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ISSUE 7 2022
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UNITING THE WORLD OF FITNESS

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Offering free membership at Drop Fitness p34

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Delivering health and fitness at Nobu p20

Shannon Hudson

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ON THE COVER

Sebastian Schoepe & Rainer Schaller

launch new fitness brand, Heimat p56

PHOTO: RGS GROUP

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

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- **Energy-savvy**: the new excite line represents the next generation of sustainable equipment

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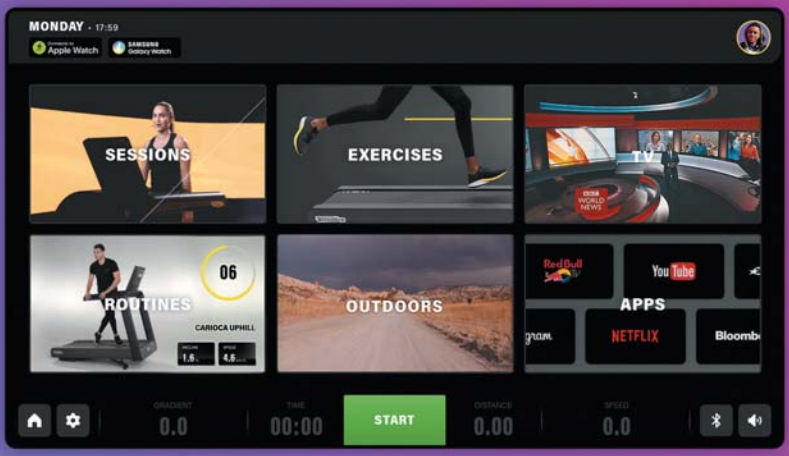

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Focus on outcomes

For years the sector has used participation numbers as a measure of success, but policymakers are now calling for a change to measuring outcomes, so value can be established

In a perfect world, governments would care about their citizens and spend time, money and energy actively seeking insights to establish the best ways to support their health and wellbeing, but this kind of proactive approach is sadly all too rare.

Instead, the majority of governments are not proactive and expect to be lobbied, with those who shout loudest and make the strongest monetary case getting support, while the rest exist in a kind of grey zone beyond the comprehension of most ministers and policymakers.

The health and fitness industry has been increasingly aware of its status in this grey zone and has been advancing its case with growing effectiveness since the start of the pandemic, through lobbying by trade associations such as UK Active, Europe Active and IHRSA, working in partnership with numerous other representative bodies.

This activity has gone up a gear recently with the launch of the Global Health and Fitness Forum and now the World Active Forum (see page 27) and it seems we're getting the rest of the frameworks and structures in place we need to lobby ever more successfully.

There are also exciting moves underway to further coordinate the production of the factual evidence needed to unpin the case for the sector. On page 12, for example, Alfonso Jimenez explains the upcoming launch of a new body – Task Force Sport (TF Sport) – a specialised group that will be responsible for the harmonisation and development of statistics and data on the health-enhancing benefits of physical activity, while on page 31, UK Active reveals that establishing new data and insight services is one of its aims for 2022-23.

We also need to change what we're actually measuring and on page 76, Martyn Allison reviews the latest report from the UK's National Audit Office and suggests it's time we moved from mainly measuring participation to also routinely measuring outcomes, as a fundamental metric.

This call is reinforced by Colin Milner, CEO of the International Council on Active Ageing (page 70), who says "Tracking outcomes in addition to participation levels is the way to discover the effectiveness of what's offered... and show the value of an activity."

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES

Outcomes could include shorter hospital stays, for example

> **We must move from mainly measuring participation to also measuring outcomes – social, personal and economic value**

As new data-gathering and dissemination services come on stream around the world for the sector, we must ensure they give us the evidence we need to engage with decision-makers and governments. This will require the use of a common set of data points to track and report on participation rates and outcomes in terms of social, personal and economic value.

Only then will we be set up to make the true case for the life-changing work being done by our sector.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

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PHOTO: DROP FITNESS; MILE HIGH RUN CLUB

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

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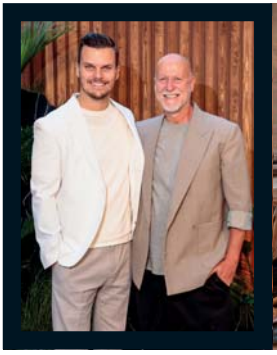

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

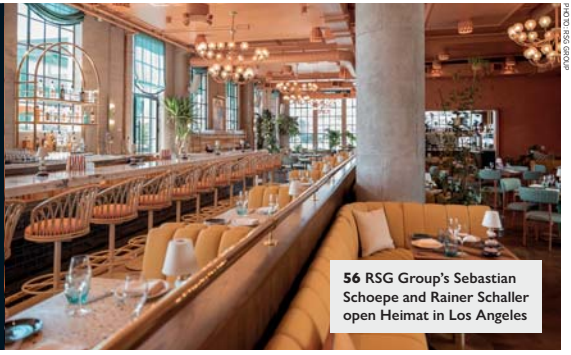

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

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www.HCMmag.com

MEET THE TEAM

theteam@leisuremedia.com

Editor
Liz Terry
+44 (0)1462 431385

Publisher
Jan Williams
+44 (0)1462 471909

Managing editor
Frances Marcellin
+44 (0)1462 471934

Head of news
Tom Walker
+44 (0)1462 431385

Editor-at-large
Magali Robathan
+44 (0)1462 431385

Assistant editor
Megan Whitby
+44 (0)1462 471906

Email us:
fullname@leisuremedia.com

Customer service
+44 (0)1462 471901

Advertising
+44 (0)1462 431385

Subscriptions
+44 (0)1462 471910

Circulation
+44 (0)1462 471932

Finance
+44 (0)1462 471930

Credit control
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CONNECTION

The most powerful form of member motivation.

*Source: Les Mills 2021 Global Fitness Report & The Retention People

58% of members report being highly motivated by the social aspect of attending the gym, and group exercisers are 26% less likely to cancel memberships than gym-only members.

The Les Mills Groupness Study found members experience increased levels of individual enjoyment, exertion and satisfaction from fitness classes. Group fitness participants are among the most valuable type of member - they drive both retention and acquisition by staying longer and pulling in more new members.

How are you keeping your members motivated?

Write to reply

Fuel the debate about issues and opportunities across the industry. We'd love to hear from you – *letters@leisuremedia.com*

The goal of raising the value and importance of physical activity and exercise in society is one that knows no boundary or border – geographic or bureaucratic

Raising the (policy) value of physical activity

Alfonso Jimenez
Think Active, GO Fit Lab and King Juan Carlos University.

It's important to acknowledge our sector as an important generator of growth and employment and essential for our great industry to have access to high quality data with which to demonstrate its value to governments at all levels, as well as to investors, the media and an ever-growing range of stakeholders who have a shared interest in collaboration towards mutually-held goals.

Coherent data, collected in a consistent, transparent and evidence-based manner is vital to self-critical analysis of areas where we have the opportunity for improvement and also to articulating the complex cases for preferential treatment and investment we need to make.

I've recently been invited to become co-chair of Task Force Sport (TF Sport), a highly-specialised group responsible for the harmonisation and development of statistics and data on health-enhancing physical activity, the social dimension of sport and Sport Satellite Accounts in the EU.

This taskforce has been created to support discussion about the ways this harmonisation and development will be implemented, based on existing multi-purpose European data collections, to foster a common understanding and recognition of the less tangible benefits linked with physical activity and sport.

A pool of outstanding experts in economics, physical activity and sports participation surveillance, and social value assessment – from every corner in Europe – will work together, supported by consultants, to identify the current position, establish key work strands for the coming decade and put in place the resources needed to advance them.

Enhancing the robustness of the surveillance of our impact, and better connecting it to a broader policy agenda globally requires collaboration from all actors with a shared interest in advancing this essential industry we all care so much about.

This programme of work is due to start in Q3 this year, and I look forward to seeking and sharing the best ideas from across the world to advance this initiative in the years ahead.

The goal of raising the value and importance of physical activity and exercise in wider society is one that knows no boundaries or no borders – geographic or bureaucratic.

This is a cause to which I've dedicated my career as an applied academic – at this time with my

The new taskforce will harmonise and develop data to prove the value of activity

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MOYNE/BUSINESS IMAGES

base in academic practice at the University of King Juan Carlos in Spain and as chief scientific officer at wellbeing operator, GO Fit.

It's a cause I've also long supported, as the founding principal investigator of the Fitness Industry Association Research Institute in 2010, and now as lead board director of Think Active, the research unit of Europe Active.

As more actors become persuaded of the case to enhance the knowledge ecosystem that any vibrant industry requires, the case for greater collaboration and harmonisation grows stronger.

Global collaboration

In recent times, nations around the world have been developing policies and strategies designed to enhance activity levels among their populations, with monitoring frameworks of varying levels put in place to track progress towards the goals set out.

Often these monitoring frameworks are disconnected from other policy frameworks that exist at a local, national, or international level, making the case for joined-up policymaking or international benchmarking impossible.

We would all gain so much more by having a common framework from which to base our discussions and extrapolate our learnings.

This is a topic of great interest across Europe at a policy level for a range of stakeholders, including the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Director General Education and Culture, Eurostat (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat) and the European Commission (www.ec.europa.eu/info/index_en).

● **Contact: alfonso.jimenez@urjc.es**

Two new Quest assessments launch on 1 September, focusing on things such as environmental management, exercise referral and inclusivity

Quest is getting an update

Sarah Maxwell
Right Directions

What a great piece on the Quest Foundation Review in *HCM* highlighting Sport England's work providing insights into live customer service experiences from people who've traditionally been excluded from physical activity opportunities (see *HCM* issue 2 2022, page 72).

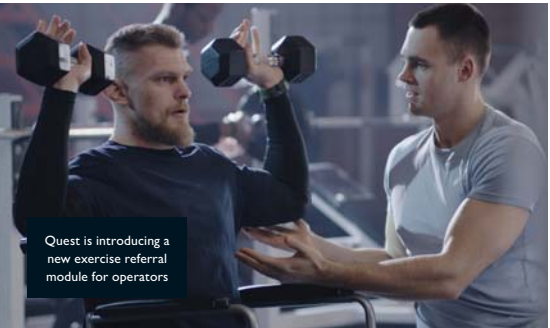
We're evaluating data from the first quarter's assessments and are excited to share our learnings with the sector.

But this is only one element of Quest. Much work has been going on behind the scenes over the last two years to ensure the continuous improvement tool – which is now more than 20 years old – keeps up-to-date with current issues operators face, particularly due to the pandemic and rising energy costs.

New areas for assessment

Another two new Quest assessments launch on 1 September, focusing on everything from day-to-day operational standards and service delivery, to hot topics such as environmental management.

The environmental module aims to help facilities develop and plan environmental considerations into their operations.

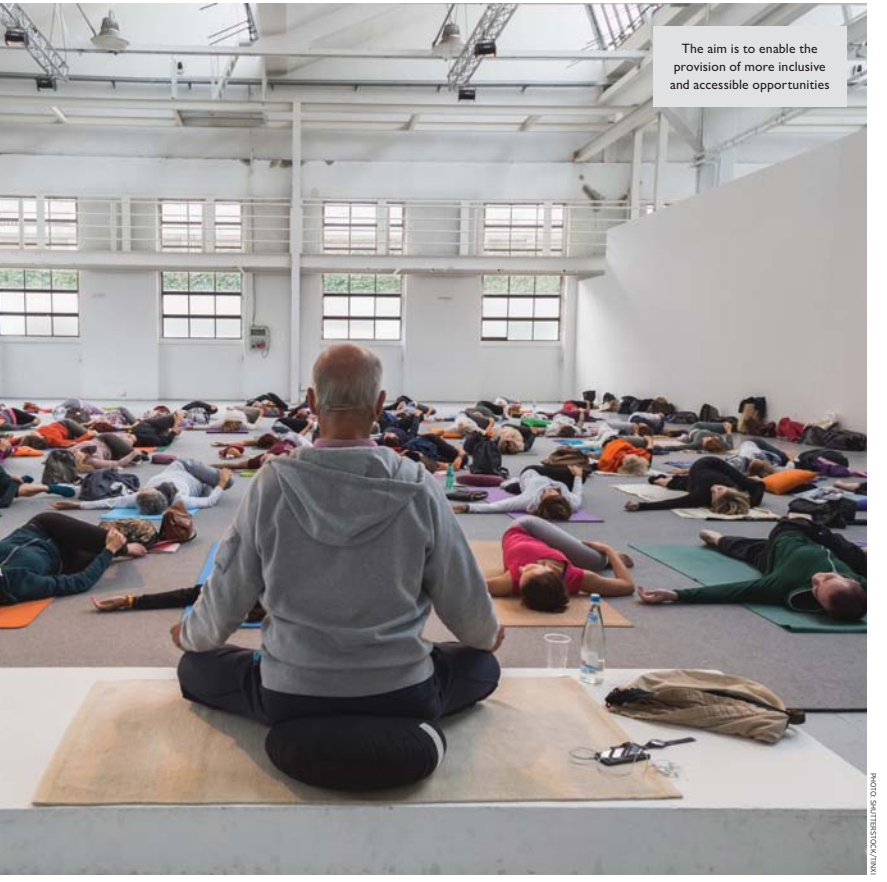


Quest is introducing a new exercise referral module for operators

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/FRAME STOCK FOOTAGE

There's also an exercise referral module, which will enable operators to evaluate their current offering and follow a set of quality operating standards to help drive improvements and consistency in scheme delivery.

The new Quest also covers tackling Inequalities, a module developed alongside the Activity Alliance to help leisure operators offer more inclusive and accessible opportunities for people from inequality groups.



The aim is to enable the provision of more inclusive and accessible opportunities

PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK/TINKI

Greater accessibility

Finally, an accessible facilities module will help operators meet their design and operational obligations for different user groups by physically auditing the facility from a user's perspective. This is done against key inclusive focal points, such as accessible changing rooms, hearing loops and inclusive fitness equipment.

As Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England's CEO says, public leisure facilities and services have a vital role to play in providing opportunities for people to be active. These new Quest offers will enable local authorities and their service delivery partners to showcase their safe, welcoming centres and champion the role they can play in tackling inequalities, aiding our environment and reconnecting communities.

By following Quest's 'plan, measure, review and impact' steps for each of the modules undertaken, leisure operators and their teams can not only have the quality of their work recognised and nationally accredited, but may also demonstrate how they measure up against national standards, and why continued and further funding is certain to be money well spent. ●

Right Directions manages Quest on behalf of Sport England

HCM people

"I wanted to bring real kickbox training to the average person in the most convenient format, while taking out the worst part – getting punched in the face!"

Shannon Hudson

Founder and CEO, 9Round

Hudson started 9Round with his wife in 2008

PHOTO: 9ROUND

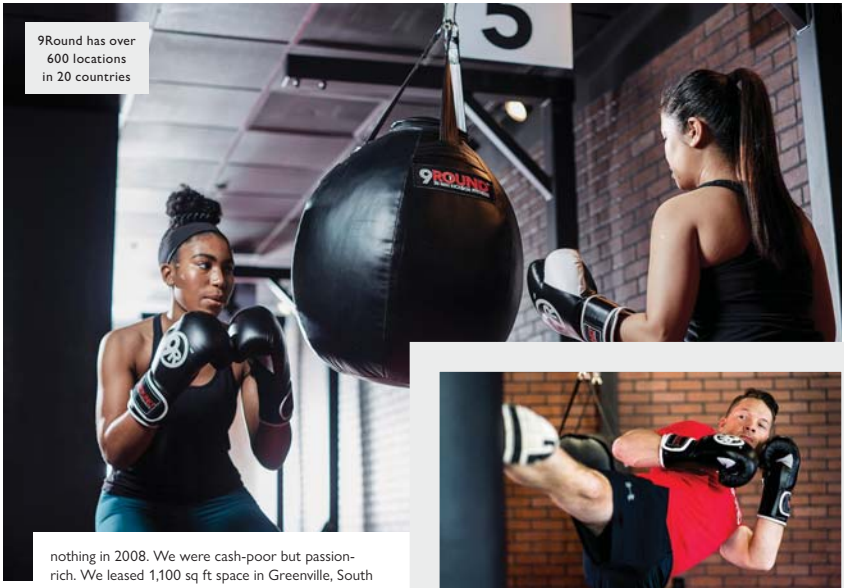
What's the elevator pitch?
9Round gives you an instructor-led, full-body circuit training workout designed by certified professionals. You'll punch. You'll kick. And you'll sweat. Then you'll walk away ready to tackle anything. 9Round makes members stronger in 30 minutes, physically and mentally.

What sets you apart?
It all starts with authenticity. I won a world title as a professional kickboxer and wanted to bring real kickbox training to the average person in the most convenient format, and of course to take out the worst part – getting punched in the face!

Convenience is our USP. Because of our circuit training format, there are no class times. Customers walk in, are greeted with their fighter name, get a killer session and are out the door in 30 minutes.

Who are the main people driving the business?
We have 52 head office employees all working with one purpose. To serve franchisees and help them win. Winning is having a profitable business that serves their communities. From our operations, legal, finance, distribution, marketing, video, IT, and workout team, they're all vital ingredients for the 9Round world.

How did it all begin?
We were definitely one of the first specialised boutique studios. My wife and I started 9Round from basically



9Round has over 600 locations in 20 countries

PHOTO: 9ROUND

nothing in 2008. We were cash-poor but passion-rich. We leased 1,100 sq ft space in Greenville, South Carolina, and couldn't even afford a sign on the building, but after 30 days, we had almost 100 members and that's when we knew we had a tiger by the tail. Here we are 14 years later, in 20 countries and 600 locations.

Did being an early mover have advantages?
Absolutely! No one had ever seen a workout format like it. It was unique and so effective that all of our member and franchise growth was organic from current happy members. Lord knows, we didn't have an advertising budget at all. We couldn't afford one.

What are the key lessons you've learned along the way?
Grit, determination, big dreams, trust your gut intuition and a never-give-up attitude are what makes it work.

How have you scaled the business?
If you don't have brand standards, then you don't have a franchise. We built this business by owning the supply chain too. Every punching bag, boxing glove and T-shirt we own and ship from our distribution centre. This puts us in complete control of quality of products, branding and what products are in the locations.

Are workouts standardised?
Yes, our workout programming team gives all locations the exact workout to give members for each day and the workouts change daily.

Hudson won the world kickboxing title

PHOTO: 9ROUND

> *We want to continue our international growth, as we believe that part of our operation can be bigger than our US business*

What shape would you say the business is in today?
We are very blessed to be in a very good position for the next 10 years. We're very solvent cash-wise, as we've never had any debt whatsoever, and we pay our bills the moment they come in.

