collectors will generate 122k+ kilowatts of thermal energy annually, replacing the need for natural gas

Christophe Williams

Naked Energy

We've worked with Woodgreen Leisure Centre in Oxfordshire to implement solar thermal technology to bring energy costs down and keep the open air pool viable. The

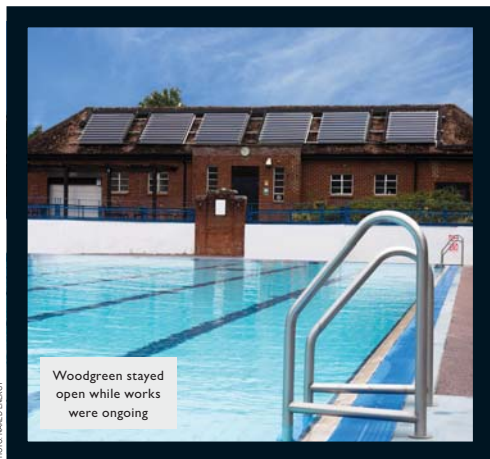


Williams says sites are now seeing a much quicker ROI

PHOTO: NAKED ENERGY

renewable technology that's been installed will save the leisure centre thousands of pounds a year in running costs, as well as 22.5 tons of carbon emissions annually.

Around 500 solar thermal collectors will generate 122k+



Woodgreen stayed open while works were ongoing

kilowatts of thermal energy annually, replacing the need for natural gas. Outside the peak swimming season, the installation provides hot water for both showers and heating.

Our Virtu product range has been designed to enable businesses to integrate the technology seamlessly with existing systems, including heat pumps, existing solar panels and traditional gas boilers.

Woodgreen already had a solar installation which provided electricity, but used natural gas to heat its outdoor pool, and we were able to adapt our design plans to fit around the technology already on-site.

Renewable technology can generate savings of thousands of pounds a year in running costs and as the price of fossil fuels increases, these savings will increase and the return on investment will be even quicker.

PHOTO: NAKED ENERGY



I've worked in the industry for 30 years and have never seen a project that has engendered such positive change in an organisation

team power

Faced with rising energy bills, South Downs Leisure CEO, Duncan Anderson and his team decided radical change was needed

For years we've been trying to reduce our impact on the environment by taking measures most will be familiar with, such as installing PIRs and LEDs, along with signs to ask staff to switch machines and lights off. While this was a nice effort, it wasn't having the long-lasting or required impact for the future.

In November 2021 I was introduced to Dr Amanda Turner who specialises in geology and the environment and after talking with her in depth, it was clear we both had a drive to reduce our environmental impact.

While some people had in the organisation had already bought into the fact that change

PHOTO: SOUTH DOWNS LEISURE



Duncan Anderson

was needed, not all members of staff were on this sustainability journey, so we devised a plan we hoped would significantly change the culture of the organisation.

Firstly, Amanda trained 50 key staff in environmental awareness over four sessions which involved them conducting audits of their own sites and I wrote a sustainability development strategy, focusing on the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit. We then devised – and linked – one-year and four-year development plans that recognised it was vital not only to focus on driving down utility costs, but also to look at how the organisation supports communities and staff in terms of their wellbeing and approach to sustainability.





PHOTO: WILKINSON EVERS

SPLASHPOINT LEISURE CENTRE

300 solar panels have been installed at Splashpoint Leisure Centre, supplying 98,000 kWh of electricity a year and reducing its carbon footprint by 27 tonnes of CO₂e.

To build knowledge in the team, 12 staff members signed up to do a TQUK Level 2 Certificate in understanding environmental sustainability – a six week course looking at various principles, including sustainable communities, development, energy management, transport, waste management and the social responsibility of business in relation to sustainability.

The impact of change

We started to see a great deal of office talk about both the six week course and the sessions delivered by Amanda and this got people thinking about what they needed to do, both at home and in the workplace.

We also kept the momentum going by ensuring there was investment in all areas of the three Ps. For example, we purchased some electric bikes

for staff to use to travel between our sites and reviewed all lighting, spending in the region of £75,000 on more LEDs and PIRs. We also promoted things we'd already done, such as installing solar power at one of our leisure centres.

After four months we put together a sustainability working group and sent them on a tour of the Rampion Wind Farm in the English Channel to learn how the marine ecosystem has regenerated around the turbines, as no dredging is allowed. We sent the same group on a trip to our recycling plant to prepare for our next initiative, which is reducing waste.

Start at the top

To drive leadership of the initiative it was decided that all board decisions had to be taken in light of the three Ps, in the same way they would consider





We recognise it's vital not only to focus on driving down utility costs, but also on how the organisation supports communities and staff

other important areas of the business, such as our financial, health and safety and equality impacts.

With so many of the team on board with this project now, we've seen daily staff suggestions for improvements and when we've made changes, these have been embraced and welcomed.

One of the biggest impacts has been in our utility bills when comparing 2019 with the first six months to 2022, during which time we've seen a reduction of 25 per cent in gas and 17 per cent in electricity. We expect to reduce our gas by the year end 2022 by over a million kWhs and our electricity by close to 500k kWhs.

By focusing on people, planet and profit, we believe we'll encourage people to work

for our organisation and for customers to remain members, in the same way people support organisations such as the National Trust and the Youth Hostel Association – because it's a good cause.

The most recent good news is that we've been shortlisted for two local awards and a business award for sustainability and working with the community.

I've worked in the leisure industry for 30 years and have never seen a project that has engendered such positive change in an organisation. We still have a great deal of work to do but with the team on board this will be a much easier ride as we enter some choppy waters. ●

A sustainability working group visited the Rampion Wind Farm



The team visited a recycling plant to learn about waste reduction

South Downs Leisure

Vision

- Make facilities carbon net zero by 2040, including pools
- Make dry side facilities carbon net zero by 2030

Mission

- To put sustainability at the forefront of key decisions made across the organisation

Values

- Training team members
- Educating customers on our journey
- Avoiding greenwashing
- Minimising the use of fossil fuels
- Understanding the supply chain
- Considering the three Ps in all decisions
- Focusing on the wellbeing of staff
- Supporting the wider community

Achieved to date

- Over 300 solar panels fitted with BEC
- New pool cover purchased
- LEDs installed across seven more sites
- Eco cups in cafés to reduce disposables
- All disposables now plant based
- Introduced plant based snacks with paper packaging in cafés
- Reducing the temperature of pools
- Reviewing backwashing
- Diverting grey water from pools to flush toilets

Installed new kit, including

- Tap sensors
- Variable speed drives
- Ultraviolet pool technology
- Combined heat and power (CHP)
- Heat blankets on pipes and valves



Crunch point

Enthusiasing children from all backgrounds about exercise paves the way for a healthy adulthood, while creating new customers for the sector, however, this virtuous circle is being broken by poor policymaking, says Martyn Allison



Tens of thousands of young people in the UK will miss out on physical activity and sport as a result of the cost of living crisis according to reports on the BBC, while Nicola Walker – CEO of Sported – said she was “alarmed” by a member survey which showed 67 per cent of members expect young people to be forced out of participating in activities over the next six months – even when those activities are free. Also 43 per cent are concerned about young people and families being unable to afford activities, and almost 20 per cent of operators fear they will need to halt activities altogether.

Not a new problem

While I recognised the seriousness of the problem, it's important to point out that for decades the children of poor families living in poor neighbourhoods have been missing out on recreational activity. They haven't had the money to join clubs, join leisure centre membership schemes or pay for swimming lessons on standing orders. They can't afford all the kit or the cost of travel to training

and matches. Their parents (or parent) don't have time to take them or support them because they're busy doing multiple jobs or looking after others.

All the data for years has shown these individuals and communities have remained excluded, but has the sector been concerned enough to do anything about it? Not really, nothing has really changed.

But all of a sudden the sector – concerned about poor post-COVID recovery, an energy crisis and now a cost of living crisis that's affecting its traditional customer base, suddenly needs to amplify these concerns to help justify demands for more funding from government and councils.

A hard-hitting report

I was still thinking about this situation when I received my copy of the Chiles Webster Batson Commission report on sport and low-income neighbourhoods. It has had a low profile and I suspect few of you will have heard about it, let alone read it, but it's the latest in a line of reviews into the current state of sport and activity – this time focusing on children and young people living in poorer neighbourhoods.



The report praises organisations such as Streetgames, which delivers its Fit and Fed initiative

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/POUND LINTREBA.COM



We can't afford to ignore this report in our search for the future of public sport and leisure services

I've been less than impressed by most previous reviews by government and the House of Lords and many of the reports produced by the sector itself, but this one actually makes sense. It gets to the heart of the inequality challenges we face, and offers meaningful solutions. I would argue that these solutions not only apply to children and young people, but also to adults and older people living in these communities.

There is absolute alignment between the concerns raised in the report, the national issue of worsening health inequalities and declining levels of activity. Its recommendations are key to helping deliver Sport England's strategy, *Uniting the Movement*, in that it calls for fundamental changes in how we fund, work and measure. We can't ignore this report in our search to define the future of public sport and leisure services.

About the report

The Commission took as a starting point the interconnectivity between life in a low-income neighbourhood and low rates of participation in physical activity and sport.

In these neighbourhoods, 72 per cent of people don't attain the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines of one hour a day of enhanced physical activity, while only 16 per cent are members of a sports club of any kind, and just 14 per cent visit leisure centres.

This is a shocking outcome after 40 years of claiming we've been tackling variable levels of participation.

The commission points out that "this under-representation of low-income young people in the activity system is not best explained ▶

- by reference to personal choice. Rather, there's a structural inadequacy that results in the exclusion of low-income young people".

Traditional sports clubs such as tennis, rugby, cricket, athletics, gymnastics and even football are less accessible to low income families than to more affluent families for reasons of geography, price and the tendency of such clubs to market themselves to people in their own image.

Most leisure centres now rely on annual membership schemes paid for by direct debits which are impossible to afford for families with fluctuating incomes, while discretionary pricing structures have always stigmatised people and constrained

access times. Swimming lessons – mainly paid for in 10-week blocks – can exclude poorer children. It's the same with gym membership where even the cost of even budget gyms is frequently prohibitive.

For years, we've encouraged traditional providers to do more to reach these disadvantaged communities, through policy, funding and measurement, but with limited and localised success.

A different approach

The commission's response to the challenge is to suggest working not through these traditional providers, such as governing bodies, trusts and local authorities, but to take a new approach by working

An LTO offering the right activities at the right price can attract more low income families



The commission suggests a new approach, working with Locally Trusted Organisations rather than NGBs

through Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs).

"Evidence to the commission showed LTOs, and the people who run them, are a vital part of the sporting ecosystem," said the report. "They're uniquely effective at activating children and young people the traditional system would classify as 'hard to reach'."

