

Liz Clark

"I felt the industry was not being treated respectfully"

p24

Life Lessons

Dave Wright

"I used to ask myself, 'why the fuck am I doing this?'"

p64

Christian Tötze

"We want to have a million people doing Hyrox every year"

p30

Rural gyms

The next frontier for growth

p68

ON
THE
COVER

Dan Summerson

"Everlast Gyms is gearing up to go global" p16





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Fight for recognition

Around 85 per cent of disease is epigenetic/preventable and exercise is one of the most effective ways of delivering prevention. Can the industry shout loudly enough about this to be heard?

It's been a busy few weeks, with the conference season in full swing and lots to learn and reflect on.

First up was the Global Wellness Summit (GWS) in Miami, where we heard that the global wellness economy has grown to a value of US\$5.6 trillion, with the physical activity segment worth US\$976 billion of that.

Public health, prevention and personalised medicine is now worth US\$611 billion and healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss US\$1,079 billion, meaning we're sitting in the middle of some huge and fast growing markets.

The event had a strong focus on prevention, with Poonacha Machaiah, CEO of the Chopra Foundation explaining his concept, Cyberhuman, which is working to connect data from wearables to people's schedules and social and geographic data to enable the creation of a personalised AI platform for optimising health.

Also presenting was insight outfit, Fountain Life, which is offering universal diagnostics for US\$25,000 to catch disease in its early stages or head it off altogether with prevention.

While this service is the preserve of the very affluent, the trickle-down effect is kicking in, with health club operator, Life Time, recently soft-launching a medical wellness service called Miora, which offers a 95-part blood panel for US\$299, putting it within reach of a far larger slice of the population.

In the UK, high street retailer, John Lewis, has also picked up on the opportunity, partnering with Randox Health to offer full-body health checks in-store.

This trend shows how the well-off are increasingly investing in prevention-based interventions, but we must continue to question where this leaves the less-well-off, to avoid exacerbating current inequalities.

EuropeActive's first Exercise for Health Summit in Madrid the following week was a euphoric occasion, as the sector convened to contribute to the work of positioning exercise at the heart of the health and prevention agenda.

With attendance from UK Active, the World Health Organization and a global network of researchers, academics, practitioners and policymakers, conference delegates heard Professor I-Min Lee, from the



PHOTO: PEARL IMAGES.COM VIA A SHUTTERSTOCK

A focus on prevention could eliminate 85 per cent of disease

“We’re moving to another level in terms of representation and must surely soon get cut-through with governments”

Division of Preventive Medicine at Harvard Medical School present detailed evidence to prove exercise prevents chronic disease and enhances longevity.

Epidemiologist, Dr Melody Ding from the University of Sydney, then looked at the positive economic impact of exercise, contributing critical input to drive the success of industry lobbying.

Seeing the sector uniting to deliver such robust evidence from across the globe shows we're moving to another level in terms of representation and must surely soon get the cut-through we need with governments.

Liz Terry, editor
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HCM CONTENTS

Uniting the world of fitness

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PHOTO: HYPOX



30 Christian Tötze says Hyrox is aiming to engage a million people a year

05 Editor's letter

The big challenge for the sector is reaching all populations to ensure everyone can get access to exercise in a way that works for them, says Liz Terry

12 Letters

Roland Oमार, Mike Lyons and Ken Masser talk about serving communities and building strategic partnerships in their letters to HCM

16 HCM people Dan Summerson

The CEO of Everlast Gyms tells us about the launch of a new 37,000sq ft flagship site in Gateshead and how it will support the brand's global expansion

24 HCM people Liz Clark

The first female CEO and president of IHRSA shares her plans to reimagine the association with Kath Hudson

30 Interview Christian Tötze

HCM talks to the founder of Hyrox, the sports racing event that's growing into a global movement, with insights from BFT's Cameron Falloon

44 Talking point ESG

While critical for business success, the challenges of ESG can be overwhelming. Operators tell us how they're tackling it

54 Finding stability

The *London Boutique Studio Report 2023* from Leisure DB examines how the sector has emerged from the pandemic, as David Minton reports

64 Life lessons Dave Wright

The founder of Myzone and one of the fitness industry's most visionary entrepreneurs talks to Kath Hudson about how he deals with adversity

68 Country life

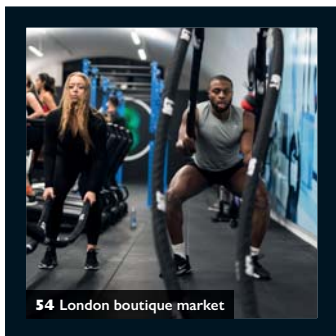
Many people living in rural areas are missing out on fitness. What can the public and private sectors do to broaden their customer reach?



16 Dan Summerson talks to *HCM* as Everlast reveals global ambitions



86 Skills-based training



54 London boutique market

76 Global insight

The 2023 *IHRSA Global Report* reveals a positive long-term outlook for the industry, as operators navigate challenges and embrace growth. Jeff Solsby reports

86 Life skills

Challenging the mind and body with functional movement, the skill-based training trend is gathering pace. Steph Eaves investigates

94 The benefit of insight

Dealing with attrition can be the key to success for operators, according to new research that provides actionable insights

105 Product innovation

Steph Eaves rounds up the latest health, fitness and wellness kit to hit the market

112 Reader services HCM Directory

If you're in procurement, the *HCM Directory* is part of a network of resources designed for you that includes www.HCMmag.com/CompanyProfiles

114 Research Exercise 'treats mental health'

Physical activity is linked to a 43 per cent reduction in mental health symptoms such as depression, a recent study shows



24 IHRSA's Liz Clark

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Our true value lies in removing barriers to health and wellness

Rowland Omamor, Lampton Leisure

Local authorities and their operator partners are facing unprecedented financial challenges, but while we're grappling with these, it's vital we don't lose sight of our core mission – serving communities that depend on our facilities.

We operate as a Local Authority Trading Company, with the liberty to be commercial, while also remaining community-centric. With the backing of Hounslow council, we stand firm in our commitment to uplifting the lives of local people, while also reducing the burden on NHS services.

From April 2022 to February 2023, we facilitated 1,754 Exercise on Referral sessions and hosted 51 adult weight management sessions. Our efforts expanded between March and October 2023 to the point where we allocate 76 hours a week to Exercise on Referral.

Recognising the diverse needs of local people, we provide specialist sessions, including women-only classes to empower more women to embrace fitness in a nurturing space and work with senior citizens focused on minimising mishaps, such as slips and falls.



Rowland Omamor

PHOTOS: LAMPTON LEISURE

Collaborating with the London Borough of Hounslow Swim Club, we grant free swimming and water safety sessions to people facing accessibility challenges.

These initiatives demonstrate our focus on societal impact.

While we believe we've delivered a robust post-lockdown recovery, our metrics of success extend far beyond that. We believe our true value lies in cultivating community ties and removing barriers to health and wellness.

We advocate for a transformation within the industry, envisioning leisure centres as essential community pillars, enhancing both mental and physical health.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALICIA LUND

Ken Masser, Miova

I read your commentators' analyses of the UK government physical activity strategy, *Get Active*, in the recent edition of *HCM* (issue 9 page 72).

It's good to read a strategy that acknowledges the importance of local leadership, as there's lots to be done around diversity, safeguarding, integrity and sustainability.

The key to unlocking that ambition is to recognise local leaders have the best understanding of where and what action is needed.

Facilities are an important part of the answer, but shouldn't be the focus of the question and trying to fix problems 'one facility at a time' is focusing on the wrong solution, as ageing centres – while problematic – need to be viewed in the context of the challenge around stubborn inequalities in activity levels.



A broad principle that emerges is that we need to embed physical activity along the whole life course

This approach accepts that the answer to every problem is not always to provide more money, but instead to focus on strategic leadership and local collaboration.

The more that can be joined-up, collaborated on and co-designed, the better. However, this isn't all about co-locating services – although that can be part of it – it's more about the nuanced interaction between facilities of all types, outdoor spaces, leaders and the workforce and the way people are welcomed and engaged.

The government strategy is a clear invitation for communities to come together and consider these elements holistically by establishing local plans for what's needed in their area. This should help develop a pipeline for delivery and evidence to underpin funding requests across government.



Ken Masser

We've enjoyed working with the Local Government Association and Sport England to support learning opportunities for local leaders to understand more about systems approaches and place-based working, as well as the practical application of those principles.

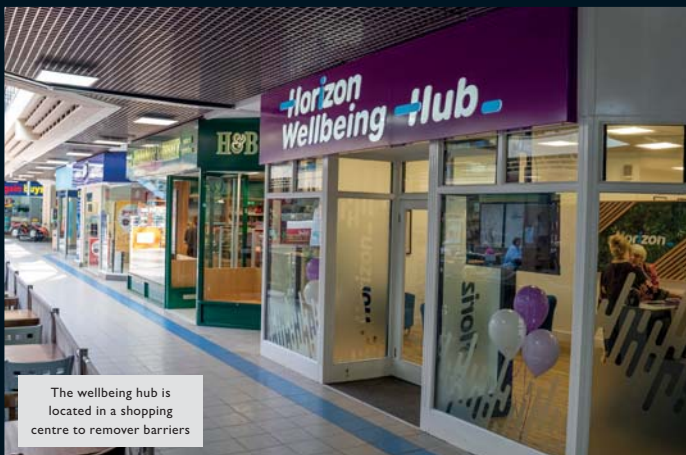
As the strategy says: "We'd encourage local leaders and local authorities to ensure there's a clear and well-evidenced facilities

plan for their local area. This should take into account informal spaces for participation, as well as the role the local leisure estate plays in contributing to physical activity and wider wellbeing."

A broad principle that emerges in the new strategy is the idea that we need to embed physical activity along the whole lifecourse, at every age, in every community, and across all policy areas.

This will help ensure there's joined-up local policymaking towards this outcome, improved local accountability and that local leaders and authorities are having positive impacts within their spheres of influence.

The strategy seems to summarise it well: "As we move forward, systemic change is now needed to ensure that public leisure is both relevant and viable in the coming years."



The wellbeing hub is located in a shopping centre to remove barriers

PHOTO: HORIZON LEISURE

“It’s a totally different offer for our community

Mike Lyons, CEO, Horizon Leisure

If we want to engage with the physically illiterate, we can’t do this from the confines of our normal facilities, as we would simply be talking to the converted; we have to build programmes that allow us to start talking to local people where they are.

We’ve taken a giant step forward in our outreach programme, meeting local residents through the opening of our Wellbeing Hub in a shopping centre.

It isn’t a gym and it’s not a leisure centre, it’s a totally different offer to our community.

Our first of its kind drop-in-centre, which was funded through Havant Borough Council, offers opportunities for wellbeing in a non-scary, familiar environment.

The Wellbeing Hub, which looks like a normal shop front, is situated next to a café in a shopping mall,

meaning our community can pop in for health checks and physical activity advice from our experts on their way to the shops, or when they meet friends for a cup of coffee.

As a charitable health provider in Havant, Horizon Leisure is committed to inspiring healthier and happier communities and as part of that we’re keen to increase public accessibility to physical activity in a wider range of places and spaces.

The drop-in centre is offering free health checks, health interventions, exercise orientation programmes and small group exercise classes.

The hub, which only opened this summer, is already having a positive impact, with momentum building on the number of visitors popping in for health checks. It has already hosted a number of specialist community sessions, where a leisure centre setting might be seen as more



Mike Lyons

PHOTO: HORIZON LEISURE

intimidating and unfamiliar to those new to exercise. These include over 50s, men’s introduction to weights, Horizon Leisure’s Foundation Programme (an eight-week course designed to build confidence before attending our leisure centres), as well as low impact circuit classes, men-only circuits, women-only circuits, Flourish – our weight management programme – Smoke Free Hampshire and physio-led classes. ●



VIRTUAL BIKE

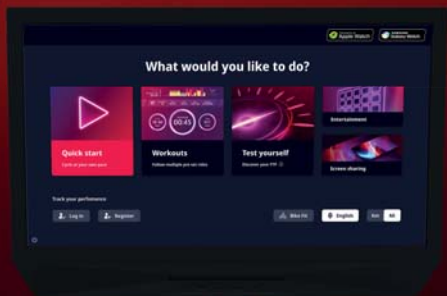


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*We're gearing up
for global expansion
through joint
ventures with our
retail partners*

Dan Summerson

MD, Everlast Gyms



Dan Summerson is
leading the development
of Everlast Gyms

Where are you with the UK business?

We stripped the portfolio back slightly when we started out two years ago, disposing of sites that weren't investable or where there were landlord issues.

We wanted to optimise the estate, make sure we believed in all the sites we kept and then elevate those by totally overhauling them before setting out on a path to growth.

We're at that stage now and over the next three to five years we're aiming to grow from 60 to 100 gyms in the UK.


And you're going global?

We're also gearing up for global expansion and although we have the portfolio of clubs in the UK, we don't want to build our own clubs overseas, so we're looking for joint venture (JV) partners who want to make Everlast part of their journey.

They'll ultimately own the properties and run them under a licence or franchise agreements.

Why this approach?

Because we're part of retail giant Frasers Group, we have the opportunity to extend existing retail partnerships to develop the Everlast Gyms brand globally.



Everlast Gyms has opened its 37,000sq ft flagship location in Gateshead

PHOTO: EVERLAST GYMS

We're looking for the right partners who are winners in their markets to get global reach and scale quickly.

We've already got huge JV partners across the globe – in places such as Indonesia and Malaysia, for example – and Frasers Group is also expanding in other world regions, so we've got plenty of partners with whom to collaborate.

What interest are you expecting?

Frasers Group is having meetings with JV partners and they're just as interested in taking an Everlast Gym as they are our other brands, such as Sports Direct, because they believe in the future of the fitness industry. In some cases, they want to talk more about the gyms than the retail.

We're responding to that demand and will be offering them the Everlast brand alongside our retail concepts.

So your new flagship gym in Gateshead has been planned as part of this strategy?

The aim has been to create a flagship site, while also using it to demonstrate all the different workout modalities and concepts we've developed over the last two years.

As we start our global expansion, we want to have a central point where potential JV partners can browse, see which concepts would work for them and decide what to put in their own Everlast Gyms.

The aim in Gateshead has been to create a flagship gym, while also using it to show the different workouts we've developed to our global JV partners

They may not have the 37,000sq ft we have, but we can show them how the different elements would scale to fit their space and best suit their target audience.

It's great to have all the different Everlast concepts in one place – it's like a shopping centre for gyms.

Every gym we've done so far has taken us on a journey and this concept is the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

What led you to create such a wide range of workout options?

What's been really exciting about the journey so far is that in the UK, since we launched the brand, we've been systematically 'elevating' our clubs by upgrading them. ▶

- We brought the portfolio together via a number of acquisitions, so it's been an important part of the strategy to bring them all into the same look and feel.

As a result of this legacy, however, many of the Everlast sites in the UK differed in terms of size and layout, meaning we've had to develop concepts that are super scalable, so we can drop them in, depending on the space that's available. This has given us a highly flexible portfolio of IPs and workout options.

What will the JV business arrangement be?

We're flexible about the contractual arrangements, so it will depend on how they want to do it. We're fortunate we can be flexible.

How many JV clubs are you aiming for

I'd hate to put a number on it, as the potential is enormous. We expect JV partners to take multiple sites.



I don't think there's anything that can compete with it in the UK. It's something completely different

What size will they be?

We've created a number of different models in our JV pack. These range from 12,000sq ft to 40,000sq ft+ so very different models, different sets of costs and different EBITDA numbers they can return.

We want to create options for our partners.

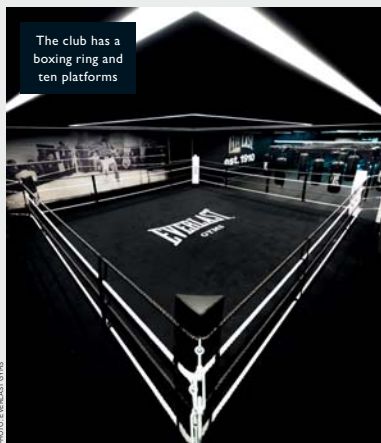
Tell us about the Gateshead development

The site is a former Debenhams department store in the Metrocentre and Frasers Group has taken the whole 137,000sq ft on three floors, putting the 37,000sq ft gym on the top floor, a 50,000sq ft Sports Direct downstairs and the Flannels clothes brand on the ground floor.

We're aiming to roll out this same model in other former large retail sites in the next few years – we're negotiating on other Debenhams, for example – so we're going in at scale.

What's inside the Gateshead site?

It's 40,000 sq ft and has a lot of open plan. It's got all the boutique elements, as well as all the Big Box elements. I don't think there's anything



The club has a boxing ring and ten platforms



The gym floor has a big focus on strength training

that looks like it or could compete with it in the UK. It's something completely different.

We've set the whole club up so all the spaces are usable throughout the day, rather than there being areas that are used for two or three hours a day and then just collect dust for the rest of the time – as you get in many health clubs.

There are also a lot of areas that have three or more concepts in one to create more engagement.

Give us a rundown on the group exercise options

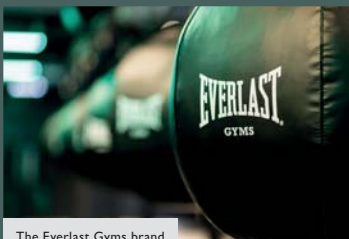
We've got a strong range of group classes that take place throughout the day.

There's a HIIT offering called Hustle, which has four specific zones and is our take on a traditional HIIT class, but in a cooler, quirky environment and powered by heart rate training.

It's got everything from SkiErgs to assault bikes, functional training and body-weight training.

There are no treadmills, as Hustle has been designed to be super low-impact and accessible to everybody.

It's one of those zones that can be use throughout ▶



The Everlast Gyms brand is now refreshed and baked into the operation





All Everlast Gyms' clubs are being 'elevated' to be on-brand

PHOTO: EVERLAST GYMS

- ▶ the day, so you'll see PTs in there delivering sessions, for example and it's ideal for people who are a little intimidated by the main gym floor. We've got dumbbells in there and benches and plyo boxes. Rather than being a shut off area, it's a cage, so it feels like the gym floor.

The Everlast bike workout is called Cranked and takes place in a pumping, immersive studio, with special lighting and music, while Breathe is the holistic mind-body concept and involves yoga/Pilates, stretching and mobility work. It's been designed to get people feeling better and offer them a bit of escapism through things such as guided breathwork.

Haymaker is a boxing concept, as you can tell by the name, and has been designed so 50 per cent of the time it's a combination of kettlebell work, resistance training and sports conditioning and then the other half is building on boxing combinations.

We're not appealing specifically to people who are super into boxing, but are focusing on improving technique, building confidence and skill.



We're developing global concepts that we know will play well with our target markets, while also linking with our heritage

Who's delivering the classes?

At the moment it's all about live workouts and all our classes are coach-led.

We may go down the virtual route at some point as an additional service, at certain times of day, but the main focus now is very much about delivering through our people.

The studios are also being used by people outside of class time – you see members in there all the time working out, so our plan to make the whole club useable all day is really working.

What happens on the gym floor?

We've created seven different styles of workouts and strength is a big part of the gym floor – it's very popular today with both women and men.

Weights used to be a men's zone, but it's equal now. Women love lifting and training with weights, so we've shrunk our cardio areas and expanded resistance. It's been part of our strategy across all our sites to expand into that area.

We've also created specialised gym floor zones. The Apex is a functional space with rigs that's been designed to enable people to train for sports racing, preparing them compete in events such as Hyrox and Athx.

Then we have the 1910 concept [the year the brand was founded in the Bronx, New York],

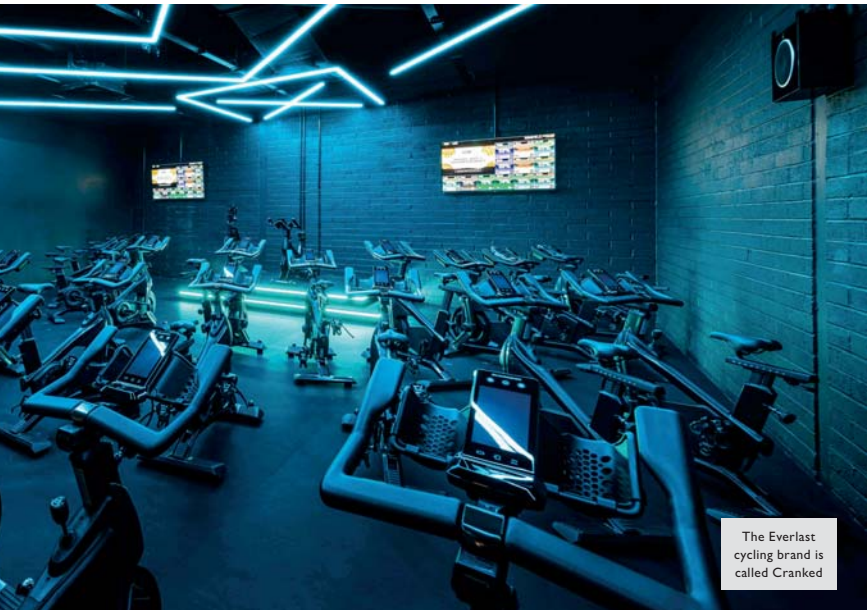


PHOTO: EVERLAST GYM

which is a pure boxing brand with a full boxing ring, along with boxing-style workouts. It fits with our brand and has a heritage feel to it.