We're also building a very talented field team to support our franchise owners. One of our goals is to get as much face-to-face time with our franchisees as possible. It's all about building relationships and trust.

Lastly, we're developing some really exciting technological innovations, such as an on-demand ▸

programme and in-studio screens to give members an even better experience while they exercise.

How has the pandemic been for you?

It sucked! I think personal service businesses such as hair care, nail salons, and gyms got hurt the most. But with crises comes innovation and creativity. Our team thrives on moving fast, being nimble, and trying new things. We love being pioneers and trailblazers.

To this day we're still the largest unit-count kickboxing franchise chain in the world and have been for the past decade. There are a ton of companies that can be great for a year or two, but to do it for a decade is substantial. We're very proud of that.

How many sites are open and what's your pipeline?

We have 603 units open worldwide with over 400 of these being in the US. We'll open 15-20 more sites this year.

What are your global plans?

As I mentioned before, we're in 20 countries. One of our most successful regions is the Middle East and in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). We have 40 units open in KSA. Japan is up to 10 locations and starting to move faster too.

We want to continue our international growth, as we believe that part of our operation can be bigger than our US business.

What proprietary systems form the foundation stones of the company?

We have a lot, including a patent on the bag-hanging device that holds our punching bags. We also have numerous word-mark and design-mark trademarks active and in use in all the countries around the world.

9Round's screen technology was built in-house

Our workout system, stations, and trade dress are also proprietary. We are especially proud of our in-studio screen technology which we built in-house. On top of that, we have a killer legal team that polices the IPs.

Who designs your workouts?

The original approach has come from me, but now we have an entire team that programmes the workouts.

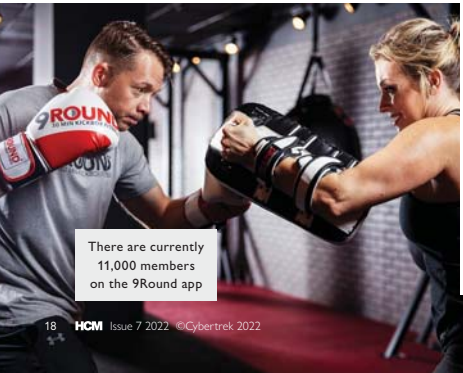
Members of this team have all the letters after their names, from CPT (certified personal trainers), GFI (group fitness instructor) and kinesiology degrees, to CSCC (Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach). We even have a kickboxing course called Kickboxology that's accredited by ACE, NASM, AFAA and others.

Tell us about your on-demand set-up

We have over 11,000 members on our 9RoundNow app. Our goal is to be at 15,000 by year-end.

We're on all devices, including Roku, Apple, Android, Amazon Fire and more. We're proud of this as we built an entire studio at our home office to film the content.

We add new content to this app each week and franchisees can upsell, down-sell and include this app with memberships – it's been a great addition.



There are currently 11,000 members on the 9Round app

PHOTO: 9ROUND

> We absolutely love the health and wellness space and will continue building 9Round, but look out, as we have some surprises coming!

PHOTO: 9ROUND

How are franchises funded?
Franchisees are individually owned and operated and many use the SBA [US Small Business Administration], while some leverage home equity or personal savings and others work with a rich relative. We also have several third-party vendors through which franchisees can get funding.

What services do you provide franchisees?
The home office's job is to make it easier for the franchise owner to operate a successful business.

Because we own all distribution, franchisees have a one stop shop for kit, which is very helpful. They don't have to wonder about quality, price, or customer service. It's all vertically-integrated.

We also have an optional in-house digital marketing service they can tap into if they choose. Fitness fanatics usually aren't very savvy with digital marketing so we provide a service that can help.

What tech are you using?
We just signed up to work with Glofox as exclusive International software partner. The initial agreement is for 20 markets, and this will expand to a further 15 markets in the next two to three years.

Glofox will deliver integrated payment processing, royalty collection and management, local operational support for franchisees and detailed single-source network-wide reporting.

Why is franchising such a good fit for the health and fitness sector?
All fitness brands have the same thing in common. We want to get people off the couch and living a healthier lifestyle. Franchising is a distribution model that allows local people in communities to own their own business. It's a wonderful arrangement and very empowering.

Will you go beyond kickboxing?
This rolls into the next question as we absolutely love the health and wellness space and will continue building 9Round, but look out, as we have some surprises coming!

What's the end game?
There's really no end game. One day I may not be the day-to-day CEO, but we want to set 9Round up to live forever.

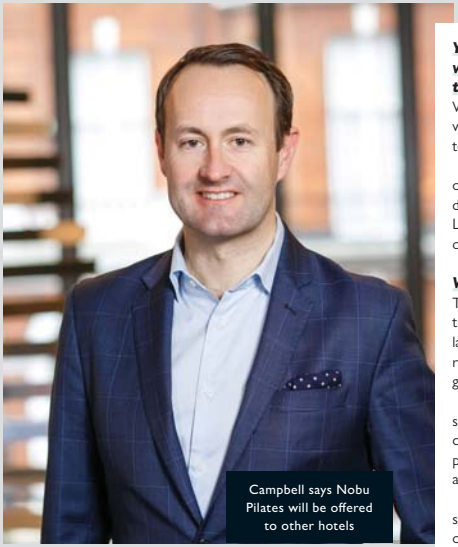
What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
Keep more money coming in than is going out and keep your credit clean. Simple but timeless. ●

It was important to create a high-end gym that offers as much value to the local community as it does to hotel guests

Grant Campbell

GM, Nobu Hotel London Portman Square

Members of the Nobu Wellness & Fitness Space pay £1,800 a year



Campbell says Nobu Pilates will be offered to other hotels

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NOBU HOTEL LONDON PORTMAN SQUARE

You've got a substantial gym. What was the thinking behind this when the hotel was being planned?

Wellness is a huge part of travel and we wanted to be able to offer our guests a space to keep up their daily fitness routine.

It's often difficult to find a city hotel that offers a large wellness space as well as signature dining and spacious rooms. With Nobu Hotel London Portman Square it was important we offer guests all three, without compromise.

What spaces and equipment do you have?

The hotel has a 140sq m Nobu Gym and three treatment rooms. The gym is open 24/7 and has the latest Technogym equipment, including running and rowing machines, free weights and bikes. We also offer guests a customised workout-tracking app and PT.

The treatment rooms offer a menu that's been specially curated by Nobu to mirror the brand's core beliefs and we're fortunate to have an in-house physiotherapist who gives guests in-depth assessments and can also outline personalised treatment plans.

Guests can also purchase cold-pressed juices and smoothies, as well as snacks that can be enjoyed on the Wellness Centre's outdoor terrace.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NOBU HOTEL LONDON PORTMAN SQUARE

Tell us about your Pilates offering

The Nobu Wellness & Fitness space is also home to Nobu Pilates – a global brand first for Nobu Hospitality and we're very fortunate Nobu Hotel London Portman Square is its home.

Nobu Pilates is headed up by creative director Marsha Lindsay and is a fresh new take on Pilates, offering guests a mix of classes in two light-filled studios. The classes use a variety of equipment, including Pilates reformers, cadillac, stability chairs and barrels.

There are three different 55-minute classes on offer, each devised by Marsha, called Power, Precision and Pure. Power classes offer a high-energy, full-body, HIIT style workout incorporating jump-board choreography and up-tempo moves designed to build strength, length and endurance.

Precision classes offer a complete body workout with time spent on specific muscle groups to sculpt, strengthen and tone the overall physique to deliver fast results for strength and overall fitness.

Pure classes make use of all the equipment, acting as an education in good posture and solid core. They're designed so guests leave feeling balanced, lighter and lengthened.

Marsha also offers Prescribed classes for those who want a targeted workout in a one-to-one setting. Bespoke workouts are designed, combining all three Nobu Pilates pillars to meet individual requirements and personal goals.

Nobu was founded by Robert De Niro, Nobu Matsuhisa and Meir Teper

PHOTO: BLAKE EZRA

How does the wellness offering reflect Nobu's brand values?

Nobu's roots are in Japanese culture and one of our core values is based on the Japanese notion of "omotenashi" which means the very best of service and hospitality.

In everything we do, we aim to bring our guests the highest level of service and hospitality experience, and Nobu Wellness & Fitness is a key part of that overall experience for our guests. Nobu Pilates specifically takes inspiration from Nobu's key principles of passion, integrity and growth.

Do you have a local membership in addition to serving hotel guests?

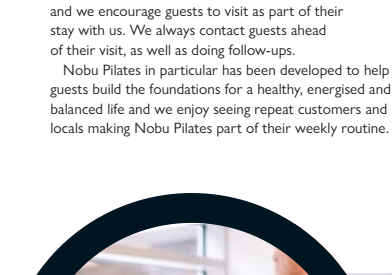
We're part of London's Marylebone neighbourhood so it was important to create a high-end gym space that offers as much value to the local community as it does to hotel guests.

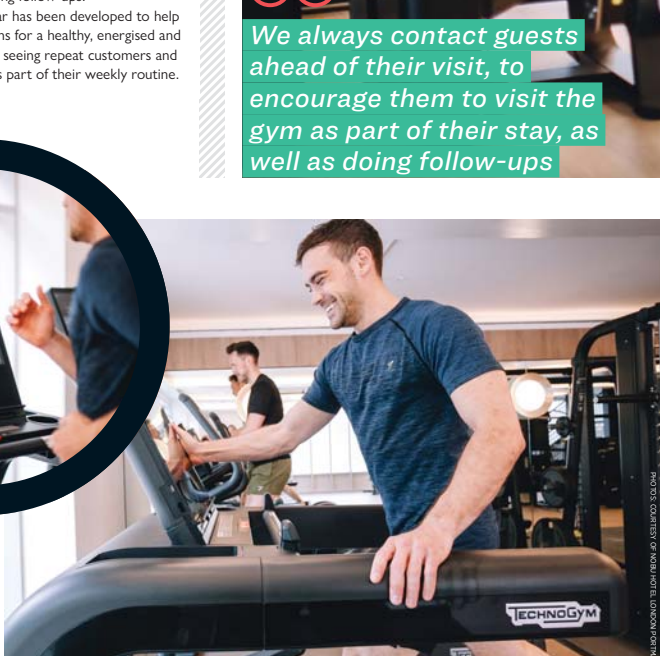
How do you motivate hotel guests to come to the gym?

Wellbeing is a key part of the Nobu experience and we encourage guests to visit as part of their stay with us. We always contact guests ahead of their visit, as well as doing follow-ups.

Nobu Pilates in particular has been developed to help guests build the foundations for a healthy, energised and balanced life and we enjoy seeing repeat customers and locals making Nobu Pilates part of their weekly routine.

We always contact guests ahead of their visit, to encourage them to visit the gym as part of their stay, as well as doing follow-ups





Nobu chose Technogym equipment for its high-tech gym space

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOBU PORTMAN HOTEL LONDON, LORTMAN MAYFAIR

Facilities are 24/7 to cater for people's busy work, travel and private lives

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NOBU HOTEL LONDON PORTMAN SQUARE

What's the split between guests and locals?
We have a large proportion of external visitors through all the areas of the hotel, including the gym and restaurants. As hotel occupancy has improved following the challenges of the pandemic, the balance between guests and locals is returning, but the gym is still largely used by non-residents which is great, as it generates a more cosmopolitan profile for the space.

How many members do you have and how much is membership?
Gym membership has grown steadily, but membership numbers aren't a major focus in terms of metrics, so we're growing it carefully to ensure good levels of service for everyone. Membership is £1,800 a year.

Nobu Pilates has grown in popularity over the last year and we're seeing a number of repeat guests, as well as new customers.

Nobu Pilates classes start at £35 and bundles of 10 can be booked for £310.

Tell us about the physiotherapy options
It's important to be able to offer guests a 360-degree approach to wellness, and this includes professional services such as physiotherapy.

Our resident physiotherapist offers clients an active rehabilitation approach with close guidance, education and progression to help them prevent or overcome injury. Clients are also encouraged to work closely with a Nobu Pilates instructor and/or a personal trainer to progress their recovery and help maintain their overall fitness and wellness. We offer competitive prices, with each session costing £180.

The gym has a resident physiotherapist

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NOBU HOTEL LONDON PORTMAN SQUARE

What spa treatments are on offer?
We offer a selection of luxury treatments that have been specially curated to mirror the brand's core beliefs. All these use products from Ayurvedic skincare brand Mauli and British men's grooming brand Gentleman's Tonic.

Nobu Zen is the signature massage, starting from £165 and tailored to each guest, using a range of different massage techniques and a personalised blend of oils.

The Devi Supreme Skin Radiance is also popular – it's a transformative treatment that focuses on rejuvenation and facial massage using Mauli products. ▸

Nobu's roots are based on the notion of 'omotenashi' – the very best of service

The celebrated Nobu restaurant in London's Portman Square

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF NOBU HOTEL LONDON PORTMAN SQUARE

- Then we have men's treatments, such as The Ultimate Tonic, that focuses on the mind and body and includes a body massage, scalp massage and facial.

What tech are you using?

All equipment in the gym is by Technogym. We wanted a high-end gym solution that guests would instantly recognise and Technogym fits that bill.

One of the most popular pieces of equipment is the Technogym Bike; it's an impressive piece of tech that comes with the Technogym Trainers' on-demand classes, Technogym Outdoors and Total Body Workouts. Whether a beginner or an advanced user, our guests are able to enjoy a guided, engaging and motivational fitness experience.

We're continuing to look at ways we can innovate the wellness journey for guests while continuing to inspire them to maintain their health and fitness whenever they travel. With the help of our ongoing partnership with Technogym we're excited to see how the use of tech in gyms develops over the next few years.

What are the challenges and solutions of managing a 24-hour operation?

People's lives are increasingly busy, with packed schedules and we felt it was important to keeping our gym open 24/7, to accommodate guests whenever they might want to work out. We did the same with our in-room dining, allowing people to order 24hrs – it's about being able to adapt to our guests' lives to ensure a seamless experience.

How many staff do you have?

Our employee level has increased steadily as we've become busier, however, it isn't a fixed number and is adapted to guests attendance.

Do you collaborate with wellness teams in other Nobu hotels around the world?

We're looking at ways we can introduce Nobu Hotels and other cities around the world to Nobu Pilates – we have such a unique offering that Londoners are loving and we're looking forward to seeing how this might grow over the next few years.

Do you think offering more rounded wellness services is the way forward for the health and fitness sector?

Wellness doesn't start and end with the gym – it's a part of our everyday lives, and the hospitality industry must evolve with the ongoing trends and developments within the health and fitness sector. For many of our guests, fitness and wellness is an integral part of their everyday routine, so it's important we're able to offer a rounded wellness service – a space to workout, a space to recharge and relax, a space to eat healthily and – should guests need it – a space for rehabilitation. ●

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Maier reveals automated, climate neutral club

Twenty Four – a new automated gym and sports facility where all equipment is self-powered – has opened in Ludwigsburg, Germany. The site is part of Urban Harbor, a 200,000sq m former industrial area that is being transformed by Max Maier Urban Development to become Europe's first climate-neutral urban district.

The Twenty Four concept was conceived by founder and CEO Philipp Maier (no relation), who opened the Urban Health Club (UHC), UHC Spa and UHC The Outdoor Gym – a combined £2.8m fitness and wellness development – on the site in 2021, marking the first stage of the Urban Harbor project.

TWENTY FOUR

The staff-less, automated gym only uses equipment which is self-powered

TWENTY FOUR

At the heart is a focus on sustainability, energy efficiency and being CO2 neutral

Philipp Maier

The gym – 750sq m indoors and 250sq m outdoors – is fitted out with fitness, performance, strength and weightlifting equipment. Twenty Four is also an official showroom partner for Life Fitness and other brands.

"At the heart of Twenty Four is a focus on sustainability, energy efficiency and being carbon neutral," said Maier. "The concept is futuristic and has not been seen before."

More: http://lei.sr/n4Q9F_H

Rainer Schaller launches his 20th fitness brand

RSG GROUP

Rainer Schaller with Sebastian Schoepe, CEO of RSG Group North America

RSG Group has launched the flagship club for Heimat – the gym giant's new fitness and wellness brand – in Los Angeles. It's the first of a number of sites expected to open over the next three years in Dallas, San Francisco, Berlin and other cities.

Set over five floors across a 75,000sq ft space, Heimat offers a fitness centre, boutique classes, a spa, co-working lounge, rooftop swimming pool and a restaurant by Michelin-starred chef, Michael Mina.

Heimat, in German, means the place you feel most at home, and this concept provided the inspiration for the founder and CEO of RSG Group, Rainer Schaller, to develop a premium offer that combines a high-end health club and private members' club.

RSG GROUP

The industry was missing an exclusive place where you could find every type of training

Rainer Schaller

"Having worked in fitness for 25 years, it was clear the industry was missing an exclusive place where you could find every type of training under one roof and where members experience a feeling of belonging," said Schaller. *Read more on page 56.*

More: http://lei.sr/q4Y8Z_H

World Active Forum to represent sector globally

The World Active Forum (WAF) – a new network of national fitness associations and organisations from all over the world – has officially launched.

WAF is intended to unify the voice of the health and fitness industry and represent it globally, so the sector boosts its visibility – politically, socially and economically – as an essential service when it comes to public health and wellbeing.

The forum has been founded by a group of global stakeholders, including Europe Active's CEO Andreas Paulsen, the Europe Active board and team, stakeholder advisory boards, European national associations and partners around the world. Barrie Elvish, CEO of AUSactive and WAF co-founder, has been elected as the first chair.

SHUTTERSTOCK/RAZVAN

The WAF will represent at the highest level

EUROPE ACTIVE

We have a unique opportunity to establish WAF to speak with one voice globally
Andreas Paulsen

"There's now an informal network of associations around the world, and I believe we have a unique opportunity to formalise that this year, turning it into a federation of associations that speaks with one voice globally," said Paulsen.

More: http://lei.sr/z7D9P_H

Club Intel report identifies key gym personas

A new report – *Optimising Personalisation using Fitness Personas* – which defines four key gym-goer types has been released by insight firm Club Intel.

The findings are the culmination of two years of consumer research involving 1,500 consumer surveys – in collaboration with research firm Dynata – and commentary taken from industry experts during IHRSA's 2022 trade show.

Also commenting are Club Intel's Mark Williamson; Kelly Thorne, VP of Movati and Cristine Keo and Lee Robinson from ABC Fitness Solutions.