The report says there's evidence to show that more low-income families would be drawn into activity if their neighbourhood benefited from an LTO offering the right kind of activities, at the right price and at the right time.

LTO's in-depth understanding of the local area means they can tailor provision to what communities

need and want – as opposed to what funders think is important. Historically, they say "strategies to promote participation among this group have largely been unsuccessful because they've often been too 'top down' in their development and delivery, and have not taken account of the specific needs and preferences of diverse communities".

To enable children and young people living in disadvantaged communities take part in physical activity, provision needs to be built around the needs and assets of individuals and neighbourhoods using place-based and person-centred approaches.

"LTOs are ideally placed to support this endeavour. They understand local places, have the needed reach into communities, are trusted by local people, and are connected into local networks," says Chiles Webster Batson.

NAO consensus

This same view was also reflected in a recent National Audit Office (NAO) report, called *Grassroots Participation in Physical Activity and Sport*, which exposed failures in policy implementation by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Sport England.

The NAO report criticises the previous Sport England strategy, *Towards an Active Nation*, for its attempts to address inactivity in the most deprived communities.

It highlights the fact that Sport England failed to switch its funding strategy fast enough from





We may claim we want to pivot to health, but the fact remains that health inequalities continue to worsen and inactivity is growing in disadvantaged communities

- ▶ supporting traditional providers such as NGBs to funding organisations closer to more deprived communities such as LTOs and also criticised the inability to measure the impact of nationally-allocated funding through NGBs on local communities.

The NAO does, however, acknowledge the switch made during the pandemic to support the most deprived communities and the successes that were emerging in the form of local delivery pilots.

It also praises the way this shift of emphasis has been embedded in *Uniting the Movement*, which reaffirms the focus on addressing inactivity at a place level, while also calling for fundamental changes in how we work as a sector.

The commission's report echoes much of the learning coming out of the local delivery pilots and the work of organisations such as The Active Wellbeing Society in Birmingham and nationwide organisation, Streetgames.

These organisations were the only ones operating to Marmot's principles of proportionate universalism when I investigated this a few years ago, finding that most leisure facilities don't work to this principle but continue to over-serve better-off users and underserve poorer users, thus making health inequalities worse.

Mainstream facility operators are now facing a growing crisis due to partial post-COVID recovery, the energy crisis and a cost-of-living crisis while



at the same time their parent councils face huge funding pressures that will frustrate and maybe prevent any attempts to make them sustainable, let alone more accessible to poorer communities.

Crunch point

Some of us would argue that we've finally reached the crunch point for the sector.

We may well claim that we want to pivot to health but the fact remains that health inequalities continue to worsen and inactivity is again growing in our most disadvantaged communities, so our health partners will expect us to pivot to where the need is greatest.

All the evidence points to the value and importance of more opportunities to participate in physical activity and sport in these more deprived communities, particularly for children and young people, yet we've repeatedly failed to reach them.

**Locally Trusted
Organisations need
more secure funding
to be sustainable**



History tells us that traditional providers such as National Governing Bodies and many sport and leisure facility operators have consistently failed to meet the needs of these communities, and in the current financial situation are even less likely to suddenly be able to improve their contribution.

The commission, therefore, makes a compelling case for switching funding from these providers to working with LTOs if we now want to succeed, but they rightly point out that these have traditionally been funded through small short-term grants and in ways that leave them under-resourced and constantly vulnerable.

So if Sport England is now ready to roll out the next phase of place working by partnering with councils and Integrated Care Systems, will it be brave enough to refocus more funding away from the NGBs to LTOs?

Furthermore, will councils faced with facility infrastructure that does not meet the health

and wellbeing needs of their most deprived communities decide that these facilities have had their day and close them, investing instead in LTOs that actually better serve these communities, finally making them more sustainable?

If we're brave enough we could see the biggest reshaping of the sector we've ever witnessed, creating a very different system that is finally delivering a universal service, but in a way that is actually proportional to need. ●

Find out more:

The Chiles Webster Batson Commission on Sport and Low-Income Neighbourhoods

www.sportcommission.org

Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity. National Audit Office.

www.HCMmag.com/NAO

l'Orange Bleue offers in-house professional training for over 100 young people a year

MUSCU
Libre

l'Orange
bleue

“

*I'm preparing l'Orange Bleue
to expand outside France*



The majority of clubs are operated under licence

PHOTO: L'ORANGE BLEUE

JOSÉ NERCELLAS



PHOTO: L'ORANGE BLEUE

The CEO of l'Orange Bleue talks to Frances Marcellin about revamping the brand and expanding into Spain and Italy

Where did it begin?

For most of my career I worked in the retail industry, in fashion, for brands that are well established in France, such as Decathlon, Okadi and Orchestra.

How did you cross paths with l'Orange Bleue?

The fitness industry is completely new to me, but initially my contact was through a meeting with l'Orange Bleue president, Thierry Marquer, who founded the company in 1996.

I had a good feeling about the business, it's aims and the people who are leading it, including Bertrand Roué, who is one of the shareholders and Axio Capital, the private equity firm that's been financing the company since 2019.

What made you decide to switch to the fitness industry?

There were three things: one of them is sport. I played basketball for a long time and today I still take part in sport. The second – related to the workings



If our business model works well, we could envisage opening between 200 and 300 in Spain

of the organisation – is that they have a team in-house that trains around 100 young people a year.

These young students receive homologated diplomas via a partnership with training body L'École Nationale de la Culture Physique (ENCP). It's a fantastic programme, because after their training they're ready for employment. We also train our trainers and coaches – overall around 2,000 people within our organisation a year.

The third major factor was the potential of the company. L'Orange Bleue has around 400 clubs in France and we believe there's the opportunity to open between 200 and 300 more in this country. We have just three clubs in Spain, but there is huge potential to expand there and go into Italy as well. So that's a major reason why I joined the company: I'm preparing L'Orange Bleue to expand outside France.

You're aiming to open 850 clubs in the next five years?

Yes, we have 400 clubs today, and we're opening between 50 to 100 clubs a year in France. In reality I think the potential is even bigger than that. When you look at the map of France, there are areas where we have very few locations. If our business model works well, we could envisage opening between 200 and 300 in Spain.

Where is the fitness market in its product lifecycle?

What I see is that fitness, compared to retail, is a few years behind. Here in France, as well as in Spain and Italy, there are still a lot of private clubs, with one operator per club. But in the same way that it changed with retail, brands are going to increase their volume and market share.

So you think there will be consolidation?

Yes I do. It happened in Spain while I was working there in 2007. Between 25 and 35 per cent of

the retail industry was wholesale. Now wholesale in Spain has a small share of the market.

Will you grow by acquisition or new-build?

It could be that our business model evolves in such a way that we can acquire, however, today, 98 per cent of our clubs are built from scratch. It depends on the country and the opportunity.

Have you done global rollouts before?

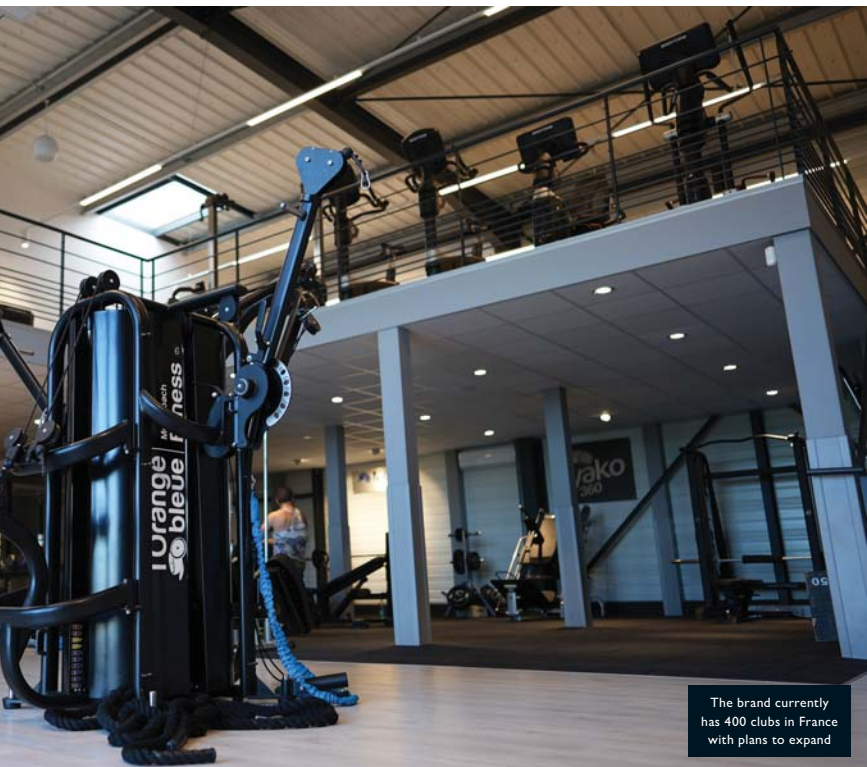
I've worked with the same business model with other brands in the past, when I opened in more than 30 countries.

I'm here to support the company in changing its mindset ready for international expansion, because from one country to another there are different cultures and languages and sometimes a different way of working.

Did these companies also operate via a franchise model?

They had both, however just to clarify, at L'Orange Bleue we don't see ourselves working as a 'franchiser', in French our model is called a 'licence de marque'.





The brand currently has 400 clubs in France with plans to expand

PHOTO: L'ORANGE BLEU

How is that different from a franchise?

In the level of engagement and the way of working with partners. It's also a different approach from a legal point of view. The contract with a partner mainly consists of transferring know-how and giving operational follow up.

What are the financial arrangements?

The fee for a licence de marque is around €40,000 – a total investment €300,000 for a 600sq m club. They also have to create their own company to run the clubs.

We have partners running one facility and others with between five and 10 clubs. Around 50 per cent of our partners have more than one. In the future we'd like to have multi-licensee figures of around 70 per cent.

How many clubs do you own directly?

We currently own 17 clubs, the rest are held under a licence de marque.

How do you think the name l'Orange Bleu will travel internationally?

I believe it will work well as an international brand. I'm Spanish and I've lived in England and for me, l'Orange Bleu has a French touch.

It is a very strong and unusual brand name – a 'blue orange' is very memorable and visual.

You have fitness clubs and then separate wellness clubs, what are the differences?

Fitness and wellness are two different concepts with two very different kinds of clients.

The fitness clubs are 650sq m with 20-30 per cent of the space dedicated to group classes. The wellness clubs much smaller at around 350sq m, allowing more proximity with the client.

They have a spa area with sauna, hammam and contrast bathing as well as some

gym machines, but it's really a completely different type of business from fitness.

Wellness is our new challenge and today we have 11 wellness clubs and I think it's a niche with huge potential – not a huge volume business like fitness, but we would like to develop this part of the company, and we're currently working on the business approach and the concept.