We also have an area called Backbone, which is all about lifting and strength – at the Gateshead site we've got ten platforms.

It's all about platform education – teaching people who want to use platforms and rigs the right technique in smaller groups.

You get a workout, but there's a lot of education and smaller group training is very popular in America which helps with our global expansion plans.

There's also a huge gym floor with plate-loaded equipment, free weights and an extensive cardio area.

Are these global concepts?

Yes, we looked globally for concepts we knew would work well in our target markets, while also linking with our heritage. It's important when growing JV partnerships to ensure there are concepts to suit every market.

Do you have a recovery zone?

We've created spaces for recovery called Activate. This is the first location where we're going to be using Hyperice products, such as Normatec recovery boots, and massage guns, along with chill tubs and saunas for contrast bathing.

We've had a recovery zone in all of our elevated sites so far, but because we've got the luxury of more space and believe recovery is a strong trend, we've enhanced it in Gateshead, adding rentable physio rooms, so physios can deliver private treatments, as well as using the Activate area with their clients.

It's an unbelievable set-up – we believe it's the biggest hybrid gym in the UK.

How much of the Gateshead gym will be open to non-members?

Normally Sports Direct and Everylast Gyms have separate entrances, but this is the first club connected directly to the Sports Direct by escalators, which means we can cross-market them.

The gym's smoothie bar and cafe – the Flavour Bar – will be accessible for non-members and people coming in from the car park and heading down to the Sports Direct, so we can generate additional revenue from the retailing and F&B and subtly introduce them to the gym environment.

We're serving barista coffee because the quality of coffee on retail parks is high and as that's the kind of environment we're increasingly going to be trading in, we need to know if we put coffee in it will be excellent.

We've also added a laptop zone, so people can stay and work at the gym if they choose to. ▶



Zones are sectioned off by cages to maintain the open-plan feel

We think we're one of the first in the world to combine retail, co-working and gym in this way.

Tell us about the transport links

Metrocentre Gateshead is very well connected, so has strong links to big catchments. It's got rail and bus links and is right next to the A1. You can park in the multi-storey car park and walk straight into the gym without needing to go into the Metrocentre itself. We also offer really good bike storage.

How many members are you aiming for?

We're targeting at least 10,000 members. At some of our smaller sites, we've achieved that number.

How important is the original Everlast brand?

It had zero connection a few years back – there was no retail in our stores and no connection with boxing equipment – but over the last two years we've brought in more retail and this has also been elevated, so the sportswear that's being produced is of a high standard.

We stay close to the brand slogan 'greatness is within', we always have Muhammad Ali featured in our imagery and we're developing the 1910 brand in the gyms and also in the sportswear.

You bought DW Fitness to build your portfolio, are you on the lookout for acquisitions?

We get offered a lot of health club businesses to buy and we'll take the right opportunities if they come along – the good thing about Frasers Group is that we're well-funded, so the money is available for the right purchases that fit the strategy when it comes to building the Everlast Gyms portfolio in the UK.

We also own some of our property, so we're open to purchasing assets and – given we're extending into retail spaces, this can be in shopping centres and retail parks.

Fraser's Group wants to have the fittest workforce in the world. Tell us more

Employee wellbeing should be a top priority for any organisation, it fosters a healthier, more engaged workforce and promotes a positive culture, which is central to achieving long-term success.

The Fraser's Fit initiative was created to enhance teambuilding and promote healthy, active lifestyles among all Fraser's Group employees.

It's been designed to tackle three pillars – physical, financial and mental wellbeing.

Fraser's Fit gives employees access to free resources, useful materials and engaging activities to help them stay motivated and achieve their personal goals.



PHOTO: EVERLAST GYMS

Who's driving the Frasers Fit initiative within the business?

It's being driven from the top by CEO, Michael Murray, who's an advocate of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

From a fitness perspective, the programme fits well within the company structure, as we already have the depth of knowledge and facilities available to help deliver an impactful wellbeing programme to our employees.

What support is the team getting to support their journey into wellness?

We recently launched a Frasers Fit app that offers our teams free, pre-loaded workouts that can be filtered based on individual goals, fitness level and lifestyle.

Whether they're a fitness enthusiast or just starting their journey, Frasers Fit has something for everyone.

Colleagues can also track progress and metrics, link wearables, log stats and compare with other colleagues.

Frasers Group has partnered with The Retail Trust, who provide support and resources for the financial and mental wellbeing pillars of the initiative.

Are gym staff delivering these interventions?

The benefit of having a fitness industry brand as part of the group is that our gym staff are fully invested in the benefits of Frasers Fit and support



Frasers Group CEO, Michael Murray, is an advocate of healthy lifestyles and is driving the Frasers Fit programme

it however and whenever they can – whether that's coaching group training sessions in one of our gyms, leading park runs, getting involved with challenges, or running workshops in our head offices.

How will you measure success?

Employee engagement and feedback is something we thrive on. We've already received great testimonials from colleagues on how much they love using the Frasers Fit app.

Do you always use your own gyms to deliver Frasers Fit programmes?

It's a perfect fit, as we have 60 gyms throughout the UK where our staff can train and also where we can run events and activations.

In addition, Frasers Group also has a partnership with Barry's, so its locations can be used by our London- and Liverpool-based colleagues, to make sure they're getting a sweat on too. The beauty of the Frasers Fit app is that you can use it wherever you are – at home, in a hotel room, on holiday, or at one of our gyms. ●



Health and fitness is an industry I really believe in and I felt it was not being treated respectfully

Liz Clark

CEO and president, IHRSA



Clark says the impact of COVID-19 on gyms made for a 'rough' first year of tenure





The long-term goal is for IHRSA to be seen by policy makers and decision makers around the world as the credited voice for the industry



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / FOTO SHARON

You took over as IHRSA CEO and president at a difficult time. Why did you take the job?

I love the association model and the concept of being able to help companies and industries with their problems: be it with policies, reputation and getting them onto the right footing.

Health and fitness is an industry I really believe in and I felt it was not treated respectfully, or recognised appropriately, during the worst of the pandemic. I was really excited to get in the chair and change the narrative.

The first year was rough because the industry had been completely decimated, with almost 30 per cent of gyms and fitness centres in the US going out of business. Year one was about recovery, year two has been a year of rebuilding and stability and next year will be healthy.

It's exciting that the US fitness industry is now back to where it was pre-pandemic and growing week by week. IHRSA membership is also growing, with global brands coming back in the tent. I continue to spend every day meeting potential members, as well as those who have been with us forever and may be left a little disenfranchised.

Exercise is a great form of 'preventative healthcare'

Tell us about your US government lobbying. Why do you think it is such a slog to get proper support for the health and fitness sector?

There's a lot of competition to get our voice heard: there are 67,000 registered trade associations representing 67,000, different industries and more than a million representing philanthropic issues in the US alone.

Many of those other associations have been established for 120 years and we're not even a 50-year-old industry. We're really just arriving on the scene, so it's all about building awareness.

We have a few wrongs to right. Our industry had some hiccups as it was building, like the problems around consumers cancelling or getting out of their memberships and the reputation for taking steroids. But there is also plenty of positive narrative about preventative healthcare and how we can be a solution. ►



Ultimate success is being recognised as an industry for preventative healthcare, from recognition and financial perspectives

- We have some really simple talking points to take to decision makers about preventative healthcare and the potential ROI of investing in exercise, versus investing in healthcare, which could be considered sick care. The numbers sell themselves.

You came from the sugar industry, tell us about that

They have a lot of money, but they're also very organised and have been doing it for a long time, so have built the relationships. It was a deliberate exercise to ensure candy/sugar was classified under food manufacturing because nobody wants to mess with the food supply.

It's important for the fitness industry to shift in order to become part of the healthcare conversations and be seen as contributing to preventative healthcare.

Even the policymakers understand exercise and what it does for your mental health. When you look at everything else we're competing with it won't happen overnight, but it is a tremendous opportunity.

You said at the outset you wanted to reimagine IHRSA. How is this project unfolding?

It's definitely been a challenge and one I knew we would have at the outset.

It's important to have the perspective that this is a marathon and not a sprint. It's about building our staff to be the people we need them to be, in the positions where we need them and educating our members on how to leverage their voices with the right policy people.

There's been a lot happening in the administrative space to get us on the front foot, such as some structural changes about who sits on our board. From a diversity equity and inclusion point of view it's important that our board is diverse.

The PHIT Act

The Personal Health Investment Today (PHIT) Act, which is being sponsored by IHRSA, would allow Americans to use pre-tax dollars, such as flexible spending accounts (FSAs) and health savings accounts (HSAs), to pay for health club memberships, fitness equipment, exercise videos, and youth sports.

In 2018, the PHIT Act passed the House of Representatives in the US for the first time, but the US Congress adjourned before the Senate could vote. Since then, IHRSA and industry leaders have worked alongside numerous members of Congress, to build support for it.

PHIT would enable individuals to use up to US\$1,000 per year – up to US\$2,000 for families – to cover physical activity-related expenses.

Can you explain to us more about IHRSA's general approach to public sector, government-subsidised and charitable ventures?

It's in our bylaws that IHRSA doesn't allow non-profits to be members because of the competitiveness issue, since they're subsidised and get a tax benefit. However, that's not to say we can't have a new path forward in this regard.

I've spent time with some of the non-profits to try and figure out ways we could partner – by doing research, for example.

We've also talked about how the industry was left behind and not recognised by the people who needed to recognise it, so it would be amazing if we could come together and advocate arm-in-arm with some of the non-profits.

What are IHRSA's plans when it comes to working with other trade bodies, such as EuropeActive, World Active and Aus Active?

We're exploring all of that and I'm very open to working with overseas partners. I have a great relationship with Dave Stalker at EuropeActive and we've talked about a path forward with research. Then there are more than 20 federations in the UK, Australia and New Zealand so we're looking at creating a kind of consortium of what we could do together.

Research has always been a pillar of what IHRSA provided, but we're looking at what more we can

More people are now exercising for their mind as well as their body



do and who we can partner with to ensure we're not doubling up. We've spoken to many research companies and we're looking at creating a consortium of groups which are invested in research.

How can we improve pay and training in the sector so we encourage talented people to build careers in fitness?

That's the question of the day and I don't think it's unique to our sector. I don't have the magic bullet and it's a real concern. Offering training and certifications to help people grow is one way and we're looking at creative solutions around business models, especially with trainers. One advantage for our industry is that we have an interesting narrative in terms of what we do for bodies and minds. People are really drawn to that.

What are the biggest trends you're seeing?

It's a bit like everything that's old is new again. Two things which are coming back – free weights and cold plunges – were big in the 80s.

Two areas I'm hearing more about are nutrition and recovery and it's interesting that now more people are exercising for their mental health than their physique.

We've only scratched the surface of wellness, but we're seeing clubs moving out weights to install massage chairs, and changing rooms with cryotherapy. So I think there is a lot coming in on the horizon in that space.

What are the plans for IHRSA in the short, medium and long term?

Our three strategic objectives are advocacy, education and research. Year one in the seat was really about keeping the lights on. This year is about looking at our organisation, rebranding it and having a strategic plan for where we want to go. In the next three years we're going to be focusing more on state advocacy and looking at new partners to have in the mix.

The long-term goal is for IHRSA to be seen by policy makers and decision makers around the world as the credited voice for the industry. That will involve recruiting smart, diverse, coalition partners and making sure we have a unified voice. I see the ultimate success as being recognised as an industry for preventative healthcare, from both a recognition and financial perspective. It's an ambitious goal, but I talk to a lot of folks around the world and it doesn't seem as though anyone's objecting! ●

A man with a beard and extensive black and grey tattoos on his arms and neck is looking upwards with his right hand raised. He is wearing a light grey t-shirt. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows and other people's hands raised in the air.

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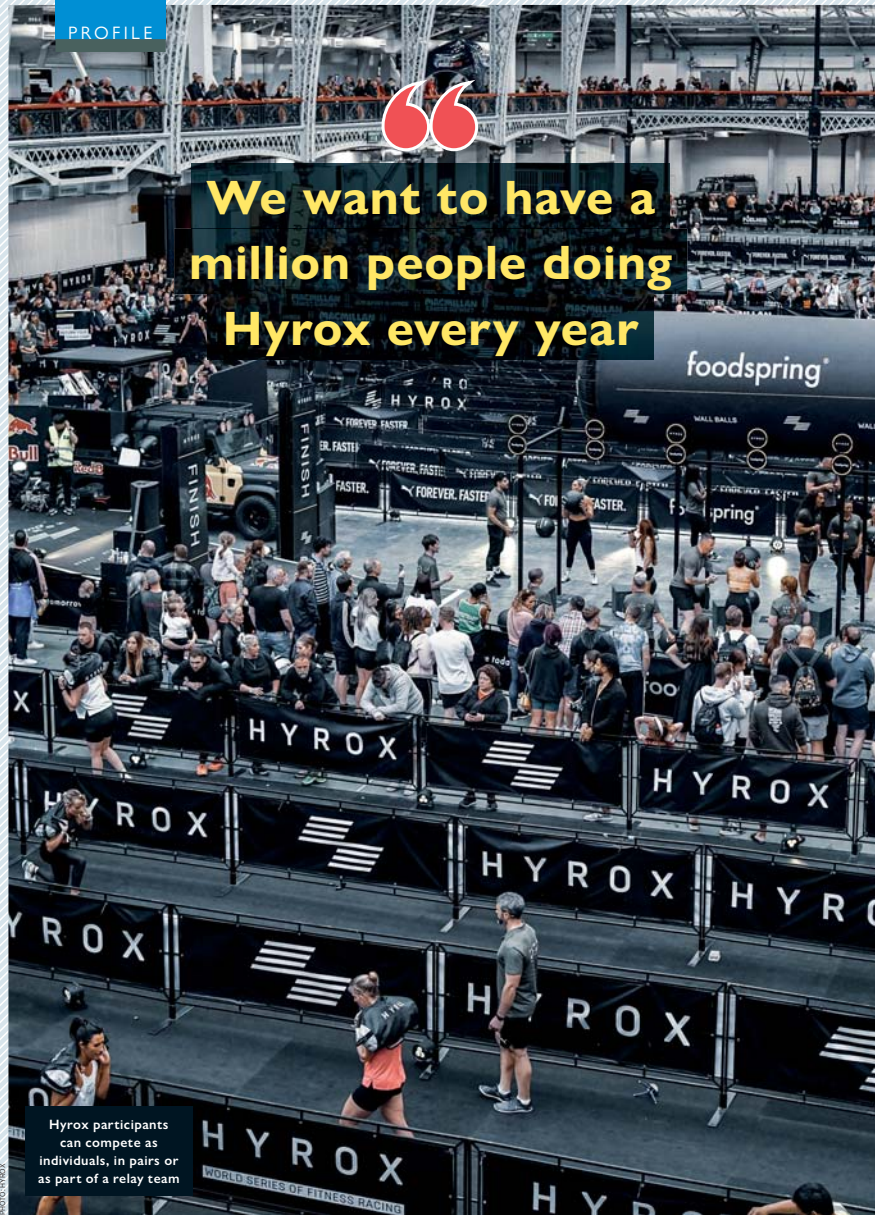
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We want to have a million people doing Hyrox every year



Hyrox participants can compete as individuals, in pairs or as part of a relay team



Tötze says every launch post-pandemic has been a big success

PHOTO: JORDAN

CHRISTIAN TÖTZKE

Founder, Hyrox

Tell us about Hyrox

It's a mass participation, competitive event for gym goers, combining running and functional workouts in a huge indoor space, such as an exhibition centre. Participants run 1km, followed by a functional workout, and repeat this eight times, with a different functional element each time.

The elements are SkiErg, sled push, sled pull, burpee broad jumps, rowing, farmers' carry, sandbag lunges and wall balls.

Hyrox is widely accessible, as people can participate as individuals, pairs or in a relay team. Elite level athletes aim to complete in less than 60 minutes.

Who does it appeal to?

Ninety eight per cent of participants are gym members. Because there was never any competitive fitness event before this, for many Hyrox is their first competitive event. Compared to triathlons, we attract a high number of female athletes, a split of around 58/42 male/female.

People go to Hyrox as a social occasion, to benchmark themselves and sometimes to see how they measure up to other people in the rest of the world. It's much cheaper to enter a Hyrox than an OCR or Ironman and all you need is a pair of shoes, a shirt and shorts.

- We're also seeing a growing number of the Hyrox community travelling to events outside of their country. It's now so popular in the UK that British events sell out quickly months before they happen and 600 Brits went to the Barcelona event recently. We try to structure it so individuals can do two to three events each year without a huge amount of travelling. Generally each location has one event a year, but the demand in London is so high that next year we'll run three at Olympia.

How did you come up with the idea?

Working out at the gym is the only sport with no gamification. No one plays tennis just to burn calories – they play tennis because you want to play against another person, otherwise they might as well hit a ball against the wall. Providing a competition gives gym goers the drive and motivation to train for something.

True, you can use the gym to train for running, cycling or triathlon but you can train for those events without going to the gym. I used to do all three of those events but grew tired of them because triathlon and cycling require a big time commitment to train and running was hard on my knees. Training for Hyrox allows individuals to train their whole body and stay fit but a session only takes one hour, three or four times a week.

Are you worried about copycats?

Not at all. I think fitness events will become a huge market, which will lead to a significant growth in gym membership and the elite level will be on television.

I want Hyrox to be the equivalent of the London Marathon: the one big event of the year which



Training for Hyrox allows people to train their whole body

With high demand, there'll be three Hyrox events at London's Olympia next year



Fitness events will become a huge market, which will lead to a significant growth in gym membership and the elite level will be on television

The aim is for Hyrox to be 'the equivalent of the London Marathon'

PHOTO: HYROX / BBC WITKOPF





Hyrox incorporates natural movements which don't require a high level of skill



**We have a very clear vision
of having 170 Hyrox events
by 2027, in the most exciting
cities around the world**



Even those with low fitness levels can take part in Hyrox events

- ▶ everyone aspires to participate in. Other fitness events could act as feeders for us and grow the community, in the way that all the Parkruns, 10k runs and half marathons feed the London Marathon.

Will you update the format?

We have no intention of changing anything because that would stop people being able to compare their performances from year to year. The doubles and relays make it accessible without us having to change the event.

We would only change the format if an amazing new revolutionary workout machine was invented, such as the SkiErg when it first came out. Every year we're launching new events into countries where people have never done Hyrox, so that's enough for us to focus on!

How did you decide which functional workouts to include?

They have to train every part of the body and be inclusive, so everyone is able to complete. We use natural movements, rather than those that need a lot of skill, and stay away from anything that might cause an injury. When devising the format we tested it a lot. Since running our test event in Hamburg, in 2017, we haven't changed anything.



Other fitness events could act as feeders for Hyrox to grow

How did the pandemic impact your growth?

It couldn't have been more brutal. We were running indoor mass participation events when you weren't allowed to be indoors with more than three people! We had launched in Germany and the US and then everything was closed. Although we tried some virtual things to try to keep the brand alive, it was a hard stop.

We launched in the UK as soon as we were able to, and somehow it was the perfect timing, as it's flying now. Everywhere we've launched since the lockdown has been more successful than the two pre-pandemic regions. They lost the momentum,



Participants do functional workouts to train every part of their body and avoid injury



- ▶ but are keeping up now. We're very happy that we can continue to grow and are in 20 countries.

The logistics must be massive, how do you do it?

We work like a rock concert tour! We have key staff in each region who run the show, doing up to 20 events in one season, and then we hire local labour and volunteers to help. It's a very complex operation. Everything is packed into trucks at the end of the event and taken to the next location.

Why did you partner with Xponential's Body Fit Training (BFT)?

This partnership offered such scope and importance. The brands have many similarities and offer interesting strategic opportunities. We wanted to grow into Australia and Asia where BFT is strong and they want to go to Europe where we have a good presence.

Hyrox gives people a different motivation to train and we believe BFT has the best product in the global market to train for our events. So far this partnership is bringing us unbelievable success in APAC and has allowed us to get going much faster. We've launched in Singapore, Sydney and Melbourne, which has broken every record so far: it was a sold out event with 3,500 people on 26 August, of which a significant number have come out of the BFT database. Singapore – sponsored by Cigna Healthcare and held in the Singapore Stadium on 6 October – outperformed Melbourne.