SHUTTERSTOCK/VASYLKOLOMOYETS

The 'routine lifer' is over 66 and tends to stick to a regimen day in and day out

CLUB INTEL.COM

Consumer personas help you design your products to meet the needs of members and clients
Mark Williamson

"Consumer personas help you design your products to meet the needs of members and clients," said Club Intel founder, Mark Williamson. "They're fictitious characters used to represent a real target audience and are used to summarise and communicate research about a specific audience in a succinct and digestible way."

The four personas identified by the report are The 'routine lifer' (34 per cent), the 'wellness lover' (30 per cent), the 'fitness explorer' (19 per cent) and the 'casual consumer' (17 per cent).

More: http://lei.sr/x7n5z_H

Amazon acquires One Medical in $3.9bn deal

Amazon has acquired primary healthcare organisation One Medical in a US$3.9bn deal that will see it moving further into the wellness market.

The move follows the e-commerce giant's growth and development of its nutritional supplements range.

Amazon says it's aiming to "transform the healthcare experience" by leveraging One Medical's existing network of healthcare services, which currently serves 767,000 members virtually and in-person.

SHUTTERSTOCK/VASILIY RUSH

Amazon has moved further into wellness, buying One Medical for US$3.9bn

LINKEDIN/NEIL LINDSAY

Healthcare is high on the list of experiences that need reinvention

Neil Lindsay

Last year, One Medical acquired Iora Health, a primary care group with 47 offices, bringing One Medical's branches to almost 200 across the US.

The membership-based service costs users US$199 per year.

As part of its focus on prevention and wellness, One Medical says it starts with a "deep dive" into lifestyle, genetic background and personal goals, "however modest or ambitious they may be".

Neil Lindsay, SVP of Amazon Health Services, said: "Healthcare is high on the list of experiences that need reinvention."

More: http://lei.sr/Y9r6z_H

Nordic chain SATS announces record results

SATS

SATS' Q2 report showed that revenues were up by 53 per cent

Nordic fitness chain SATS has reported Q2 results showing a 53 per cent increase in revenue to NOK 1,022m (£85m).

The group also demonstrated a strong EBITDA, getting to NOK 83m (£67m), compared with NOK -113m (-£9.5m) in the corresponding quarter last year.

The number of clubs has risen by 13 since last year to 267, while SATS has also seen a 10 per cent growth in its member base, which now stands at 671,000.

"The market for exercise and health is in the process of recovering after the pandemic and we strongly believe that SATS' competitiveness has been strengthened," said CEO, Sondre Gravir. "We're proud of our members, who are – on average – more active now than before the pandemic, which shows they're succeeding in their training.

SATS

The market for exercise and health is in the process of recovering after the pandemic

Sondre Gravir

"The number of visits per member is an important key figure for SATS," said Gravir. "It gives a good indication of our contribution to public health."

More: http://lei.sr/w2t4H_H

Gym Group on track for £45m EBITDA in 2022

The Gym Group saw its membership grow by 10 per cent during the first six months of 2022 to 790,000, with revenues jumping to £84.2m – a 187 per cent increase on the first half of the COVID-19-affected 2021, giving an EBITDA of £17m.

Analysts are predicting a full-year EBITDA of around £45m. The low-cost operator, which currently has 215 clubs, said it was making "excellent progress" with its recently announced growth strategy.

The group has a target of reaching 300 gyms by the end of 2025, along with an EBITDA between £95-£105m.

It has opened 11 gyms since December 2021 and is on track to launch 28 new sites in total by the end of this year.

THE GYM GROUP

Our financial performance demonstrates the resilience of our business
Richard Darwin

CEO Richard Darwin told *HCM* that memberships are now back to 90 per cent of pre-pandemic, 2019 membership levels.

"We're pleased with our financial performance, which demonstrates the resilience of our business," he said.

More: http://lei.sr/K2w5G_H

THE GYM GROUP

Membership jumped to 790,000

Fitness industry remains 'male dominated'

Nearly half (47 per cent) of men employed by fitness companies work in leadership roles – while for women, the figure is just 36 per cent.

The data comes from a survey on gender equality in the fitness industry, conducted by Sport Alliance and the Women in Fitness Association (WIFA), which suggests that further work is needed to achieve equality for women in the sector.

According to the *Gender Equality in the Fitness Industry 2022* report, men currently make up 70 per cent of the cohort of gym owners.

The report also found that leadership positions are harder to achieve for women.

As the major obstacles for reaching their career goals, people cited feeling underestimated and not respected and having low chances of getting promoted. Women also highlighted the fact that it is hard to combine family and work.

Maike Kumstel, Sport Alliance, said: "Men are more likely to be in leadership roles in fitness than women. Among the self-employed, most women are trainers rather than running their own businesses."

More: http://lei.sr/Z3M9N_H

SHUTTERSTOCK/ROPEPHOTO.COM - VOLIA

The survey shows that only 29 per cent of gym owners are female

SPORT ALLIANCE

Men are more likely to be in leadership roles in fitness than women
Maike Kumstel

F45 CEO steps down amid profit warning

Mark Wahlberg- and David Beckham-backed F45 Training has announced a reduction in its core workforce of 110 employees with the aim of cutting its cost base. The number represents around 50 per cent of the head office headcount.

President and CEO Adam Gilchrist has also stepped down from his operational role with a reputed US$7m payoff while remaining on the board. Ben Coates, director of Coolgardie Investments – who's been on F45's board since 2021 – will serve as interim CEO while recruitment of a new leader takes place.

F45 says that although demand for franchises has been strong, the global outlook and share performace of F45 has stymied some franchisees' efforts to obtain capital and this has slowed growth.

This in spite of the company having launched a loan financing deal with Fortress recently.

F45

Adam Gilchrist stepped down from his operational role, but remains on the board

"Recent share price performance has made it challenging for franchisees to utilise financing facilities announced earlier this year," confirmed CFO Chris Payne.

F45's shares have been falling since its US$1.4bn IPO in New York in July 2021, with the share price having dropped from around US$17 a share in August 2021 to US$2 in August 2022. They dropped a further 60 per cent on the restructuring announcement, to US$1.35, making F45 a likely takeover target and wiping more than US$206m off the company's value overnight.

More: http://lei.sr/A9Z4p_H

Health clubs on 'front line of healthcare'

SHUTTERSTOCK/ROLOSTUDIO

Health clubs will be used for the delivery of musculoskeletal treatments

A two-year research project will look to find ways to transform the UK's physical activity facilities into musculoskeletal (MSK) hubs that could be used by the National Health Service (NHS).

Called Healthy Ageing Challenge, the project aims to design a system-based approach to better integrate leisure facilities within the nation's healthcare infrastructure, turning them into a locally accessible network of community 'MSK hubs'.

The project is being driven by a consortium which includes social enterprise Good Boost, industry body UK Active, Orthopaedic Research UK, group rehabilitation programme ESCAPE-pain, and Arthritis Action.

Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive, said: "The projections for NHS waiting lists show that things are going to get even worse over the coming years, but the potential within this project means we could start reducing that pressure significantly over the long term. We have an opportunity to integrate fitness into the healthcare system."

PHOTO: UK ACTIVE

We have an opportunity to integrate fitness into the healthcare system
Huw Edwards

More: http://lei.sr/R6X9t_H

Independent gym sector valued at £625m

LeisureDB has launched a new Spotlight Report series analysing independent operators.

It has been compiled by drilling down into the *State of the Fitness Industry Report (SIR)*, which was released in May 2022.

The new report delves into changes that occurred in the independent sector during the pandemic from 2019 to 2022, but draws a distinction between an independent club and an Independent Survivor Gym (ISG).

It defines ISGs as "those gyms that were listed as independent following industry audit on 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2022, covering the critical period before and after the COVID-19 lockdowns".

The report revealed that while there are 2,207 independent gyms in total, it is the 1,969 ISGs – which made up 89 per cent of the gyms analysed for the *State of the Fitness Industry Report* – that are the focus of this Spotlight Report.

It adds that in the *State of the Fitness Industry Report*, independent gyms represented 20 per cent of the £3.5bn private sector total market value, but ISGs have a lower percentage market share at 17.7 per cent.

After giving a breakdown of health and fitness clubs, the number of members, the average membership and the market value for each region in the UK, LeisureDB estimates that the total market value of ISGs lies at £625m, against a figure of £626m for 2019.

More: http://lei.sr/B7t7b_H

SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND

The report charts years 2019 to 2022

UK Active sets out milestones for Vision 2030

Establishing new data and insight services and strengthening relationships with both government and the NHS are among UK Active's aims for 2022-23.

The industry body has published its 10 strategic goals for the coming year, which also include delivering projects with Sport England, the launch of a new website and the rollout of The Active Standard, an industry kitemark for consumers.

The 10 milestones are part of UK Active's *Vision 2030* strategy, which maps out plans for growing and developing the physical activity sector through the rest of the decade.

SHUTTERSTOCK/MIDO

UK Active is aiming to work more closely with the NHS in delivering services

CEO Huw Edwards said: "We want to be clear and transparent with our members about the set of milestones ahead for us as an organisation.

"Together with our members, we can not only navigate the current challenges facing the sector, but also lay the foundations for our growth and development across the rest of the decade. This document sets out the key milestones to begin the journey towards our shared ambition."

Other goals include the improvement of membership engagement, which UK Active plans to achieve by implementing a new year-round member engagement strategy.

"Our commitment is to communicate effectively with our members, providing support, championing the great work they do and helping the sector grow," the body states.

"Our goal as a team is to further engage with our members in order to help them achieve their goals and ultimately make the nation healthier."

More: http://lei.sr/9A9J6_H

Solar tech reduces pool heating costs to zero

Easton Leisure Centre in the UK has announced a 100 per cent reduction in heating costs of its 25m swimming pool this summer (June-August).

Leading a pilot project set up by Bristol City Council and Everyone Active, 800 solar thermal tubes were installed in May, costing £89,000, which has cut its energy costs entirely during the longer daylight hours.

The council says a typical leisure centre produces approximately 500 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, and that the new system will save almost 13 tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere over a 12-month period.

With spiralling energy prices, combined with the urgent need to reduce fossil fuel consumption, Bristol City Council has spearheaded this campaign so pools can stay open.

"We haven't used gas to heat the main pool water since the system was installed," says GM Noel Hickman. "We anticipate using gas again later in the year, but it will be reduced by the contribution of the heat still coming from the roof."

More: http://lei.sr/9E2S4_H

EASTON LEISURE CENTRE

Everyone Active's Easton Leisure Centre has 800 solar thermal tubes on the roof

TWITTER.COM/NOELHICKMAN

We haven't use gas to heat the main pool water since the system was installed

Noel Hickman

Fritz Lanman appointed CEO at Mindbody

MINDBODY

Fritz Lanman (pictured) will take over from Josh McCarter as Mindbody CEO

Mindbody has announced that Fritz Lanman will become the company's new CEO from 3 September 2022. He will succeed Josh McCarter who is to join Mindbody's board of directors.

When Mindbody acquired fitness membership platform ClassPass last October, with Lanman as CEO, McCarter led the combined business. Founder Payal Kadakia exited and Lanman became president of ClassPass and Mindbody Marketplace.

Lanman has been involved with ClassPass since 2014, leading its seed and Series A fundraising, before becoming CEO in 2017.

"I'm excited to build on the strong foundation the company has built over the years and bring new approaches to help accelerate our growth and deliver greater value for wellness business owners and wellness enthusiasts alike," said Lanman. "There's tremendous opportunity in the wellness industry right now and Mindbody is poised to capitalise on market changes and challenges."

When ClassPass and Mindbody merged last year, it benefited from a US$500m investment from Sixth Street. In February 2022, ClassPass demonstrated recovery from COVID-19 by reporting more reservations than in February 2020. One month later, Mindbody launched Mindbody Capital to support client growth as the industry navigates its way out of the pandemic.

More: http://lei.sr/9U8V6_H

Join W3Fit in 2022

Where Business Meets Wellness

Premier hosted buyer event connecting owners and operators from Europe's top health, fitness, and leisure clubs and hotels with executives from global supplier companies innovating the fitness industry through pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings, education, and networking.

We are looking forward to meeting with suppliers face to face again so the news of We Work Well launching W3Fit for our industry is fantastic. We look forward to being part of the inaugural event.

Kevin Yates, CEO, TRIB3

It is great to hear about the launch of W3Fit, where industry leaders can meet, network and form everlasting friendships. We look forward to joining what surely will be a must attend event in our calendar.

Dave Wright, Creator & CEO, MYZONE

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The club offers 25,000sq ft of 'snackable' fitness, with no membership obligation

My starting point was to ask what would happen if membership was something you gave for free?

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

Non-members can come in and use the food and retail areas

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

JEB BALISE

Drop Fitness has launched its first site in New Jersey using a new model inspired by the gaming industry. The founder and CEO talks to Kate Cracknell

In May 2022, Drop Fitness opened its doors in the small town of Montvale, New Jersey, US. In the process, it unveiled a model that brings together four boutiques, private training and a gym floor – all on a 'pay for what you want, when you want' basis in a download-to-join membership that's so flexible you need never leave the community.

Here, we ask Drop's founder and CEO to elaborate on the concept and explain why he believes it could be a new winning formula.

How did you get the idea for Drop Fitness?

It might seem surprising, but my previous experience in mobile gaming provided the perfect trajectory into the fitness world.

I was a crossword puzzle enthusiast and I had the idea of putting crossword puzzle tournaments on Facebook, which at the time was blowing up with Farm Ville and City Ville. I thought our app would be a big hit, but it ended up appealing to only a small handful of people. I realised most people just wanted a small, easy, snackable, relatable puzzle they felt they could get through every day. The experience taught me a lot about my interests versus those of the mass market, and how those two things can be very different.

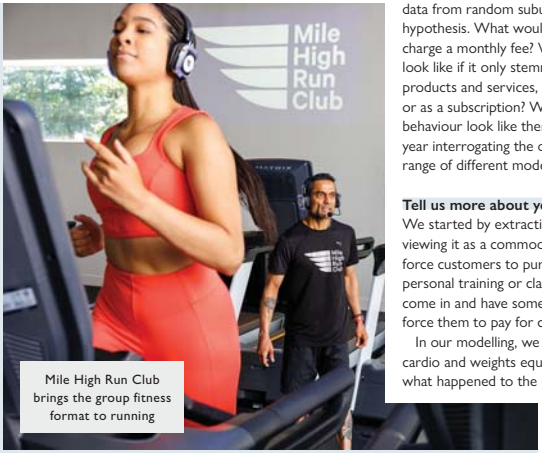
We started creating slightly smaller, easier puzzles. We also moved off Facebook and onto mobile phones. And all of a sudden it worked. In the space of a few years, with just seven of us in the office analysing user behaviours in the app, we ramped up to about US$2m in monthly revenues. In the process, we figured out a lot of ▸

things about the mass market. And with a segue into fitness, we learned a lot about what retention looks like, how to provide value on a daily basis to bring customers back, and how vitally important that is. Because it doesn't matter if you have millions of downloads. If the next day you go out of fashion, you no longer have a business.

Can you elaborate on the link with fitness?
All our findings around retention got me thinking about the gym I used to attend. I was spending US$5,000–$10,000 a year on personal training. On top of that, I was being hit with a US$200 a month bill for membership. Charging a mandatory membership fee for the right to buy personal training seemed unnecessary, and not a great way to keep a high-value customer.

So I started digging into the industry and I discovered that around 35 per cent of people quit the gym every year, with the average gym membership lasting only 14 months. At the end of that 14 months, leaving can be such a terrible experience that some customers never want to come back – certainly not to you, in spite of the millions you've spent building your facilities.

Meanwhile, most successful gyms have an expensive sales team that's continually refilling the 'leaky bucket' of members leaving after 14 months. There seemed to be an acceptance that customers would only be payers for 14 months. It was counter to everything I had learned about the importance of keeping customers and I started asking myself a lot of 'what ifs?'.



Mile High Run Club brings the group fitness format to running

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

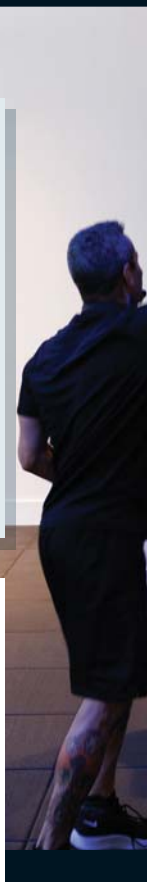
Mile High Run Club
at Drop Fitness

Mile High Run Club brings the group fitness format to running, offering an experience for people at every level.

Classes range from 30 minutes to an hour and depending on the class and sessions, start with runners on their own treadmill, followed by off-treadmill strength exercises.

Coaches can include former collegiate sprinters, Olympic marathoners and triathletes.

> "Mile High Run Club offers running programmes, including 12-week NYC Half Marathon training



My starting point was to ask what would happen if my club didn't charge me the US$200 monthly membership. What if membership were something you gave for free, and then you let people pick and choose what they wanted to pay for over time? What would retention look like then?

That thought prompted me to start digging properly, and the first thing I did was buy data from random suburban clubs to test my hypothesis. What would happen if I didn't charge a monthly fee? What would revenue look like if it only stemmed from ancillary products and services, sold either standalone or as a subscription? What would purchasing behaviour look like then? I spent about a year interrogating the data and looking at a range of different models and price points.

Tell us more about your analysis
We started by extracting cardio and weights, viewing it as a commodity that we wouldn't force customers to purchase. If people wanted personal training or classes, or just wanted to come in and have something from the café, why force them to pay for cardio and weights?

In our modelling, we then set the price for cardio and weights equal to zero, just to see what happened to the usage curve. Of course,

Mile High Run Club classes are delivered by expert coaches

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

> *We've got four boutique partners – Mile High Run Club, Physique 57, Humming Puppy and Fhitting Room*

in practice you'd quickly become overcrowded and no-one would want to come. But this was an academic exercise at this point and was all about usage. That's what we wanted to establish, because it then becomes a solvable equation and dictates your price point: if you know how often your members come, and how many machines you have, you can calculate how many passes you can sell before there's a capacity constraint. That allows you to set your pricing at a level where you sell to comfortable capacity without overselling and crushing the user experience.

In practice, what that means for Drop Fitness is a price tag of US$1,000 for our annual Drop Pass – unlimited use of our open gym product – although we're currently offering a new member discount and selling it at US$500. I expect the price will change as we fill up: our primary focus is usage and capacity, because the business model works at most prices.

We'll charge a reasonable price that gets us to comfortable capacity, and then start a wait list. We're not going to jeopardise the customer experience by overselling.