Had you considered putting wellness facilities into your fitness concept?

No. It's two different approaches, two different clients, two different worlds. The market for wellness is between 35- and 55-years-of-age with more women attending than men.

At our fitness clubs the age profile used to be 25- to 35- or 45-years-of-age, now it is 18-30. The mix between men and women is 50-50. I think young people have more confidence to go to the gym and are influenced by social media – you see the stars and influencers doing sports and fitness, it's a trend.

How did the pandemic impact your business?

From a cash point of view we were in a better position after the lockdowns than before, as the French government helped a lot with subsidies which related well to our size and overheads.

For clubs with bigger spaces and overheads, it was more difficult. We managed to keep about 70 per cent of our members between lockdown and reopening.



We've done a design refresh taking the concept upmarket by changing everything, including the lighting and entrances

Before COVID-19 we had 380,000 members, but after losing 30 per cent, this figure dropped to 266,000. Today we have around the same as pre-COVID, so we have rebuilt the business well.

What's your membership forecast for 2023?

By 2023, we expect to go beyond 400,000 members across all our sites.

What classes do you offer?

We've developed class courses under the brand of Yako within our group, and there are 20-30 different types dedicated to everything from yoga and HIIT to cardio. We don't offer virtual classes



The new La Chappelle club in Rennes retains its church features



PHOTO: L'ORANGE BLEUE



Fitness and wellness are treated as two different concepts

or use screens, we're very much human-to-human, with our certified coaches running the courses.

Overall our trainers deliver 50 classes each week, and in total we offer almost a million classes each year in our clubs.

Do those with the licence de marque pay extra to deliver these?

The licence for the use of our Yako classes is included in the management fees which they pay on a monthly basis. Every year we change some of the classes and introduce new ones. Yako was launched ten years ago.

l'Orange Bleue recently launched a new look

Yes, we've done a design refresh and unveiled the new concept at a big event in Paris recently in front of 300 stakeholders.

We've changed everything, including the lighting, changing areas and entrance. It's like in the retail industry when they change the concept and the image of a store. We've taken the concept more upmarket and made the clubs cosier.

Do you now have hundreds of locations that need to be retrofitted?

Some of them, yes, others, no. It depends on the age of the club. This happens in every brand when they refresh the concept – they do it progressively, depending on the needs of the club or store, it's the same approach.



A new wellness and fitness app will launch by the end of 2022

PHOTO: BERTREK



Wellness is our new challenge – I think it's a niche with huge potential and we're working on the business approach and the concept

Our typical refurbishment cycle is five to seven years, but the concept evolves over time as well, so in three years we expect to have all the locations upgraded.

Which club are you most proud of?

Normally our clubs are in retail parks, in the regular box-shape building, but in Rennes we have a very nice new club called La Chappelle. It used to be an old church and we've kept the style of the church, even the windows, so it's very much a flagship location for us.

Is your 2022 goal of €156m attainable?

It is – we have to achieve this turnover.

Tell us about your tech

We're implementing a new tech platform and by the end of the 2022 we'll launch a new website and mobile app. The app will offer

advice on health, nutrition, exercise – all kinds of different subjects. Members should also be able to use their phone to get into the gym.

However, our added-value – physically speaking – is our proximity with the client and the way we follow-up with them, and we're aiming to keep that culture of proximity when it comes to how we deliver digital. This is important for us, as it's the way Thierry Marquer developed the business – to have human impact.

We know 65 per cent of people going to fitness clubs do other activities outside of that. We've been figuring out how to keep that connection with clients when they're away from the clubs and how to engage them with other services we offer.

This is why we've relaunched the physical concept and once the digital platform is ready, it will complete our offering, so we're ready for the next stage of our development. ●



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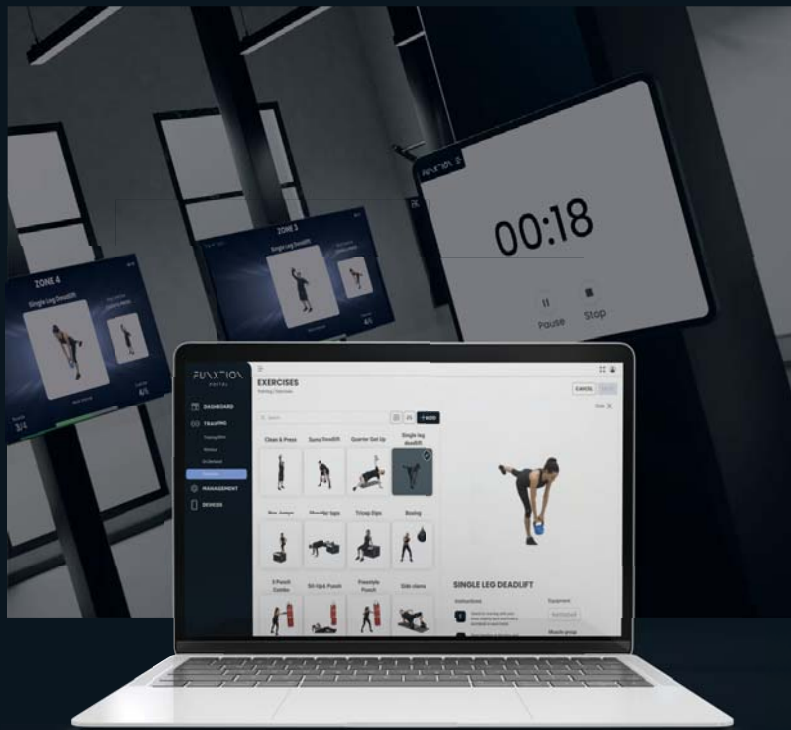
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Streamed content gives members the flexibility they need

PHOTO: FUNCTION



Reach and engage

Function has elevated the member experience at SportCity with a new omnichannel offering

Customer-centric gym operator, SportCity, was searching for an adjacent service to expand on its live group classes. The company already delivers Function's virtual classes, digital workouts, and training plans to its members via a dedicated app and wanted to provide this extra service inside its gyms, too.

"We pride ourselves on our exceptional live group class experiences and will continue to offer this service to our members. However, some members cannot attend scheduled class times and we needed a way to offer this core service to those members," said Debbie Koekkoek, group fitness product owner.

The company chose Function's Virtual Player (VP) to do the job and started with 30 of its 113 clubs in the Netherlands. The Function VP is in-gym technology that streams content to group studios via a control panel and a display screen.

How it works

The VP connects to Function's SaaS content platform that houses an extensive library of digital fitness content, including SportCity content, its selected third-party provided content and hundreds of Function's white-labelled virtual classes. This allowed the operator to customise Function's virtual class videos with its own company logo and colours.

"Function supported our strategy to evolve our services adjacent to our live classes, helping our members to work out with greater flexibility and choice – be it in the physical facility or digitally at home," said Koekkoek.

"Our member attendance in the group studios has improved since we introduced an omnichannel approach, while our member engagement has also increased overall through greater participation as our members combine virtual with live group classes," she said.

The company has started trialling Function's Multi Screen Solution



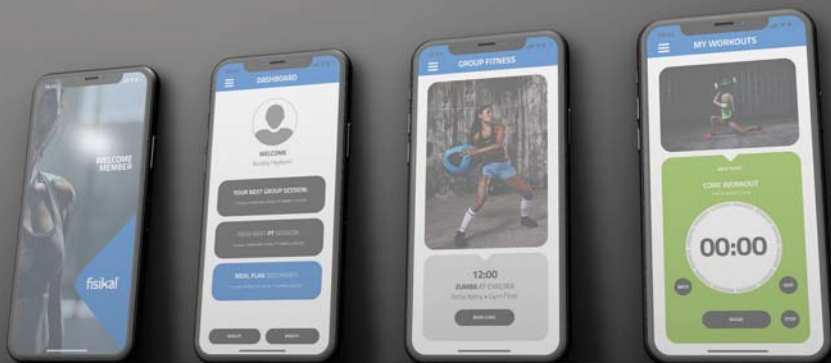
Our member attendance in the group studios has improved since we introduced an omnichannel approach

Debbie Koekkoek, SportCity

(MSS) across four of its sites. The MSS streams single digital exercise demonstrations and workout circuits across multiple screens across the functional gym floor space via the VP control panel.

"With customisable content and the ability to extend the capability of a brand through omnichannel integration, operators can effectively reach and engage consumers beyond those willing and able to visit a physical facility, hugely elevating the commercial opportunity of the business," said Mendel Witzenhausen, co-founder and chief innovation officer at Function. ●
● www.Function.com

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PHOTO: EZDIHAR SPORT

Evox Gyms in Saudi Arabia is working with Fisikal on its tech

Successful solutions

Fisikal has been appointed by Ezdihar Sport to deliver an unrivalled digital member experience for its Evox gyms

Evox Clubs, a collective of three luxury fitness and wellness hubs in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has engaged fit tech business Fisikal to develop and manage a new, custom-branded, digital ecosystem that will deliver an unmatched member experience.

The brand, owned by Ezdihar Sport, will see the integration take place over the next month, following on from the success of Fisikal's custom-branded roll-out across its mid-market chain, Activ.

"Evox Clubs are already recognised as one of the most exclusive fitness and wellbeing providers in the region, with members paying high end prices for an outstanding experience," says John Greenwood, CEO of Ezdihar Sport. "Our holistic approach blends cutting-edge technology with personalised and scientifically-proven training methods designed to elevate physical as well as mental health.

Upgrading the digital offering

"Fisikal will work with us to upgrade our digital offer, providing a Fisikal solution that includes membership and payment management, group exercise and PT bookings to deliver a fully inter-operable experience

that supports our members at every stage of their fitness and wellbeing journey," said Greenwood.

Earlier this year, Fisikal partnered with Ezdihar Sport to create a digital ecosystem to service its existing three mid-market Activ clubs and support a rapid roll-out of new clubs over the next two to three years. Greenwood adds: "Our brief for both brands is highly bespoke and Fisikal has met the challenge with successful solutions every time.

"For example, local culture requires our clubs offer totally separate services and facilities for men and women. This segregation needed to flow through content delivery and booking schedules accessible via the app, only showing services relevant to the gender of the user. We also needed access to bespoke reports and BI dashboards to give us immediate real-time access to key business markers and analytics.

"We've been blown away by the support and the 'can do' mindset of the Fisikal team. Of course, this is a marathon not a sprint, so we continue to work closely with them on developing a world class experience." ●

● www.fisikal.com



PHOTO: EZDIHAR SPORT

We've been blown away by the support and the "can do" mindset of the Fisikal team

John Greenwood, CEO

Tangible results for optimal living

The team at PGA Catalunya is delivering integrative programmes as part of a 360-degree wellness model that treads new ground for the industry

The PGA Catalunya resort in north-east Spain is famous for its link to the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA), with the resort having hosted the PGA European Tour numerous times since it opened in 1999.