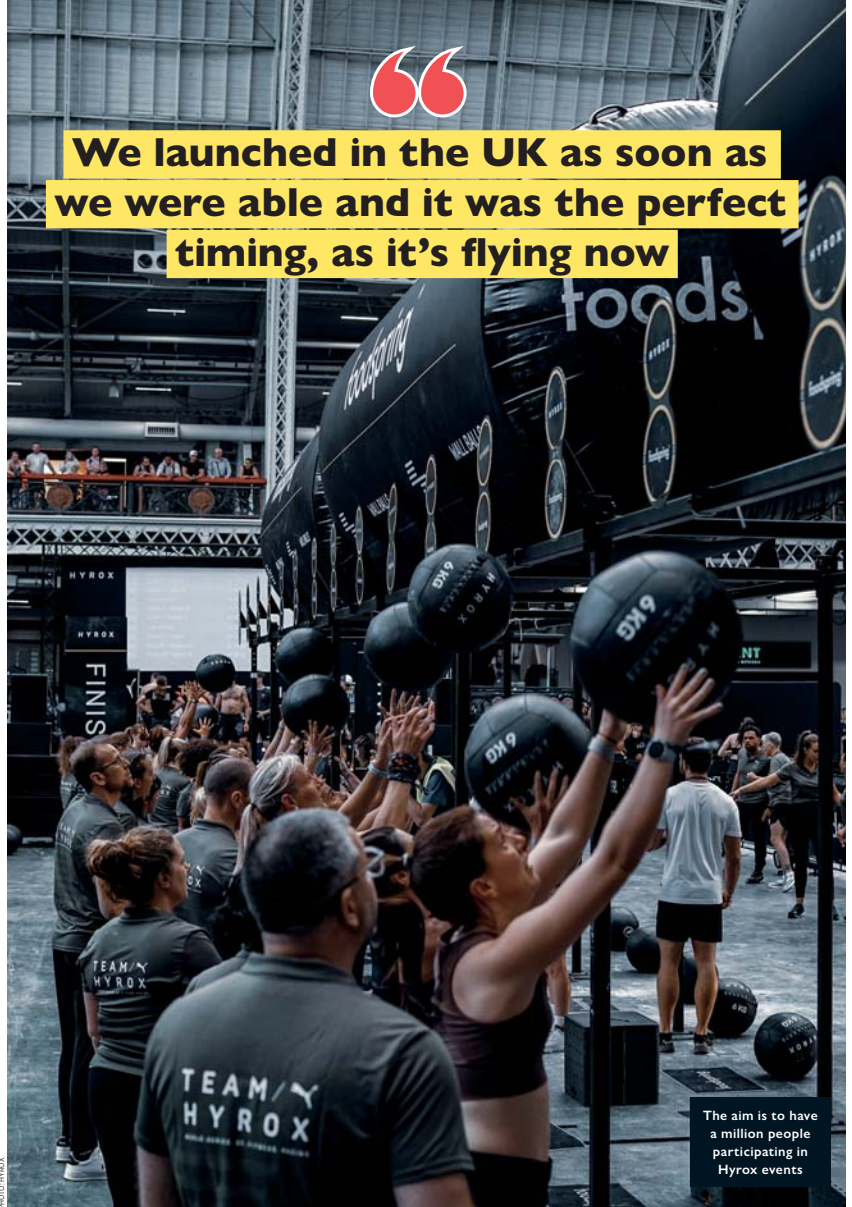
What is your plan for the future?

We have a very clear vision of having 170 Hyrox events by 2027, in the most exciting cities around the world and in all the most relevant markets for fitness.

We want to have a million people doing Hyrox every year. Our partnership with BFT opens up the Asia Pacific region for us and we're looking for solutions to get into other markets in the future, such as Brazil and India.



Hyrox gives people a different motivation to train



We launched in the UK as soon as we were able and it was the perfect timing, as it's flying now

The aim is to have a million people participating in Hyrox events



BFT franchisees
are excited
about Hyrox

**The feedback has been
phenomenal and the
engagement is huge**

PHOTO: BODY FIT TRAINING

BFT & Hyrox

**BFT co-founder, Cameron Falloon, gives his take
on how the BFT/Hyrox partnership is progressing**



Cameron Falloon

PHOTO: HYROX / BFT WITHTOPP

“Hyrox uses the same equipment as BFT and all the same movements, so it was evident from our side that there was a lot of alignment in terms of how this relationship could pan out. Straight away we found a strong strategic alignment and a strong level of trust.

We have good market share in Asia Pacific, with a great database of consumers to support Hyrox's ambition in this region and as we venture into the UK and Europe, this partnership offers a great opportunity for us to leverage off Hyrox, to grow awareness of BFT.

Our franchisees and members are really excited about Hyrox. Any weekend warrior or gym-goer can go and take part, or you can partner with

someone or do a relay. So it's really accessible for everyone from elite athletes to people with really low levels of fitness.

From a franchise perspective, Europe is a different opportunity for us, with the Ukraine war and the inflationary issues in the UK. We're experiencing that to a much lesser degree in the APAC region.

As we work to articulate our story, the Hyrox partnership will expedite that and add credibility as well. We're opening in Spain, the UK is going well, Germany is slower to adopt, but once they do, we know things go mainstream really quickly.

At BFT we run eight- and 10-week Hyrox-specific training programmes where members

get special training and a real understanding of the event. We've worked hard to scale it from the least fit person, who might be doing a relay, to those who are looking to break 60 minutes. It's been a challenge, but the feedback has been phenomenal and the engagement is huge.

We're really excited about what we've seen in Europe with Hyrox, because if the APAC region can get to anything like those levels in terms of participation rates and people coming to watch, then this relationship will bear fruit for both parties. ●

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“

Virgin Active operates in the premium space and Technogym supports that vision through the quality of its equipment, its innovation, digital developments, and research

GYM FLOOR EVOLUTION

Virgin Active has upgraded its gym floor proposition to maximise consumer trends in partnership with Technogym

With 237 health clubs around the world, Virgin Active has enviable access to fitness trend data and customer feedback and in early 2023, the group began reimagining the gym floor experience in its UK clubs, with investment in cutting-edge equipment and a new approach to zoning.

A data-led approach

Virgin Active is at the forefront of fitness experiences, using these member insights to guide innovation. Following a substantial investment in its group fitness, the company turned its sights to the gym floor.

Responding to shifts in wellbeing trends, Matt Harras, head of fitness at Virgin Active UK, wanted to create spaces that are aspirational for its PTs, as well as its members – a Virgin Active Academy plays a key role in developing careers in fitness and the group wants its clubs to support a best-in-class experience for both members and staff.

Harras and his colleagues worked with a data analytics company to analyse the use of gym equipment across its clubs, and shared early development plans with individual clubs and PTs so they could make local suggestions.

Gym spaces that meet fitness trends

The investment project started in 14 UK clubs early in 2023 – including its largest club in Sheffield – and will continue to roll out across the estate over the next two years. Together with equipment partners



This will be a first for our UK clubs and it's all been made possible thanks to our partnership with Technogym

Matt Harras, Virgin Active

Technogym, Virgin Active has redistributed the weighting of its gym zones and upgraded its equipment and digital offerings.

“All the data we received indicated a shift in consumer aspirations away from cardio and towards strength training,” says Harras. “As a result, we reduced our cardio provision, focusing on the most innovative pieces

of kit, and almost doubled our strength training equipment.”

Investing in Technogym's latest cardio equipment not only introduced cutting-edge cardio technology, but also helped Virgin Active make smarter use of space, as the newest Technogym cardio

equipment has a significantly smaller footprint, freeing up space for a bigger weights zone and creating a better flow around the gym floor.

Technogym Excite Live equipment was the natural choice for an upgrade to best-in-class cardio with advanced digital content for a premium user experience.

Investment in Technogym Ride indoor bikes helped Virgin Active increase the scope of its performance training zones for members and PTs.

“Technogym is market leaders in the cardio space,” says Harras, “we don't see them being beaten on innovation, design, functionality and use of digital content.”

Investment in Technogym Bike has helped Virgin Active optimise the launch of its indoor cycle programme – Power. The advanced level of functionality on the bikes is helping drive the class metrics, as participants can utilise screens to access more of their training data.



Virgin Active is transforming its gym floor in partnership with Technogym



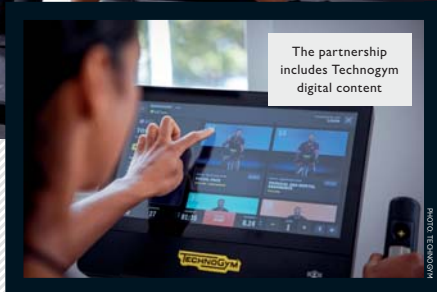
Virgin has a focus on strength training

Future-proofed gym spaces

As strength training and bodybuilding grow in popularity Virgin Active chose to build out its Technogym Selection strength range with new items of Technogym Pure Strength – in response to member feedback and in recognition of its ergonomic design and exceptional durability. “We see Technogym as best in class for strength equipment,” says Harras. “Virgin Active operates in the premium space, and Technogym supports us with that vision through the quality of its equipment, its innovation, digital developments and research.”

Virgin Active is also working in partnership with Technogym to develop its Virgin Active Revolution digital offering which will be rolled out using Technogym Bike.

“Virgin Active Italy has led the way through its work with Technogym’s content studios which has seen the teams layer our Revolution digital workout content with Technogym’s digital content to create a bespoke digital experience for our indoor cycling offer,” says Harras. “This will be a first for our UK clubs and it’s all been made possible thanks to our partnership with Technogym.”



The partnership includes Technogym digital content

A healthy future

Virgin Active’s investment in its gym floor experience suggests an exciting future for the health and fitness sector, which is attracting a new generation of consumers who are highly engaged in health and fitness.

“The industry is in a strong place and we’re seeing new trends in consumer behaviours that suggest they’re developing more of a educated attitude towards wellbeing,” says Harras. “That’s one of the reasons we’re proud to continue our partnership with Technogym – like us, the company is committed to supporting wellbeing by getting more people engaged with physical activity.”

“We’re excited to roll out this new investment across the Virgin Active estate and continue to develop fitness spaces that act as social hubs for people to get involved in healthy activities with their communities,” he said. ●

● More: www.technogym.com

Consumers are choosing businesses that demonstrate strong ethical behaviour

PHOTO: THIRD SPACE / JON INYNE

A group of people in a gym performing a lunge exercise with kettlebells. In the center, a man in a white t-shirt and green shorts is in a lunge, holding a black kettlebell with both hands. To his left, a woman in a light green sports bra and maroon leggings is also in a lunge, holding a kettlebell. To his right, another woman in a pink sports bra and grey leggings is in a lunge, holding a kettlebell. The background shows gym equipment and a dark interior.

Everyone's talking about **ESG**

ESG has become critical to business success, but implementing it can be overwhelming. Kath Hudson speaks to some big players about how they're tackling the challenge



PHOTO: THIRD SPACE / JON BARNIE

Waggett: 'ESG is part of being a good citizen of the planet'



Don't do new things, find ways to do things differently

Colin Waggett

CEO Third Space

It's now important for any business, in any industry, to be considering ESG. Over time it will become a determinant for attracting customers, team members and investment. It's also part of being a good citizen of the planet, which is an expectation of team members, club members and other stakeholders – including investors.

Although full of buzz words, ESG is really about building a brand and a business which is high quality in every way, taking into account of all stakeholders.

About two years ago we took a big step back and challenged ourselves

as to what ESG meant for Third Space, asking what aspects were relevant to us and where we could raise our game. We settled on four areas: environment and energy; diversity, equity and inclusion; clear and fair pay for all roles and community and social value.

There are specific goals and streams of activity for each area. For example, under clear and fair pay for all roles, our goal is to have objective evaluation and increase transparency for pay and benefits. We ensure we pay at least the London living wage for every role, externally benchmarking every role within the business for pay and benefits and internally publishing grades and pay levels, so people know their earning potential as they progress within the organisation.

Within environment and energy we had already eliminated single use plastic from our food business, but we set further goals to reduce our total energy usage, without negatively impacting the member experience. We've cut this by around 15 per cent, through a combination of operational discipline and state of the art building management systems.

Prior to embarking on ESG, I was given two important pieces of advice. Consider areas which are important to your team or your customers – or ideally both. Focus on being a better business, rather than just 'doing' ESG and secondly, don't do new things, find ways to do things differently.

If the objectives and new ways of working are woven into the organisation it's not a burden, it's quite the opposite.

Andy Bindon

Chief change and values officer
GLL

Through its goals, networks and consumption, the industry is uniquely positioned to positively influence public health and wellbeing, community engagement and environmental stewardship through ESG initiatives.

As we all become more conscious of sustainability, social responsibility and ethical business practices, successful operators will incorporate ESG principles to build reputation, attract socially conscious customers and staff, as well as building resilience against future challenges.

For 30 years, ESG has been integral to GLL's growth into the UK's largest leisure and cultural trust. The ever-important environmental agenda means our ESG aligns with the priorities of our partners, customers, colleagues and society. It's good business sense to invest in our people and technology as they are key drivers of change and innovation in modernising public services. Our future vision of GLL being a successful 21st century business is based on our ESG-aligned values supporting long-term growth and positive change.

GLL's commitment to ESG is reinforced in our new corporate plan for 2023 – 2027 Creating Our Future. A landmark business and social action programme, it sets out our

Bindon: 'ESG can enhance the business and contribute to a better world for everyone'

GLL is the UK's largest leisure and cultural trust



Our vision of GLL being a successful 21st century business is based on our ESG-aligned values

ambitions against our six core values of partner of choice; customers and communities at our heart; tackling health inequalities; respecting the planet; more than a job; and the better way of doing business.

The plan introduces a range of initiatives and actions deliverable by 2027, including targets for social value, more people more active more often and subsidised pricing.

Our environmental commitment is equally crucial, with energy and carbon reductions and increased waste recycling.

Our three foundations will empower individual talents, social businesses and bring broader socio-economic benefits.

Tackling ESG doesn't require a one-size-fits-all approach. An obvious place to start is governance

arrangements. Are necessary structures, checks and balances, support, insights and communication in place? Is there diversity of people and thought?

The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals are a start, but improvements must be grounded in meeting local needs and challenges which are shared priorities for partners, customers and communities.



Staff are the greatest asset in any ESG strategy

Cornelia Woschek

Sustainability director
The Gym Group

Since we opened the first gym in 2008, our commitment to sustainability and sector-leading ESG initiatives has been core to our business, forming part of our founding mission and purpose, which is to break down barriers to fitness for all.

Proud to be AAA MSCI-rated, we have committed to a science-based target to achieve Net Zero by 2045. Always looking at innovative ways to reduce our carbon footprint in our operations, we have introduced heat pumps which produce four times less carbon than traditional gas-fired water heating. On our pathway to Net Zero, we've also invested in carefully chosen gold standard carbon offset projects, making us the UK's first carbon neutral gym chain.

We work with Sheffield Hallam University and 4Global to quantify the social value contribution of our gyms to the communities we operate in. Last year each gym contributed on average £3.3m (£3.9m, \$4.1m) worth of social value, which includes direct NHS cost-savings and mental health benefits for our members, who are living healthier lifestyles. We're passionate about breaking down barriers to fitness and driving gym-going habits. Average member monthly visits have been increasing year on year.



Having a meaningful impact on the communities we operate in is important to us, and it's clear it matters to both our employees and our members. Not only does energy reduction make commercial sense, but it's our responsibility to play our part in addressing climate change. We also know how important a diverse and engaged workforce is to the success of a business and we proudly invest in our people, creating career opportunities through early careers pathways, including our Accelerate PT programme, and setting targets for employee diversity and promoting equality of opportunity in our business.

It's also our collective responsibility to reduce the carbon footprint of our industry and address environmental and social challenges. Often what's right for the planet is also right for business. Across all sectors, consumers will choose companies which demonstrate a commitment to sustainability.



On our pathway to Net Zero, we've invested in carbon offset, making us the UK's first carbon neutral gym chain

As the second largest UK chain, with 230 gyms, we know we can have impact at scale. We publish annual in-depth reports on our sustainability progress and share best practice for ESG to drive sector change. For those getting started, ensure your strategy ladders up to your company purpose, set achievable targets, and invest in your people. ▶

£20m has been invested in energy-efficient tech at DLL, including heating and lighting

Russell Barnes

CEO

David Lloyd Clubs

Any business looking for strong and sustained growth needs to look carefully at its ESG strategy and it's important for our sector for all operators to look carefully at their practices if we want to be seen as relevant in the future.

We know that when searching for a new role, potential employees make their decisions based on a businesses' values, such as diversity, equal pay, carbon emissions and modern slavery. Consumers are also increasingly choosing businesses with strong ethical behaviour and commitment to sustainability, while investors favour businesses with robust ESG policies.

Sustainability is one area where David Lloyd Clubs has made some big commitments, setting ourselves the target of carbon Net Zero by 2030. To this end, we're working on a wide range of energy efficiencies and

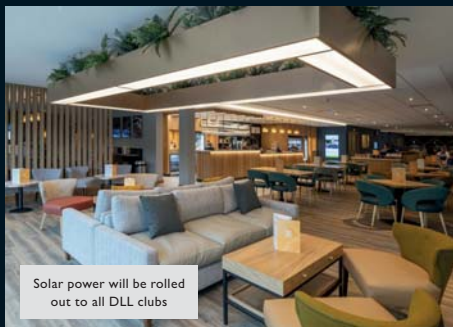


We're the first UK health and fitness club to have a self-supply water licence

have already saved more than 10,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

We've invested £20m (£23.3m, \$24.9m) in energy-efficient technology, including low-energy LED lighting on our tennis courts and overhauled our heating and cooling systems.

Two solar panel installations have been completed at clubs in Luton and Madrid. The combined projects deliver approximately one third of our club's electricity requirements and we're now committing £30m (£35m, \$37.5m) to fitting solar panels to as many of our 132 clubs as we're able.



Solar power will be rolled out to all DLL clubs

PHOTO: DAVID LLOYD CLUBS / STEVE EWALD



PHOTO: DAVID LLOYD CLUBS

David Lloyd Clubs are committed to reaching carbon Net Zero by 2030

We're also buying more green energy and 95 per cent of our UK- and European-grid electricity volumes are purchased via renewable sourced contracts.

Water usage is another key area and we're the first UK health and fitness club to have a self-supply licence, which is a big step for us.

Supporting the communities in which we operate is a key strategy for us and last year David Lloyd Clubs was able to contribute more than £1.7m (£1.9m, \$2.1m) to a range of local and national charities. We're a founding supporter and the biggest contributor to social

enterprise and coffee provider, Change Please. Our partnership has raised £2.5m (£2.9m, \$3.1m) so far to help people experiencing homelessness get a fresh shot at life.

We've also created a People Strategy to promote equality, diversity, development, inclusion, health and wellbeing. The gender pay gap will feed into our social targets as we align our ESG strategy and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy for the year ahead.

Green champions have been recruited at all our clubs to make sure their site operates as efficiently as possible, and to encourage team

members to share ideas. We're still in the early stages of our journey, so to make sure we deliver on our promises we've also established an ESG Committee which meets quarterly and holds the business accountable, ensuring our ESG values form the basis of our operation.

When developing an ESG strategy, start with a few projects which are close to your team's hearts, build advocacy and then you'll be able to drive change at pace. People are proud to work for a business which does the right thing, and this cultural shift will impact all touch points of your service and operation.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / IRZAKAER

Ray Algar

CEO

Oxygen Consulting

believe it's important, and urgent, for all businesses to see ESG through the two lenses – risk mitigation and unlocking new opportunities.

The core purpose of the fitness industry is to improve quality of life for people and communities, therefore, an ESG proposition is essential for all businesses, regardless of their size.

When ESG is deeply embedded, it can unlock new opportunities, such as boosting business reputation, reducing costs and improving employee recruitment and engagement. With consumers increasingly gravitating towards conscious, compassionate businesses, ESG can also deepen customer relationships.

Ignoring ESG exposes businesses to severe reputational and financial risks. Take the recent Equinox discrimination case where Róbynn Europe, a personal training manager, was awarded \$11m (£8.8m, €10m) in a high-profile race and gender lawsuit. People will seriously question if they want to work for, or workout at, a luxury fitness club which an eight-person jury found to have a "toxic and discriminatory culture".

It's heartening to see more chains adopting a triple bottom line approach – people, planet and

profit, as well as publishing sustainability and social impact reporting. Brands such as The Gym Group are consistently reporting against nine of the 17 UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while Planet Fitness has written its annual impact report around the four pillars of physical health, emotional health, planetary health and business health. This is for all stakeholders, not just investors.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed. Try starting with the 'social' in ESG, which aligns with the industry's core purpose of improving quality of life. Focus on how your business impacts members, employees and the community. Cultivate an inclusive environment which promotes wellbeing and fair practices for employees, members and suppliers.

A small business could begin with a stakeholder survey to understand which issues resonate most and remember stakeholders are anyone impacting your business. Next, identify the most relevant of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as SDG 3 – good health and wellbeing; SDG 5 – gender equality and SDG 10 – reduced inequalities. Once you implement them, monitor and report against them.