You offer more than a gym floor, too…

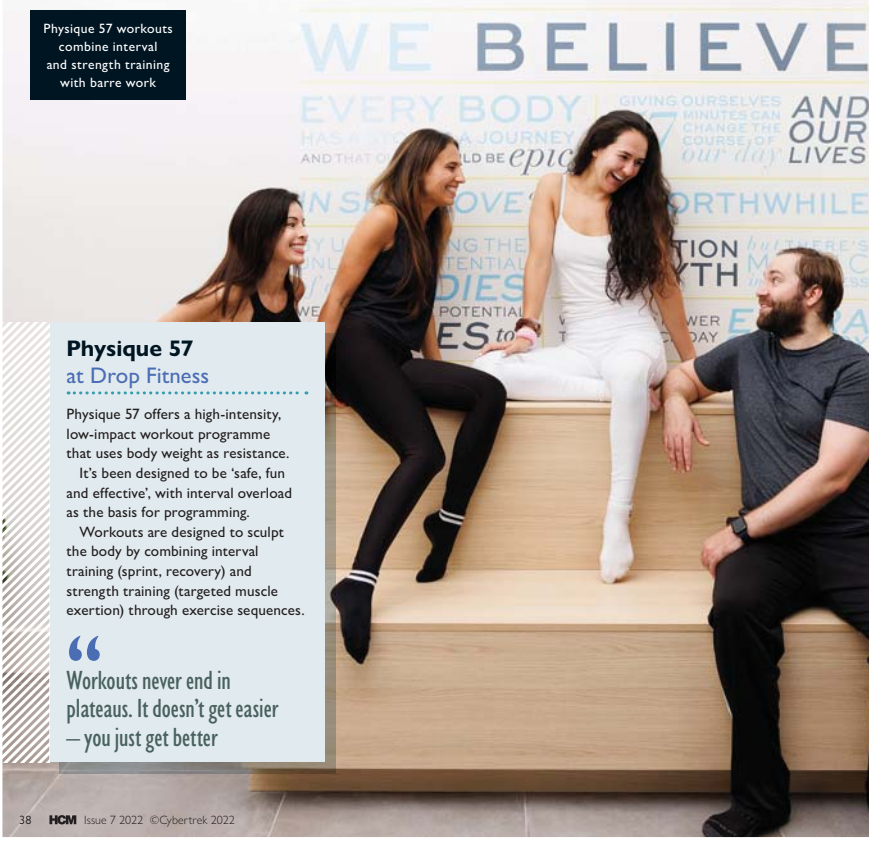
Factoring out the open gym as a standalone business was the biggest hump to get over. Then we just started adding in all the other things that are selling around the world, starting with four premium boutique fitness brand partners – Fhitting Room, Physique 57, Mile High Run Club and Humming Puppy – with proven track records from proven entrepreneurs.

And that's the magic of the whole story: layering on the brands we know people will pay for.

We sell five different products: 7,000sq ft of cardio and weights, boutique fitness though our partners, private training, café and retail – without being forced to first pay for open gym membership.

Drop Fitness members can then access multiple brands and products under one roof, enjoying all the amenities you'd find at an all-inclusive premium gym – kids' club, café, luxury locker rooms and so on – in a space that's designed to feel like a high-end club. But they have the flexibility to buy only what they want, when they want it, at the same sort of price point as they'd usually pay to access just one brand. And we give them better parking. Suddenly it's a pretty exciting value proposition.

Incidentally, we see our café and retail as viable standalone businesses, so they sit front of house. You don't have to be a member to use them. You can walk into our beautiful café off the street, have an avocado toast or a smoothie or whatever, then leave and never use the gym. Member-only cafés and retail don't make a lot of sense to us. It's only our three fitness products that sit behind our front desk.



Physique 57 workouts combine interval and strength training with barre work

Physique 57 at Drop Fitness

Physique 57 offers a high-intensity, low-impact workout programme that uses body weight as resistance.

It's been designed to be 'safe, fun and effective', with interval overload as the basis for programming.

Workouts are designed to sculpt the body by combining interval training (sprint, recovery) and strength training (targeted muscle exertion) through exercise sequences.

> "Workouts never end in plateaus. It doesn't get easier – you just get better

What's your price list?
Everything is discounted at the moment while we build our customer base, but as I say, our regular price for unlimited cardio plus weights is US$1,000 a year. You can also buy a day pass for our open gym, provided we haven't hit capacity.

Then there are monthly class subscriptions, which give you access to all four boutiques plus seven days' access to the gym each month. Crucially, you can turn all subscriptions on and off through our app at the touch of a button.

Once again ignoring current discounts, an unlimited class subscription costs US$200 a month, or you can subscribe to four (US$100), eight (US$150) or 10 classes (US$200) a month – all including that seven days' access to cardio plus weights.

Meanwhile, our flexible class packs have a 12-month expiry date, so you really can come and go as you please, but don't include gym access: US$28 for a single drop-in class, $120 for five classes, US$180 for 10 classes.

Physique 57 at Drop Fitness

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

> *My experience in mobile gaming provided the perfect trajectory into the fitness world*

Finally, we have private training (US$80–100 a session) and group private training, where friends train together and get a price break: it costs about US$70–80 per person per session, and we're already seeing a lot of people taking that up.

It sounds very flexible…
You have total freedom to pay fixed or variable, pay monthly, go unlimited or buy à la carte. You can also subscribe and then unsubscribe and you're still a member. There's no quitting process. We're not kicking you out of our community. You don't even have to talk to anyone: if you're done for a while, you just press a button in our app. If you then get motivated again in three months' time, we're still there for you.

We want to make luxury fitness approachable, with a model and price points that appeal to a broad cross-section of the community.

Humming Puppy classes offer varying yoga and meditation styles

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

Humming Puppy
at Drop Fitness

Classes are not based on any one yoga style but reflect the inspirations and backgrounds of teachers. All offerings include the fundamental principles of breath – pranayama, movement –asana and awareness– meditation.

Humming Puppy teachers are a warm and welcoming collective who are passionate about sparking curiosity, conversation and connection through the practice of yoga.

> Spaces reverberate with a 'hum' at 7.83hz and 40hz, which assist in restoring the mind's equilibrium

> *We never want to lose customers. We want people to trust and stay with us forever, not just for 12 or 14 months*

- We don't want to just skim off the top one per cent of a population, locking them in to a contract, and not worry about anyone else. We'd rather have a larger customer base who may spend a little less money with us each day, but where we never lose a customer.

What do you mean, never lose a customer?

We've created a download-to-join model whereby all you need to do to join is download our app and enter some basic information. It takes one minute to join and you don't have to commit to paying anything.

You then get one week free to try some things out, which starts whenever you first come in; it doesn't have to be straight away. At that point, we check your ID and take a security photo and that's it – you're a member forever.

After that, you choose what you want to do – or not do! All our pricing is super-transparent: there are no hidden fees or taxes, no up front

Monthly class subscriptions give access to four boutique offers, including Humming Puppy

PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

cost or joining fee. We don't have a sales team, so all the power is with the customer.

If someone comes that first week but then doesn't come again for a while, that's fine. We recognise that everyone's motivation is unique to them. If they're not ready, there's no pressure. When you're ready and feel motivated, we're here for you – but you can still turn your subscription off at any time. We even encourage members to keep going to our competitors too, if they're finding value there.

If members allow us to sync with the contacts in their phone, our app will also show them which of their friends are booked into a class. They can turn this feature off for privacy at any point, but we make it easy for people to book right next to their friend – or further away from them. It's a social network of sorts.

Once you remove the awkward part where you quit – which as I say we don't have – then really you're a community. With that mindset, provided they want us to, we keep in touch with everyone and send out invitations to free community events, pilots of new class formats, tasting sessions at the café and so on. People can come or not come, and can opt out of email if they don't want to hear from us. The choice is 100 per cent theirs.

The point is, we never want to lose customers. You might not always come, but the whole point is to create a community that's reliable, that treats all people equally and that keeps growing. We want people to trust and stay with us forever, not just for 12 or 14 months.

The way we're approaching that is to give our customers total control.

What's your agreement with the boutiques?

We put in a lot of work to find the brands that best fit into our strategy. All the entrepreneurs we've partnered with are people we really wanted to work with. It was about winning entrepreneurs first, winning concepts second.

Ours is a joint venture in which we're the operator. The boutiques then supply whatever we need to best operate the business. For example, we employ the trainers; the boutiques train them to deliver their programmes. Each boutique brand then enjoys a revenue share.

It's a great way for boutique brands to grow and scale across the country, beyond the big cities where they traditionally operate. For a boutique to come out to the suburbs on its own would cost so much time, energy and money, all for a 2,000sq ft space. Town planning permissions can sometimes be brutal, and doing it for a 25,000sq ft space is much more efficient.

Of course, it requires a model that works at a different price point, because not everyone can afford New York City prices. We've been able to achieve that here.

How have you made boutique fitness so affordable?

We enjoy lower rent than in the big cities, of course, and we have no expensive sales team. Additionally, although we pay our staff more than our competitors do and we've secured exceptional talent, that talent is less expensive here than it would be in New York City, for example, due to the lower cost of living.

We also achieve economies of scale by having five products all in one place, all part of the product from the outset, all running through one app.

Did the COVID lockdowns set you back?

We had our concept ready and were just about to start building a 40,000sq ft gym when COVID hit and our investors said 'we can't build this now'.

At that point, we were down to our last US$10,000 in the bank, paying US$40,000 on a lease we couldn't use, so we had to rethink things. We sold our lease to a grocery chain, had our architect redraw our plans from 40,000sq ft to 25,000sq ft, and we got through it.

There were certainly some challenging conversations with prospective investors, where I was talking bricks and mortar at precisely the time when Peloton had a US$30bn market cap and we were all living in our respective basements.

It just shows that good things happen to people who are willing to be patient and fight for what they believe in. We've built a great, resilient team, and that goes for our employees in Montvale too.

How's it looking?

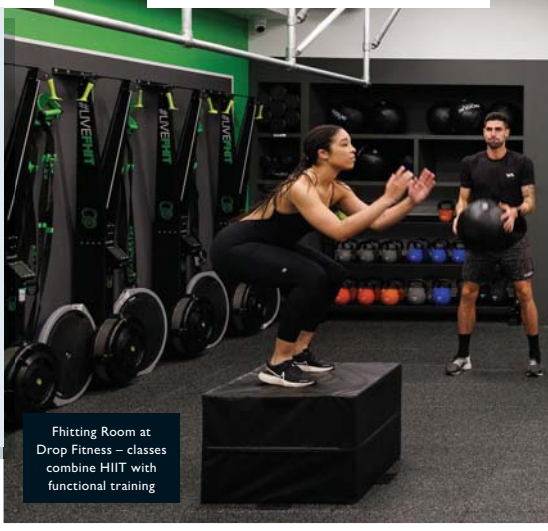
We're certainly not declaring victory: we have a long way to go and a lot of things to work out. But the directional data – in terms of app downloads and revenues to date – is encouraging. We also strongly believe the gym industry will all be download-to-join someday. It's much fairer to

Fhitting room at Drop Fitness

One-on-one personal training session within a motivational group fitness setting is Fhitting Room's approach. Classes incorporate high-intensity intervals and functional strength movements that translate directly to daily life activities, with an emphasis on kettlebell training.

Kettlebells are central to the programming because they offer huge potential to progress.

> A JEDI Team (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion) is led by a diversity and inclusion officer



Fhitting Room at Drop Fitness – classes combine HIIT with functional training

> *There were some challenging conversations with investors, where I was talking bricks and mortar at precisely the time Peloton had a US$30bn market cap*

the consumer, you can offer a lot more value and you can get more consumers through the door.

This inaugural site is 25,000sq ft, which is small relative to what it could be: I can see this model working well in a mall or defunct mall, starting with 20,000sq ft of cardio and weights onto which you tack boutique brands, athleisure, recovery, self-care, spa services. It works because all of these are winning businesses, combined under one roof with a giant parking lot, kids' club and café.

Will you roll out the concept?

We're already having conversations with banks and REITs [Real Estate Investment Trusts], but for now, we're a humble start-up. We're gathering qualitative and quantitative data to show what happens when you run our model. How many people show up? How do you best explain download-to-join to the customer? How do you control capacity and understand utilisation?

Once we gather that information, we'll be in a position to roll Drop Fitness out across the US, working with the brands we've already partnered – as long as they're enjoying success with us – as well as bringing others on board. I'd like to run different versions of the model, too: a 15,000sq ft model, perhaps, and a 50,000sq ft model.

We'll roll out as aggressively as possible once we have the data points we need to justify doing so. We believe the model works everywhere: we'd charge higher prices in cities to support the rents and talent, and lower prices in less economically-advantaged areas. But that's why we see price as far less important than utilisation: if you can optimise utilisation and understand human behaviour, pricing should work itself out for each market.

Will you go global?

Would we go beyond the US? There's no reason why this couldn't ultimately be a global concept. There's a distance between where we are now and where that is, but download-to-join is highly scalable, including across geographies. It's all a matter of execution – and for now, we're at the start of our inaugural site being open. Before we make any grand plans, we have to execute here! ●

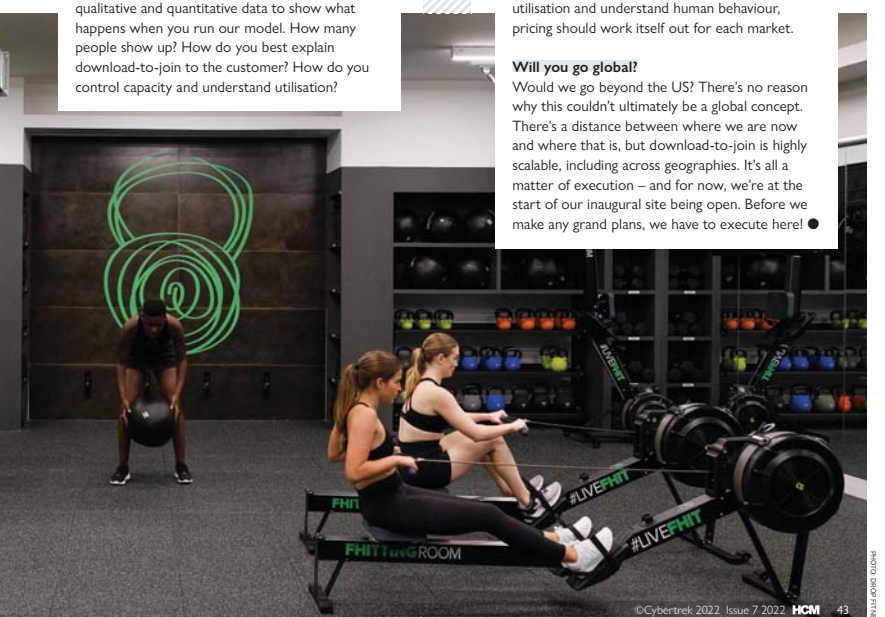


PHOTO: DROP FITNESS

Everyone's talking about

The metaverse

Are you on board with the metaverse or is it something to leave to the tech team? Kath Hudson investigates

Consumers now enjoy at least one activity in the immersive world

The general consensus seems to be that metaverse is at the same stage of development as the internet in the late 1990s.

Nick Clegg, VP of global affairs and communications for Meta (Facebook), says: "The metaverse is coming, meaning the future of the internet will be more human than the way we experience it today – more physical, interactive and speech-based than flat screens filled with text and images."

Matthew Ball, author of *The metaverse and how it will revolutionise everything* confirms this view, describing the metaverse as "a persistent and interconnected network of 3D virtual worlds, which will eventually serve as the gateway to most online experiences and also underpin much of the physical world." Not an alternative to real life then, but part of our future way of engaging with each other.

According to metaverse expert Lesley Morisetti, director of Morisetti Associates, in the three weeks between late October and early November 2021, Google searches for the term metaverse grew by almost 1,500 per cent. Valuations are high and varied, with McKinsey giving a projected valuation of US$5tn by 2030 and Citi GPS estimating the market could be worth as much as US$13tn by 2030 in its report, *Metaverse and Money*.

Morisetti says that, as with the internet, it will take time to truly understand the new opportunities and for consumer behaviour to adapt. She says the drivers of growth will be creative content and environments that consumers want to spend time in and which enable them to drive their own interactions.

One advantage of the metaverse is that it has its own economy, with direct transactions between buyer and seller, because digital currencies such as NFTs are used, which don't involve banks. However, decentralised finance such as this has pitfalls – there are reports of Instagram accounts being hacked, which has led to NFT collectibles worth millions of dollars being stolen. Without a middleman, there's no protection.

Morisetti says there are further challenges before the metaverse can begin to realise its potential, including achieving realistic graphics to represent the physical world, safeguarding and content moderation. There are also challenges around the incompatibility of big tech such as Apple and Android – as each wants to dominate.

Finally, access barriers need to be solved. Citi GPS believes that to achieve the highest growth expectations access needs to be via more commonplace hardware than VR glasses.

So where is the health and fitness sector in relation to the metaverse and what's the potential? We talk to experts and those who've already taken the plunge…

PHOTO: MCKINSEY

> Virtual reality fitness, shopping and attending social events are the top three metaverse experiences

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RYNA MAGO

Eric Hazan

McKinsey

While estimates of the potential economic value of the metaverse vary widely, our bottom-up view of consumer and enterprise use cases suggests it may generate up to US$5tn in impact by 2030 – equivalent to the size of the economy of Japan.

Changes in lifestyle are occurring as consumers experiment with everything from socialising to fitness, commerce, virtual learning, and other daily activities. Today, consumers say they prefer at least one activity in the immersive world compared to the physical alternative. Fitness (virtual reality exercise), shopping (purchasing physical goods) and attending social events are the top three reported metaverse experiences.

The metaverse appeals to everybody, not just a small group of users. There are already three billion 'gamers' in the world who have access to different versions of the metaverse. Beyond that, the use cases go far beyond gaming, with the only limit being our imagination.

Health and fitness can continue to evolve towards remote and more social and collaborative environments. Quality can be improved through becoming more immersive – for example, in service delivery and collaboration around R&D.

In healthcare, we can think about next-generation telemedicine, optimisation of hospital operations – which are now faster, safer and more accurate – remote diagnostics and procedures, fully-personalised health consultations driven by metaverse data, with real-time data access, or metaverse-enabled patient treatment robots treating patients solving employee shortages.