Its flagship golf course – designed by Angel Gallardo and Neil Coles – is among the top 100 in the world and is regularly voted number one in Spain.

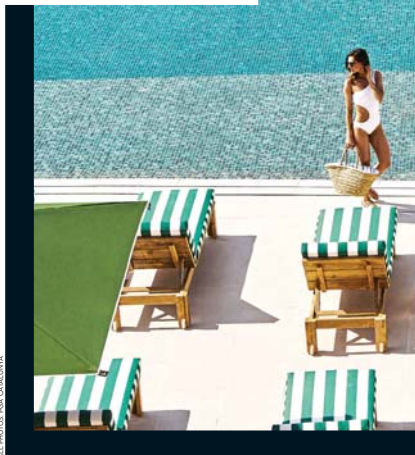
Resort owner, Irish entrepreneur Denis O'Brien, who also owns the Quinta Do Lago golf resort in Portugal, has spent the last two decades developing the resort as a year-round destination.

The most recent investment is a €5m (US\$5.3m, £4.3m), 1,000sq m Wellness Centre, adding to the resort's existing facilities, which include restaurants and leisure facilities, hotels and holiday rentals and high-end residences.

Ramping up the wellness offering

Although the resort featured a small gym and spa previously, CEO David Plana admits it needed a far more comprehensive facility. "Golf is not enough," he explains. "You need family activities, outdoor pursuits, sports, gastronomy and, of course, wellness. People expect this, and as diversification is important to us, we're looking for the new Wellness Centre to attract people for longer stays and also to appeal to guests with different budgets and demographic profiles."

Despite a year of on-off COVID restrictions, the summer of 2021 and 2022 highlighted a regional appetite for travel, with hotel occupancy reaching more than 75 per cent in July and August, while golf and hotel revenues returned to 2019 levels or higher during the same period. Plana says he'd like to retain this increasing regional and domestic clientele, and adding more wellness is part of achieving that mission.



ALL PHOTOS PGA CATALUNYA



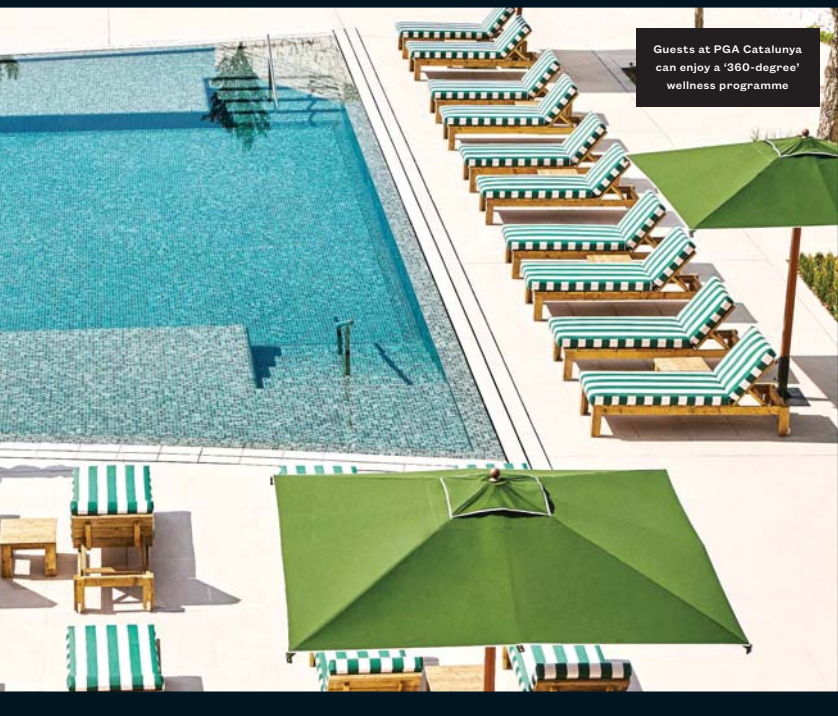
We're looking for the new Wellness Centre to attract people for longer stays

David Plana, CEO



Luxury is no longer the story, people want tangible results

Greg Payne, consultant to PGA Catalunya



Guests at PGA Catalunya can enjoy a '360-degree' wellness programme

“PGA Catalunya encourages guests to invest in their wellbeing with precision and efficiency

“Accessible” and “recovery” may not be buzzy marketing terms, but they sit neatly at the heart of the Wellness Centre’s concept. Offering a programme-based approach that sits between clinics like Chenot, Lanserhof and SHA Wellness, and operators such as Aman or Mandarin Oriental, PGA Catalunya encourages guests to invest in their wellbeing with precision and efficiency that equates to accessibility, both in time and value for money.

A new business model

Wellness industry consultant, Greg Payne, who worked with the resort’s team to conceive the wellness offering, explains: “The bigger-is-better model hasn’t worked for the hospitality industry since the 2008 financial

crash, with return on investment in 2,000sq m-plus facilities failing to add up. There’s been a vacuum since, as we’ve waited for the next model to be developed.

“Relaxation, a massage, a robe and a small gym are simply not enough these days, with consumers wanting more tangible results. In short, luxury alone is no longer the story.

“At PGA Catalunya, we’ve created day-long and short-stay programmes that support clients looking for symptomatic relief, by combining elements you’d find at world-leading wellness clinics, but which also offer incredible value for the operator when you remember they’re being delivered in a 1,000sq m space.

“Considering that gyms, wellness facilities and thermal areas in particular have an average build cost ▶

The resort has a family wellness offering based on activity



ALL PHOTOS: PGA CATALUNYA



The concept represents a 360-degree offering to anyone seeking to restore equilibrium, resolve a problem, or take preventative action

Núria Camins, wellness manager

► of €3,000 (US\$3,200, £2,600) per sq m, this translates into real financial impact on the potential for profit."

The Wellness Programmes, which start at €385 (US\$411, £327) per person, per day, combine movement, fitness, relaxation, holistic touch therapies, nutritional expertise and high-tech treatments – some very new to Spain – all with a recovery focus. "Back in 2018, I visited a football club and saw how state-of-the-art technologies such as cryotherapy and oxygen chambers were being used to get athletes back on their feet," says Payne. "I thought about the golf/sports setting at PGA Catalunya and how there could be a continuum from spa right through to athletic performance for anybody interested in optimal living."

Wellness manager Núria Camins, a 15-year wellness industry veteran, says the new concept represents a 360-degree offering to anyone seeking to restore equilibrium, resolve a particular problem, or take preventative action. This holistic approach benefits from the integration of high-tech therapies because "they are able to access a level of the body – the deeper cellular levels – which hands cannot". The important distinction, however, is that the

tech works as a complementary and amplifying component to touch, nutrition and movement.

The programmes

While the menu will continue to evolve, there are currently three wellness programmes: Immunity Support, Weight Loss and Detox, and Ageing Well. The two-day Ageing Well programme, priced at €755, (US\$807, £642) includes access to the gym, a signature hammam experience, a 60-minute massage, an IV vitamin infusion, four additional high-tech therapy sessions, light lunches and wellness refreshments.

"We personalise elements to suit our client's needs, but each programme addresses specific concerns that are relevant today," says Camins. "COVID-19 has shown the importance of a healthy immune system, so our Immunity Support programme works to improve its functionality through Kneipp and hammam treatments combined with infusions, photobiomodulation and oxygenation therapy.

"With our Weight Loss option, we believe that the body benefits from a seasonal reset and detox, so here we work on optimising a client's metabolism,



We've been looking at non-invasive wellness screening that would take place before and after the programmes to show tangible improvements in physiological biomarkers

Sports teams use PGA Catalunya for their training camps

stimulating their circulation and sharing nutritional advice that moves them towards clean eating, rather than calorie counting. Finally, our Ageing Programme is really about the client's quality of ageing rather than being 'anti-ageing' in its focus."

A spa menu offers individual treatments and rituals alongside celebration experiences, for example, a one-day Spa-Cation is €300 per person (US\$321, £255), to appeal to the Wellness Centre's target audience. This ranges from residents who have homes or rentals at the resort, and local visitors – from Girona, Barcelona or the wider Catalonia region – to European guests, including from France, Germany, the Nordic countries, Switzerland and the UK.

Getting assessed

Experts assess guests, looking for things such as issues with sleep, feelings of tiredness, burnout or sadness and dehydrated skin, and then recommend the most appropriate high-tech treatments. If they don't want to commit to a programme, guests can take a single session to deal with a particular complaint, such as problems with the sciatic nerve. ►



The fitness facilities have been kitted out by Technogym

About PGA Catalunya

Less than an hour from Barcelona, 20 minutes from the Costa Brava and 15 minutes from Girona, PGA Catalunya Golf and Wellness is based around real estate development.

It incorporates two championship golf courses, two hotels – the 5-star Hotel Camiral, designed by architect Lázaro Rosa-Violán and the contemporary Lavida Hotel – as well as a Kids' Club facilities and five restaurants.

PGA Catalunya Golf and Wellness offers outdoor activities designed to enable guests to enjoy the surrounding countryside, including Forest Park – a family adventure park with a zip-wire, cycling, trekking and horse-riding on trails through nearby forests and mountains.

Villa plots are for sale, enabling owners to develop their own property in keeping with the resort's architectural concepts, while the resort offers move-in-ready, architect-designed villas.

The Residents' Club offers owners and guests access to facilities including a 20m outdoor pool, solarium, children's pool, Technogym -quipped gym, and the new spa and wellness offering. www.pgacatalunya.com



(Above) The golf course has hosted the PGA tour numerous times. (Below) the spa is part of the wellness offering



ALL PHOTOS PGA CATALUNYA



The choice of technologies is designed to aid recovery for sports professionals. Recent visitors have included English and Polish pro football players

► Indeed, the choice of technologies is designed to aid sports and workout recovery for sports enthusiasts, semi-professionals and professionals alike; recent visitors have included English and Polish football players who were particularly enthusiastic about their experience of whole-body cryotherapy – one of the most popular high-tech therapies at €60 (US\$64, £51) per session.

During a cryotherapy session, clients step into a Mecotec chamber, initially set at a temperature of -60°C for 30 seconds followed by two-and-a-half minutes at -110°C. “As a client stands in the extreme cold, blood in the body rushes to protect vital organs. As soon as they step out, it floods back into the system, boosting circulation, moderating adrenal stress and releasing endorphins,” says Camins.