A decade ago I published the *Fitness Sector Social Good Report* and had the



PHOTO: OXYGEN CONSULTING

Ignoring ESG can expose you to reputational and financial risks. Take the Equinox discrimination case where a manager was awarded \$11m (£8.8m, €10m) in a high-profile race and gender lawsuit

chance to interview sustainability consultant, Giles Gibbons. When I asked what a socially responsible fitness business looks like, he replied: "It's not merely about being eco-warriors, it's about doubling down on the industry's core purpose."

Let improving quality of life for all be the anchor which informs and guides all your actions on ESG. ●



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ULTIMATE HIIT SOLUTION

Mars Athletic in Turkey turned to Life Fitness and Myzone to create a compelling new HIIT zone for its clubs

Mars Athletic opened its first club in Istanbul in 2007, offering advanced technology at affordable prices. The company now has more than 100 clubs across Turkey and around 260,000 members.

Interest in HIIT has surged to make it one of 2023's hottest fitness trends (as reported in ACSM's *Health & Fitness Journal*) and Mars Athletic wanted to include HIIT in its offering, so reached out to Life Fitness, who partnered with Myzone to deliver the perfect solution.

Together, they created a new concept called Hammer Strength Power, which enables Mars Athletic members to maximise the benefits of

group HIIT activities, while enjoying a bespoke individual fitness experience via the Myzone app.

New dedicated spaces

To optimise this concept for its members, Mars Athletic has also created newly-designed spaces for Hammer Strength Power within its clubs, equipped with premium Hammer Strength HD Tread and HD Air Bikes, as well as Life Fitness Heat rowers, offering the highest-quality cardio workouts to members at every level of fitness.

Myzone's wearable heart rate monitoring technology rewards effort rather than ability, using community elements and game-based mechanics to motivate users.

The Myzone app feeds users' progress to a large screen to make exercise fun and increase member retention.

"This class allowed the trainers to detect people who have difficulties with the exercises, to show them easier variations of the movements – thanks to their heart rate – and even take special care afterward to provide a positive lesson for their exercise in the future," says Onur Bayhan, fitness director at Mars Athletic.



Life Fitness HD Air Bikes feature in the new Mars HIIT zone



The new Mars Athletic HIIT zone is boosting attendances and retention



PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

Outcome and results

"The Hammer Strength Power concept at Mars Athletic is proof of how Life Fitness and Myzone deliver motivation, reward effort, and encourage positive behaviour change that lasts," says David Stalker, Group CEO of Myzone.

More than 80 per cent of members surveyed after a Hammer Strength Power group class agreed the new concept would not only encourage them to attend the gym more frequently, but that it had also increased their engagement with the fitness community at the club.

"As operators, one of our most important goals is to create reasons for our members to come to the club more – this is one of the main tasks of every fitness product," concludes Bayhan.

"With its innovation, fun, dynamic structure and connected experience, Hammer Strength Power classes make an invaluable contribution to us being able to achieve this goal."

● More: www.hcmmag.com/MARS

FIND OUT MORE



With its innovation, fun, dynamic structure and connected experience, Hammer Strength Power classes motivate members to come to the club more

Onur Bayhan, Mars Athletic

Finding stability



David Minton

Market intelligence outfit Leisure

DB has published its *London*

Boutique Studio Report 2023.

Founder David Minton outlines key trends highlighted by the research

In 2018, when we published the first *London Boutique Studio Report*, it was easy to be seduced by the boutique lifestyle. Founded by individuals with ideas, passion and energy, the premium experiences, environments and emotions inspired loyal communities.

2018 was the heyday for operators and consumers, with visitors coming from far and wide to try the capital's latest boutique concepts – 62 studios opened in London that year, more than in New York City – while globally F45, then the fastest-growing brand, opened 900-plus sites.

The momentum was still there in February 2020, when boutique fitness authority Emma Barry published her book, *Building a Badass Boutique*. I was honoured to write the foreword and speak at the launch about how the industry was having a 'fitainment' moment like never before. One month later came the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

The market has been in too much flux to report reliably since the start of the pandemic, but this year, as things stabilise, we've revisited the London boutique sector to discover an industry that's finding its feet again amid the distributions of recent years.

In spite of a number of permanent closures and some brands falling into administration or liquidation, many have emerged leaner, stronger and more nimble. Openings may be fewer than in the 'peak boutique' years, but closures are slowing, as surviving brands stabilise and start to rebuild.

Finances remain tight and new funding can be hard to come by for some, but London's operators retain the pioneering spirit, responding to changing consumer behaviours with creativity and passion.

Let's take a look at some of the key themes of this year's report, which contains both statistics and in-depth interviews with leading players, taking as read that this is a sector adapting to hybrid working patterns that render central London a predominantly Tuesday–Thursday hub.

A new model

"Fitness boutiques can claim responsibility for driving a lot of emotional and financial value into group fitness experiences over the last 15 years," writes Barry in the report.

"However, my unbridled pre-pandemic optimism has been tempered and I now have a more balanced view. It now feels like a tough sector."



*Boutiques are
exploring recurring
membership models
to support their
commercial success
in this new era*

There are now 300
boutiques in London
according to Leisure DB

- “What’s now clear is that a class pack-based model is not the path to business sustainability,” say Richard Smith and Steph Davies from United Fitness Brands (UFB). “Neither can you rely on brand alone to drive custom. This is a big challenge for the boutique sector, which is having to explore recurring membership models to support its commercial success in this new era.”

“Meanwhile big box clubs are becoming more flexible, with short-term memberships, punch packs, casual visits and day passes,” says Barry. “As the HVLP (high value, low price) and some mid- and luxury-level segments flourish, boutiques also come down to unit economics – site-by-site profitability – and consolidation will continue as operational budgets remain tight.”

Yet in spite of continued challenges, operators are standing firm. “Post-COVID” is a constantly evolving state,” says Sandy Macaskill, CEO of Barry’s UK. “The landscape may have changed for now, but we can see forward to a time when it changes back again, so, we haven’t reduced our schedules, we’ve taken risks and set ourselves up with growth opportunities.”

Confused definitions

“It can be a confused and saturated market, not helped by big boxes coming in and calling

PHOTO: UNITED FITNESS BRANDS



“A class pack-based model is not the path to business sustainability”

Richard Smith, UFB

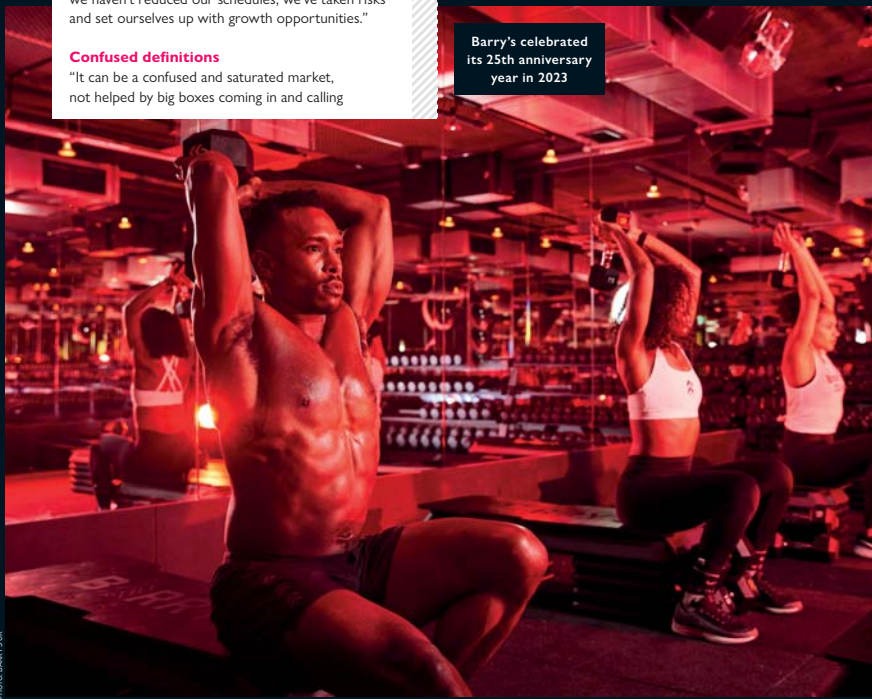
PHOTO: UNITED FITNESS BRANDS




“It can be a saturated market, not helped by big boxes calling themselves boutiques”

Steph Davies, UFB

Barry’s celebrated its 25th anniversary year in 2023





Ten launched as an antidote to big box gyms

themselves boutiques," say Smith and Davies. "‘Boutique’ has become a buzzword and it's led to a lack of clarity around its definition."

"In its heyday, ‘boutique’ meant uniqueness, expert focus within a single discipline, elevated touches and the one-off specialness of a small business that people were willing to travel across town for," says Barry. "As boutique brands have scaled, big boxes have created high-quality in-club boutiques and some regions have become oversaturated by a genre, so that uniqueness has dissipated in places."

"The perspectives that used to set boutiques apart have been analysed and understood and absorbed into other businesses, such as big box gyms, corporate sites and residential communities. These fitness businesses are taking elements of boutique and placing them in their own spaces," says Barry.

"One of the biggest threats to the boutique sector is gyms," confirms Ten Health & Fitness founder Joanne Mathews, "which is ironic given that when we launched in 2007, we were the antidote to impersonal big boxes. Now we see the likes of Third Space really excelling, including in its class offering – where you'll see reformer classes on the timetable – and securing investment to continue its growth".

Speaking of reformer pilates, this is the hot trend referenced unanimously by our interviewees. However, says Frame's Joan Murphy: "I'm not seeing many brand sites opening, but quite a few existing boutiques are converting to reformer pilates or adding it to their class portfolio."



"I see the future as positive, but only if we stop discounting and create a more transparent environment"

David Watt, CEO, Psycle



"We've taken risks and set ourselves up with growth opportunities"

Sandy Macaskill, CEO, Barry's UK

A self-inflicted threat?

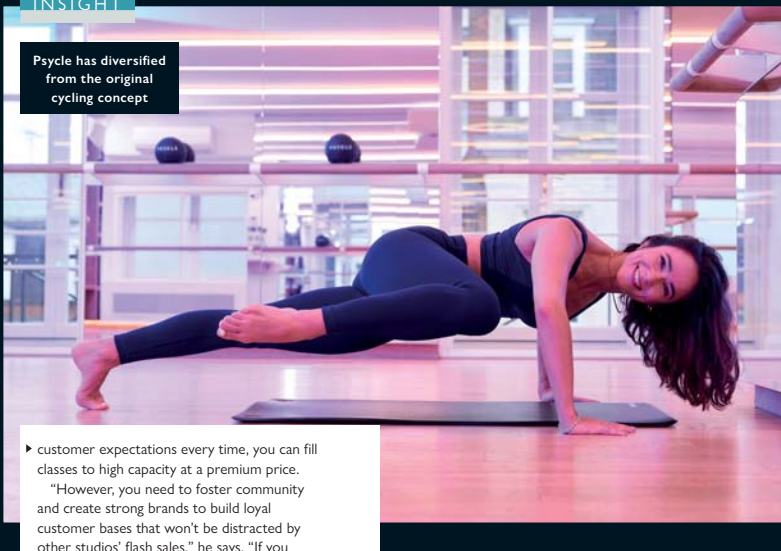
"Why does the boutique industry find it necessary to consistently discount?" asks Mathews. "We'd all be far better off if this didn't happen: it risks commoditising the boutique fitness product."

"The biggest danger to the sector is the constant discounting and race to the bottom," agrees Stanbury.

"The boutique model does work and if you have the best instructors and can deliver excellence across every touchpoint to meet high



Psycle has diversified from the original cycling concept



► customer expectations every time, you can fill classes to high capacity at a premium price.

"However, you need to foster community and create strong brands to build loyal customer bases that won't be distracted by other studios' flash sales," he says. "If you can achieve that, you'll be in good shape."

"I see the future of boutiques as positive, but only if we can stop discounting, and only if we create a healthier, more transparent environment," adds Psycle CEO, David Watt.

A multi-modality future

"I believe that, with a few exceptions, the era of the one-genre boutique is over," says Barry. "There's been a natural swing towards diversification, with consumers seeking variety and boutique business owners wanting to meet customer needs and capture more of the wallet-share."

Blok London co-founder, Ed Stanbury, goes one step further, saying: "I've always believed the single-format and limited multi-format boutique studio model is fundamentally flawed. Consumers can't achieve balance by doing individual types of workout in isolation. That's why Blok has always had a cross-discipline approach and why we're seeing many boutiques expand into additional disciplines... even when the clue to their expertise lies in their name."

"Variety must be delivered in the right way and 'right' depends on your offering, your model and location," advises Emma Barry. "Take Barry's as an example of best practice. It's taken its time to understand its market deeply and has not been sidetracked. It introduced new concepts Lift and Ride, but both of these uphold the original Red

PHOTO: TEN HEALTH & FITNESS



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"One of the biggest threats to the boutique sector is gyms"

Joanne Mathews, founder, Ten Health & Fitness

PHOTO: FRAME



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"Quite a few boutiques are converting to reformer pilates"

Joan Murphy, co-founder, Frame

PHOTO: BLOK



“

"The biggest danger to the sector is the constant discounting and race to the bottom"

Ed Stanbury, founder, Blok



"The era of the one-genre boutique is over"

Emma Barry, CEO, Trouble Global

Room vibe, are based on clear customer needs and were piloted extensively before rollout.

"Diversification hasn't always worked as well in other boutique operations, where a set of programmes have sometimes come out under one brand, seemingly more in response to trends than a long-term view of customer needs, brand authenticity and the ability to deliver a consistently fantastic experience.

"Diversification can work within one brand, but it's important to make sure it's authentic, based on a deep analysis of customer needs and tested to ensure people actually come and are happy to pay."

Consolidation and collaboration

An alternative approach can be to bring separate boutique brands together behind the scenes, as

FAST FACTS

London boutiques

300

Boutiques in London

17.4%

Growth in number of studios since 2018

56%

Adults living within a mile of a studio

F45

Biggest operator with 44 studios

10

Operators own a third of boutiques

20%

Growth in membership fee since 2018

15%

Growth in class-pack fee since 2018

15%

Growth in class numbers since 2018

25%+

Number of boutiques with a digital offering

Blok has always focused on a cross-discipline approach





Frame has navigated the pandemic with its core locations intact

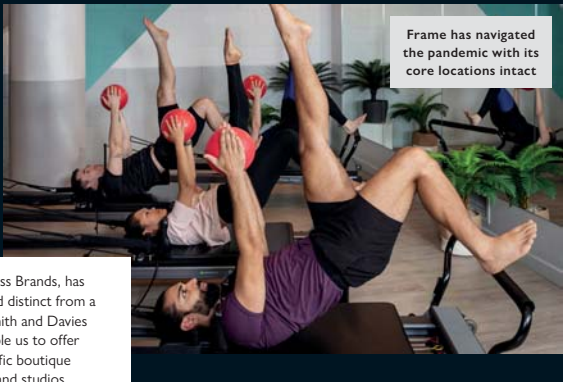


PHOTO: FRANK / JAM WELLS PHOTOGRAPHY

► multi-brand operator, United Fitness Brands, has done in London, leaving each brand distinct from a customer-facing perspective, as Smith and Davies explain: "Our multiple brands enable us to offer a choice: membership of one specific boutique brand, or accessing all our brands and studios through our Studio Pass membership – we're able to offer variety, all within one business."

Psyche is also looking at consolidation, but intends to do it under its own umbrella, says Watt: "I believe the future of boutique lies in the ability to reach scale," he says. "Consolidation under one brand represents a great opportunity to achieve that."

"There are a large number of small operators that are running on survival right now," he continues. "I believe the way for these businesses to succeed is to start to think about ways to pool their assets, driving economies of scale that help them uplift the quality of their product, offer consistency to the customer and slowly regain price appreciation. I believe joining bigger, more established businesses is the way to do that."

Leisure DB chair and industry veteran, David Turner agrees, saying "Ironically, it's an approach that begins to 'reconstruct' the multi-disciplinary, big-box clubs that boutiques had previously 'deconstructed' – but now with a different pricing model."

A people problem

Staffing is a now huge challenge, says Barry: "Boutiques have always prioritised the quality of their talent, but the pain of finding and training new staff in high-churn roles is now very real, with a smaller, younger, less experienced labour pool."

Mathews agrees: "There simply aren't enough people in central London to fill all the jobs that need filling, due to the double impact of Brexit and the 'new normal' work-life balance and these staffing challenges can make it hard to have a stable business."

"We're seeing interesting shifts in the employment market – not least having four generations simultaneously in the workforce for the first time in history. That's imposing very diverse demands on employers and we need to understand these shifts if we're to recruit and retain a great team."

PHOTO: BFT



"If you have a product you think could work as a franchise, develop your IP and don't be in a rush"

Cameron Falloon, founder, BFT

To franchise... or not?

"We're on a mission to get more people moving, and provided we can bring passionate people on board who share our ethos, franchising will be the fastest way to achieve that goal," says Murphy.

UFB also sees franchising as "very much part" of its long-term strategy: "It may not be right for all our brands, but we're considering opportunities across our portfolio," says Smith.

"Franchising can be a hugely powerful way to get your brand out there, provided you have the right partners who take on the brand as if it were their own," confirms Macaskill.

But other experts sound a warning bell. Cameron Falloon, founder of the BFT (Body Fit Training) franchise, which is now part of Xponential Fitness, says: "I've seen a lot more boutique brands turn to franchising recently and I'm not convinced all will succeed."

Falloon's advice? "If you have a boutique studio product you think could work as a franchise, develop your IP and don't be in a rush... You don't want to do early adopters a disservice by launching a product that keeps changing. Know what your next five years looks like and what it's going to take to get there." ●

More: www.leisuredb.com/publications
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An integration between Xplor Gym and Technogym Mywellness CRM has been designed to deliver personalisation at scale

Elevating the member experience

A new integration between Xplor Gym and Technogym's Mywellness CRM powers highly personalised member experiences

We're witnessing an unparalleled evolution – both of the fitness market and in relation to consumer demand – and health club operators and owners who embrace these opportunities stand to benefit.

Despite economic challenges, consumers are prioritising spend on health and fitness and

Xplor's recent attrition research found that even with volatile inflation rates, just 4.4 per cent of UK health club members cancelled due to cost and financial reasons in the first part of 2023.

This prioritisation of health and fitness is further demonstrated by the latest data from insight firm, LeisureDB, which shows the fitness industry penetration rate has risen to 15.1 per cent in the UK. Members are returning to their health clubs and they're spending more, with reported market value increasing 11.5 per cent year-on-year.

However, operating costs have risen rapidly and operators are facing staffing challenges, with demand for talent and salary expectations high, so doing more with less is imperative.

Personalisation is non-negotiable

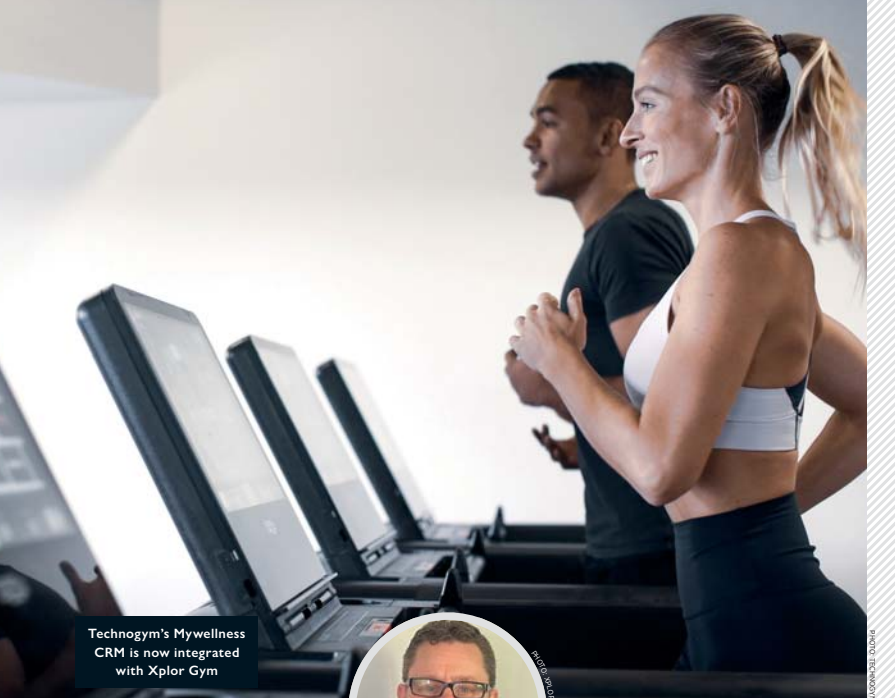
As we head into 2024, member expectations are higher than ever and consumers are increasingly demanding personalised experiences.

McKinsey found 71 per cent of people expect personalisation and 76 per cent get frustrated if they don't get it.