The metaverse poses urgent challenges which cuts across firms, their employees, independent developers and content creators, governments and – of course – consumers. Part of the workforce will need to be reskilled to take advantage of it rather than compete with it, and cities and countries serious about establishing themselves as hubs for its development will need to join the global competition to attract talent and investment.

The metaverse has obvious societal implications. Stakeholders will need to define a road map toward an ethical, safe, and inclusive metaverse. Guidelines may also be necessary around issues including data privacy, security, ethics and regulatory compliance, physical health and safety, sustainability and equity and fairness.

Kevin Yates

Trib3

The metaverse is starting to challenge how we live our lives and experience the world around us. A great example of this is live events: millions of people have virtually attended concerts and gigs in the metaverse by Snoop Dogg, Ed Sheeran and Justin Bieber. Some of the world's biggest brands are investing huge amounts of resources into this area because the digital world is the future. It's an opportunity which can't be ignored.

As a boutique fitness brand, Trib3 has gamification and community at its core, and we actively come up with new ideas and solutions to solve the problems the fitness industry faces regarding inactivity. Since it allows the delivery of rewarding and engaging fitness experiences, the metaverse is perfectly aligned to our goals.

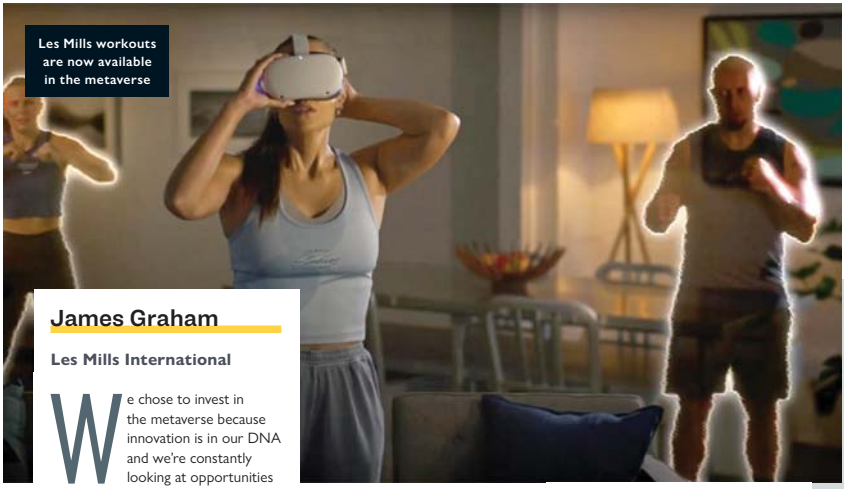
Understanding how your brand can communicate and engage on a physical and digital level is so important. GenZ and Gen Alpha – our future guests – expect brands to deliver first-class experiences online as well as offline. In an always-on culture, we believe Trib3 needs to be accessible 24/7, with a strong digital footprint to support our scaling physical presence. The metaverse will allow us to reach a new audience and penetrate a new group of individuals, introducing them to our brand before they come and see us on a physical level.

We have lots of ideas about how we'll be able to use the metaverse to generate additional revenue. Our first revenue stream will be to launch an NFT project later this year. We also want people to earn Dose Tokens (www.dosetoken.com) by exercising and then spending these within our connected eco-system which in turn will also drive revenues, not to mention attracting new audiences.

Yates says Trib3 is launching an NFT project

PHOTO: TRIB3

> Since it allows the delivery of engaging fitness experiences, the metaverse is perfectly aligned to our goals



Les Mills workouts are now available in the metaverse

PHOTO: JACOB LUND-SHUTTERSTOCK

James Graham

Les Mills International

We chose to invest in the metaverse because innovation is in our DNA and we're constantly looking at opportunities to evolve our offering to ensure we're helping as many people as possible fall in love with fitness.

Workout content and programming is a key part of how we innovate, but also stretching ourselves as we think about how and where different people want to work out. As the whole world evolved through the onset of COVID-19, taking one of our most popular classes, Bodycombat, to the metaverse seemed like an exciting opportunity to push our boundaries.

With our 50+ years of fitness heritage, we knew our newest offering had to be a fantastic workout that delivers results.

Where numbers are concerned, we've been bowled over with the response so far – to date we're sitting at a 4.6/5 star rating in the app store, with 55k sold.

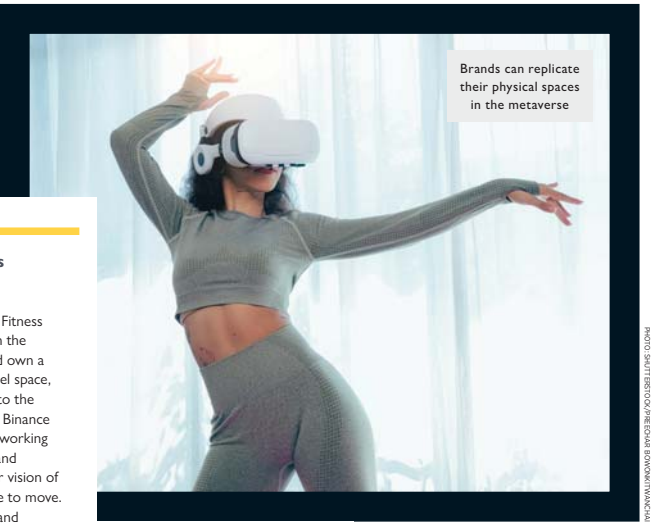
We genuinely think the Bodycombat VR app can appeal to anyone. It talks to the fitness gamers who are looking for a great science-backed workout, as well as our current Les Mills fans who are looking for a new and exciting way to experience one of their favourite programmes. Beyond that, the beauty of the Bodycombat VR app is that we can tailor workouts for all fitness levels and take people through the workouts in a safe and progressive way.

PHOTO: LES MILLS

> Our favourite instructors could soon become literally on-demand, able to appear wherever we wear our mixed reality headsets, in any language

Having a presence in the metaverse offers an exciting opportunity to broaden market appeal and take fitness to a much wider, and typically younger, audience. Advancements with VR headsets have demonstrated that our favourite instructors could soon become quite literally on-demand, able to appear wherever we wear our mixed reality headsets, in whatever language we require. It could also mean members need never miss their favourite class, being able to virtually join their club's group exercise studio in the metaverse from anywhere in the world.

Like any innovative undertaking, there are challenges in bringing this to life. Some elements still don't translate to wearing a headset, like round-house kicks, so we had to look at the elements we could bring across. We pushed our VR specialists at Odders Labs pretty hard to bring new functionality, such as enabling knee strikes, to ensure we're embracing the broader martial arts category.



Brands can replicate their physical spaces in the metaverse

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/PREDRAG BOVKOVIKITIVANCHAI

Andy Hall

OliveX/The Fitness Metaverse

We set up the Fitness Metaverse in the Sandbox and own a 12 x 12 parcel space, sitting next to the likes of Adidas and Atari, Binance and Snoop Dogg. We're working with brands, businesses and individuals who share our vision of encouraging more people to move.

We're taking our lead and inspiration from the US$800m play-to-earn model and market, which shows no sign of slowing down. We want to take this concept and apply it to encouraging new audiences to exercise, move more and quite literally invest in their health and wellbeing.

There's a waiting list to join the launch of our Dose Land experience (The Sandbox Game) and NFT projects. Some of the most forward-thinking brands were first to the table – the likes of Playinnovation, Trib3, Stages, Hero, Salsation and Myzone – all with amazing ways to motivate, inspire and create a point of difference; not to mention drive more revenue.

The metaverse is already worth billions and the potential is beyond what we can comprehend right now. Aside from the economics, the metaverse has the potential to tap into new audiences and target the 80 per cent of non-gym goers we've all been going after for decades.

We have an opportunity to motivate people through gamification of fitness and with more than a promise of improving their wellbeing, as they have the potential to earn currency while working out.

We're coupling this with the ability to virtually visit health and fitness brands/spaces within the Fitness Metaverse.

Brands can replicate their physical spaces online or create the ultimate brand experience. The true value will come when brands can fuse the two and offer considerable value both on and offline. This is quite literally connected fitness 3.0.

We launched our first NFT project in June when we sold 600 US$150 NFTs (avatars) for apparel brand Gym Aesthetics in four hours. Some of them are now trading on the secondary market for near US$1,000. This was a small project but we have more opportunities coming up later this year.

Targeting new demographics in the NFT, crypto and gaming space will also bring new members into the sector, but it's not just about selling more memberships, it's ultimately about what value we can deliver to the consumer. ●

PHOTO: OLIVEX

> We have an opportunity to motivate people through gamification. They have the potential to earn currency working out

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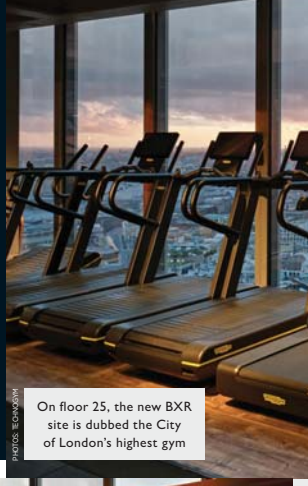
BXR goes to new heights

BXR is one of the most exciting brands in the fitness industry. Co-founder Alex Nicholl gives us a glimpse behind the scenes



PHOTOS: TECHNOGYM

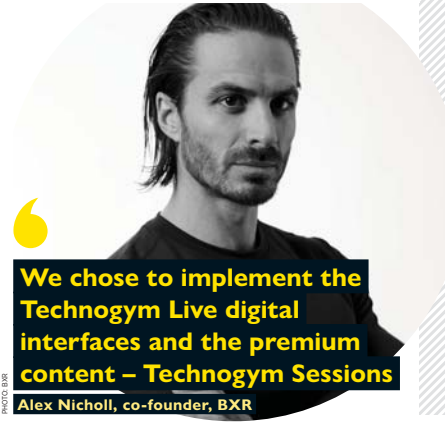
On floor 25, the new BXR site is dubbed the City of London's highest gym

In February 2022, BXR unveiled its second flagship location in London's iconic Bishopsgate development. It followed the opening of the first location in Marylebone, London in 2017.

With more plans underway, including luxury retreats overseas and a site in London's Battersea Power Station, BXR is building a legacy.

City of London's highest gym

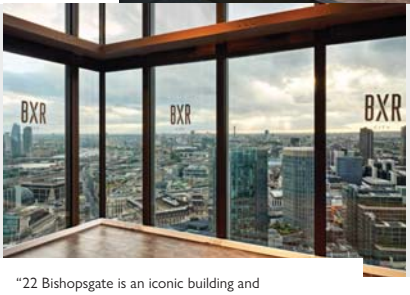
The Bishopsgate site has a full-scale BXR gym and two Sweat by BXR group exercise studios with breathtaking views of London's skyline. Occupying the 25th floor of 22 Bishopsgate at 500ft, it's been dubbed The City of London's highest gym.



We chose to implement the Technogym Live digital interfaces and the premium content – Technogym Sessions

Alex Nicholl, co-founder, BXR

PHOTO: BXR



"22 Bishopsgate is an iconic building and we share the address with 12,000 people, including brands such as Apple. It's amazing to be part of this vision," says Nicholl.

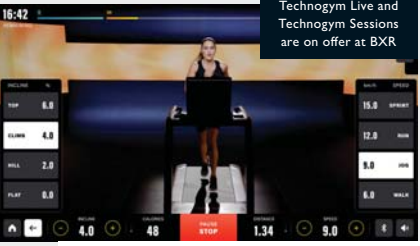
"We're excited to open our doors to all the businesses on site, as well as local residents. It's such an exciting opportunity and I'm thrilled we're part of the renovation of such an iconic London building."

The role of technology

"Technogym helped us create the full BXR experience at Bishopsgate, with its beautiful and innovative cardio products, featuring Technogym Live," he continues.

"Technology has always played a role in BXR's experience-led customer journey, from the conception of the first location in Marylebone – when we launched seamless booking – to Bishopsgate, where we've introduced on-demand training content and entertainment across our cardio equipment from Technogym.

"We chose to implement the Technogym Live digital interfaces and the premium content –



Technogym Live and Technogym Sessions are on offer at BXR

Technogym Sessions – across the cardio products at Bishopsgate to meet consumer needs," says Nicholl. "The growth in consumer content consumption is clear and we recognise that expectations transfer – members expect to be able to consume content wherever they are, even when in the gym."

Not only is the Technogym Live interface packed with various categories of guided content and social entertainment, such as Netflix, it also includes the trainer-led Technogym Sessions, providing users with engaging and motivating workouts and something different to elevate their cardio training experience.

Partnering with recognised brands

"I've worked in the fitness industry for a long time and always knew Technogym was a leading brand," says Nicholl. "Having partnered with them for five years, I can say they're best in class. We want to show BXR clients we select the best products on the market, and Technogym is definitely part of that selection. The equipment is well researched and designed, always innovative and has amazing aesthetics."

BXR

The journey so far

When BXR's first site opened in 2017 in London's Marylebone, Alex Nicholl and his co-founder Olia Sardarova had two visions for the brand – to develop locations offering boutique, high-end, multi-functional boxing gyms and pay-to-train classes offering new and exciting concepts.

The Marylebone site set the bar for BXR's experience-based customer journey, with best-in-class trainers, stunning aesthetics, steamrooms, a juice bar, and a lively community connected by events.

In 2019, the company opened a second site in London at Canary Wharf offering Sweat by BXR's new class formats, and shortly afterwards came Sweat by BXR franchises in the Middle East.

Work then started on BXR's most ambitious project to date: 22 Bishopsgate.

Attention will soon turn to another landmark setting with BXR Battersea Power Station, which will be the biggest site to date, at 16,000sq ft.

The team have set the standard for boutique boxing gyms

PHOTO: DEAN/TECHNOGYM

BXR has partnered with Technogym since the brand started out in 2017 and in five years, Nicholl and his team have created a brand renowned for incredible class experiences, amazing spaces, a world-leading gym experience and a community that consumers want to be part of.

"BXR is run by a small team, so we were able to assess what was working as we grew," he explains. "We were keen to keep moving into new locations, but don't want to just offer huge spaces without a soul.

"BXR is all about community, quality, and exciting concepts. And we're grateful to partner with leading brands such as Technogym that truly understand our values." ●

More: www.technogym.com

"Consumers are more focused on wellness than ever and are expanding their definition to encompass a lot more than just being in shape"

Now trending

From VR to personalisation, here's what we can expect to see in wellness in the coming months, says Lauren McAlister

The *Mindbody and ClassPass 2022 Mid-Year Wellness Trends Report* has highlighted key trends for the sector, with wellness top of the agenda.

"Wellness is more important than ever, with the global pandemic having a profound impact on the way consumers view their health," says Mindbody's Josh McCarter.

Josh McCarter

"Around the globe, we've seen a drastic shift right in numerous areas, right down to their core motivations for practising wellness. Pre-pandemic, people worked out to control their weight and feel good, but now they're motivated to keep moving to reduce stress and feel better mentally.

"This speaks volumes to the impact wellness experiences can have on mental health, and we'll see this show up across the entire wellness industry in various ways as we move towards 2023.

"From consumers taking more in-person workouts to feel a sense of community, to expanded wellness routines with more variety, there is great opportunity for operators that recognise this shift."

More people are seeking a sense of community

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK BEYOUNDPICTURE

Numbers for in-person attendances are breaking records

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/CREATISTA

Trend #1: In-person experiences

Real life options roar back

The growing enthusiasm for in-person experiences presents significant growth opportunities for the industry.

Mindbody app users are increasingly opting to book in-person, with 82 per cent of users utilising the platform exclusively for in-person bookings and only 14 per cent seeking virtual offerings.

Even participation in on-demand fitness is leading to more in-person experiences in the US, with 35 per cent of Americans going to an in-person fitness class they discovered through on-demand channels.

In February 2022, the ClassPass platform saw the most reservations since February 2020, with users booking at 10 per cent higher rates than pre-pandemic.

In terms of market growth, as of December 2021, almost a third of Mindbody's operator customers were planning to expand their business into more locations by December 2022.

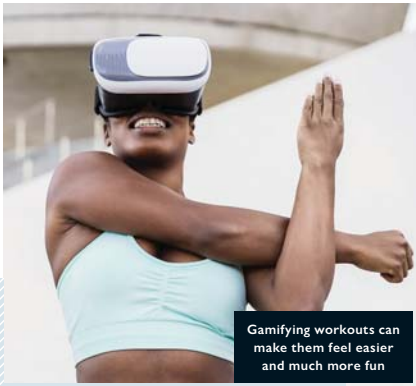


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DIGOBIEVART

Gamifying workouts can make them feel easier and much more fun

Trend #2: Gamification

The metaverse will expand

Immersive gamification of the fitness industry is underway, with the growing adoption of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) and researchers at Technavio predict the market is on track to grow by more than US$125bn globally over the years 2020 to 2024.

Fitness brands such as TRIB3 are launching businesses in the metaverse, and 32 per cent of the Mindbody sample are excited about AI's power to analyse personal data via apps and other technology to generate personalised suggestions.

Gymtimidation plays a factor for those who haven't made their way back to the gym, with 55 per cent of non-members saying getting in better shape before joining a health club would make them feel less intimidated.

Many are using AR/VR to get in shape at home, as the gamification of exercise makes working out fun, easy and appealing, breaking down barriers and allowing people to up their fitness level at home before joining a gym or studio.

Emma Barry from Good Soul Hunting is excited about the future of AR/VR, saying: 'It's going to be the meeting place for all realities."

Trend #3: Healthy company culture

How you treat your teams will be more important than ever

Today's employment market is unique and challenging to navigate. According to a recent study by Frandata and IFA, nearly 90 per cent of franchisees are having trouble finding skilled workers, unskilled workers, or both.

Another staggering figure – a recent McKinsey article (www.hcmmag.com/McKinseyEmployeeRetention) claims 40 per cent of employees are likely to leave their current job in the next three to six months.

Why this significant transition? "During the pandemic, people had a really good look in the mirror, and they reprioritised," says Emma Barry. "It's not all about the dollar anymore. People want to know they matter."

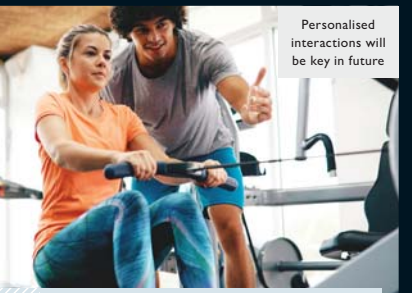
So, what can brands do to attract and retain high-quality talent in 2023? New research by B Authentic Inc shows flexibility and company culture will be increasingly important. When looking at potential new employers, 42 per cent said that wellness perks and benefits, such as corporate wellness programmes are an important part of their decision when making their final decision.