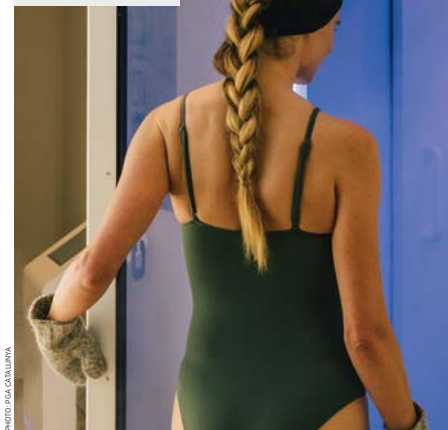
Popularised by personalities from Lewis Hamilton to Cristiano Ronaldo, the therapy reduces inflammation and muscular pain.

Equally intriguing but less extreme, photobiomodulation light therapy also priced at €60 entails clients lying down for 20 to 30 minutes inside a MitoGen pod, during which time a red laser light powers cellular regeneration by stimulating ATP energy production. The third tech option is Oxygen Chamber Therapy, while the fourth involves IV Infusions provided by London’s NADclinic.

IV infusions

The PGA team worked with Dr Saskia Kloppenburg of NADclinic to produce three specific infusions containing different combinations of vitamins, minerals, amino acids and electrolytes: the first is formulated for sport and exercise recovery, the second to boost the immune system and the final for essential immunity. They’re delivered on-site by a registered nurse in the privacy of a treatment room.

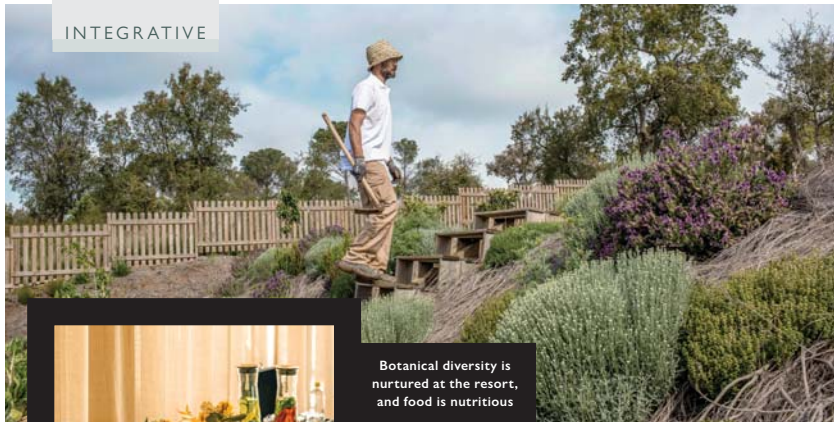
Whole-body
cryotherapy reduces
inflammation



Camins acknowledges that IV infusions are proving the most challenging to introduce: “International guests, from the US, are the most likely to be familiar with them, so we’ve had to think carefully about how to introduce them for our European guests. We’re still testing this but, as with all the technologies, it helps when our therapists explain how they work in person during an introduction to the facilities, and how they can specifically support a guest’s particular needs.”

This challenge of ‘the unknown’ is also picked up by Payne, who says: “A few years ago, cryotherapy would have been regarded as too extreme to be included in this kind of environment, but now it’s going mainstream. And with the IV Infusions, we’ve had to tread carefully to consider the correct level of staffing and medical oversight to deliver them with a sense of security and assurance.”

While it’s still early days, are there any promising signs about tech uptake? “When we opened, we made the decision to focus on spa over the summer, returning to wellness in the winter,” says Payne. “Despite not pushing wellness, we were encouraged to see that the high-end leisure market already had an appetite for tech-led treatments, which made up 26 per cent of the treatment mix in the summer months. But the most interesting fact was that they were additional treatments, contributing to an ►



Botanical diversity is nurtured at the resort, and food is nutritious



ALL PHOTOS: PGA CATALUNYA

- average of 1.8 treatments per guest over a three-day stay, meaning they represented incremental income and not just a shift in the therapies sold."

As to be expected of a facility that aims to become one of the leading European wellness centres, PGA Catalunya's spa partners are highly regarded and include Aromatherapy Associates and Biologique Recherche. Clients booking individual rituals, treatments and facials have access to the thermal pavilion in which to recover and relax by experiencing the hot and cold pools, sauna and steam.

Food and environment

Nutritionist Mireia Cervera has worked with the destination's executive chef David Vives to create menus for each wellness programme. "We use integrative nutrition to help our clients achieve all-round health; not just to lose weight," she says. "In a world that can make it challenging to maintain control over your diet, we guide clients by showing them how a natural, nutritious diet can help prevent disease and improve symptoms."

Cervera is available to personalise diets, but there is a sample seasonal menu created in advance for



We believe in using integrative nutrition to help our clients achieve all-round health; not just to lose weight

Mireia Cervera, nutritionist



We're preserving green infrastructure, nurturing botanical diversity and reintroducing near-extinct species

Oriol Dalmau, biologist

each programme. For example, a typical Immunity Support meal includes a salad of cabbage, celery, apple, pomegranate and raisins, followed by tofu, mushroom and pumpkin lasagne, and fruit salad with a soup of green tea, fennel and celery to finish.

Enclosed in 540 hectares of tranquil green landscape and a recipient of the IAGTO Sustainability Award for Nature Protection, PGA Catalunya's environment is akin to a natural reserve. In-house biologist, Oriol Dalmau, is responsible for "preserving green infrastructure, nurturing botanical diversity and reintroducing near-extinct species to the terrain". With its own organic garden, vineyard and beehives, the destination's secure and spacious green setting is well suited to the addition of the Wellness Centre, which was built from scratch. ●



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FINDING A BALANCE

The pandemic has provided a fertile breeding ground for eating disorders. Kath Hudson looks at how the industry can respond



It's good for people to discover what makes them feel energised



Encourage members to see the bigger picture of what exercise can give them beyond weight loss

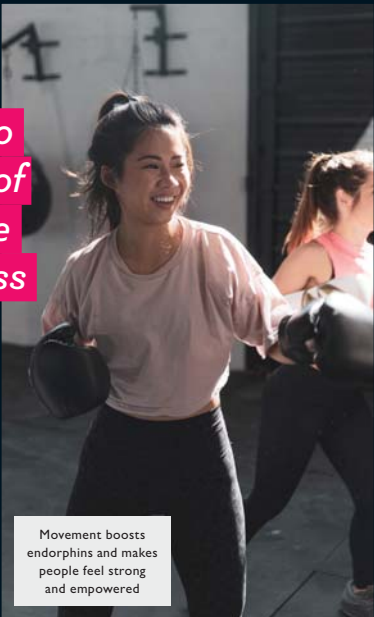
For someone suffering from an eating disorder the triggers are everywhere – calories listed on menus, anxiety-inducing government campaigns about weight and before and after selfies by influencers.

Other culprits include the labelling of 'good' and 'naughty' food which is embedded in our culture and even characters in books and films who are described as 'fat' and seen as less desirable. The list goes on.

Implicit is the need for females to be smaller and males to be ripped and this can be confusing for someone suffering from an eating disorder – they were just doing what they thought was right.

Eating disorders were on the rise pre-pandemic but have skyrocketed around the world since 2020. At its peak during lockdowns, calls to eating disorder charity Beat's helpline increased to 300 per cent above pre-pandemic levels, while the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health is urging parents to look out for signs of eating disorders in children and young people: its snapshot survey suggests some parts of the UK have seen a three- or four-fold increase in cases in the last year.

Consultant in paediatrics at King's College Hospital and South London and the Maudsley,



Movement boosts endorphins and makes people feel strong and empowered

Dr Simon Chapman, has worked in the field for 10 years and never been so busy. He says referrals trebled in the year after March 2020 and according to the NHS, 2,508 children were admitted to hospital because of eating disorders from April to October 2019 rising to 4,238 in the same period in 2021: an increase of almost 70 per cent.

It appears to be a global issue and medical records from 80 US hospitals show a 25 per cent increase in adolescent eating disorder patients from March 2020 to August 2021. A report published in *The Lancet* earlier this year, entitled *The hidden burden of eating disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic* said disorders are most prevalent in high-income countries, but a trend has been observed around the world, especially in east and south Asia. There are also multiple reports from Europe, Australia and North America to show increases.

Thanks again COVID

NHS associate clinical director for children and young people's mental health, professor Prathiba Chitsabesan, says the rise could partly be attributed

- to the unpredictability created by the pandemic, including the sense of isolation, disruption to routines and experiences of loss and uncertainty.

Author of *Anorexia and other eating disorders*, Eva Musby, says her work supporting parents of young people with eating disorders indicates that lockdown and pandemic-induced stress, anxiety and isolation have contributed the rise. However, she cites another reason, which is relevant for our industry – extreme exercise. “Many parents have told me their child got obsessed with online exercise programmes,” she says. “Their eating disorder started with a decision to ‘eat healthy’, and/or take part in online workouts. At first it seemed good thing to give structure to the day and lift the mood. Until it became obsessive.”

This is where it can get difficult for our industry, because for an unfortunate minority, exercise can become a weapon they use to punish themselves.

The gym is a social place to make friends and exercise should be fun and not compulsive

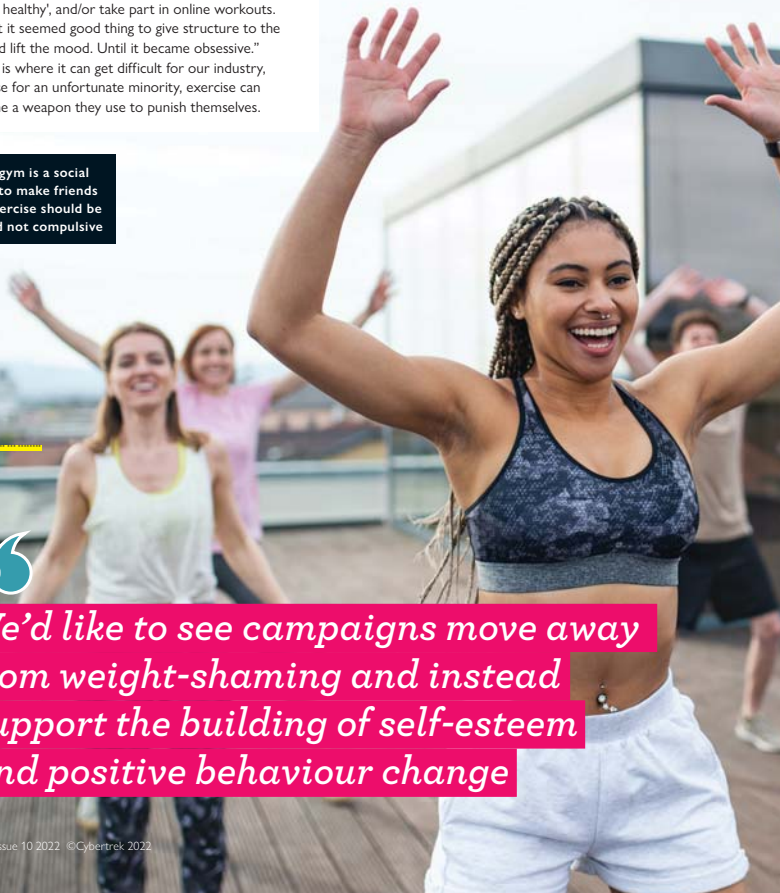
Exercise takes on a distorted meaning: it's compulsive, punishing and used to atone for food which has been eaten – going to the gym becomes a negative addiction, an obsession, a superstition.