Other industries have set the bar high and on a daily basis, members consistently experience seamless

Technogym and Xplor power personalisation





Technogym's Mywellness
CRM is now integrated
with Xplor Gym

personalisation from the likes of Amazon, Netflix and Spotify.

To satisfy members today and into the future, operators must pay attention to how they feel at every touchpoint and those who anticipate their needs and consistently delight will succeed in retaining members.

Work smarter not harder

Delivering personal service effectively at scale is challenging and tech is essential to overcoming this challenge – tech that makes use of automation can enable operators to scale personalised experiences.

A recent integration between Xplor Gym's fitness club management software and the Technogym Mywellness CRM has been designed to deliver personalisation at scale.

Operators can work smarter, not harder, with this automation on their side, enabling them to easily personalise the entire member experience, from the



"This solution allows operators to deliver the level of personalisation consumers demand, so they stay engaged throughout their fitness journey"

James Barter, Xplor

personalisation consumers demand, so people get more value from their membership, staying motivated and engaged throughout their fitness journey." ●

Book a free demo: www.HCMmag.com/xplordemo
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Life
Lessons

I used to look at myself in the mirror at three o'clock in the morning and say "why the fuck are you doing this?"

Dave Wright

The founder of Myzone and one of the fitness industry's most visionary entrepreneurs talks to Kath Hudson about how he deals with adversity

The toughest time of my career was in 2011-2012 – about a year after I'd launched Myzone.

CFM, my company which sold gym

memberships, used a collections company to handle contracts.

That company was taken to court for having illegal contracts and 98 per cent of these were for CFM.

Although I moved our membership administration away from them, they continued to collect the money, so we lost £7.2m of what we were due and there was nothing I could do about it.

As this was shortly after the launch of Myzone, we were having technical issues and product recalls and our monthly CFM income went down from £480,000 to £112,000 at the same time as

PHOTO: MYZONE



Dave Wright

Myzone needed investment.

It was like being punched in the face with your hands behind your back and not being able to do a thing about it. Everything was on the line.

I would meet with my financial controller and make the decision about who we could pay that week and I didn't take a salary from Myzone for six years. It was a stressful time.

I said to my team that we had to sell our way through it, that Myzone would eventually change the health of the world and if they stuck with me they would be paid handsomely.

From years of selling memberships, speaking to people and owning my own gyms, I knew Myzone would be a global success, but many people doubted

The launch and expansion of Myzone into a global brand has not been without its hurdles



PHOTO: MYZONE



Myzone is now used by 2.5 million people in 9,000 gyms and facilities globally

► it and when the two crises hit at the same time I used to look at myself in the mirror at three o'clock in the morning and say "why the fuck are you doing this?"

Bring it on

As awful as it was, I did believe I would look back with hindsight and see it had happened for a reason and I do. You can't appreciate the good times if you don't have bad times. And when you're flush with cash you make silly decisions. What I developed from that time was a laser focus on profitable, efficient operations. I've always been able to deal with adversity by thinking that it's only a moment in time. Whatever it is at some point it will be over and then you'll be stronger for it.

I've always been a big believer in learning about – and developing – mental strength. I started out working with kids, being a camp director in Australia and America, which was all about teaching them mental resilience. When you run a sales and marketing company you have to become adept at overcoming objections and dealing with rejection, so I've constantly read books and gone to seminars on how to train your mind to deal with adversity.

I believe it's not what happens to you but how you respond which makes the difference. So every time I get presented with adversity, I ask myself what can I do to deal with this and how can I find a solution? It's all about moving from your reptilian brain – your flight and fight – to the neocortex, which is about solutions.

This thinking has served me well. I've got quite a few friends who run their own businesses and when COVID came along we all felt alive. I just thought "bring it on, I've faced adversity, this is where I shine and we'll bounce through it", as we did.

Melbourne, which is where my brother runs a number of my gyms, was hit really badly. I kept saying to him this was our time to show we're

PHOTO: MYZONE



It was like being punched in the face with your hands behind your back and not being able to do a thing about it

engaged with our community and he stepped in and grabbed it by the horns. It was nothing compared to the adversity we had dealt with before.

Once you've been through one difficult time you know you can do it again and again. You ask yourself, have I been through this situation before? And what did I do about it? And you end up stronger for the experience. ●



Myzone's
wearables give
users real-
time feedback

Country LIFE

Many living in rural areas are missing out on fitness, as the standard gym model doesn't work with low population densities. Kath Hudson asks how public and private sectors can broaden their reach

One of the prices us countryside dwellers pay is that we miss out on many of the conveniences city people enjoy, including things such as GP surgeries and the proliferation of health club options.

The low cost gym model, which has so effectively broadened the market, doesn't fit with low density populations, meaning people living rurally pay more: memberships tend to start at £40 (€50, US\$46.70) a month in the UK, for a health club offering that would cost less in a city. Couple this with the fact that wages tend to be lower and it makes joining a gym less achievable in rural locations.

With obesity, lifestyle diseases and mental illness on the rise, rural populations need support with their health as much as people in metropolitan areas. Australian government research shows that adults living in rural areas are more vulnerable to weight struggles and related issues: 72 per cent of adults in inner regional, outer regional and remote areas reported as overweight or obese, compared to 65 per cent in major cities. Those in rural and remote areas often face struggles with accessibility, availability and affordability of healthy food options and greater socio-economic barriers to purchasing.

Those living in the British countryside face similar problems, and also receive less governmental support than cities. Recent analysis from the County Councils Network shows the number of adults who are overweight or obese has increased by 1.1 million in UK rural areas since 2015. These areas account for a

58 per cent increase in England, yet they receive only about half of what councils in London receive in public health grants and much less than the national average.

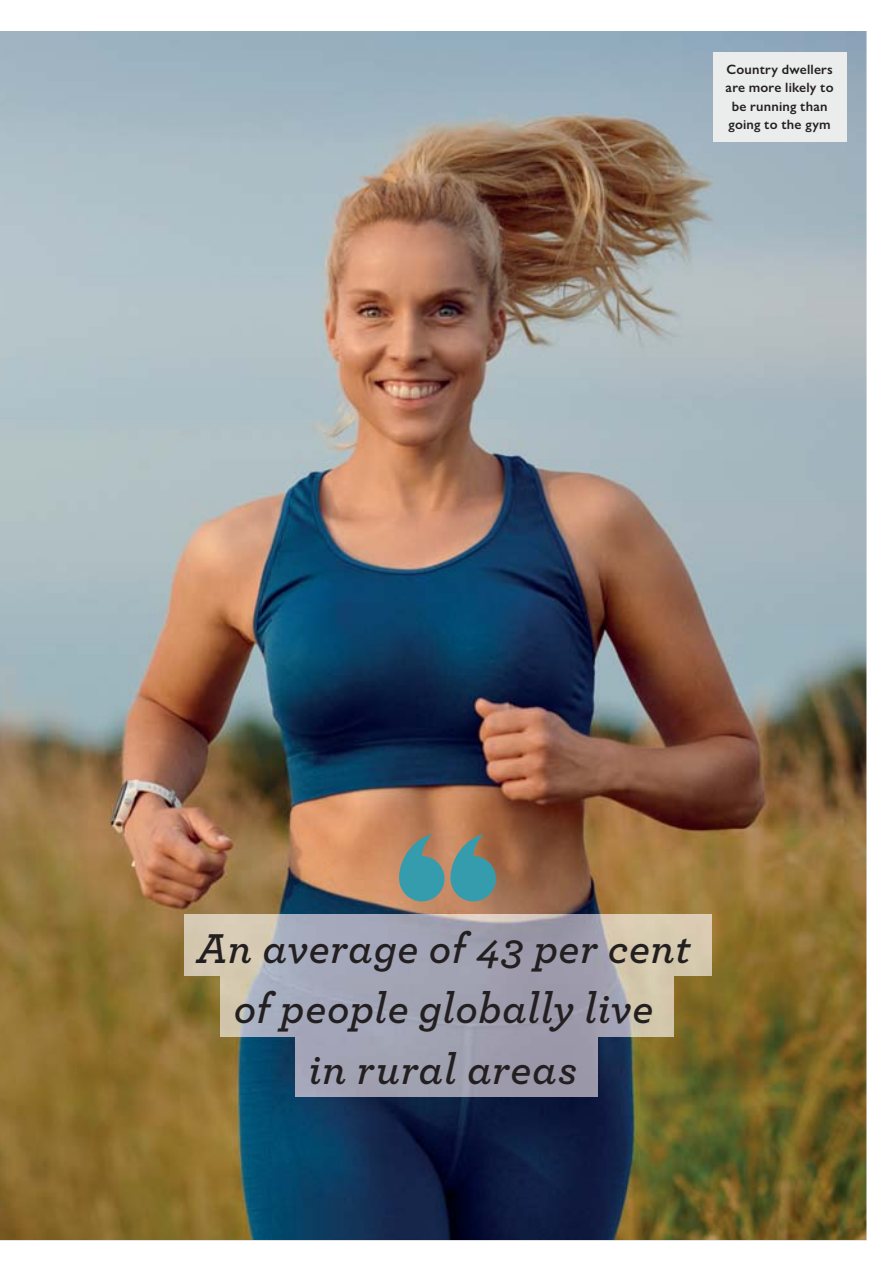
With an average of 43 per cent of the world's population living in rural areas – ranging from 20 per cent in more developed countries such as the UK, to places such as Liechtenstein, where it's 85 per cent – this is an issue that doesn't get the attention it needs.

Case study 1: GLL

With 260 leisure centres, GLL has coverage throughout the UK, but strategic advisor and former CEO, Mark Sesnan, concedes it's hard to make a model that was originally designed for urban areas, work in rural locations. "The traditional leisure centre was based on high population density and footfall which allows for a full service offer with intensive programming seven days a week," he says. "While serving the widest demographics, and financially efficient, it's a challenge to lift this model into rural areas and expect it to work just as well."

"However, with 10.5m people – nearly 20 per cent of the UK population – living in rural areas, it's a big market and the need exists beyond the cities. Adults need to work out, kids need to learn to swim, schools need indoor space for physical activity and the dozens of sports and other clubs which underpin the social fabric of our communities need quality spaces."

Sesnan points out that a further financial challenge is that the cost of provision is similar in urban and rural locations, but income is lower, simply due to

A full-page photograph of a woman with blonde hair tied back, running towards the camera. She is wearing a blue athletic tank top and matching leggings. Her hair is blowing in the wind, and she has a joyful expression. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grass under a clear sky.

Country dwellers
are more likely to
be running than
going to the gym

“

*An average of 43 per cent
of people globally live
in rural areas*

there being less people. This means a higher subsidy is required, but subsidies are no longer available.

GLL is currently exploring different models to help address this challenge. These include influencing leisure centre design to build compact, cost-effective and easy-to-operate multi-activity spaces.

"We're also working with community groups to develop blended management models that combine our expertise with trained and committed local volunteers," says Sesnan. "Co-locating gyms and leisure facilities with health hubs and libraries keeps the costs down and makes travel easier. We're also exploring further community use of school facilities, since every community has a school."

With 110 libraries across the country, GLL has experienced this problem before when library funding was cut. Sesnan explains they navigated it by calling on the community: "Most of our Lincolnshire

libraries are now run by local volunteers," he says. "GLL trains the volunteers and we provide each library with the backbone book and media stock and rotation and all digital services. This has ensured no libraries in Lincolnshire have closed and many are now thriving community hubs," he says.

Sesnan expects to be generally working with more community groups in the future in rural areas where the full service model is no longer financially viable.

Case study 2: FOWLC

Wadebridge Leisure Centre, in Cornwall, (www.wadebridgeslc.co.uk) is an example of a centre which was at risk of closure, until it was taken over by seven volunteers who formed a community interest company called FOWLC. This was formally awarded the contract in July 2022 to run the site on a not-for-profit basis.

The Fit+ staffless franchise can work in locations with populations of 12,000



German operator, Fit+ offers a staffless franchise and founder, Toorsten Boorberg, believes the model can work anywhere



“We’re working with community groups to develop blended management models that combine our expertise with trained and committed local volunteers”

*Mark Sesnan,
strategic advisor, GLL*

Sesnan: experience of delivering in rural areas



Two people have taken on part-time executive director roles, overseeing the site and bidding for grants.

Director, Emma Tudge, says the facility is a valued resource in the community and members are happy to help with jobs such as cleaning, gardening, painting and carpentry. More than 1,000 people attended the open day and the first event sold out in days. The site is next door to a secondary school, which is one of its biggest customers, so they have close ties and the head of PE is on the board.

Tudge says one advantage of being independent is they can be agile: “One size doesn’t fit all and it’s important to listen to what the community wants and needs from their leisure centre. If something doesn’t work, we look at why and tweak or change it. We needed to make it easy and enjoyable for individuals to find something they wanted to do, at a time and cost which worked for them, as well as provide good pool and sports hall access for local schools and clubs.”

Some of the changes implemented include things large scale operators frequently strip out to save costs, but which customers value: a direct dial phone line, a fully staffed reception desk and accepting cash. Junk food was removed from the vending machines, the number of exercise classes on offer was quadrupled and the team works closely with a number of local sports clubs to give them better access, while also investing in upgrading the facilities.

Tudge says rural facilities need an agile approach and one which is embedded in the local community: “To make a rural club work you need to listen to and engage with the community and have a genuine passion for engaging and including people. Spending money on improvements where you know there will be demand can be scary but is so necessary.”

So far the approach is working. Wadebridge Leisure Centre has a net promoter score of 88; has doubled the number of adult memberships and children in swimming lessons; the sports hall has seen new



Passmore: 'PureGym wants to serve rural communities'

"We're looking to see if a gym can be viable with 1,500 members. If we could make this work, it would give our property team more markets to target"

Rebecca Passmore, MD, PureGym

teams and clubs being formed and it has achieved a score of Very Good in its first Quest assessment.

Case study 3: Pure Gym

But will only local, not-for-profit, mixed use models work in rural areas? Are low-cost health club operators ruled out? According to Rebecca Passmore, managing director of PureGym, it's always been challenging to make the affordable model work in rural areas, because it relies on high member densities and in some areas the population just isn't large enough to sustain a commercial gym, however, the company is working on alternative models.

"PureGym has been able to deliver an attractive return on capital at a 6,500sq ft (604sq m) site, compared to its average of 15,000sq ft (1,394sq m)," she says. "And we've found a viable model with an addressable population of 30,000 to 40,000.

"Proximity is key: our penetration is strong within the first three to five kilometres and then it starts to reduce, no matter how well-priced or high quality the facility is. This is also the case even if there isn't another gym option nearby."

A further challenge is that a gym which is one third of the size will not have proportional cost savings, since there are aspects of gyms which cost the same to install regardless of club size, such as control panels.

"We want to be able to serve rural communities, but it is a challenge which will definitely require us to innovate our model, looking at the various compromises and trade-offs," says Passmore. "While we can't yet make a gym work on 1,000 members, we're working to become viable at 1,500 members and if we could make this work, it would give the property team more markets to target and take in some of these currently underserved areas."



PureGym has seen a return on capital at a 6,500sq ft site

Wearable tech is key to delivering fitness in rural areas, says Hill

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALLIANCE IMAGES



Rural facilities can be catalysts for rejuvenation, connection and sustainable living

Case study 4: Fit+

One multinational health club chain going into low population areas is German operator, Fit+ which offers a staffless franchise. Founder, Torsten Boorberg, believes his model can work anywhere: "We opened a 390sq ft (36sq m) club in the German town of Bad Doberman four years ago, which has a population of 12,000 people and it's been a success, thanks to its hardworking licensee, Karsten Luther, who has attracted more than 1,000 customers," he says.

Boorberg believes his concept is successful because digitalisation and being staffless reduces costs and the master licensees know their market. Members do, however, need to be comfortable with digital coaching, or have the means to book a personal trainer.

Part of the community

Mike Hill, director of Active Insight, reiterates that rural gyms are only going to become more important over the next decade and should be embedded in, work with, and reflect the local community. "Community health and activity centres have been run 'by the community, for the community', for years in countries,

such as the Netherlands," he explains. "They also serve as hubs for social interaction, mental rejuvenation, and skill development, boosting social cohesion."

Hill argues the unique needs of the community should be taken into consideration during the design of the facility. This might mean adding a meeting room, a community centre or an indoor sports hall. Technology – both for operations and to link with wearable tech, as well as sustainable design – should also be prioritised.

If space is maximised, eco-friendly designs are embraced, technology is integrated, and the community is engaged, Hill says these facilities can become more than just spaces for physical activity: "They become catalysts for rejuvenation, connection, and sustainable living, ensuring rural communities remain vibrant and resilient in the face of urbanisation."

Clearly there are many challenges around this issue, but with operators working on solutions, it will be interesting to see the models that emerge. ●

● *Do you run a rural health club? If so, we'd love to hear your story. Write to: letters@leisuremedia.com*



Powerbase is now one of the most heavily-instrumented strength and conditioning facilities in the world

Rich Ellis, Loughborough University



PHOTO: LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

Delivering the VISION

Loughborough University set out to expand its Powerbase gym to support people both with and without disabilities equally, as Gregory Bradley explains

Loughborough University is renowned as one of the world's leading universities for sport, as well as being home to numerous Olympic, Paralympic and world champions and the NFL Academy.

The recent expansion of Loughborough's Powerbase gym stands as a testament to inclusivity, providing a holistic training environment for both able-bodied and para-sport athletes, with innovative rack designs and equipment placements.

These adaptations ensure both able-bodied and para-sport athletes can train side by side without compromise, with the facility also serving as a hub for athlete rehabilitation and pioneering sports research.

Powerbase is also a training ground for the next generation of strength and conditioning professionals.

A strong partnership

Loughborough's focus on creating and supporting a diverse, equitable and inclusive community, as part of the investment in Powerbase, offered a great opportunity to consider the needs of people with disabilities from the very start.

The university has a high concentration of multi-sport practitioners on campus and the team driving the development had an intricate understanding of the needs of each of their programmes. This expertise was complemented by input from practitioners from Loughborough's national governing body and institute partners, ensuring rigorous and meticulous planning went into the new development.

BLK BOX delivered all project stages, from concept and manufacturing, to installation



BLK BOX

This project would not have been as successful without partnerships, such as the one we have with BLK BOX



WATCH THE VIDEO:

www.hcmmag.com/bb



The Powerbase gym at Loughborough University, with kit by BLK BOX

To bring the vision to life, the Loughborough team was determined to find a partner who could create bespoke equipment solutions and customise each product, as this was crucial to delivering outcomes.

BLK BOX joined the team to develop innovative solutions, so Powerbase could accommodate the needs of all stakeholders.

Engineering solutions

The Loughborough team benefitted from BLK BOX's engineering expertise and experience in the sector, both of which enabled it to deliver innovative solutions to performance challenges.

These have been far-reaching, from integrated Smith machines and dual-function benches – to save floor space – to floor boxes that house integrated, but removable force plates.

When it came to the rack systems, buying a standard stock product was not an option. It was imperative that it was customised to meet the needs of the diverse user groups and practitioner requirements and BLK BOX was able to deliver on this.

Bespoke storage solutions allow for optimisation of training space, along with the clustering of racks to create 'microclimates' for individual programmes.

Supporting a diverse community

For the team at Loughborough, another important aspect of the partnership was BLK BOX's ability to fully engage in focus group sessions.

These examined the needs of all users and helped Loughborough find ways to facilitate independent and uncompromised training options for people with all levels of ability.

Rich Ellis, gyms and technical relationships manager at Loughborough University said: "We're delighted with the extension to our Powerbase gym, it has given us one of the largest and most heavily-instrumented strength and conditioning facilities in the world. One that has been tailored to the needs of our user groups.

"This project would not have been as successful without partnerships, such as the one we have with BLK BOX. We're proud to say that our partnership has led to sector-informing solutions that not only benefit users at Loughborough, but also reach far wider. We hope we'll start to see more facilities delivering an inclusive equipment offering.

"Our relationship with BLK BOX is constantly evolving and right now we're working together on prototype products that we look forward to bringing to our users. This approach is a living example of how Loughborough University is always looking to be better and working together with our partners to achieve this." ●

● More: www.blkboxfitness.com



It's clear the industry remains on a path of recovery and long-term growth

Jeff Solsby, IHRSA



GLOBAL INSIGHT

The 2023 IHRSA Global Report shows a positive long-term outlook for the industry, as operators navigate challenges and embrace growth, says Jeff Solsby

In the face of economic and geopolitical turbulence, the global fitness industry continues to face challenges, but innovation and a can-do entrepreneurial spirit is positively benefitting the industry.

Supply chain issues, high energy costs, inflation and a tight labour market have all affected industry recovery. However, despite these macro barriers, market leaders maintain an optimistic perspective, according to insights from the recently published *2023 IHRSA Global Report*.

Pre-pandemic levels

The research explores the industry's outlook and examines market data and trends, while sharing the results of a survey of leading operators that reveals the current sentiment of health club and studio operators.