Additionally, 40 per cent said corporate wellness programmes motivate them to prioritise wellness more, which can help prevent burnout – something that's all too common these days.

The reality is that the definition of wellness is changing and people experience wellness in different ways. By offering diverse, well-rounded programmes, 88 per cent of professionals say they're more likely to recommend a workplace that supports their wellbeing.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RAWPIXEL.COM

How staff are treated changes customer dynamics



Personalised interactions will be key in future

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/VIKTOR CHEREVATY

Trend #4: Personalisation

Tailored experiences will be an expectation

In 2023, personalisation will be increasingly important. According to a recent McKinsey report (www.hcmmag.com/McKinseyPersonalisation), over 70 per cent of consumers expect to have personalised interactions with brands they invest in and over three-quarters get frustrated when they don't.

In the wellness industry, a personalised approach is even more important. A second McKinsey report (www.hcmmag.com/McKinseyWellnessReport) shows consumers are increasingly willing to give their personal data to receive more personalised wellness treatments and services.

For wellness brands such as The Hydration Room (www.hydrationroom.com), a personal approach is nothing new. "Personalisation has been the driving force behind our business strategy since day one," says founder and CEO, Dr Brett Florie. "Our health and wellness are inherently individual. What will work for you might not always be the case for anyone else. With personalisation, you receive a much more engaged customer: one who visits weekly, is eager to try new services, and becomes a champion of your brand, both online and in-person.

"Of course, this all leads back to customer service – making sure you have dedicated employees who are willing to put in the time to educate your customers. That will always yield a reward," he says.

Pilates core workout Solidcore (www.solidcore.co) says it will also continue to prioritise personalisation. "Personalisation to help clients achieve results is more than a business strategy—it is a business imperative," says president and CEO, Bryan Myers.

There's been a big rise in people walking outdoors in the US, due to the hot girl walking craze

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MASTOLIO

Trend #5: A wider remit

Consumers will continue to seek more from their wellness experiences

Consumers are more focused on wellness than ever before and are expanding their definition of wellness to encompass a lot more than just being in shape. This is likely to be a lasting effect of the pandemic. Americans say that the pandemic has negatively affected their mental (49 per cent) and physical health (40 per cent).

We found 86 per cent of Mindbody app consumers exercise three times a week or more. There is also a notable rise in those who are walking outdoors (up from 33 per cent in 2021 up to 71 per cent in 2022), this is likely to be at least partly thanks to the viral hot girl walk trend which started on TikTok in 2021 (www.HCMmag.com/hotgirlwalk). Weight training and yoga also continue to rank among the top three, with hiking and HIIT rounding out the top five.

There's opportunity in the market for businesses that accommodate this consumer shift and offer all-around wellness experiences.

For Exos (www.teamexos.com), providing an integrated approach to help clients achieve their goals is nothing new, but its leadership team recognises this shift happening in the industry. "A holistic approach to wellness is being adopted by many of the players in the market today, often starting in one domain of service and gradually expanding to the next," says head of performance innovation, Emily Carlson-Phillips.

"Companies want to drive long-term engagement and impact, but the challenge is to ensure that new services and offerings don't simply pile on top of each other, with more to do for the member. They must be thoughtfully integrated" she says. "Services, plans, and coaching should complement, not compete, with each other, all working together to move the member more efficiently toward the outcomes they're striving for." ●

Sebastian Schoepe (left) with Rainer Schaller at the opening of Heimat

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

ELEVATED CONCEPT

RSG Group has opened Heimat, a members-only concept fitness club and a new way to 'work out and live well', as Liz Terry reports

> **It was clear the industry was missing an exclusive place where members experience a feeling of familiarity and belonging**

Heimat in LA is the first of a new chain of high-end concept clubs

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

Rainer Schaller and his dynamic team at RSG Group, have unveiled Heimat, their latest creation, in West Hollywood, Los Angeles.

The 75,000sq ft club, billed as a first-of-its-kind fitness and wellness concept where members can "play, work, and 'simply be'", is the inaugural site for a new brand rollout, with additional clubs already in the planning stages for San Francisco, Dallas, Berlin over the next three years and locations also being planned in other world cities.

Schaller says he built his new brainchild around the philosophy that wellbeing is not just a physical pursuit, but a lifestyle to be nourished from morning to night, through work, rest and play.

"Having worked in every part of the fitness market for over 25 years, it was clear that the industry was missing an exclusive place where you could find every type of training under one roof and where members experience a feeling of familiarity and belonging," he told *HCM*. "We believe in nourishing both the body and mind and felt the time was right to introduce Heimat."

Built over five floors in a vast converted 1930s industrial warehouse, the club offers the latest fitness spaces and classes – open from 5.00am to midnight – and a luxury boutique spa, as well as a glamorous restaurant by award-winning chef Michael Mina, co-working spaces and a country club-style rooftop pool and bar area with cabanas, table service and sweeping views of the Hollywood Hills. ▸

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

The 75,000sq ft club, in West Hollywood, is spread over five storeys

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

Heimat is located opposite a 1.6-acre cement works, which has been trading on the site for 60 years, however, this is relocating and the land has just been sold to LA-based CIM Group (www.cimgroup.com) for US$46.5m and is expected to be redeveloped for mixed-use and luxury housing, further improving the club's environs.

Warm feeling

"Heimat is a German word used to describe that warm feeling you get when your heart feels at home," says Schaller. "The club is designed to ignite all the senses by elevating the details – from the globally-inspired cuisine to original murals and the artwork and rich textures and materials that are used throughout the space.

"Our goal is to create an experience that you can not only touch, see, taste, hear and smell, but also one that taps into a sixth sense reminding you of a safe and beloved space," he says.

Sebastian Schoepe, president and CEO of RSG Group North America, who worked closely on the launch with Schaller, told *HCM*. "Los Angeles is the perfect place to introduce a concept that sets a new standard for fitness and living well. We chose the city as the base for Heimat's flagship because of people's passion for wellness and the city's track record for setting fitness trends for the rest of the world to follow."

Everything in one place

Schaller, a serial entrepreneur whose businesses touch all parts of the health and fitness sector, has a strong interest in the arts, fashion, food, music and nightlife and these influences are very evident throughout Heimat.

The club's consumer offering is delivered through four channels, called Invigorate (fitness and exercise), Radiate (spa and wellness), Nourish (food and diet) and Cultivate (community, networking and culture).

Wellbeing is a lifestyle to be nourished from morning to night

Heimat has been designed to feel like the home of a friend

The luxury changing rooms have private showers and complimentary bath and shower products

PHOTO: ESG GROUP

Heimat's Mother Tongue restaurant was developed in partnership with Michael Mina

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

The rooftop bar also serves light plates

PHOTO: BSG GROUP

Restaurant design was by Martin Brudnizki Design Studio

PHOTO: BSG GROUP

Members can access a range of holistic recovery services, such as IV therapies

On offer for fitness are the nine purpose-built studios for everything from reformer Pilates and cycling, to TRX, dance, yoga, boot camp and boxing. Heimat also has a dedicated Technogym Kinesis studio, with ten stations.

Also available are functional and machine strength training from gym80, a dedicated stretching area and cardio equipment from Technogym. A Heimat app integrates the use of equipment for members to create a customer journey, while members are also offered a one-to-one dedicated personal trainer.

The full-service spa offers treatments by Hydrafacial, as well as nail care and a range of massages and body treatments. The spa has its own reception and treatments are not included in the price of membership or sold to potential members by the gym sales team.

The spa has a dry sauna, relaxation room and 'European foot spa' and members can access a range of holistic recovery services such as IV therapies.

All changing rooms have private showers and complimentary bath and beauty products.

On the menu

Heimat's Mother Tongue restaurant (www.hellomothertongue.com) offers plant-forward menus for lunch and dinner with wild fish and

The small rooftop pool is a social space with table service and a 'Soho House' vibe

FIRST PERSON

HEALTHY UTOPIA

David Minton paid a visit to Heimat in Los Angeles to check out RSG Group's latest tour de force

David Minton

Angelenos have long known that health is wealth and some of the healthiest and wealthiest are now heading down to North La Brea and Romaine Street in West Hollywood to get their fix at Heimat.

Housed in an iconic corner building that's been gentrified from top to bottom, it's reputedly the world's first concept fitness club.

Heimat is a German word used to describe that familiar feeling of where your heart feels at home and home on this occasion is through the golden doors and into the 75,000sq ft club with pretty much everything that the US$350 per month membership fee, (subject to approval, a US$300 initiation fee, plus valet parking at US$5 per visit or US$30 a month) can buy you.

The one year contract includes all 200 plus classes and so many machines and functional equipment you'd never need to wait, including nine dedicated and branded studios.

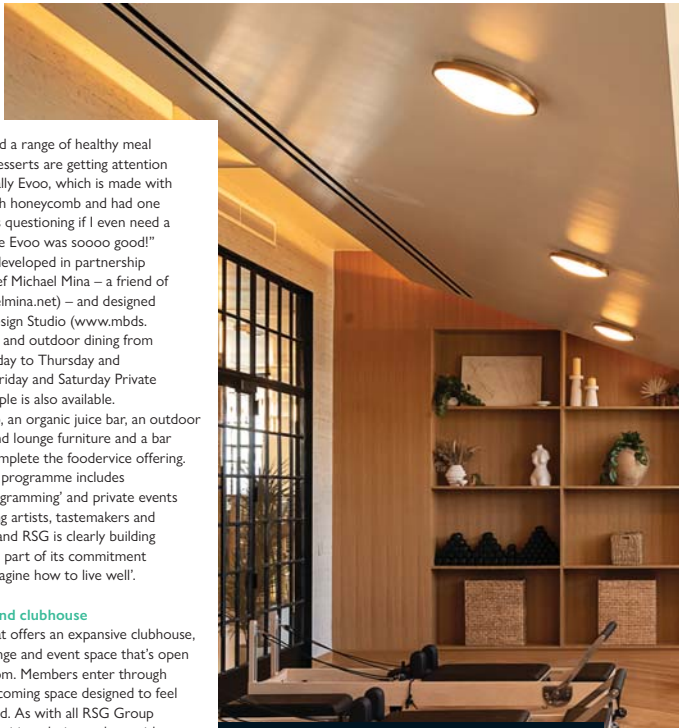
For those going straight to the plant-forward, health-focused Mother Tongue restaurant, which is open to non-members and perched on top of the club, there's a fabulous view to enjoy while contemplating the healthy utopia of Heimat that highlights all the current wellness trends in LA.

The top floor oasis does feel very 'Soho House' with its rooftop pool, swanky bar and private cabanas and where all the servers seem to wear golden tennis shoes – of course.

Everything about Heimat is cultivated to create a fitness, clubhouse and F&B experience. I didn't get chance to work out as I'm not part of the community but did feel very much at home lolling about on the brown leather in the clubhouse, doing these 300 words for HCM while young 'uns all about me polished their latest film or TV scripts.

Over 9,000 people already follow Heimat on Instagram (they check all your social media before approval to join is given) and if even half that number (a guess) have already joined, no wonder the place is buzzing and has created such a vibrant atmosphere.

It reminded me of Third Space in Soho in the early days, with its Fresh & Wild shop, medical centre and dry cleaners sitting along side the architecturally-designed club which – to my mind – was an early-days 'concept fitness club' and of which I'm still a member.



farm-sourced meats and a range of healthy meal options. The unusual desserts are getting attention on review sites, especially Evoo, which is made with olive oil and served with honeycomb and had one reviewer write: "...I was questioning if I even need a boyfriend anymore. The Evoo was soooo good!"

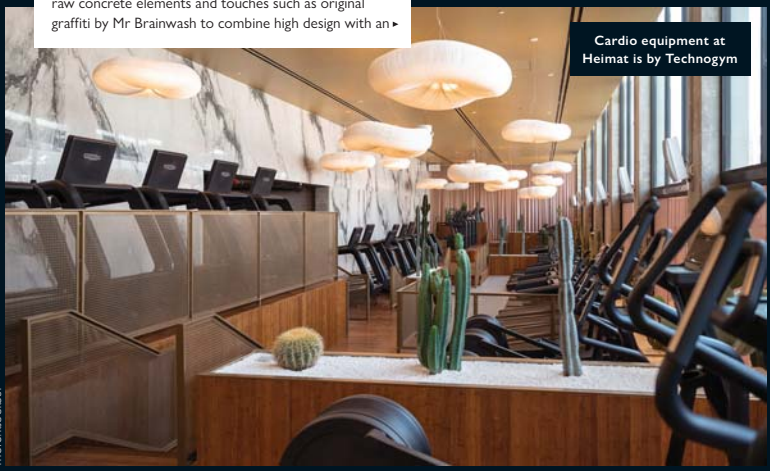
The restaurant was developed in partnership with award-winning chef Michael Mina – a friend of Schaller's (www.michaelmina.net) – and designed by Martin Brudnizki Design Studio (www.mbds.com) and offers indoor and outdoor dining from 7.00am - 10.00pm Sunday to Thursday and 7.00am - midnight on Friday and Saturday Private dining for up to 10 people is also available.

Elsewhere in the club, an organic juice bar, an outdoor terrace with fire pits and lounge furniture and a bar offering small plates complete the foodservice offering.

The club's 'Cultivate' programme includes 'thought-provoking programming' and private events featuring up-and-coming artists, tastemakers and 'cultural connoisseurs' and RSG is clearly building a vibrant community as part of its commitment to helping people 'reimagine how to live well'.

Co-working lounge and clubhouse

The top floor of Heimat offers an expansive clubhouse, library, co-working lounge and event space that's open from 10.00am to 6.00pm. Members enter through the Living Room, a welcoming space designed to feel like the home of a friend. As with all RSG Group properties, Heimat prioritises design and art with raw concrete elements and touches such as original graffiti by Mr Brainwash to combine high design with an



Cardio equipment at Heimat is by Technogym

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

The club has nine purpose-built studios for everything from reformer Pilates to TRX and Kinesis

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

200 different classes a month are included in the membership fee

The relaxation lounge at Heimat LA with complimentary towels and robes

PHOTO: RSG GROUP

The launch of Heimat takes RSG Group's portfolio of fitness and lifestyle brands to 20

industrial edge. Original murals and artwork throughout were commissioned from emerging Los Angeles artists, such as Abel Macias, Jessalyn Brooks, and Sophia Dherbecourt. The rooftop pool is open from 9.00am to 10.00pm, with F&B pool service until 6.00pm.

Growing portfolio

The launch of Heimat, takes RSG Group's portfolio of fitness and lifestyle brands to 20, including iconic names such as Gold's Gym, John Reed, and McFit. The company – one of the biggest fitness operators on the planet – has more than 6.4m customers worldwide, 41,000 employees and 1,000 locations in 48 countries.

Schaller opened his first gym in 1997, pioneering the concept of the discount, 24-hour gym in Germany with McFit and has continued to bring disruptive thinking to the fitness industry.

Memberships, by application only, cost US$350/month with a US$300 joining fee and one-year commitment. Given the pandemic has hit those on middle and low incomes the hardest, while the well-off have – in many cases – seen their wealth increase, Heimat's focus on the upper end of the market is undoubtedly timely. ●

More: www.heimat.com

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It's vital to understand outcomes, especially as the line between wellness and healthcare blurs and chances for reimbursement increase

DOUBLING DOWN ON WELLNESS

Colin Milner, CEO of the International Council on Active Aging explains the latest research into opportunities in the active-ageing sector

PHOTO: COLIN MILNER, ICAA

"The wellness market is booming," states global business consulting firm McKinsey & Company. "Consumers intend to keep spending more on products that improve their health, fitness, nutrition, appearance, sleep, and mindfulness."

So, is the fitness, health and wellness industry embracing this US$15tn opportunity and if not, what needs to change for this to happen?

To answer these questions, the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) – an industry association that has led, connected, and defined the active-ageing industry in North America since 2001 – surveyed its real estate, community, fitness, health and wellness centre members and found an industry doubling down on wellness. Four in five (81 per cent) of the 459 survey respondents said they view wellness as a 'high' or 'essential' priority for their organisation – a 55 per cent increase since 2019.

Findings from the *ICAA State of the Wellness Industry 2022* show industries such as real estate, community, fitness, health and wellness centres in transition. One example is the real estate market's senior living segment. Nearly two in three (61 per cent) of the 242 respondents from this sector feel their community will be based on a wellness lifestyle with care options by 2025. This is consistent with opinions in the *2018 ICAA Trends Survey*, when the same question was first asked.

What can the survey results teach us?

This move towards wellness may explain why lifestyle programmes top the priority list of 88 per cent of all

The ICAA has been researching the impact of active ageing interventions since 2001

PHOTO: GETTIMAGES/WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

respondents. And why most (75 per cent) of all those polled offer formal structured wellness programmes. However, wellness is more than a programme for the 53 per cent of all respondents who believe their organisation is based in a wellness culture. This positive response rate is about the same as in 2019, when that year's ICAA survey asked the same question.

The 2022 survey also shows that, compared to respondents with managerial titles (61 per cent), staff members (75 per cent) are more likely to state their organisation has a formal, structured wellness programme. These results point to a gulf between management and staff in understanding what they offer.

What will reduce or eliminate this gap? Ongoing education about the wellness programmes implemented will benefit an organisation's board of directors and senior leaders. Improved knowledge and understanding help prepare these decision-makers to address areas important to a thriving wellness programme. Unsurprisingly, the first is funding.

Commitment high, funding low

In one positive finding from ICAA's 2022 survey is that wellness budgets are mostly holding to pre-pandemic levels, however, fewer are increasing and 10 per cent are decreasing.

Investment levels are similar for organisations where leaders attach a high or essential priority to wellness.

To fulfil the wellness vision requires a commitment to funding wellness programmes, making policy changes, training staff, augmenting the built environment and reinvigorating sales and marketing.

Understanding wellness ROI

Given the significant importance and priority of wellness, an organisation's ability to understand the return on this investment becomes more important and wellness staff members must be proactive in demonstrating the value of their work.

About three in four (72 per cent) of all ICAA 2022 survey respondents count the number of participants ▸

> ***It's not clear why some operators track the number of participants, but not the results and outcomes of their participation***

who join programmes, while a smaller number record participation rates for analysis. Only 38 per cent record **outcomes** of wellness activities and programmes, such as improved health and customer satisfaction levels. It's not clear why some respondents track the number of participants but not the results (outcomes) of their participation. A concerted effort needs to be made to close this gap, allowing organisations to better understand their ROI and inform their budget.

According to the survey, people in older-adult services (50 per cent) do track outcomes, as they're needed to maintain funding and required by evidence-based programmes.