How to step in

There's a lot the industry can do alleviate the problem, and become part of the solution. Firstly, being aware this is a problem and looking out for negative or disordered behaviours.



We'd like to see campaigns move away from weight-shaming and instead support the building of self-esteem and positive behaviour change



"It would be beneficial for fitness professionals to be aware of the signs of an eating disorder and the support which is available, as early intervention can play a large role in recovery," says Umairah Malik, clinical advice coordinator at Beat. "Being aware of warning signs of an eating disorder and including these in messaging could also support people to look out for each other. This should also include signposting for support."

But how can you tell if a regular member has a problem or is just very keen? Physical size is



The facts

- Eating disorders are complex and come about through a mix of genetic, biological and cultural factors. Those suffering often have key personality traits: competitiveness, perfectionism, a need for control and low self esteem. They often judge themselves harshly and compare themselves negatively to others.
- For someone genetically susceptible to an eating disorder, the greatest trigger is negative energy balance – expending more energy than you consume.
- An element of mastery is felt about being able to override the biological drive for food. The compulsion to restrict food or over-exercise is benign to start with, but escalates into a nagging, offensive, critical, frightening and persistent internal voice.
- If sufferers don't obey they're overcome with shame and self-loathing. The body is in a battle with itself: part wants to find food to avoid starvation, the eating disorder voice wants to override this.
- At any one time, 1.25 million people in the UK are struggling with an eating disorder. (Source: Beat)
- Globally, 2.2 per cent of women and 0.3 per cent of men experience anorexia nervosa at some point, with it typically starting in the mid-teens. (Source: NHS)
- One in six adults is at risk of developing an eating disorder (Source: NHS)
- Many eating disorders are exacerbated by something the individual saw or heard in the media. (Source: Beat)
- People with eating disorders can be diagnosed with anorexia nervosa, ARFID (avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder), binge eating, bulimia nervosa, OSFED (other specified feeding or eating disorder)
- It takes three and a half years on average to get treatment, because people don't realise they're ill. It's common for them to believe they're not unwell enough to deserve treatment, even if they're seriously ill.
- The vast majority of people with eating disorders are within a normal weight range.
- Eating disorders are second only to opioid overdose as the deadliest mental illness.
- Eating disorders are treatable and people can and do make full and sustained recoveries.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ANSEL APPLIS

Offering support

Concerned about a member? Here's how to start a conversation...

Before approaching someone get trained and informed and make a plan of what to say. A call to the Beat Helpline (0808 801 0677) could help shape the conversation. It's a good idea to start by mentioning the observations which have led to the concerns and ask open questions.

Choose a safe place to speak where you feel comfortable and won't be disturbed. Eating disorders are about how a person is feeling, so that could be a starting point for your discussion.

In the early stages of change, people may experience denial, so it may be necessary to have the conversation more than once. Fitness professionals can signpost people to Beat's Helpline which they can call, as well as using the webchat service, or sending an email. The HelpFinder is an online directory of eating disorder services.

Social media can be unhelpful to those people with low self esteem, who are prone to comparing themselves negatively to others, so suggest they reconsider the amount of time spent on social media and the accounts they follow.

- ▶ not an indicator of an eating disorder, it's about how the individual feels about food and exercise. Physiotherapist and PT at BodyWorksWest in London, Chloe Munro, says communication is key, and it's important to find out members' motivations.

"I question all clients at their induction," says Munro. "They say they want to be toned, but I dig deeper, break it down and ask them what they really mean. Alarm bells ring if they say things which show they're focused on diet, calories, constant weighing or drawing attention to a part of their body they don't like."

Having worked with clients with eating disorders, Munro has found listening has been incredibly powerful: "Be empathetic, allow them to leave feeling they've been heard. It's less about giving advice and more about making the client feel understood, that they're not alone and that there's a solution."

Sometimes training habits need to change: moving away from beastung cardio and towards free weights, as well as promoting a positive mindset

Health clubs can support people in making healthy life choices

towards exercise. "Moving the body and exercising is healing," says Munro. "Encourage them to see the bigger picture of what exercise can give them beyond weight loss. Movement boosts endorphins and makes you feel strong and empowered. The gym is a social place to make friends and exercise should be a fun habit, not a compulsive one."

Young people who may be vulnerable to eating disorders are more likely to access online rather than gym-based workouts and experts who work in the field of eating disorders have called on those streaming online workouts – especially high-profile celebrities – to be careful about messaging.



Your average person shouldn't be told to count calories, but to develop awareness and respect when it comes to appetite





Everyone should be getting the message that bodies like to move and also to rest

► Wider society

Is it possible for health recommendations to be universal if some people need to be persuaded to move, but other will move too much? Does messaging need to change across society? For someone with disordered thoughts around food and exercise, for example, even the basic WHO exercise guidelines would be triggering.

Beat has previously published a report on the risks which government anti-obesity strategies pose to people with eating disorders. The charity wants to see an end to campaigns which ignore the risks to people with eating disorders and calls for a holistic approach to addressing obesity, informed by evidence from the field of eating disorders.

"We'd like to see campaigns move away from weight-shaming and instead support the building of self-esteem and positive behaviour changes," says Malik. "Anti-obesity campaigns commonly focus on raising anxiety about the impact of obesity, exacerbating anxieties in people with eating disorders. They also fail to recognise that eating disorders and obesity are not separate issues. Many people with eating disorders also have obesity and obesity is a risk factor for developing an eating disorder."

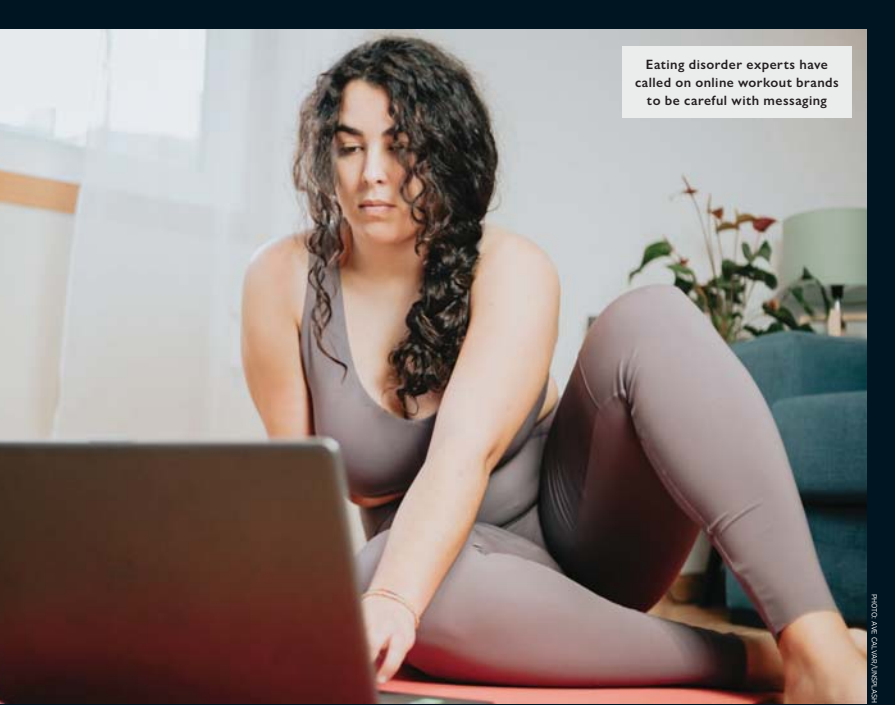
Musby says messaging could work for everyone as

long as it's one of moderation, balance and respecting and trusting your body. "Your average person shouldn't be told to count calories, but to develop awareness and respect when it comes to appetite and fullness, combined with self-love and respect for the yumminess and sociable aspects of food," she says. "Yes, it's harder to put that across than calorie-counting, but it would serve everybody better."

"Everyone, whether couch potato or prone to exercise compulsion, should be getting the message that bodies like to move, and they also like to rest. It's good to discover what we like to do in order to feel energised, not to change body shape." ●

Eating disorders a guide

- ✱ Bring in eating disorder experts for talks.
- ✱ Train team members so they're qualified to support vulnerable members.
- ✱ Don't sell false dreams to impressionable people: rein in unrealistic expectations at the induction stage and steer clients towards targets which have nothing to do with body size.
- ✱ Encourage members to establish an exercise habit which is balanced, moderate and sustainable, not overloaded with cardio, but a mix of vigorous and gentle exercise.
- ✱ Fitness professionals should examine their own body and weight biases which might skew how they approach clients.
- ✱ Stay away from fat shaming or guilt-driven marketing.
- ✱ Get to know your members. If someone is in the gym a lot, find out their motivations so you can work out if there's disordered thinking going on.
- ✱ In marketing, messaging and initial induction, emphasise both the physical and mental health benefits of exercise.
- ✱ Talk about the social element of membership and the endorphin release, rather than weight loss and changes in body shape.
- ✱ Focus on what bodies can do, not how they look.
- ✱ Use diverse marketing imagery, with a range of body shapes. Slim models can be triggering for those with eating disorders, as their eating disorder voice will tell them they're worthless because they don't look like that.



Eating disorder experts have called on online workout brands to be careful with messaging

PHOTO: AIE CALWALAN/ASAHI

- * Gently make clients aware of negative self talk and encourage them to practise positive thinking.
- * Think about language and whether it could be triggering. Avoid talk of burning off calories or fat, or doing a class to compensate for a few drinks later on.
- * Never comment on body shape, not even as a compliment.
- * People with eating disorders live by a rigid and exhausting set of rules, so don't overload them with more, such as do ten press ups every day, or eat more protein.
- * Cardio machines can be triggering in the way they detail calories burned. Free weights can encourage people to focus on form, breath and controlling motions.
- * People suffering from or recovering from eating disorders often have an element of body shame and/or dysmorphia, so will easily find themselves falling down the hole of comparing themselves with others. Providing smaller breakout spaces with no mirrors can help.
- * Work to create a diverse and supportive community of members representing all ages and all types of body shapes and sizes.
- * Don't treat eating disorders as a taboo subject. Have posters for eating disorder charity, Beat, visible and make members aware that support is available.
- * Ensure all your staff are aware of these issues.
- * Avoid talking about 'good' bodies and focus on the fact that all bodies are good no matter what they look like.