Roughly 80 per cent of operators expect to end 2023 with membership and revenues having grown by more than 5 per cent and despite

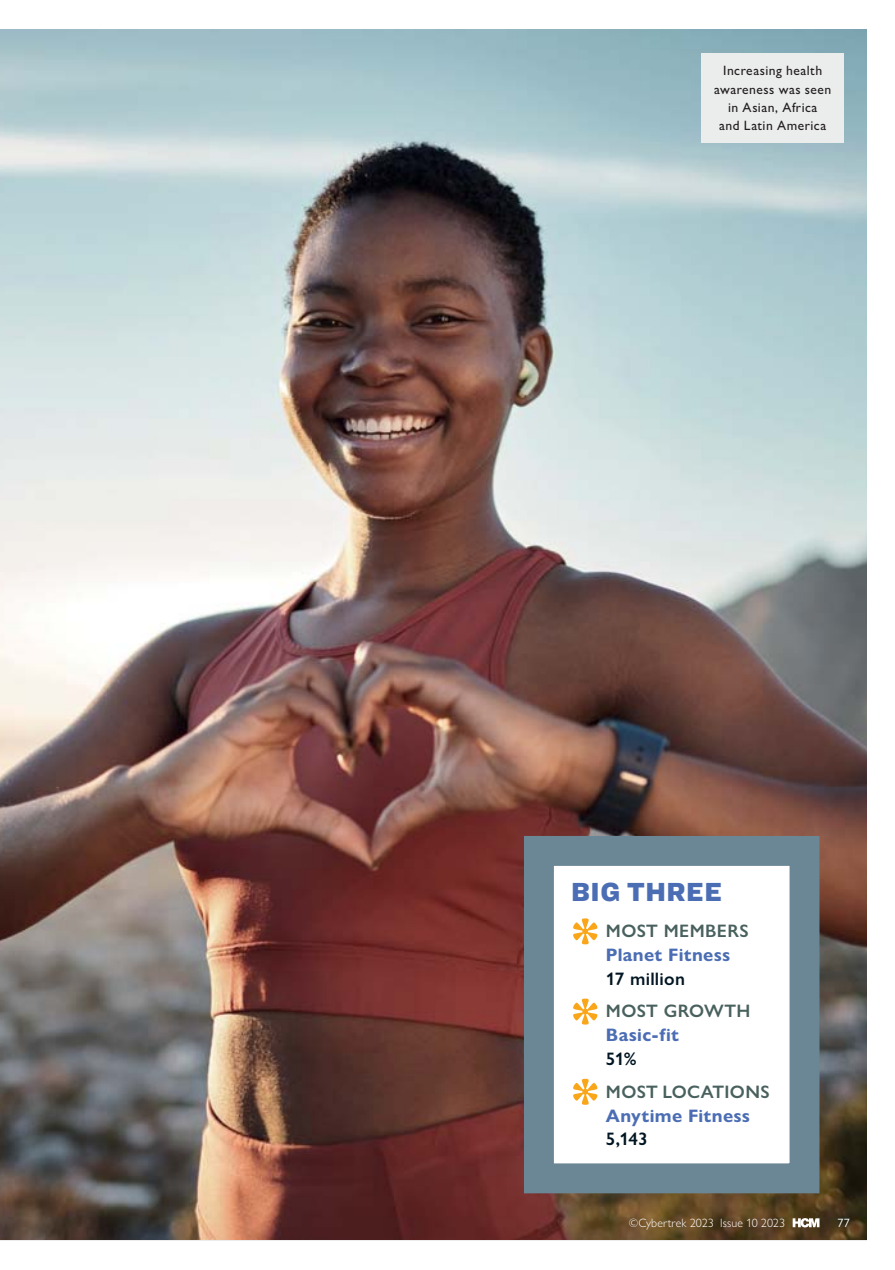
inflation and high energy costs, two-thirds anticipate EBITDA will improve by over 5 per cent.

This optimism is validated by consumer trends, such as those highlighted by a recent Ipsos research study of consumers in 50 countries and territories, that revealed 86 per cent are motivated to prioritise their physical wellbeing.

Ipsos found the desire to invest in wellbeing is strongest in regions with historically low member penetration rates for health club memberships, such as Asia, Africa and Latin America, where increasing health awareness and demand for fitness are creating growth opportunities for industry operators.


The report references Garmin's *Year in Review* which found its participation in physical activity has returned to pre-pandemic levels, with a strong growth in outdoor activities that can't be performed at home and noting a 20 per cent increase in strength training activity – bearing out the current trend.

The *2023 IHRSA Global Report* also flags a number of trends, including the integration of

A smiling woman with short dark hair, wearing a red sports top and a blue wristband, is making a heart shape with her hands. She is wearing yellow earbuds. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with mountains and a clear sky.

Increasing health awareness was seen in Asian, Africa and Latin America

BIG THREE

-  **MOST MEMBERS**
Planet Fitness
17 million
-  **MOST GROWTH**
Basic-fit
51%
-  **MOST LOCATIONS**
Anytime Fitness
5,143



The integration with healthcare, the growth of Gen Z, recovery, strength training and pickleball are all trends we're seeing

Table 1

Number of members

Rank	Company	Total
1	Planet Fitness	17,000,000
2	HiLeFit	10,000,000
3	Anytime Fitness	3,900,000
4	Smart Fit	3,800,000
5	Basic-Fit	3,352,000
6	Crunch Holdings, LLC	2,160,000
7	24 Hour Fitness	2,140,000
8	RSG Group (Europe Only)	1,805,000
9	Powerhouse Gyms International	1,800,000
10	PureGym	1,665,000
11	Life Time	1,400,000
12	GoodLife Fitness Group	1,300,000
13	FitX	842,000
14	Fitness Park Group	835,000
15	The Gym Group	821,000
16	Curves Holdings Co., Ltd.*	787,000
17	David Lloyd Leisure (DLL)	730,000
18	SATS Group	721,000
19	Xponential Fitness	590,000
20	Friskis & Svettis	486,000
21	EASYFITNESS	435,000
22	Keep Cool	422,000
23	Renaissance Incorporated	373,615
24	Forus	372,000
25	Nuffield Health	366,000

Source: IHRSA 2023 Global Report



the industry with healthcare, the opportunities presented by weight loss drugs, the growth of Gen Z as a customer cohort, the growing popularity of pickleball and padel tennis, surging interest in strength training and growing opportunities to offer recovery interventions as trends requiring engagement by operators.

It also flags up the importance of the sector when it comes to military readiness and the opportunities this presents to support the armed forces and the growing awareness of the role exercise plays in delivering good mental health for the population.

Return to the gym

In IHRSA's research, an analysis of statements from industry executives across 15 key geographies attests to the growing demand for health and

ee zone



At 17 million, Planet Fitness had the most members globally in 2022

fitness, including health club-based offerings. The resurgence of health clubs is also evident, as more people return to fitness facilities to engage in activities they can't replicate at home, enjoying access to specialist equipment and expertise.

Pressure is also reducing on operators in some urban locations, as employers are increasingly requiring workers to return to offices, easing the strain on health clubs located in central business districts that have been impacted by the pandemic-induced work-from-home trend.

The fitness industry continues to see the growth of the top operators and survey responses from the top 25 worldwide show average annual membership growth of 15 per cent between 2021 and 2022.

Listed companies and fitness franchises are at the forefront of this growth, because of their access



FAST FACTS

IHRSA Report

51%

In Europe, Basic Fit achieved a 51 per cent increase in members from 2021 to 2022, with membership figures rising from 2.22 million to 3.3 million.

43%

French operator Keep Cool improved membership by 43 per cent and at the end of 2022, had more than 400,000 members.

33%

Fitness Park Group, also based in France, recorded a 33 per cent increase in members to 835,000 at the end of 2022.

31%

In the Americas Xponential Fitness' member base grew by 31 per cent, with the operator finishing 2022 with 590,000 members across 2,641 locations.

26%

SmartFit increased member numbers by 26 per cent, ending 2022 with 3.8 million at more than 1,200 locations across Latin America.

Basic Fit in Europe saw memberships increase from 2.2 to 3.3 million between 2021 and 2022



Advocacy efforts are finally starting to pay off, signalling a positive shift towards a future where the fitness industry is seen as a key player in public health

► to capital and with locations across every major geographic region, the top operators demonstrate the global reach of the fitness industry.

Leading the world in 2022 was Planet Fitness, which reported it had 17 million members at the end of the year, a 12 per cent increase on the previous 12 months, putting it at the top of the report's global rankings of health club operators in terms of membership numbers.

The world region reporting the greatest membership uplift between 2021 and 2022 was Europe and the operator with the most locations globally at the end of 2022 was Anytime Fitness, with 5,143 locations. Other operators at the top of the sector by number of locations at the end of 2022 included Planet Fitness with 2,410, Curves Holdings – based in Japan – with 1,954 and US-based Orangetheory Fitness with 1,528.

The report notes that analysts at www.placer.ai – which measures IRL and web retail traffic – found increases in foot traffic between April 2022 and April 2023 of 25 per cent for Xponential's Club Pilates, 20 per cent for Crunch Fitness and 15 per cent for Planet Fitness, while La Fitness and Pure Barre saw no change.

Social value

A study by Deloitte and commissioned by the Fitness Industry Council of Canada (FIC) – *The Impact of the Sector: a Health Valuation of Sport and Physical Activity in Canada* – reported that the Canadian fitness industry helped generate health savings of CA\$23.4bn in 2019 and prevented more than 2.2 million health conditions.

In addition, health and fitness facilities alone generated CA\$6.19bn in total social value.



Table 2

Number of locations

Rank	Company	Total
1	Anytime Fitness	5,143
2	Xponential Fitness	2,641
3	Planet Fitness	2,410
4	Curves Holdings Co., Ltd.*	1,954
5	F45 Training**	1,900
6	Orangetheory	1,528
7	Smart Fit	1,236
8	HiLeFit	1,200
9	Basic-Fit	1,200
10	LIFT Brands	1,100
11	RSG Group (Europe & North America)	900
12	PureGym	555
13	9Round	543
14	Crunch Holdings, LLC	421
15	Lava Hot Yoga Studio	420
16	Hotworx	409
17	Fitness & Lifestyle Group	385
18	L'orange Bleue	380
19	GoodLife Fitness Group	370
20	Viva Leisure Group	338
21	Bodystreet	309
22	Keep Cool	302
23	Burn Boot Camp	300
24	Mrs. Sporty	300
25	24 Hour Fitness	283

Source: IHRSA 2023 Global Report

The FIC, which represents more than 6,000 fitness facilities with more than six million members, is also an effective advocate for Canadian clubs. In August 2023, the FIC and other fitness professionals in the province of Saskatchewan successfully defeated a proposed 6 per cent tax on gyms in the province.

Importance of advocacy

Worldwide, advocacy efforts on behalf of the health and fitness industry share a common thread: a collective drive to establish exercise and movement as critical components of wellbeing and healthcare and these efforts underscore the industry's commitment to gaining recognition and support from governments.

Initiatives include advocating for fitness-related tax incentives, promoting physical activity in schools and expanding health campaigns.

Others include educating policymakers about the industry's economic and social impact and fostering collaboration with healthcare providers and insurers to emphasise the preventive health benefits of regular exercise.

Advocacy efforts are finally starting to pay off, signalling a positive shift towards a future where the fitness industry is regarded as a key player in public health.

On March 14, 2023, the PHIT Act (Personal Health Investment Today) was reintroduced in Congress. If passed, the law will allow both Health Savings Account and Flexible Spending Account funds to be used for health club memberships, youth sports and other expenditures related to physical activity. The PHIT Act has received strong backing from key lawmakers of both parties in the Senate and House of Representatives. ▶

- ▶ Preparing young people for a life of healthy habits will be an important benefit of the PHIT Act, which aims to increase funds available for youth programmes. This is another important mission for IHRSA members in countries that face increased childhood obesity rates and sedentary behaviour among youth.

Other lobbying and advocacy work is detailed in the report and includes IHRSA's collaborations with the National Health & Fitness Alliance (NHFA) and Global Health & Fitness Alliance (GHFA), while the IHRSA Fly-In and Advocacy Summits and the launch of a Strategic Advisory Committee to work on developing strategic operational plans, and research reports are also detailed.

IHRSA's advocacy team is working to initiate an economic impact study on the adult sports fitness industry by the Department of Labor, the Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis in the US.

The team is also tracking changes and preparing to fight changes proposed by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that would require cancellation methods known as "click-to-cancel," which IHRSA believes would negatively affect the industry.

Path of recovery

The resilience of fitness club operators, coupled with the increasing global emphasis on health and wellness, offer hope for a positive future.

Industry executives are optimistic and their commitment to meeting the evolving needs of consumers is a driving force behind their positive outlook, and when this insight is paired with the data and trends outlined in the 2023 IHRSA Global Report, it's clear the industry remains on a path of recovery and long-term growth. That's good news for owners, operators, members and public health overall. ●

Jeff Solsby is head of communications at IHRSA

Anytime Fitness
had the most
global locations at
the end of 2022



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ServiceSport UK has partnered with cutting edge outfit, Upholstery2u, to expand its upholstery repair services, enabling operators to keep their gyms in perfect working order

High standards

ServiceSport UK, a leading provider of gym equipment service and repair solutions, has announced a new partnership with Upholstery2u, a reputable name in the upholstery repair industry.

The collaboration marks an exciting milestone for both companies and expands the range of services offered by ServiceSport.

Having served the fitness industry for over 20 years, ServiceSport has built a strong reputation

for delivering exceptional customer service and high-quality maintenance solutions, including the service and repair of commercial gym equipment, the refresh of existing equipment, custom clothing supplies, gym equipment part supplies and 3D printing and CNC machining of gym equipment parts and equipment across the UK and overseas.

The new agreement with Upholstery2u will see it become a trusted partner for all upholstery repair, with the move being part of ServiceSport's continuous commitment to excellence.

By joining forces, ServiceSport and Upholstery2u aim to provide clients – such as Nuffield Health, JD Gyms, Marriott Hotels, David Lloyd, Bannatyne Health Clubs, Total Fitness, Anytime Fitness and many others – with a further enhanced and comprehensive range of services, unrivaled in the fitness equipment industry.

Partnership of excellence

"It's no secret that the fitness industry is booming – operators are seeing year-on-year increases in membership numbers and with this comes an increase in users," says ServiceSport's Michael Ellis. "This means gym equipment is being put under more strain and as a result, we've seen a 30 per cent increase in demand for our repair services since Q4 2022.

"Although we're in a strong position in terms of our own growth strategy, in the 20 years we've



Michael Ellis (L) with Michael Boyle

Clients include

- Nuffield Health
- JD Gyms
- Marriott Hotels
- David Lloyd
- Bannatyne Health Clubs
- Total Fitness
- Anytime Fitness



ServiceSport can now offer a complete solution, from servicing and repairing gym equipment, to expert upholstery repairs

The service includes on-site repairs to avoid equipment down-time

operated, we've never been a company to 'settle' when it comes to our accomplishments – we're always questing to do better," he says, "Hence the new partnership with Upholstery2u – another service provider making waves in the fitness industry.

"What Upholstery2u has achieved in the past three years is testament to the work ethic of the team and overall quality of its work – we see nothing but glowing reviews.

"The fact the company has set such high standards made it an easy decision for us to partner with Danny, Michael and the team and we look forward to supporting each other, growing together and celebrating our successes moving forward," explains Ellis.

"Upholstery2u brings a wealth of expertise and a proven track record in the upholstery repair field. The company's team of skilled upholstery engineers excels in refreshing and restoring the appearance of gym equipment, ensuring it's both aesthetically pleasing and functional," he says.

"By leveraging Upholstery2u's specialised knowledge, ServiceSport can now offer a complete solution, from servicing commercial gym equipment, to expert upholstery repairs," he concludes.

Michael Boyle, MD at Upholstery2u, said: "Our business has been built with a huge focus on the customer and we feel that working together with ServiceSport will only enhance this.

We're absolutely delighted to be partnering with them and believe companies working in unison is the optimal way forward.

"As both businesses have been at the top of their game for years, we're confident this partnership will create a 'one stop solution' for all health club and gym operators in the UK," he says.

Elevating the service

This exciting partnership allows ServiceSport to further elevate the level of service it provides its valued customers. Whether it's repairing a torn bench cushion, refurbishing workout benches, or reupholstering gym equipment, ServiceSport and Upholstery2u combine their collective experience and craftsmanship to deliver outstanding results that exceed customer expectations.

Both teams are thrilled about this official partnership and look forward to expanding their reach, improving customer satisfaction and raising the bar in the fitness industry. Both are committed to delivering exceptional quality reliability and also driving innovation that sets new standards in equipment maintenance and repair. ●

For more information about ServiceSport UK and its range of services, please visit www.servicesport.co.uk

To learn more about Upholstery2u and its expertise in upholstery repairs, visit www.upholstery2u.com

Life skills

Learning and practising functional movements is a great way to get fitter. Steph Eaves investigates the skill-based training movement

Stephen Barton

Skillcourt GmbH

What are the benefits of skill-based training?

Utilising a skill-based testing and training approach allows for the identification of necessary skill sets that require development and the correction of deficits that may impede performance or heighten the risk of injury.

This personalised and targeted support benefits both people undergoing physio treatment and athletes, enabling them to enhance their proficiency in areas that hold true significance for their individual progress.

How can health clubs utilise this concept?

First, it's essential to identify the everyday tasks undertaken by our customer groups. These can range from sitting in front of a screen to driving a car. It might also include things such as ensuring elderly people can walk without falling, or combating the risk of dementia.

When you examine the anatomy and physiology behind each conscious movement, you will consistently identify the same pattern: perception, cognition, and then motor function.

Both health clubs and medical centres should offer specific visual and cognitive training for their clients. Enhancing these skills leads to increased concentration, improved academic performance, fewer accidents and injuries, enhanced overall performance and a reduced

PHOTO: SKILLCOURT



Stephen Barton

risk of cognitive decline throughout the lifespan. Just 5-10 minutes per session is sufficient to deliver these benefits.

Tell us about Skillcourt

Skillcourt is a laser and camera-based testing and training tool designed to enhance visual, cognitive and motor skills. The system integrates scientific principles with game development to engage children, gym goers and athletes.

We've developed skill-specific workouts tailored to everyday activities – such as driving safety – as well as helping with fall prevention, cognitive fitness and general learning and academic performance.

In elite sports, Skillcourt is employed to assess athletes, pinpoint weaknesses, and enhance their scanning, reaction time, decision-making and agility. When individuals receive and process information more rapidly, they can make better and quicker decisions, resulting in fewer injuries and improved performance.

Thanks to LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology, which uses safe laser beams to track human movements in a training space, nearly every facility can easily incorporate our system. It can be installed on surfaces of various sizes with minimal resource wastage, ensuring maximum benefits for clients.

This system is poised to become an indispensable asset for facilities dedicated to enhancing their clients' development.

Steve Barton is head of UK at Skillcourt

“Skillcourt is used by athletes to enhance their reaction time, decision-making and agility”



Lasers are used to track movement in a training space

Jessica Christensen

Mavericks/BBS Training Academy

What are the benefits of skill-based training?

The human body is designed for skilful development: we learn best by 'doing', using a whole-systems approach to training.

Skill-based training strategies ensure a workout isn't purely biomechanical or effort-based, but instead involves cognitive and proprioceptive development which is essential for the development of a resilient, capable body.

When we learn something in pursuit of a tangible goal our body can be more efficient at engaging a whole-system response that goes far beyond muscle targeting and fat loss. Our body can also respond more purposefully in problem-solving, involving all systems in skill and fitness development.

In addition, the feeling of accomplishing a goal or skill can be the greatest source of intrinsic motivation and keep people coming to training sessions, as they pursue the next goal to unlock the next skill.

How can health clubs tap into this?

They're a great place to include progressive, varied classes that fuse skill and fitness in themed



Jessica Christensen

sessions that revolve around skills and proactive training. Callisthenics, gymnastics, dance, tai chi, yoga, martial arts, parkour, and most other skill-based activities – when combined with thoughtful class planning – can easily be combined with body conditioning or a fitness focus.

The great thing about these classes or sessions is that they don't have to be licence-led or linked to a specific brand; most people will follow a passionate coach who inspires them to learn something new – regardless of whether it's a recognised brand format.

People crave progression and if training can become more meaningful in the pursuit of skills and goals, we remove the old-fashioned view of purely chasing calorie burn or hypertrophy. We can use skill-based training to help people understand that fitness isn't a destination or a fixed goal but that it can become an integral part of a lifestyle that blends social interest, improved health performance and mental wellbeing.


Tell us about BBS Training Academy

It stands for "Body Before Skill" – because our CPD courses focus on helping coaches develop a skill-based approach to training through a deeper understanding of the body and a holistic approach to conditioning that goes far beyond traditional biomechanics and training.

Our courses are specifically tailored to teaching group classes, but also allow coaches to manage group specificity, progression, goals and flexible lesson planning.