Table 1: The ICAA's Seven Pillars of Wellness

Dimension	Descriptions
Emotional	Managing and directing feelings; coping with challenges; behaving in trustworthy and respectful ways
Environmental	Integrating wellness into physical environments and nature; eco-friendly products, services, processes and designs
Intellectual, cognitive	Engaging in creative pursuits and intellectually stimulating activities; problem solving and reasoning
Physical	Choosing lifestyle habits for health and functional ability, eg, adequate nutrition, sleep and exercise; limiting stress and alcohol intake; accessing healthcare
Professional, vocational	Maintaining or improving skills, abilities and attitudes that help self or others; being productive; financial literacy
Social	Interacting with others for mutual benefit; awareness of the larger community and participation within it
Spiritual	Living with a meaning/purpose in life; exploring beliefs and values that create personal peace and understanding

Tracking outcomes in addition to participation levels is the way to discover the effectiveness of what's offered. Professionals in fitness do this when they conduct assessments, such as the Senior Fitness Test, to track participant progress over time.

All outcomes must be reported in ways that shows the value of an activity.

The outcomes from wellness participation in senior living and care show wellness as a reason for moving into a community – longer length of stay, referrals and satisfaction. These outcomes are key indicators for decision-makers and can be measured using the ICAA/ProMatura Wellness Benchmarks (www.hcmmag.com/ICAApromatura).

It's vital to understand outcomes, especially as the line between healthcare and wellness models blur and opportunities for reimbursement arise.

Back in-person

Delivering wellness programmes in person and online seems to be the future for those who responded to the survey. As of spring 2022, many programmes (69 per cent) now take place in-person, which

Wellness programmes are proven to deliver results in elderly care

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/CAVAN

suggests physical space for activities is available. About one in three survey respondents (38 per cent) delivers a limited number of programmes virtually. A small number (5 per cent) said their organisation is closed or offers no lifestyle programmes.

During the pandemic, wellness staff members rapidly turned to in-house or web-based methods to broadcast activities and fitness programming and nurture engagement. This shift required a rapid learning curve for the workforce and for older adults. Although older adults at these organisations seem comfortable with in-person programming, they're also likely to engage with virtual programming at home or at a preferred time. This hybrid format of in-person plus virtual may be key to increasing the number of older adults who can benefit from the wide variety of wellness activities and programmes.

Programme directors are planning on it and organisational plans for 2022–2023 among survey respondents are to add technology infrastructure to current buildings (62 per cent), add new or replace current fitness equipment (54 per cent), redesign/

With today's challenges in attracting and retaining staff, providing opportunities for growth is simply a smart retention strategy

- remodel current public rooms (40 per cent) and design and construct new buildings (34 per cent).

Tech supports wellness vision

As organisations embrace technology to support their wellness programmes or culture, it should come as no surprise that technology is a priority for nearly two in three organisations (62 per cent) over the next two years, according to the survey.

These organisations' planned infrastructure updates will enable greater capacity, as older buildings were not designed to accommodate the wiring and access points that current technologies require. The increase in use of web-based ordering and services, along with a switch to virtual programmes and operations have accelerated the need for technologies and reliable internet connections.

Even as technology rises to the top of organisational priorities, only one in three respondents (32 per cent) said their staff have new technology to aid them in doing their jobs. Of course, the respondent's place of work influences the resources they will use over the next two years to deliver any planned wellness programmes.

Wellness staff are expert at making the most of what's available. Still, lack of investment in resources may unintentionally limit wellness opportunities, which can lead to dissatisfied clients and residents.

The ICAA's definition of wellness

"Wellness is derived from our ability to understand, accept and act upon our identity and capacity to lead a purpose-filled and engaged life. In doing so, we can embrace our potential (physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, vocational) to pursue and optimise life's possibilities."

Poor career development

No matter how you slice and dice it, a successful wellness programme or culture relies on people, as wellness staff have day-to-day contact with members and/or residents. These professionals are hospitality ambassadors and develop programmes that keep people mentally and physically healthy.

Why is it then that only half the ICAA 2022 survey respondents (51 per cent) said that a human resources leader or supervisor had outlined a career path for the position that suggests additional skills to learn or opportunities to move into a different role?

In addition, only 25 per cent of senior living and 32 per cent of older adult centres offer a designated career path, and with today's challenges in attracting and retaining staff, providing opportunities for growth is a smart retention strategy.

The future of wellness is bright, but can be dimmed quickly if staffing issues hinder implementation strategy.

Tracking outcomes and not just participation is key to evidencing the need for investment

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RAWPIXEL.COM

Implementation is lacking

In the previous *ICAA State of Wellness* survey, conducted in 2019 – before the pandemic – respondents indicated the important priorities and services needed to develop a culture of health and wellness.

Next, they indicated how effective their organisations were being in implementing the elements of wellness culture. Their input showcased a disconnect between decision-makers and staff.

This same importance vs effectiveness evaluation once again applies in 2022, with the important areas outlined in this article serving as guideposts for improvement.

As part of an organisation's strategic plan, specific, measurable actions can raise effectiveness, however, aspiration and implementation are too often being mismatched and therein lies the wellness dichotomy reflected in ICAA's industry surveys, past and present.

The top challenges being encountered by operators when it comes to developing a wellness culture for older adults remain the same, regardless of the priority that executives give to the organisation's wellness philosophy. With all the struggles to emerge stronger from the pandemic, we still face the same challenges: a lack of funding and widespread ageist stereotypes.

Where to go from here?

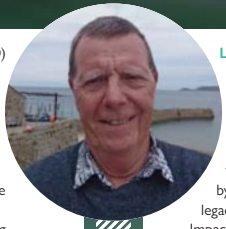
The older consumer is eager to live better longer. Wellness is the way. However, the *ICAA State of the Wellness Industry 2022* report (www.hcmmag.com/ICAAreport22) shows that aspiration and implementation have to merge to be able to benefit from this valuable opportunity.

The ICAA report is filled with additional insights, but the most important is the understanding that the priority given to wellness means nothing without the commitment to fulfilling it. ●

We have to be better able to evidence our impact and show value for money

Critical review

Martyn Allison reviews a recent National Audit Office report into grassroots participation in physical activity in the UK



The National Audit Office (NAO) has recently published its report, *Grassroots Participation in Sport and Physical Activity. A Critical Review.* It tells a story not only about the performance of the DCMS and Sport England, but also the performance of the sector as a whole over the last decade, and it doesn't make easy reading.

It confirms the Olympics didn't make a lasting impact on participation, is critical of the DCMS's ability to influence across government and evidence the impact of the sector – which left us vulnerable during the pandemic.

It exposes our inability as a sector to address inequality in activity levels between 2016 and 2019, but recognises the positive shift in thinking represented by Sport England's *Uniting the Movement* strategy, that addresses previous failures and builds on the positive results from place-based pilot schemes

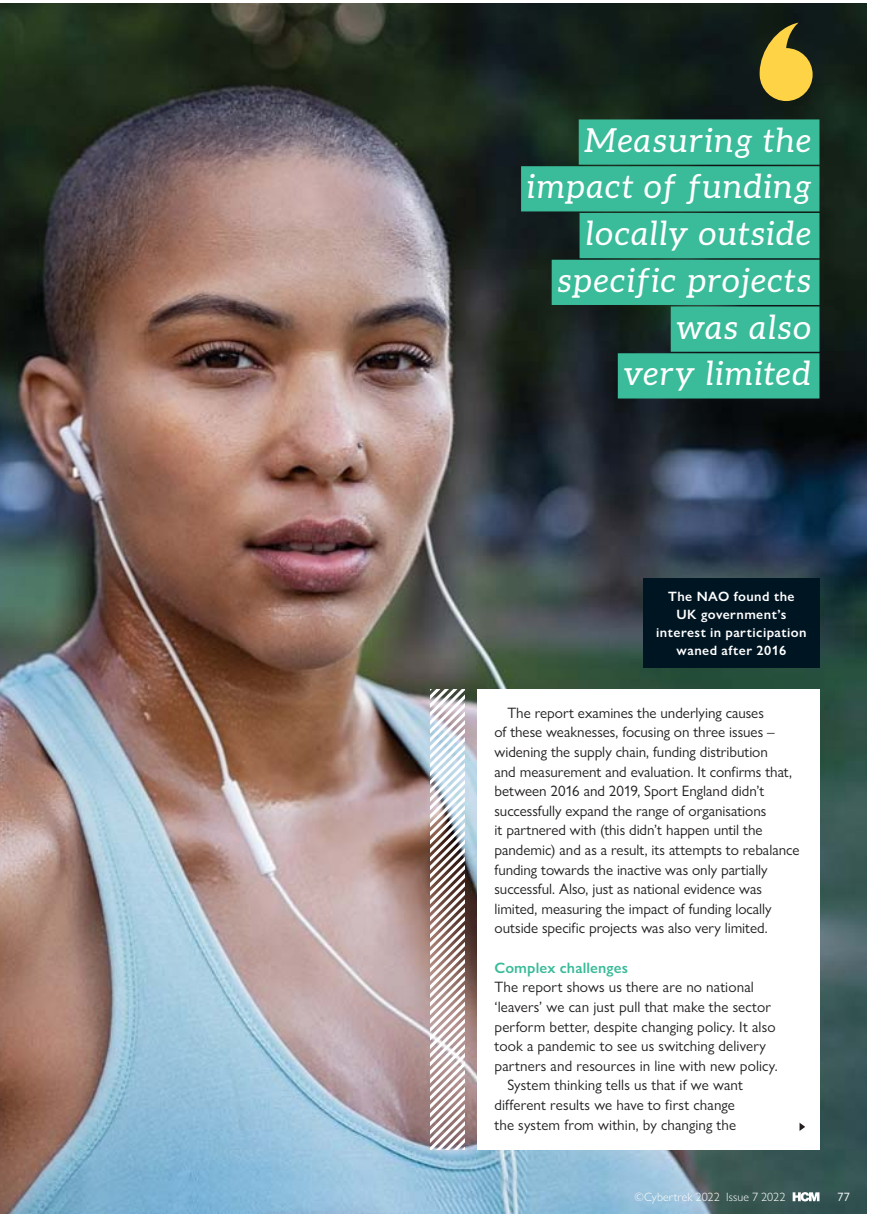
London 2012

The Olympics was supposed to inspire a nation to take up sport and some did, but the report confirms that the proportion of adults participating in sport declined in the three years following the London 2012 games and by 2016 the government's attention to legacy had reduced as its interest waned.

Impact evaluation was never completed, but research showed the Games were more likely to inspire the active than the inactive, which has meant a different legacy approach has been taken to the recent Commonwealth Games 2022.

In 2015 policy switched radically towards tackling inequality in activity levels, but the NAO report shows that increases in activity levels nationally were modest and mainly driven by including walking in the activities being measured, while progress in improving activity among the less active groups was at best mixed and evidence of impact limited.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RIZO



Measuring the impact of funding locally outside specific projects was also very limited

The NAO found the UK government's interest in participation waned after 2016

The report examines the underlying causes of these weaknesses, focusing on three issues – widening the supply chain, funding distribution and measurement and evaluation. It confirms that, between 2016 and 2019, Sport England didn't successfully expand the range of organisations it partnered with (this didn't happen until the pandemic) and as a result, its attempts to rebalance funding towards the inactive was only partially successful. Also, just as national evidence was limited, measuring the impact of funding locally outside specific projects was also very limited.

Complex challenges

The report shows us there are no national 'leavers' we can just pull that make the sector perform better, despite changing policy. It also took a pandemic to see us switching delivery partners and resources in line with new policy.

System thinking tells us that if we want different results we have to first change the system from within, by changing the ▸

culture, building its capacity and improving leadership to help it work differently.

We didn't do that at scale or at speed. We forgot that doing what you've always done gets the same results. We now have to be bolder in reforming what we do, how we work and who we work with, developing different leadership approaches and encouraging our own behaviour change rather than just seeking more money. This means radical painful change and a huge investment, not only in skills but also in leadership development.

Uniting the Movement embraces much of this learning and suggests taking a more localised and collaborative approach. Local delivery pilots have shown that different ways of working can generate better outcomes for local communities by changing culture, showing greater empathy for those most inactive and working collaboratively with others to change how the system works.

A key problem remains in the form of our continued inability to measure and evidence the progress we're making. The sector's historic dislike

Different ways of working can generate better outcomes for local communities

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ONEINCHPUNCH

If we only look to national government to advocate our value, we'll have to come to terms with more national measurement of our progress

of measurement and top-down accountability has always hindered our ability to make our case, but we now face a new fundamental dilemma.

If we only look up to national government to advocate our value and provide more direct funding, we'll have to come to terms with more national measurement of our progress and impact. But if we want to focus on local relationships at a place-level in the context of Integrated Care Systems, then any measurement and evidence will need to be reflective of local need and priorities, and accountability will depend more on trust than measured performance.

This may be inconsistent with painting a national performance picture – a tension DCMS and Sport England are struggling with.

Fundamental challenge

The report shines a huge light on our lack of leadership and clout within the DCMS and government. Opportunities were missed post-Olympics to solidify shared agendas and build new relationships across government, which damaged our position in the pandemic and this continues today. The report suggests that clearer leadership and better collaboration across government is now critical. Joined-up policy is as important as joined-up delivery, but we have to be better able to evidence our impact and show value for money.

The sector must decide which way to go. Do we look up to a stronger relationship with central government with more top-down funding and national measurement and accountability, or do we want to be part of local system change? Some will say we can do both, but I think this report shows us that this may be difficult to achieve. ●

Read more at: www.hcmmag.com/NAO22

Building skills

Tom Walker investigates how £2.2bn worth of London 2012 legacy investment has failed to empower teachers

The London 2012 Olympic legacy investment designed to improve physical education (PE) at primary schools has failed, according to a study.

Academics at the University of Winchester looked into the effects of £2.2bn worth of investment in primary PE since 2012. It showed that, despite the substantial investment, there had been no recognisable improvement in the standard of PE teaching at primary school level.

The study was conducted by Dr Vicky Randall, senior fellow in the Institute of Education at the University of Winchester, and Gerald Griggs, dean and head of academics, University Campus of Football Business (Etihad Campus).It looked into the effects of the £2.2bn investment, known as the Primary PE and School Sport Premium (or 'Premium').

Legacy hopes

Report co-author Randall says: "The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London were billed as the 'Legacy Games'.

"The Capital was poised to host a global event that, through the power of sport, promised to have a major impact on health, education and culture, as well as boosting the economy through ambitious infrastructure projects.

She continues: "Physical education (PE) in primary schools in England was to be a significant benefactor, with the aim of inspiring the youngest school-aged children.

"Renewed investment in PE would be crucial when it came to delivering much of the Games' legacy."

'Failed to deliver'

"But despite a direct investment of more than £2.2bn into primary PE since 2012 – making it the highest-funded subject at primary age – we have identified a clear failure of this Olympic investment to deliver on one of its stated aims of increasing the 'confidence, knowledge and skills of all [primary] staff in teaching PE and sport'.

"We found there is little evidence of any legacy of improved PE teaching within England's primary school sector.

"Final-year primary education trainees who took part in our latest research told us it was difficult for them to even observe a primary PE lesson as part of their teacher-training. For most, teaching a PE lesson was not an option," says Randall.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANDRESHKOVA NASTYA

There was little evidence of any legacy of improved PE teaching in England's primary school sector

The £2.2bn invested since 2012 has largely been spent on private contractors, leaving the sector vulnerable to cuts

Lack of PE teacher skills

She adds: "The London Olympics windfall has instead seen staff teachers sidelined in favour of an army of outsourced providers, looking for business in a well-funded marketplace for the best part of a decade.

"Many schools say that they are happy to pay for this extra expertise, and are happy with the work the private sports coaches do. However, there has been a striking lack of auditing of how this taxpayers' money has been spent.

"With the government still in discussions about the future of the Premium beyond the current academic year, and amid growing budgetary pressures, the failure to build primary PE teachers' skills could lead to a rapid erosion of provision should the funding be cut."

Read a full report on the University of Winchester research at www.hcmmag.com/2012 ●

GROWING STRONGER

Creators of strength-training kit have their finger on the pulse when it comes to delivering on consumer engagement. Frances Marcellin asks them to highlight emerging trends

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ONEINCHPUNCH

Today's younger gym members are a fitter generation

PHOTO: BRAWN POWER

PHOTO: BRAWN POWER

Everyone's fitness journey is personal, but outside of PT, there's very little currently in the gym that's member-specific

People want an experience and community connection

Sohail Rashid
Brawn Power

There's a growing demand for experiences and over the last few years we've seen the gamification of many forms of cardio training – think Zwift, Myzone and Strava.

People don't want to just be a number, they want it to be personalised and meaningful – in fact, they're demanding it and are prepared to pay for it.

Everyone's fitness journey is personal, but outside of personal training, there's very little currently in the gym that's member-specific.

That's why we're going to see more personalisation in all areas of the gym, as well as an accelerated period of digital transformation focused on making the gym a richer experience, translating into a deeper and stronger connection between the gym and its members.

Connection is also of growing importance. Younger gym members frequently train together in small groups and the support they give each other – and improved awareness of what makes for a healthy lifestyle – means that a lot of young adults (Gen Z) are in far better shape than previous generations.

Operators can help members build these connections with each other, regardless of their age or background. Gym floor challenges and community events give members a shared focus. Put the work into building your gym's community and the results will speak for themselves.

PHOTO: NEXA SMARTTONE

Equipment offers control of the eccentric phase

Balance is key – strength training is being combined with other disciplines

Juan Pedro Alonso
Nexa Smarttone

PHOTO: NEXA SMARTTONE

Strength training placed fourth in ACSM's 2022 ranking of fitness trends (www.fittechglobal.com/ACSM22) behind wearables and home-training and outdoor exercise.

In terms of trends, the focus on hypertrophy is giving way to a more balanced training mix of strength, flexibility and agility and we've developed a variety of strength equipment, delivering resistance by motor and digital control, to create sophisticated training systems.

Our equipment offers control of the eccentric phase of any exercise, delivering different weight loads between concentric and eccentric phases of movements. All include a smart force system that enables us to accurately read the level of force required and automatically adapt it to achieve maximum muscle performance. Our range of 11 machines enable operators to extend the membership lifetime of customers, thanks to a physical evaluation, in-house PT and a targeted CRM.