Software ENABLED

Each health club has its own requirements and challenges, but the right software solution can make all the difference, as Steph Eaves discovers

Go Fit wanted to switch to 24/7 trading, offering dedicated, controlled access zones and facilities



PHOTO: PERFECT GYM

Peter Croft Perfect Gym

Our client Go Fit, a chain owned by Evolution Wellness, with clubs in Australia, Singapore and Malaysia, focuses on delivering high value, low-cost fitness experiences.

The company wanted to switch to 24/7 trading, offering controlled access zones to continue its consumer-centric, premium service, low-staff operating model.

To deliver this experience, Go Fit used our API suite, which integrates and manages its network of third party tools and applications, covering everything from EGYM's mobile app services, to payments and access control, as well as services in membership zones, such as massage chairs.

Go Fit is now hitting 160k API-calls per quarter across all five of the clubs



PHOTO: PERFECT GYM

Go Fit is using Perfect Gym's API suite

that are serviced by us. In the last three months, its branded EGYM mobile app has validated credentials with Perfect Gym Manager 26,000 times to access EGYM services, while Go Fit access control has let people in 57,000 times, including via contactless QR codes generated by Perfect Gym Manager in the EGYM app. It has also validated members' access to API-integrated features and services, such as biometric measurement platforms in these clubs.

By embracing digital transformation through our open API, Go Fit has been able to provide a 24/7 premium fitness experience with a lean staffing strategy.

The martial arts gyms multiplied revenues four times with Glofox



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/OLGASAN.BEZHOLIC

PHOTO: GLOFOX

Conor O'Loughlin

Glofox

Carpe Diem Brazilian Jiu-jitsu is part of a global network of boutique martial arts gyms. Across its two locations in Singapore, we provide the operator with the flexibility to adapt quickly and build success in what is an ever-evolving industry.

Through lockdown, Carpe Diem noticed a gap in the market for children's classes and pivoted to cater to this demand. We made the process straightforward by quickly adding new credit packs and classes to the app, enabling the business to focus on promoting and selling its new classes.

Mehdi Elaichouni, owner at Carpe Diem, tells us that his members love using the app because it's simple, smooth, and easy to use.

Everything from booking classes to buying uniforms is done through the app. The team doesn't have to educate



PHOTO: GLOFOX

anyone on how to use it, so it also saves everyone across the business a lot of time. The app is also fully customised, helping the business stand out among its competitors and creating a seamless branded experience for members.

Once the classes kicked off, Carpe Diem multiplied its revenue four times in just four weeks, with bookings improving by 175 per cent across the month. The knock-on success also meant active memberships went up 500 per cent in the following three months.



PHOTO: GLOFOX

We added credit packs and classes to the app, enabling the operator to focus on selling classes

Technogym's
Mywellness delivers
booking functionality



PHOTO: TECHNOCISE, J. LONG

Mywellness addressed the problem of non-attendance by introducing a penalty system and automating booking confirmations and reminders



Martin Perry

Technogym

Crow Wood Hotel & Spa in Burnley, UK is set in 100 acres of parkland, offering luxury accommodation, an award-winning spa, restaurants, leisure facilities and a gym.

For over 20 years, we've supported Crow Wood with fitness equipment, digital solutions and facility refurbishments.

Recently, Crow Wood leveraged the booking functionality within the Technogym Mywellness solution with the aim of removing paper in the gym, increasing staff efficiency, reducing class non-attendance, and making the customer journey more frictionless.

Crow Wood had a problem with non-attendance at classes and was looking for

solutions. We knew Mywellness bookings could address the problem by introducing a penalty system for non-attendance and improving class booking confirmation and reminders through automation.

We implemented this system and the issue is now self-regulating, fully transparent, and fairer on members, enabling Crow Wood to make better use of its timetable and reducing unnecessary tasks for staff, which has resulted in an improved customer experience.

In addition to managing the booking of classes and appointments, Mywellness has enabled the health and fitness team to manage their diary, making better use of everyone's time and reducing their admin load.



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Virtuagym PRO+ offers members ways to keep moving forwards on their fitness journey, wherever they are

Thomas Woods

Virtuagym

For the modern hybrid fitness business, flexibility, variety and personalisation are the name of the game.

We're supporting Jetts UK – a 24/7 fitness brand dedicated to helping members achieve their health goals in ways that fit best within their busy schedules.

We began working with Jetts UK in 2019 to develop a customisable mobile app to provide an integrated, all-in-one solution covering a range of areas, from coaching to booking and financial management.

During the early stages of the pandemic, this technology was invaluable, enabling Jetts UK to continue efficiently running operations, supporting and engaging with members, even while clubs were closed.



Virtuagym's software has delivered hybrid solutions for Jetts



A prime example is the use of Virtuagym Pro+, a turnkey digital membership and engagement solution. This has further enhanced personalised service, offering members ways to keep moving forwards on their fitness journeys wherever they are.

Integrated within the Jetts UK mobile app, the software offers access to 5,000 virtual trainer exercises, 600 live streaming workout videos, an online community with fitness challenges and prizes, on-demand content and meditation, audio coaching and wellness sessions.

Xplor Gym software was introduced by Evolution Fitness XL, with payments embedded in an all-in-one solution

Ernie Theobald

Xplor Gym

The team at Evolution Fitness XL in St Helens, Merseyside has created a hub for the community, uniting new and seasoned lifters to achieve their goals.

However, the club found increasing member numbers left them facing billing challenges, with hours spent reconciling and manually processing payments, affecting collection rate success and time with members.

Our Xplor Gym software was introduced in 2021, with payments embedded in an all-in-one solution, so the club has streamlined billing by fully automating all its membership payments onto one efficient system.



Membership payments are fully automated

Since then, collection rates have improved, time spent on admin has been reduced and the team now has a complete, real-time view of its performance. Members are enjoying seamless payments and the team at Evolution Fitness XL can spend more time delivering an exceptional member experience. Even those without a technical background have found the software intuitive and easy to use.

Evolution Fitness XL has ambitious plans and Xplor is proud to scale with them. ●



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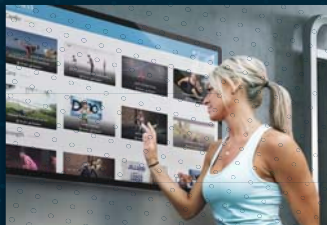
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Product innovation



Frances Marcellin rounds up the latest in health and fitness

MARS 2.0 is a reinvention of the MARS digital coaching station, says **Matthew Januszek**



PHOTO: ESCAPE FITNESS

Demonstrations that focus on how to use equipment gives operators peace of mind that people can train safely

Matthew Januszek

Escape Fitness has overhauled its Multi Activity Resource Station (MARS) and launched MARS 2.0 to provide gym-goers with a more personalised experience.

The original MARS 1.0 was designed to counter the intimidation users can feel towards new equipment by demonstrating how each piece works and the new model makes these programmes easier to access.

The main differences are the option to customise content so users benefit from a more bespoke training session and the swipe screen – like

a smartphone. This change from clicking to swiping creates a smoother experience.

"MARS 2.0 is a complete reinvention of our first-generation MARS digital coaching station," says Matthew Januszek, CEO of Escape Fitness. "Each time Escape launches new equipment, demonstrations are uploaded to the library ready to be switched on at the operator's discretion."

MARS 2.0 also connects via wifi and Bluetooth, making it more accessible for gym operators.

[fitness-kit.net keyword](#)
Escape Fitness



PHOTO: ESCAPE FITNESS

● The MARS swipe screen is more convenient for users

The Cryo Lounge+ provides a 'comfortable cold' experience, says **Paul Lunter**

Recovery specialist Hydro Massage is rebranding as Wellness Space Brands and opening pre-orders for its new Cryo Lounge+ chair, a hot and cold therapy and compression solution for health clubs.

Users sit fully-clothed in the unit for 15-minutes

to target specific areas of the body.

"Anyone who's experienced things such as ice baths knows how invigorating cold experiences can be, but the drawback is that your body can be shivering after a few minutes," says Paul Lunter,

founder and CEO of Wellness Space Brands.

"By contrast, the Cryo Lounge+ provides a more 'comfortable cold' experience.

"Users receive targeted cold therapy to specific muscle groups and heat in others to offset the cold, keeping the body comfortable throughout the session," he explains.

Additional features include calf compression, an auxiliary pad to target hard-to-reach areas and a contrast feature to switch between cold and heated areas.



PHOTO: WELLNESS SPACE BRANDS

We see all health clubs needing wellness spaces to accommodate members' needs

Paul Lunter

Chairs costs £23k (US\$26k) and will be available in the UK from February 2023.
[fitness-kit.net keyword](#)
Wellness Space Brands



PHOTO: WELLNESS SPACE BRANDS

● The chair offers both hot and cold treatments

Hyperice is developing recovery solutions that can be used in health clubs, says Jim Huether

Hyperice has launched two wearable heat therapy products, Venom Go and Venom 2 and will be targeting them at the health club market in 2023.

Both incorporate new Hyper Heat technology which is designed to maximise the even distribution of heat across the body.

The Venom Go offers three levels of heat and vibration. The product's

control pod, which has 60 minutes of battery life, magnetically connects to an adhesive pad that's applied directly to the skin. The pads can be used 20-40 times and reach up to 45°C in 90 seconds.

Using Bluetooth, Venom Go is controlled through the Hyperice app which allows multiple pods to sync, providing treatments in different areas of the body at the same time.



● American Footballer Patrick Mahomes wearing the Venom 2 belt for shoulders



PHOTO: HYPERICE

The Venom Go addresses the need for a heat and vibration solution for spot treatment

Jim Huether

Hyperice's Jim Huether says: "These products can target soreness, stiffness or pain, furthering our mission to help people improve their daily lives through recovery and movement."

The Venom 2 belt has models for back, legs and shoulders, and is controlled by the Hyperice app. Battery life is three hours and it heats to 55°C in one minute.

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD** Hyperice

Uptivo tracks members' heart rates wirelessly across the gym, says Ely Maspero

Uptivo provides a platform that monitors and displays members' heart rates during their workouts in order to adjust the training intensity, providing feedback to members on their progress through the monitoring of recovery speed.

Members can freely roam around the gym and do what they feel up to for the day, knowing that Uptivo will track their workout wherever they go and display their tile on the appropriate screen. "The real-time tracking provided by Uptivo

PHOTO: MARCELO CAMAGNA



Real-time tracking ensures trainers can keep members in the right training zones

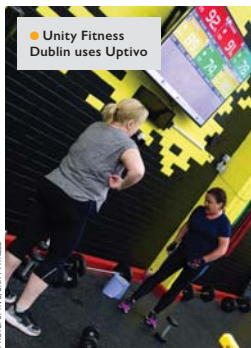
Ely Maspero

ensures trainers can monitor members as they work out and keep them in the right training zones to maximise workout effectiveness," says CEO, Ely Maspero.