Achieving a goal or skill is a great motivator



“Cognitive and proprioceptive development is essential for a resilient, capable body”

Coaches learn more about how the body moves naturally

We primarily teach via eLearning, meaning coaches can join us from anywhere. The courses are licence-free and allow coaches to apply what they learn to their individual discipline, sport or training technique. We start by teaching foundation courses focusing on full-body mechanics, particularly on functional movement, flexibility and holistic training themes.

These foundations help coaches develop a practical approach to understanding how the human body moves naturally, the variables that are considered in a whole-systems approach to sports science, links between mind-body-environment training, the mechanics and approaches that develop effective ranges of motion, and how to increase the baseline that enhances skill and performance.

Trainers can use our foundation courses immediately to enhance their practice and coaching skills, take a deep dive with our online courses, or work towards earning specialisation courses in our different training domains.

How can gym design aid skill development?

We'd love to see gyms transitioning some of their spaces from machine-based training to areas where people have more space to train using skill-based equipment and more natural ranges of movement, which can help people move away from a purely aesthetic, strength and calorie-burning mindset.

Sports and fitness can be so much more than just pumping iron! Larger spaces for skill-based training help make gyms more people-centred in their training approaches. They become more social, more sustainable and help coaches develop community-based participation.

In over 20 years working in this industry as trainers, consultants and at our own training centre, we've seen the transformative effects that a skill-based focus can have on members and coaches, as well as the uptake in membership and participation..

Jessica Christensen is lecturer, School of Sport, Health and Exercise Science.

Óscar Sanz

Pavigym

Why does skill-based training matter?

It results in more interactivity between exercisers – and workouts that are more fun. It also gets the best results for members.

How can health clubs deploy this concept?

I think free, open spaces are essential for doing skill-based training. Not necessarily using machines, but bikes, rowing machines and treadmills can be beneficial in some cases. Basically, in skill-based training we use our body as the main tool, along with some equipment such as kettlebells, dumbbells, bars and ropes, etc.

Tell us about Bootiq

Bootiq is our new concept based on an interactive and immersive boutique concept. We provide software which clients can use to create their own training concepts based on our complete library of more than 2,500 exercises and with several formats such as rounds, sets and supersets. In addition, Bootiq can be combined with a wide range of add-ons that will enhance the user's experience: floor markings, wearables, visual displays and light and music effects, all of them easily managed by our software.

Óscar Sanz is manager of the education department at Pavigym

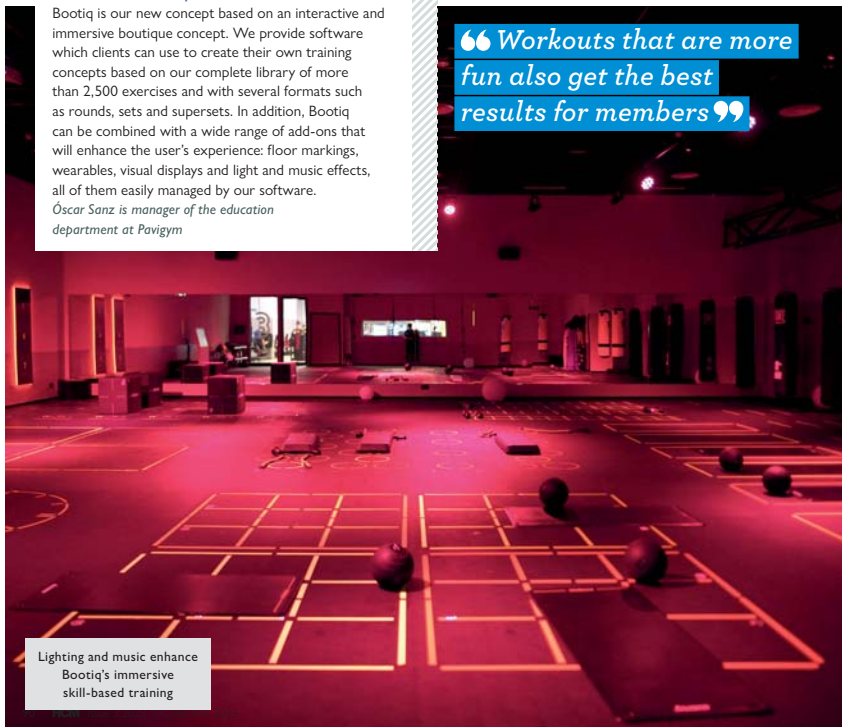


Óscar Sanz

PHOTO: OZONIA

“Workouts that are more fun also get the best results for members”

PHOTO: PAVIGYM



Lighting and music enhance Bootiq's immersive skill-based training

The ASM model unites mind and body to deliver functional movement

“Movement has to be varied, versatile, wide ranging and as much fun as possible”



PHOTO: ASM

Martina Navarro

ASM

Tell us about the Athletic Skills Model

It was founded in the Netherlands by Rene Wormhoudt, strength and conditioning coach of the men's and women's Dutch national football teams and Dr Geert Savelsbergh, professor of motor learning at Vrije University of Amsterdam. The Athletic Skills Model (ASM) is a practical and scientifically-grounded framework that offers practitioners within the sport and fitness industry a structured approach to designing and implementing a movement programme that develops adaptable and versatile movers.

The ASM adopts a holistic and integrative approach in which the body and mind are united and movement is central. Movement has to be varied, versatile, wide-ranging and as much fun as possible. The concept of enjoyment and versatility when moving applies to all ages and skill levels. The model goes beyond just prescribing a large range of exercises; it integrates fundamental movements with physical abilities in a holistic manner.

The food pyramid and eat-well wheel are well-known tools used worldwide to provide guidance for a healthy balanced diet. Rene and Geert designed a similar tool – The Fundamental 10! – to provide guidance for developing physical literacy.

The Fundamental 10! is a practical and evidence-based tool for practitioners to prescribe physical activities that are versatile, fun, healthy and suitable to everyone.



Martina Navarro

What are the benefits of skill-based training?

The scientific evidence underpinning ASM shows a holistic approach can result in increased coordination and performance, leading to an increased ability to perform more complex movements. For example, people able to perform squats are likely able to perform leg press, but the opposite isn't necessarily true.

In this case, coordination should be considered within a training programme to support the development of fitness levels.

It improves motor skills and levels of motor creativity, enhancing athletic performance, boosting confidence and ultimately resulting in the pursuit of a more active lifestyle. It also leads to people getting fewer injuries, stress, and burnout, which allows for greater longevity in training, and better mental health and athletic performance.

People have more fun during physical activities with these skills, resulting in higher levels of happiness and a more positive relationship with an active lifestyle.

How can health clubs deploy this concept?

By focusing programmes on these 10 fundamental movements and their variations, clubs would see an increase in customer satisfaction and compliance.

ASM can support health clubs in designing training programmes and also designs spaces that complement its vision. ASM-designed gyms, sports halls, parks and rehabilitation centres introduce the innovative concept of movement versatility and provide a space where the Fundamental10! can be performed. ● Martina Navarro is senior lecturer, School of Sport, Health and Exercise Science, University of Portsmouth



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MATRIX



Matrix has collaborated with Bicester Hotel and Spa

Athletic endeavour

Matrix Fitness has collaborated with the Bicester Hotel and Spa to develop a range of health and fitness offerings

In 2020, Bicester Hotel and Spa launched a purpose-built fitness and performance facility to create a standalone offering to attract a new demographic.

The club includes a performance gym equipped by Matrix Fitness, an outdoor 500m grass running track, a custom-made 200m swimming lake and an assault course.

Now, to complement this existing premium offering, the team has unveiled a refurbished health club with a modernised aesthetic – and the latest resistance and cardiovascular equipment from Matrix Fitness – to provide an integrated gym floor, three large studios and over 70 instructor-led sessions per week.

The Bicester Health Club

Andrew Foreman, health club manager said: "Our goal is to offer something for everybody. We have so much for members, from state-of-the-art equipment and fantastic trainers in our group classes, to our unique range of facilities. We can cater for anyone's training needs".

Matrix Fitness has a longstanding connection with the site, having already been chosen as the supplier for the performance gym – a self-contained project, with the highest quality required when it came to service, support and products.

The new health club includes a full Matrix Fitness connected solution with all-new performance cardio and touch-screen technology; Connexus functional training station; Ultra V2 Strength range with intelligent training consoles and; two dedicated instructor-led, virtual training studios. It also has an indoor cycling room with Matrix Fitness CXP bikes.

Nigel Tapping, head of spa and hospitality at Matrix Fitness UK adds: "The team at Bicester Hotel and Spa has taken a visionary approach, as versatile gym design and modernised, member-centric fitness offerings are playing an increasingly important role in the hospitality sector.

"The modernised health club at Bicester perfectly complements the performance centre, providing a full, wraparound fitness journey for



"The team at Bicester Hotel and Spa has taken a visionary approach and the result is an impressive, cutting-edge facility"

Nigel Tapping, Matrix Fitness

each and every member, no matter their goal or the stage of their fitness journey. The team has been forward-thinking and innovative, and the result is an impressive, cutting-edge facility."

The Performance Gym includes Magnum half and full racks, Magnum plate-loaded equipment and bespoke track flooring for strength and functional-focused training.

On the second floor, a space has been designed for movement screening, small accessory functional training and one-to-one personal training. ●

More: www.matrixfitness.co.uk

THE BENEFIT OF INSIGHT

New research explores how dealing with attrition can unlock success for operators, as Joanna Walker explains

Xplor has partnered with research company Active Insight – formerly Leisure-Net Solutions and consultants, GGFit, to research the state of attrition in the UK health and fitness market and provide operators with actionable insights.

The research was based on Xplor data from over 700,000 gym, health club and leisure members who pay by Direct Debit in the UK and Ireland.

The dataset includes information about 370,000 members who cancelled in the six-plus years between January 2017 and April 2023.

“Why do members leave?” Was the first question the research sought to answer, looking for common factors that contribute to attrition.

The insight team found 48 per cent of people will tell operators why they’re cancelling, with most commonly cited reasons including lack of use, lack of time and lack of interest (14 per cent), relocating (10 per cent) and dirty facilities (6 per cent) – potentially one of the most straightforward objections to resolve.

The remaining 52 per cent of the sample didn’t reveal a reason for leaving, while a huge 40 per cent left without directly cancelling

with the operator, who only found out when they recorded a failed/cancelled payment.

In short, many members are quietly quitting, with those aged 16 to 24 most likely to do this by quietly walking away (57 per cent).

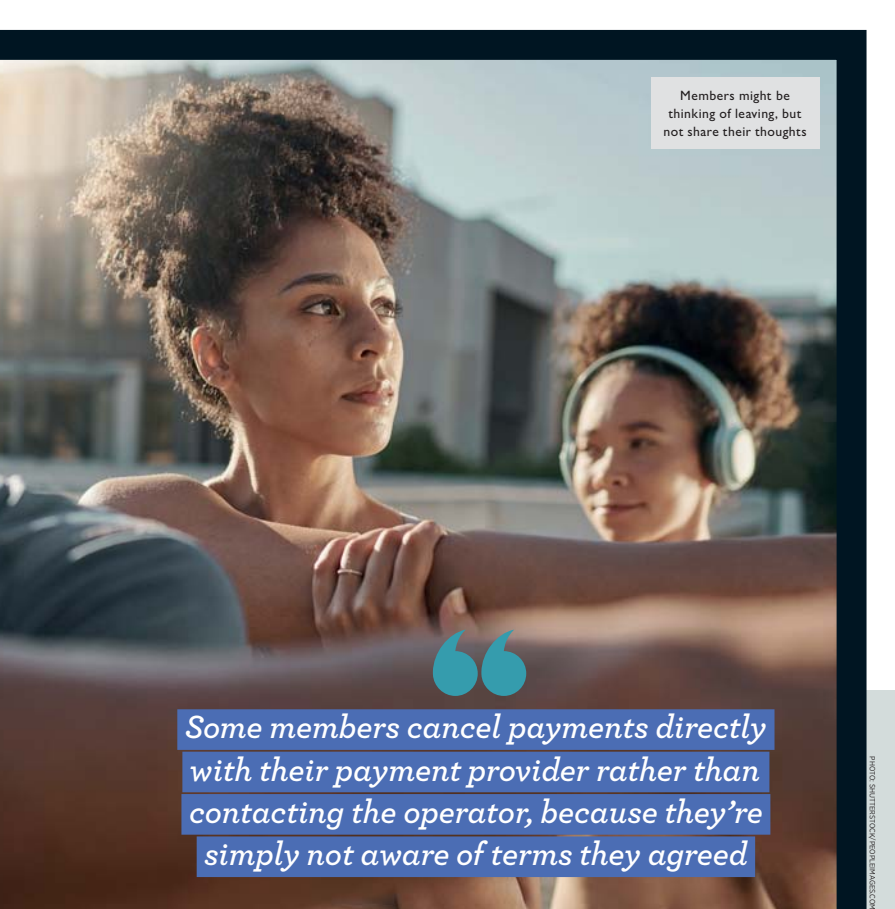
Differences by age

Generally older members (aged 65+) are most likely to share a reason for leaving, while among 25- to 34-year-olds, 48 per cent did not.

The life stage of 25- to 34-year-olds also means they’re more mobile, with 15 per cent leaving due to relocation, against an average of 10.2 per cent for all age groups and 3 per cent for the much more settled 75+ age group.

This younger cohort is more likely to respond to a national operator that can offer a range of locations, so they can continue their membership at a different club in the chain, rather than walking away.

Feeling let down can have an impact on retention, with those in the 75+ group more likely to leave because they feel that a health club “hasn’t met their expectations” (3.9 per cent) against the average score of 2.3 per cent across all of the age groups.



Members might be thinking of leaving, but not share their thoughts



Some members cancel payments directly with their payment provider rather than contacting the operator, because they're simply not aware of terms they agreed

Older people are also more likely to leave if a health club is dirty, with 7.8 per cent of the 75+ group citing lack of cleanliness as their reason for cancelling, against an average of 5.7 per cent, while the people in the younger 16- to 24-year old group are less sensitive to this issue, with a lower figure of 5.8 per cent saying lack of cleanliness put them off.

Understanding reasons for cancellations can help operators make improvements that increase retention, drive sustainable growth and increase average member lifetime value.

Start with culture

Members want to feel confident to share feedback and air their dissatisfaction and need to feel that you'll listen and then act on what you hear. The most effective way to encourage member honesty is to build a feedback culture where they have a deep connection to your club and feel they're always heard.

"Historically many operators think they know the issues already, so don't believe there's any value in listening to feedback," says Active Insight's

Train your team to
engage with members



*Listening to clients yields
vital intelligence that can
be acted on to move the
business forward*

Julie Allen, Active Insight

- Julie Allen. "We really need to shift our focus as an industry to understanding that listening to clients yields vital intelligence that can be acted on to move the business forward."

There are so many opportunities to gather feedback and make it an everyday habit for staff and customers.

Regularly survey members from the point that they join – run Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys and discuss feedback with staff during team meetings and one-to-ones, for example.

You can also follow up on feedback to amplify impact. "Develop member feedback into regular stories – both positive and negative – to create a "You asked, we responded" feedback culture," says GGFit's Guy Griffiths. "The more you ask for feedback, the more positive stories you'll get to share."



Scrutinise your payment processes

The research study found that a failed payment is the most common source of membership cancellations at 40 per cent. Allen says: "Some members cancel payments directly with their payment provider rather than contacting the operator, because they're not aware of terms they agreed or don't understand that they needed to cancel in a specific way. Payments can also fail if a member is experiencing financial hardship and the draw-down is rejected by their bank."

When a payment fails, priority should be given to attempting the collection again – letting the member know what's happening



*Ending a relationship
with a member on a
good note leaves the
door open for a return*



*Develop member feedback
into regular stories – both
positive and negative – to
create a “You asked, we
responded” feedback culture*
Guy Griffiths, GGFit

FAST FACTS

48%

Say why they're leaving

52%

Don't say why
they're leaving

40%

Leave without telling
the operator

14%

Cite lack of use,
lack of time and
lack of interest

10%

Are relocating

6%

Report dirty facilities

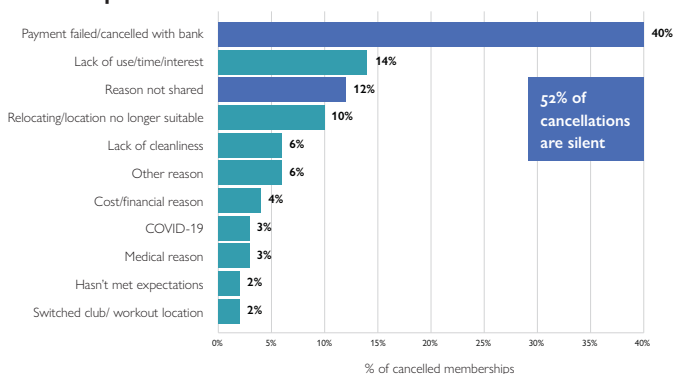
and how to get in touch. Xplor's Dave Alstead says: "Money can be an emotive topic, so a careful and skillful approach is required when dealing with people in these situations."

Operators can also take simple measures, such as verifying payment details provided, to reduce the likelihood of failures.

Give members more control

Giving members more flexibility and control over their membership can also help prevent silent cancellations and even stop some cancellations from happening.

Consider allowing members to freeze for

Table 1 Top reasons for cancellation

Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

- a period with ease. This is ideal if a member is travelling, busy with family or work commitments, or experiencing injury or illness.

Offering this option is also in line with the law, which stipulates that members can cancel if they become unwell or have a change in financial circumstances, so it's best to preempt this.

Alstead says: "Within the law, make sure you limit the amount of time a freeze lasts for, and communicate consistently during a freeze period to encourage an early return by the member and also to maintain engagement. This is critical to get members back after a freeze."

Part on good terms

It's also worth exploring how you can make cancelling simpler for your members, by providing digital options to suit those who would perhaps find a direct conversation awkward or too time-consuming.

Alstead adds: "The easier you can make it for members to understand how cancellation works, the easier it will be for members to cancel in ways that work for you too and this will cause you fewer headaches further down the line." While enabling cancellations might sound counterproductive, ending a relationship with a member on a good note leaves the door




Cutting attrition and increasing retention helps increase average member lifetime value

Dave Alstead, Xplor

open for a return and can encourage them to share an honest reason for leaving, which in turn can strengthen the operation.

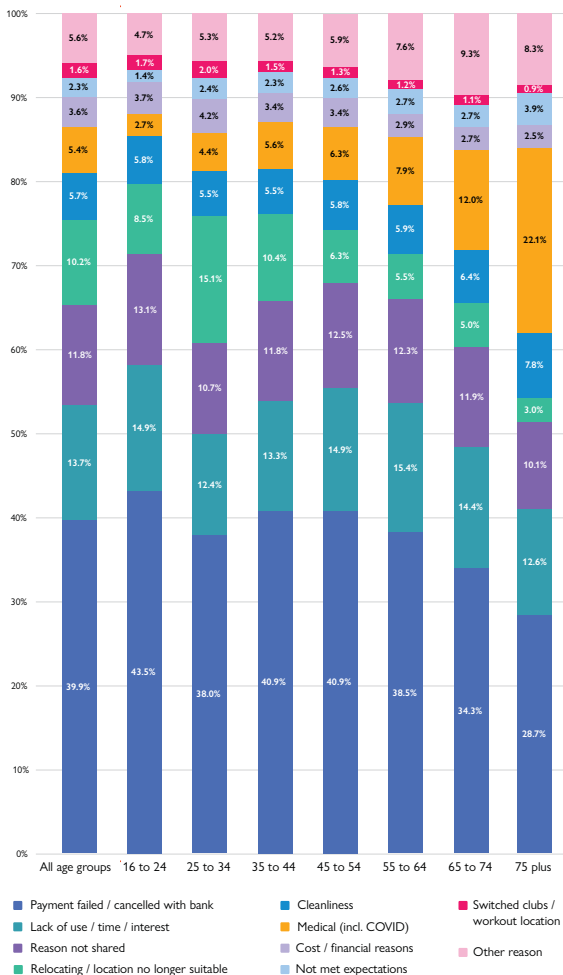
"We all know the phrase 'first impressions count', yet, every touchpoint of a member journey should be meaningful," says Allen. "It's essential that if the moment of leaving is the last interaction with the club, it's approached positively and leaves a good lasting impression" she says. ►

A group of four people (three men and one woman) are in a gym, smiling and high-fiving each other. They are wearing athletic wear. One man is holding a blue water bottle, and another is holding a green dumbbell. The background shows gym equipment and large windows.

Allowing members to freeze membership for some time is one option for clubs

“

It's essential that if the moment of leaving is the last interaction with the club, it leaves a good lasting impression

Table 2 Cancellation reasons by age group

Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

► “Cutting attrition and increasing retention helps increase average member lifetime value,” says Alstead. “This enables fitness club operators to have a more lasting impact on the health of communities they serve, while helping grow the industry beyond the current 15.1 per cent penetration rate.”

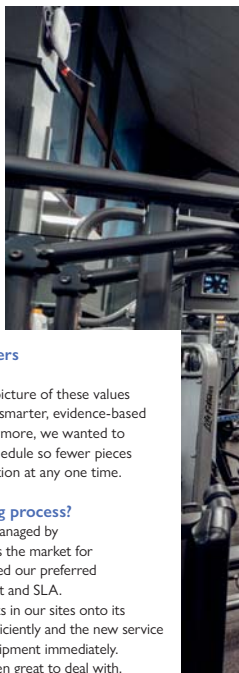
As we near the end of the year, operators are gearing up to make the most of January peak trading in the form of new joiners. The highest proportion of cancellations occur in the latter

part of the year and that raises a question: how many members acquired in January 2024 will still hold their membership come December?

On the positive side, historic data from DataHub has shown that 52 per cent of members will retain their gym membership at least 12 months after signing up, so there's ample opportunity for operators to retain more members, while attracting members who are yet to belong to a health club, as well as those returning after a break. ●

Transforming fitness asset management

Rob Cunningham, director of leisure at BH Live, explains the positive impact Orbit4 is having on the organisation



What challenges were you facing before partnering with Orbit4?

The fitness equipment across our estate was a mix of ages and sourced from a variety of manufacturers, while some of the warranties were expiring.

We were experiencing long lead times for equipment parts, resulting in equipment being out of order for extended periods of time.

In addition, we didn't have accurate information about the value of our assets or our likely maintenance costs going forward.



"Thanks to the immediate improvements to our customers' experiences, Orbit4 has noticeably increased our Net Promoter Score. The platform has greatly enhanced our operational efficiencies"

Rob Cunningham

What were the key drivers for engaging Orbit4?

We wanted to get a clearer picture of these values and costs, so we could make smarter, evidence-based investment decisions. Furthermore, we wanted to improve our maintenance schedule so fewer pieces of equipment were out of action at any one time.

How was the onboarding process?

Following a tender process, managed by Orbit4 on our behalf to assess the market for service providers, we appointed our preferred provider under a new contract and SLA.

Orbit4 onboarded the assets in our sites onto its digital platform quickly and efficiently and the new service provider started servicing equipment immediately.

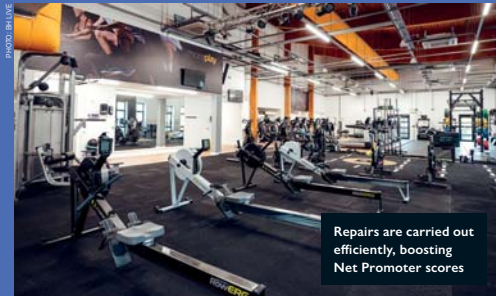
Our service provide has been great to deal with, easily contactable and with efficient response-times when contacted by our operational team using the Orbit4 mobile app.

The rapid onboarding and collaborative working enabled BH Live to see the value of working with Orbit4 in less than three months from the initial meeting.

What impact you have experienced?

Our net promoter score has vastly improved across several of our sites and our membership attrition has significantly reduced since our partnership with Orbit4, due to the improved service we're able to offer our customers.

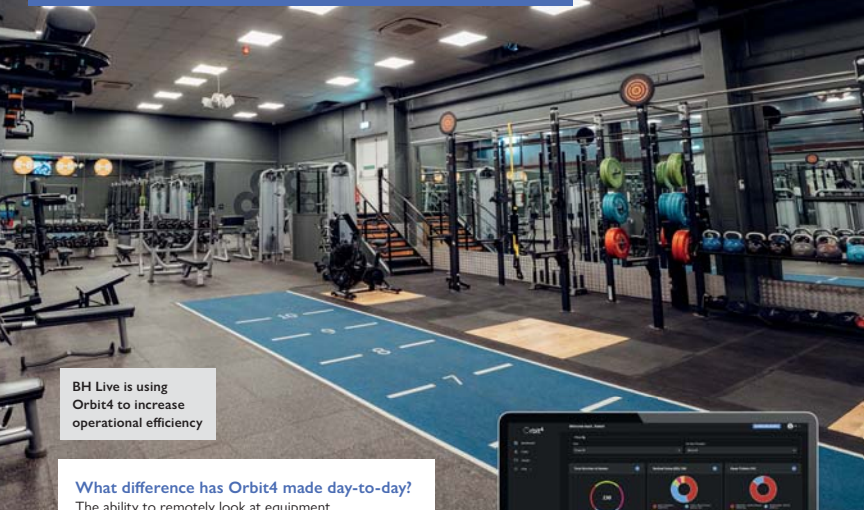
Only a handful of equipment is ever out of order across the estate and repairs rarely take longer than 72 hours to complete.



About BH Live

BH Live is one of the latest trusts to launch Orbit4, implementing it across its estate of clubs in Portsmouth and Bournemouth.

Following a thorough audit of its estate, Orbit4 has been integrated seamlessly into its operations, giving BH Live full visibility of its assets



BH Live is using Orbit4 to increase operational efficiency

What difference has Orbit4 made day-to-day?

The ability to remotely look at equipment value, check the condition of equipment and manage our assets enables BH Live to make informed decisions about investment.

The Orbit4 platform also allows us to monitor all relevant KPIs relating to our assets on a day-to-day basis and to ensure we're delivering a better customer experience.

Would you say to other operators who are considering Orbit4?

The impact Orbit4 has had on our organisation has been fantastic, as making evidence-based decisions in regards to your gym floor assets is key to improving your customer experience.

It's also been great to work with the platform and the team to streamline our asset management processes.



Orbit4's platform enables operators to control their assets

What's the most important benefit?

The servicing element of the contract has been a remarkable success – the immediate impact of this on our customer feedback and attrition rates has shown the powerful benefits of not having equipment out of order for lengthy periods of time. ●

● Learn more at: www.orbit4.org

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- ✓ Train hard without developing joint or muscle soreness



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EQUIPMENT CHOICE FOR YOUR GYM**

Product innovation

Steph Eaves rounds up the latest health, fitness and wellness kit



Rich Clarke is aiming to gamify boxing with Boxblitz

Boxblitz, an interactive boxing fitness machine, has been designed to transform gym routines by gamifying boxing. The device offers seven workout options and challenges, allowing club members them to monitor their performance data and compete on leaderboards.

The machine can be adapted to work in various gym settings, fostering community engagement as members enjoy diverse workouts and friendly competition. It features workout modes such as



PHOTO BOXBLITZ

Performance data and leaderboards add to the interactive, fun feel

Rich Clarke

the 100-punch challenge, during which the user hits green illuminated pads while avoiding red ones to test speed and accuracy and the

combo speed test where users complete three-punch combos and monitor their reaction time on a 32" screen.

The company is expanding across Europe and Boxblitz director, Rich Clarke, says: "We wanted all skill levels to be able to dive onto the machine and enjoy boxing training, all while having fun."

"The performance data and leaderboards add to the interactive, fun feel, and we can't wait for more and more people to enjoy it."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
Boxblitz



PHOTO BOXBLITZ

● One workout mode is the 100-punch challenge

Nada Rx flooring reduces stress on joints, explains Deb Lechner

Ecore has launched Nada Rx, an ECOsurfaces PVC-free flooring line. Designed for commercial spaces where safety, acoustic performance, ergonomic support and comfort underfoot are key, it's been designed to blend

functionality, aesthetics, resilience and sustainability.

Nada Rx features a 2mm resilient surface layer which is fusion-bonded to a 5mm VCR base layer, for a comfortable, safe workout space.

Heat-welded seams prevent bacteria or pathogens accumulating, while a dense, oil-free surface resists dirt, making it easy to maintain and clean.

"Nada Rx' vulcanised composition rubber (VCR) backing elevates performance by reducing joint stress and muscle fatigue, diminishing noise and reducing the risk of injury from falls," says Ecore's Deb Lechner.

The product prevents stains and scratches and is also resistant to heavy rolling so it keeps its appearance without the need for polishing or buffing.



PHOTO ECORE

Nada Rx elevates performance by reducing joint stress

Deb Lechner

The floor features a non-directional chip pattern for a uniform, contemporary look. A palette of neutrals and nature-inspired colours complements environments focused on health and wellbeing.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Ecore

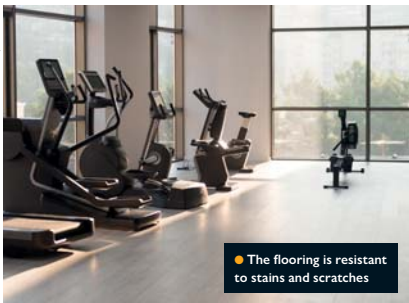


PHOTO ECORE / JALE BREAK

● The flooring is resistant to stains and scratches

Freddie Moross brings Myndstream's wellness music service to market

Wellness operators now have access to a wider range of music, following the launch of Myndstream's subscription-based music service.

The web-based platform enables operators to access to music which has been intentionally created to improve wellbeing and empower mindfulness.



Operators can transform the audio experience offered to customers

Freddie Moross

It also provides a fully licensed proposition to business owners and accommodates unlimited logins. The service is available for £205 (€232, US\$250) annually, with an additional £123 (€139, US\$150) charge per extra location. Unlike other services, the operator is not charged by zone or user.

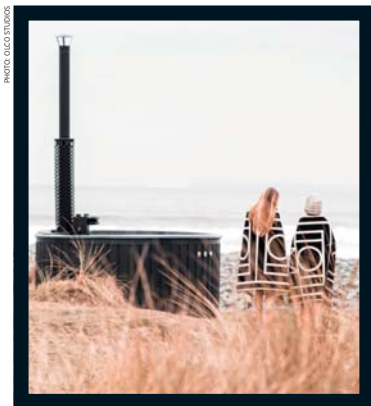
Freddie Moross, CEO of Myndstream, says: "We've created a fantastic opportunity for operators to transform their customers' audio experience."

Myndstream has also recently begun to collaborate with famed music producer, Timbaland, to create new music for wellness.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
Myndstream



● Playlists have been created by wellbeing musicians



● Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism have inspired the design of the wood-fired hot tub

Zoe Little introduces Koto hot tub

A wood-fired hot tub has been unveiled by Koto, an architecture and design studio which has a passion for Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism and natural elements.

Clad in black thermo wood, the hot tub has a diameter of 2m and can seat up to four people. It features an ultra-quiet hydromassage system to enable users to fully disconnect.

Koto is known for crafting modular, energy-neutral cabins and homes. The hot tub is the first in its Koto Elements range and a sauna and sleep cabin are set to follow.

"We prioritise designing spaces and objects that



Our designs empower people to feel relaxed and stimulated by nature

Zoe Little

embrace the natural world and empower people to feel relaxed and stimulated by nature," says company co-founder Zoe Little.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Koto

DECEMBER 2023

pulsebeat



PULSE ADDS
EXTRA MUSCLE
TO SOFTWARE
UPGRADE

PULSE
LAUNCHES
ON DEMAND
OFFER

TOP MARKS
FOR TRAKK
AT WALSALL
LEISURE

NEW ARRIVALS
TO MEET
CUSTOMERS
EXPECTATIONS

OUTLOOK FOR FITNESS 2023: REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

During a summer of incredible sporting feats, the prevalence of health and fitness is stronger than ever. Simone Biles' triumphant return to gymnastics at the U.S. Classic is an inspiring reminder that taking time to prioritise mental health and wellbeing could be the missing piece to tackling and smashing your health and fitness goals.

As the trend of wearable technology and digital solutions continues to prevail throughout the entire fitness industry, we are proud of the continued developments to improve our app, TRAKK, which delivers a fully-connected ecosystem to gym operators. Since being introduced to over 165 operators across the UK, we have been dedicated to evolving the offering to cater to the ever-changing needs of gymgoers. As the ultimate personal training tool, TRAKK is constantly being improved to enhance the user experience, from fitness plans that focus on specific user goals to body composition analysis features.

The Pulse Fitness team has had a busy year transforming a number of leisure centres across the UK, developing the spaces into key community hubs for residents to work on their fitness goals. With the introduction of TRAKK and console technology to many of these centres, more operators than ever are embracing the technological evolution to bring a premium fitness experience to the local community.

We are looking ahead to the rest of 2023 with optimism, and are excited to showcase our ongoing work with industry partners.

Best wishes,
Chris Johnson, MD

PULSE ADDS EXTRA MUSCLE TO SOFTWARE UPGRADE

Now more than ever, operators are under immense pressure to constantly evolve their offering to meet consumer demand and offer technologically advanced fitness solutions.

In response to the increasing desire for gamified workouts, Pulse Fitness is committed to consistently upgrading its software to provide interactive elements to users' exercise regimes. The Pulse Fitness console technology available on select Cardio and Strength equipment has been developed by experts to provide a premium

fitness experience. The new and improved cardio console series 6 & 8 will deliver a premium workout experience to those looking to maximise their cardiovascular health. Alongside this, the new strength console series 8 will create an engaging workout experience to help members achieve their fitness goals. Gone are the days of uncertainty during workouts – our upgraded software offers instructional demo videos guided by industry experts. With just a tap on the screen's help button before you



Cardio - New Stylish Modern User Interface



Cardio - E-Scape Virtual Video



Cardio - TRAKK Integrated



Cardio - TRAKK Personalised Training



start your workout, gymgoers can access a wealth of knowledge about correct machine adjustments, optimal body positioning, and technique. This means your members can approach each exercise with confidence, knowing they're maximising their efforts and minimising the risk of injury.

The integrated touchscreens offer the ability to track reps, sets, and tempo in real-time. This invaluable data allows individuals to fine-tune their workout, ensuring they're hitting their targets and progressing toward their fitness goals. This innovative, state-of-the-art technology captures comprehensive data for every set, providing detailed post-workout reviews which become a roadmap to improvement, empowering members to make informed decisions for their future sessions.



Cardio - Miracast Screen Mirroring



Strength - Visual Indicators To Guide

PULSE LAUNCHES ONDEMAND OFFER

Pulse Fitness is excited to share the launch of 'Pulse Fitness OnDemand' which will be available soon on select Cardiovascular machines. OnDemand cardio workouts led by expert trainers will be readily available on the machines for users to select, which will provide coaching and encouragement throughout the training to help towards achieving fitness goals. Designed to maximise the time spent on each machine, these in-built workouts will be a game-changer in improving member experience and retention, as well as refining their workouts.

TOP MARKS FOR TRAKK AT WALSALL LEISURE

After the completion of a six-month contract, Pulse Fitness has the pleasure of renewing its contract with Walsall Borough Council to transform its Oak Park and Bloxwich Leisure Centres. As a part of this installation project, both centres were introduced to our digital fitness app TRAKK to compliment member journeys and enhance the overall experience for users.

In the first 180 days of operating with TRAKK, both Oak Park and Bloxwich Leisure Centres saw 678 active TRAKK users with over 345 workout plans created and 1007 'Body Composition Analysis Weigh-Ins' completed.

Alongside the fully-connected ecosystem, both centres were kitted out with brand new Cardiovascular and Strength equipment, a large free weight, strength and conditioning area and an extension to its functional offering to provide the people of Walsall with facilities that will help to improve their overall health and wellbeing.



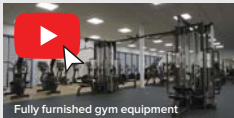
NEWS IN BRIEF

Sandwell Aquatics Centre

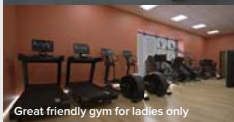
Opened in August 2023, Pulse Fitness is proud to have supplied the brand-new Sandwell Aquatics Centre - the legacy site of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games - with a full collection of Premium Cardio and Club line Strength equipment for the new gym facility, alongside a women's training area and full spin studio. After kitting out the Athletes' Villages last summer, Pulse Fitness is honoured to have worked on this project with some amazing industry partners and come full circle with the Commonwealth Games.

Pelham's, BHLive Active

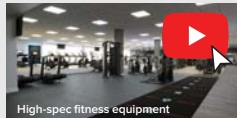
Pulse Fitness has been working closely with Pelham's Park Leisure Centre in Bournemouth to completely transform its gym space with top of the range fitness equipment. With over 100 stations from the Cardio and Strength Lines, over 3,000 members of the Pelham's Park community will be able to reap the benefits of premium kit integrated with console technology for a truly connected fitness journey. The introduction of the Pulse Fitness offering TRAKK will give gymgoers access to an abundance of personal training tools that offer a seamless and intuitive experience to drive their fitness goals and promote a healthier physical and mental wellbeing.



Fully furnished gym equipment



Great friendly gym for ladies only



High-spec fitness equipment



Dedicated free weights area

EXPANDING OUR PRODUCT RANGE AND THE BENEFIT TO OUR BUSINESS

At Pulse Fitness, we are constantly innovating new ways of maintaining our excellent standard of service to operators which is why we are proud of the newest additions to expand our product range.

Our new Indoor Rower is the ideal piece of kit for the gym floor or functional studio and HIIT training spaces as it has been designed to be used in the most robust commercial fitness environments. Complete with Pulse interactive console technology, the indoor rower delivers an effective low impact, high-intensity, cardio and total body workout.

Designed for strength and endurance training, our brand-new Indoor Ski Trainer focuses on exercising the legs, arms and core. Dedicated to accessibility, a complete cardiovascular regime is also achievable, working your core and upper body from a seated position for users with lower body limitations or injuries.

"These new pieces of kit are the perfect addition to any gym space - whether that's at home or your local leisure centre." says Dave Johnson,

Production Director.

"We're always proud to be able to develop equipment that is accessible and inclusive to all."



**NEW
ARRIVAL**

**INDOOR
SKI
TRAINER**

**DISCOVER
MORE**



**NEW
ARRIVAL**

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

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PULSE FITNESS RENEWS ITS REGISTRATION WITH JOSCAR

Pulse Fitness is pleased to announce that it has been re-certified by JOSCAR - the accreditation and compliance system for the Defence and Aerospace sectors, including prime contractors, civil aviation and security.

Our client, Leidos Supply Limited, invited Pulse Fitness to register in 2020 and our compliance information is available to all buying organisations who are part of the JOSCAR community.

This accreditation helps further our ambition of being among the most trusted suppliers within our sector and builds on our partnerships with existing Armed Forces clients. We look forward to delivering high quality, reliable and innovative solutions to all clients using the JOSCAR service.



About JOSCAR certification

JOSCAR (Joint Supply Chain Accreditation Register) is valued by some of the biggest buyers in the Defence community and its registration mark demonstrates that our organisation has gone through the process required to demonstrate its commitment and credentials to the industry. Hence, Pulse Fitness is pleased to be part of this community.

Members of the community include; Babcock International, BAE Systems, Leidos Supply Limited, Ministry of Defence, QinetiQ and Rolls Royce.



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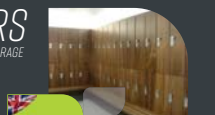
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The study found resistance exercise had the greatest impact on depression

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/W09X2

Exercise ‘treats mental health’

Regular physical activity has been linked to a 43 per cent reduction in mental health symptoms, such as depression and anxiety, a study from Australia shows

Physical activity is 1.5 times more effective than counselling or leading medications when it comes to managing and treating mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

The finding comes from research conducted by the University of South Australia (UOSA) in Adelaide, Australia, *Effectiveness of physical activity interventions for improving depression, anxiety and distress* published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

It found that physical activity is linked to a 43 per cent reduction in mental health symptoms. Exercise was deemed particularly effective for reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety and psychological distress.

A review of data, conducted by UOSA, encompassed 97 reviews, 1,039 trials and 128,119 participants, showing that physical activity's positive effects are similar across a wide range of adult populations, including the general population, people with diagnosed mental health disorders and those with chronic disease.

Higher intensity physical activity was associated with greater improvements in symptoms, however, the rate of change in effectiveness of exercise interventions seems to diminish with longer-duration interventions. Physical interventions that were 12 weeks or shorter were the most effective at reducing symptoms, highlighting the speed at which physical activity can make a change.

Some methods of exercise were also more effective than others in improving particular conditions. For example, resistance exercise had the largest effects on depression, while yoga and other mind-body exercises were most effective for reducing anxiety.

We found that all types of physical activity and exercise were beneficial, including walking, Pilates and yoga

According to Lead UOSA researcher, Dr Ben Singh, the results of the research mean exercise should be adopted as a primary approach for managing mental health issues. Singh says: "We found that all types of physical activity and exercise were beneficial, including walking, resistance training, Pilates and yoga."

"We're confident that if physical activity interventions were adopted, we would see a definite positive impact on symptoms of depression, anxiety and distress."

The benefits of exercise to mental health have been well-documented for decades and the fitness industry has consistently made the case for physical activity to be used in treating depression and anxiety.

In 2005, HCM reported on a campaign by The Mental Health Foundation to raise awareness about the effectiveness of exercise in preventing and treating mental health. In 2010, we covered the work of teams from the Institute of Psychiatry (IoP) at King's College London, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and the University of Bergen, who found that people who participated in regular physical activity outside work were less likely to show signs of depression than those who didn't.

Share your views with HCM on this research at letters@leisuremediamag.com

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