Uptivo Live has also been used during lockdowns to track members' effort and heart rate in individual and group-based remote training sessions.

As an added bonus, the platform also provides scheduling and booking options.

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORDS** Uptivo



● Unity Fitness Dublin uses Uptivo

PHOTO: UPTIVO FITNESS

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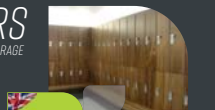
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HIIT changes the function of organs, so they compete with muscles for glucose

PHOTO: LEE MALLS/GETTY

Cancer takes a HIIT

HIIT reprogrammes internal organs to generate an exercise-induced metabolic shield against cancer metastasis, reducing risk by up to 72 per cent according to new research from Tel Aviv University

A new medical study from Tel Aviv University, Israel, has found that the risk of developing metastatic cancer drops by up to 72 per cent with regular, high-intensity aerobic exercise.

The study, *An exercise-induced metabolic shield in distant organs blocks cancer progression and metastatic dissemination* was led by Professor Carmit Levy and Dr Yftach Gepner and published in the *Cancer Research* journal.

It demonstrates how high-intensity aerobic exercise, which derives its energy from sugar, can significantly reduce the risk of metastatic cancer.

Impact of exercise on organs

Levy said "Our study is the first to investigate the impact of exercise on the internal organs in which metastases usually develop, such as the lungs, liver, and lymph nodes.

"Examining the cells of these organs we found a rise in the number of glucose receptors during high-intensity aerobic activity – increasing glucose intake and turning the organs into effective energy-consumption machines, very much like muscles.

"We assume this happens because organs compete for sugar resources with the muscles, which are known to burn large quantities of glucose during exercise.

"Consequently, if cancer develops, the fierce competition over glucose reduces the availability of energy that is critical to metastasis. Moreover, when a person exercises regularly, this condition

Physical exercise exhibits a higher level of cancer prevention than any medication or medical intervention to date

becomes permanent: the tissues of internal organs change and become similar to muscle tissue.

"Exercise changes the whole body, so the cancer cannot spread and the primary tumor also shrinks," said Levy.

Sugar-burning vs fat burning

"Our results indicate that unlike fat-burning exercise, which is relatively moderate, it is a high-intensity aerobic activity that helps in cancer prevention," said Gepner. "If the optimal intensity range for burning fat is 65-70 per cent of the maximum heart rate, sugar burning requires 80-85 per cent – even if only for brief intervals. For example a one-minute sprint followed by walking, then another sprint. Our results suggest that healthy individuals should include high-intensity components in their fitness programmes."

"It must be emphasised that physical exercise, with its unique metabolic and physiological effects, exhibits a higher level of cancer prevention than any medication or medical intervention to date," said Gepner.

"We also believe future research studies will enable personalised medicine for preventing specific cancers," he concluded.

● More: www.HCMmag.com/TelAviv

OCTOBER 2022

pulsebeat



PROUD TO BE SUPPORTING OUR BRITISH ATHLETES...

What a Summer it has been! It was fantastic to see a Summer of Sport return this year, after its unexpected two-year hiatus.

From the annual Wimbledon tennis tournament to England winning the Women's Euros and of course the Commonwealth Games being hosted on home turf, these were all historic moments of which we can be proud.

On a personal level, we were honored to have played our own part in the Commonwealth Games this year by equipping the athletes village with Pulse Fitness equipment for the participants to use and enjoy at their leisure. As a home-grown, British brand it was fantastic to be supporting our British athletes in this way.

As we move into a new season, energised by a spectacular summer, the Pulse team and I are looking forward to continuing to work with partners from all corners of the industry to provide fantastic fitness facilities.

Along with continuing to support our current partners, we were pleased to meet so many new and promising connections at this year's Active Net event in Scotland – it is great to be networking at such events again. Next, the team are looking forward to heading to Malta for this year's W3 Fit event. This industry wide, networking event is one of the first large-scale, international events to launch post-pandemic, so it will be extra special to have a presence here and we're excited to meet all attending.

As we edge closer to the end of the year, we are optimistic that the fitness and leisure industry will only continue to grow and prosper, as it has done so clearly in the first half of this year, we look forward to seeing what's in store!

Best wishes
Chris Johnson, MD



A PULSE TRANSFORMATION FOR TEME LEISURE

Teme Leisure

Earlier this year, Pulse was entrusted with the task of transforming Teme Leisure's fitness facilities in both its Ludlow and Cleobury locations. The much-welcomed renovations replaced the previous decade-old facilities and provided members with a refreshed, motivating space to visit and workout. The project brief was firmly focused on creating a welcoming space for all members of the community to enjoy, reflecting Teme Leisure's sustained commitment to supporting active, healthy lifestyles in the local area.



Ludlow



Ludlow

'We selected Pulse Fitness to revamp and re-equip the fitness facilities at both leisure centres, as we were thoroughly impressed by their high quality and durable equipment. We are also pleased to be able to offer members a connected platform that enables them to monitor their fitness both in and outside of the gym, while remaining connected to our trainers.'

Lee Hassan, Teme Leisure



Cleobury



NEWS IN BRIEF

Sports Aberdeen

In August, Pulse Fitness completed another spectacular install project, this time for Sport Aberdeen, Northfield.

The team helped give this much-loved centre an upgrade, including fully kitting out its new gym and workout studio with equipment from across the Pulse Fitness range. The install was complete with brand new changing rooms for the centre's existing swimming pool, ready for the local community to enjoy.

PULSE LAUNCHES NEW STRENGTH ARRIVALS



Club Line Hip Thrust

The Pulse Fitness Club Line Hip Thrust machine will give members the ultimate glute workout. This easy-to-use piece of equipment uses advanced biomechanics to maximise activation of both the glutes and hamstrings, mimicking the use of a barbell hip thrust without the discomfort or difficulty.

As with all Pulse Fitness' market-leading equipment, the Hip Thrust machine has been constructed using high-quality materials, meaning it will stay sturdy and stable while helping users get stronger.

Premium Shoulder Press

(Dependent Arm)

A new entrant to the range, is the upgraded Classic Shoulder Press which has been given the premium touch with the addition of the training partner console, while still being accessibly priced. Now users of any fitness ability can tap into readymade workout plans or scroll social media via the dedicated screen, all while working out.

The Pulse Fitness Premium Shoulder Press machine has been expertly crafted to be an incredibly safe and effective way of targeting the shoulders and triceps.

As with all Pulse Fitness equipment, comfort while operating the machine is key. For this reason, the Premium Shoulder Press comes complete with long-lasting and easy-to-clean upholstered support pads. The material has been designed to be resistant to everyday, gym wear and tear, meaning users can comfortably complete their workouts.



'We strive to improve and enhance our Pulse Fitness equipment ranges with each new addition, whilst ensuring that each piece is crafted with the same quality and performance in mind. Each product goes through an extensive testing process before being given the final seal of approval and added to the range for customers to rent or purchase.'

Dave Johnson, Production Director

East London University

This summer, Pulse had the honour of transforming the University of East London's gym into an up-to-date, fully-equipped fitness space for students and local residents to enjoy. The space, which hasn't had an upgrade in over a decade, is now home to Pulse's range of cardiovascular and strength equipment, as well as functional accessories, including free weights, benches and gym storage. The project was complete with the building of a new virtual cycling studio on the gym floor and the installation of University of East London branding throughout.



EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT... TECH IN WELLNESS

Each year, new technologies simplify another area of our lives. So much so, most everyday activities can now be tracked or controlled via some form of technology or software, and the fitness industry is taking note.

Many health and fitness brands have taken the leap into the metaverse to show how we can now work out from any location, at any time. Brands such as Les Mills have shown how the world of fitness and technology can join forces, by offering customers a chance to workout anywhere in the world, real or otherwise, through a VR headset.

VR headsets aren't the only wearables that are rapidly increasing in popularity. As we all look for a way to track our steps, monitor our heart rate or count the calories we've burned, demand for other fitness wearables has grown exponentially. The market is set to be worth a staggering \$265 billion by 2026. With brands such as Mojo vision developing smart tech contact lenses and scientist researching wearable skin-embedded sensors – the possibilities seem endless for this market.

Fitness apps are also a great way for users to track their activity while tapping into on-demand workouts. Accelerated by the pandemic and the temporary closure of gyms, over 350 million people were using some form of fitness app in 2021, and the sector is expected to be worth \$16 billion this year.

As innovators in fitness ourselves, Pulse has developed its own apps and software services to ensure users can continue to concentrate on hitting their fitness goals. This month marks one year since Pulse launched its connected fitness app, TRAKK. With TRAKK users can tap into ready-made workout plans, track their sessions and log their results. Since launch, over 15,000 users have downloaded the app to elevate their workouts to the next level.

Alongside updating TRAKK with new features, Pulse also regularly enhances its equipment to reflect the latest technological developments. The latest range of Pulse Fitness equipment comes complete with innovative training partner consoles, where users can tap into apps such as Netflix, YouTube and Facebook while working out.

As the industry continues to grow in line with each new and exciting technological development, we're excited to see what's next for the future of fitness.

SPOTLIGHT ON

INCLUSIVITY IS AT THE HEART OF THE PULSE



Pulse Fitness believes that exercise should be inclusive and accessible for all and as industry-leading, equipment manufacturers it is proud to offer the largest Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited equipment range on the market.

Each piece of IFI-accredited Pulse kit has met IFI design standards and as such, is fully accessible for both disabled and non-disabled users to operate during a workout.

The Pulse Fitness range includes 33 pieces of IFI-approved equipment, ranging from seated rowing machines to shoulder and chest press machines. The range also allows adjustments such as raised iconography, multi-position hand grips and easy setting adjustments, so the machines can be comfortably used by all.

As a result of Pulse's work alongside the IFI, operators can provide members with accessible fitness equipment, create welcoming fitness facilities and potentially increase membership numbers.



Pulse is proud to continue its work with the Inclusive Fitness Initiative in the development of accessible product equipment for the industry.

WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE YOU ON OUR TEAM



Pulse would like to take this opportunity to congratulate colleague and esteemed team member, Andrea Oliver, on reaching 10-years' service at Pulse Fitness.

Andrea started her journey at Pulse on the gym floor where she soon developed a passion for the industry. Her drive and creativity saw her rise through the ranks of the business to her most recent position of National Sales Manager, heading sales activity across the UK.

"I'd say the thing I love the most about Pulse, is how we can all have an input into the design of the equipment. As a team we are valued and our opinions and ideas are always taken on-board which makes working together on market-leading, innovative designs even more enjoyable."

Andrea Oliver, National Sales Manager

Congratulations Andrea and here's to the next 10 years!



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

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