The focus on hypertrophy is giving way to a balanced training mix of strength, flexibility and agility

Growing interest is being driven by the airtime strength training gets on social media and in new research

PHOTO: ELEIKO

There's demand for dedicated areas and outdoor spaces

Dale Beech
Eleiko

We're seeing a clear uptake in two main areas – an increase in the size of strength training areas and also the addition of outdoor spaces.

Growing interest in strength training is being driven by several factors, including the airtime it gets on social media and new science-backed research into the benefits. We see this as positive for new clubs and a challenge for established operators.

For new clubs, the cost is significantly less per square metre than if the space is used for cardio equipment. For established clubs, it means a reconfiguration of floorplans and there can be challenges accommodating more strength equipment.

For this reason we've developed a strength station which is designed to integrate cables, squat areas and storage into a very small footprint.

The outdoor movement began during lockdown and there are plenty of surveys to suggest people enjoy training outdoors when they can.

PHOTO: ELEIKO

Strength stations with small footprints can be retrofitted

PHOTO: KEISER

Connected experiences and gamification are attracting new audiences to strength training

Connected strength experiences provide opportunities for operators to improve customer engagement

Gamification will attract new users to strength training

Paul Dudley
Keiser UK

PHOTO: KEISER

Fitness technology continues to dominate as the fastest growing industry trend, and we believe there will be an ever-increasing demand for connected and enjoyable strength training experiences as we go into 2023.

There will always be a place for barbells and dumbbells, but we expect advances in technology to open strength training up to a wider population of people who have traditionally shied away from weight training.

Connected strength experiences provide opportunities for operators to improve customer engagement and retention rates, and by offering a simple way to track progress, gyms will be able to deliver tangible results for members using reliable data for performance tracking and increasing motivation.

Gyms are already starting to incorporate this tech into their strength training offering in several ways – gamifying the experience with colours, bars and visuals, working towards a collective 'total weight lifted' in a session combined and rewarding members for personal bests.

To support our operator partners in exploiting this trend, we've created a strength circuit that utilises third party applications to connect customer sessions, which creates an enjoyable strength circuit session, complete with metrics and in-built progression.

Tech is driving a more diverse population into free weight areas

Integrating tech helps members stay engaged

PHOTO: CORE HEALTH & FITNESS

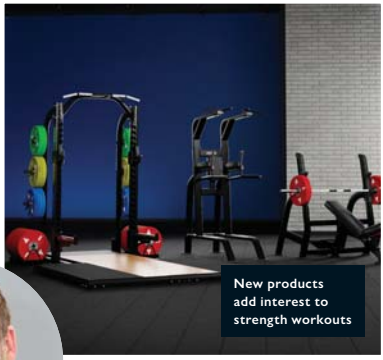
The growth of 'fitness for function' and fit tech are transforming the gym floor

Jon Thiel
Core Health & Fitness

We're seeing the emergence of two trends: technology in fitness and fitness for function.

Tech has transformed the flow of the gym, driving a more diverse population into free weight areas for a greater proportion of their workout. In response, operators are opening up their floor plans and allowing for turf, rigs, racks and platforms, accompanied by accessories such as ropes, suspension, weights, plates, kettlebells and balls.

Many operators are also learning that this type of movement requires two additional actions – the introduction of more noise abatement and changes to programming.



New products add interest to strength workouts

PHOTO: CORE HEALTH & FITNESS

We're offering solutions to address all these issues via everything from the Nautilus SVA platform to Throwdown rigs, as well as technology to bring it all together to deliver a positive experience for customers.

Whether your facility is engaging with members through their own app, or utilising the many tools available today, such as Wexer, for content delivery, or Sony Advagym, for holistic communication throughout the club, it's clear that technology is here to stay. ●

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Live insights

Banntyne is working with Myzone to enhance the customer journey, starting with the onboarding stage

Myzone and Bannatyne have collaborated on a new member journey

PHOTO: SAFE MYZONE

The Bannatyne Group, through a close partnership with Myzone, is effectively integrating its software and products across its full member journey, with the purpose of optimising member engagement and retention.

"Myzone provides members with live insights into what their body is doing," says Oliver Cox, head of fitness programming. "This means members never feel lost in the gym, they know exactly what they're doing and feel great doing it."

A smarter pathway

Recognising the need to engage members from the offset, Bannatyne has focused on its Smart Path – an exceptional new member pathway. Fundamental to this is the MZ-Fitness Test, a 12-minute cardiovascular test based on heart rate recovery.

PHOTO: BANNATYNE

Myzone integrates perfectly with our club systems, helping create an incredible member experience

Oliver Cox, Bannatyne

"We've had a great member response to the test; it turns a tedious few minutes on an exercise machine into an engaging challenge for them," Cox says. "It also greatly benefits the coaches, as it provides them with a robust fitness assessment for member programming."

Incorporating partner technologies into member journeys isn't just beneficial for member engagement, either, as Cox explains: "To reap the benefits of partner technologies, we realised we needed to integrate them into daily processes, such as member onboarding, to ensure staff retained knowledge but also to make the journey consistent for all new members."

Advancing the experience

"Myzone integrates perfectly with our club systems, helping to create an incredible member experience," says Oliver. Included in this is their B.Matched class, where members cycle within prescribed heart rate zones with an appropriately matched soundtrack. As members are ranked on their zone-match adherence, you not only see heightened motivation, but also some fun and friendly competitiveness.

It doesn't end at the club walls, though. The Bannatyne team also recognise the benefits of offering a remote class solution, using the MZ-Remote software, even hoping to hit the record for most MZ-Remote participants at one time.

Not just for members

And it's not just the members who get involved with Myzone. Cox says: "Staff need to understand what our members understand and what better way to do this than a full staff challenge – The Bannatyne Cup – which takes place across all eight Bannatyne regions.

"To impact behaviour change, there's nothing more effective than operators embracing their own activity goals and technology tools, and Bannatyne is showing the way." ●

● **www.myzone.org**

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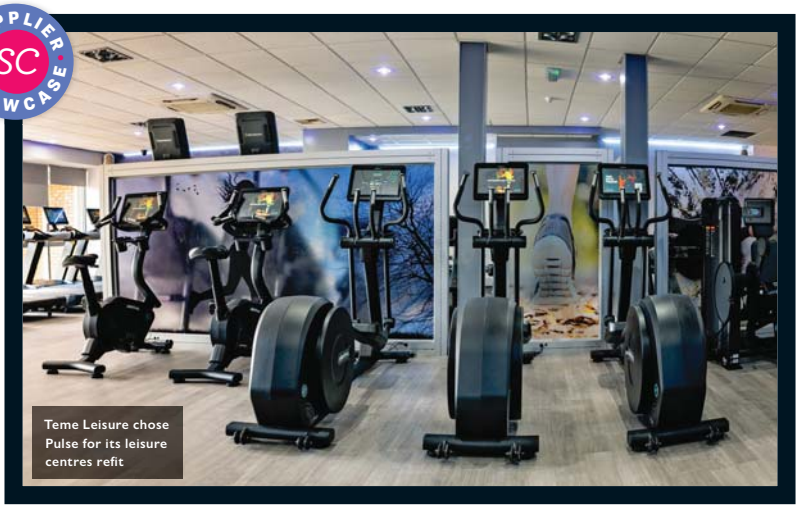

Teme Leisure chose Pulse for its leisure centres refit

ALL PHOTOS: TEME LEISURE

Getting a revamp

Pulse Fitness is supporting community activity with the Teme Leisure partnership

We were thoroughly impressed by the high-quality and durable equipment from Pulse Fitness

Lee Hassan, Teme Leisure

Earlier this year, Pulse Fitness began working with Teme Leisure to re-equip and redesign its South Shropshire and Cleobury leisure centres. The much-welcomed £400k renovation replaced decade-old facilities and provided members with a refreshed, motivating space in which to workout.

Community focus

The brief was firmly focused on creating a welcoming space for all members of the community to enjoy, reflecting Teme Leisure's sustained commitment to supporting active, healthy lifestyles in the local area.

Pulse's 40 years of industry expertise, teamed with its market-leading, high-quality equipment, ensured the brief was delivered to a high standard and by 27 May, both the South Shropshire and Cleobury Teme Leisure sites were reopened to the public with upgraded facilities and interiors.

Transformation

Members of both sites are now able to enjoy new and advanced gym equipment from Pulse's range of Premium Cardio and Strength lines, as well as a variety of strength and conditioning, free weights and functional training kit.

Alongside the new equipment, customers at both Teme Leisure centres can benefit from the introduction of Trakk, the fitness content and tracking app from Pulse. Trakk allows members to create their own workouts, tap into readymade training plans and allow PTs to digitally connect with members.

While members can log and monitor their personal fitness journeys, Teme Leisure staff can set personalised plans and programmes for their clients, as well as share automated messages with the member base.

Lee Hassan, GM at Teme Leisure said: "We selected Pulse Fitness to re-equip our fitness facilities, as we were impressed by the high quality, durable equipment and Trakk, its connected eco-system.

"Now many members are in a flexible routine, we're pleased to offer a connected platform that enables them to monitor their fitness both in and outside the gym, while remaining connected to our trainers." ●

● **www.pulsefitness.com**

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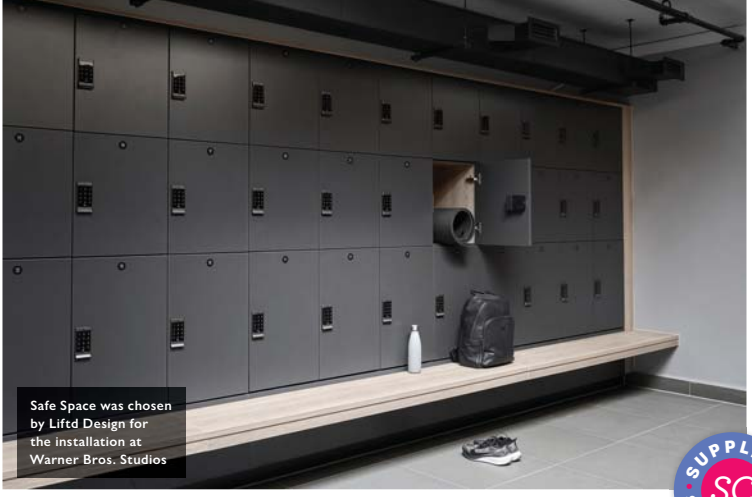

PHOTO: LIFTD DESIGN

Safe Space was chosen by Liftd Design for the installation at Warner Bros. Studios

SUPPLIER SHOWCASE SC

Star treatment

Liftd Design has created a new gym for Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, the home of Harry Potter

When interior design house, Liftd Design, was appointed as the principle contractor for a new, state-of-the-art gym at Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, the team chose suppliers it knew could deliver against the premium specification sought by the client.

Following a number of recommendations, Liftd Design engaged Safe Space Lockers to install the premium changing facilities at Zone 10, the film studios' on-site fitness and wellbeing facility.

Premium feel

The 7,000sq ft (650sq m) space comprises a multipurpose gym floor area, mezzanine studio, private gym and treatment room, as well as large changing facilities. "The whole facility had to feel premium and the quality of the changing room space was central to achieving that outcome," says James Potter, founder of Liftd Design.

PHOTO: LIFTD

Our experience with Safe Space has been nothing but positive

James Potter, Liftd

With 350,000sq ft of sound stages, a 100-acre back lot, extensive workshops and office space, Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden has hosted a wide range of world-class productions since opening in 2012.

"It's an extremely busy site that accommodates many people, from Warner Bros. staff to production crews, casts, and contractors and so the gym and changing facilities had to cater for a wide range of users, while also providing somewhere to escape the day-to-day and benefit from a serene, tranquil space," explains Potter.

Locker systems

The changing rooms were designed in neutral tones, with soft lighting and backlit mirrors. Leather bench seating was installed, and the lockers were equipped with an electronic locking system accessed via an app.

"Projects like this are complex and having good suppliers you can trust and know will always be at the end of the phone makes a big difference. Our experience with Safe Space has been nothing but positive," says Potter.

"People buy people; of course, the product needs to be right, the install needs to go well and the client needs to be happy, but a great customer experience where you can build a rapport and you feel valued and supported is something we look for in all our suppliers, and we've found that with the team at Safe Space." ●

● **www.safespacelockers.co.uk**

Product innovation

Frances Marcellin rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

"Brawn is connecting the lifting community," says Sohail Rashid

Brawn has launched In Gym, a connected strength-training visual display solution for the lifting community. The technology was recently revealed to the public at the Ministry of Sound, in London, when lifters gathered with the goal of reaching a collective 350,000kg.

In Gym has been designed to empower lifters by providing AI-driven lifting challenges, tracking performance and goals. Its interactive display can connect with other lifting communities using In Gym up and down the country and can also shared on social media.

On-screen results come from the data that gym members enter during their workouts, which allow users to track and view their results in real-time. Shared data creates a network of lifters which facilitates community competition and leaderboard rankings that drive motivation and retention.

"Brawn is leading the industry into digitised strength training and connecting the lifting community," said Sohail Rashid, founder and CEO. "We believe this places Brawn in an area where no other product in the fitness market has gone before."

The product is currently being rolled out across 50 health clubs.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Brawn

PHOTO: BRAWN

Brawn is leading the industry into digitised strength training
Sohail Rashid

PHOTO: BRAWN/MINISTRY OF SOUND

Brawn launches at the Ministry of Sound in London

"I wanted to create a stand-up stretch solution," says Sonja Laskowsi

Stretch fitness brand Elasko has collaborated with wooden equipment manufacturers Nohrd to create a new mobile stretch and posture system.

PHOTO: THE STRETCH

People struggle with posture and range of movement
Sonja Laskowski

The product has been designed by Elasko's co-founder and stretch fitness professional, Sonja Laskowsi. With a background in gymnastics and ballet, Laskowski saw the need for anchor points for support and assistance during stretch and posture moves. Elasko's new stretch system is now in full production, with global distribution available from the Nohrd hub in Germany.

"I see how people struggle with posture, range of movement and aches and pains, which all affect mental health and confidence, especially as we age," said Laskowski. "I wanted to create a stand-up stretch solution, but also an integrated, comfortable mat for those extra relaxing, mindful movements."

The system comes in six wood types and there's a custom-designed app which supports sessions on the equipment. Elasko also now has an academy that enables fitness pros to be coached on the stretch programme.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Elasko

PHOTO: ELASKO/NOHRD

Elasko's Laskowski has a ballet background

"Our vision is to create the world's most desirable shower," says Paul Ravnbo-West

Kelda Showers is launching the air-powered BubbleSpa shower. The product is the culmination of 10 years' research and development into air-powered technology, drawn from aerospace and automotive engineering.

The result is an overhead stream of bubble-sized water droplets which mimic the sensation of fingertips tapping the skin in Swedish massage.

Tapping therapy has many health benefits and can be used as an alternative to acupressure treatments, aiding circulation, reducing stress and strengthening the immune system.

PHOTO: KELDA

Bubble Spa showers feature intelligent microprocessors
Paul Ravnbo-West

"The BubbleSpa is a manifestation of our vision to create the world's most desirable shower," said Kelda's Paul Ravnbo-West.

PHOTO: KELDA

● **The BubbleSpa shower feels like a massage and saves energy**

"Each shower features a digital fan and intelligent microprocessor that controls the delivery of water and air to 16 precision-engineered nozzles."

The shower lights up each bubble with an LED light, with these making a soft popping sound when they burst. This air-powered technology can also decrease water consumption, hot water usage and lower energy demand to create lower running costs and carbon emissions for operators.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS

Speede Fitness

"We invested in 3D printers to meet the demand for gym equipment parts," says Michael Ellis

Service Sport has introduced a range of 3D printers that can supply health clubs and fitness centres with gym equipment parts.

With supply chain delays causing problems for operators in the fitness industry, Service Sport's 3D printing solution can reduce turnaround time for parts which can now be designed and printed in hours.

"Service Sport UK has invested in 3D printers to meet the demand for gym equipment parts," said Michael Ellis, commercial director. "We understand the frustration that can arise as a result of a breakdown in the supply chain.

"3D printing allows Service Sport UK to reduce those lead times and hold stock of a specific range of gym equipment parts without the need to rely on the original manufacturer."

PHOTO: SERVICE SPORT

3D printing allows us to reduce lead times and hold stock of specific items
Michael Ellis

Printable parts include items such as guide rod inserts, large belt pulleys, battery covers, treadmill joystick levers and J hooks. The parts are tested to ensure they perform to the same standard as the OEM (original equipment manufacturer) equivalent.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Service Sport

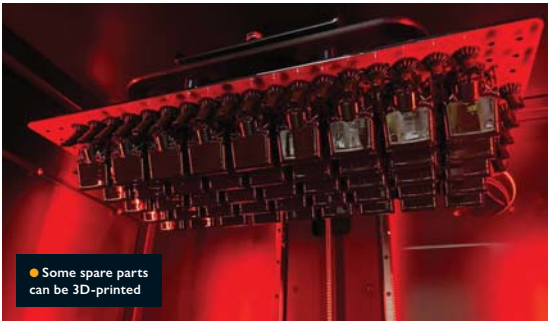

PHOTO: SERVICE SPORT

● **Some spare parts can be 3D-printed**

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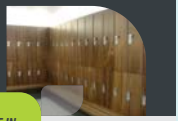

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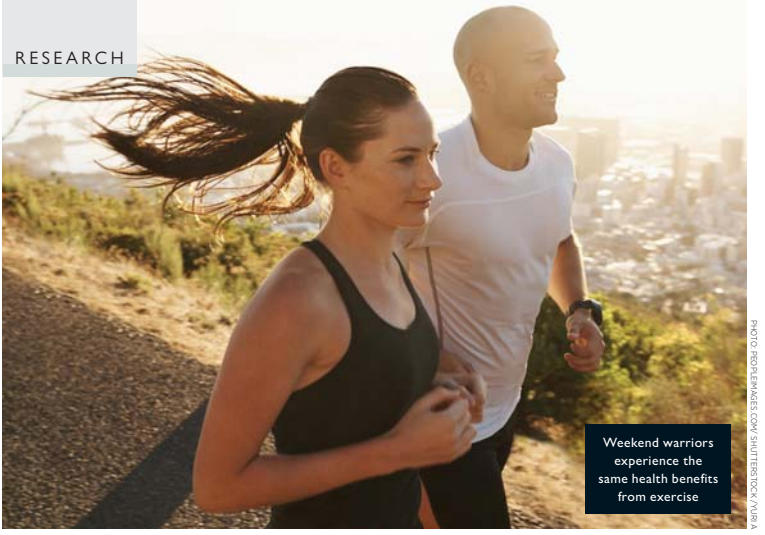

Weekend warriors experience the same health benefits from exercise

PHOTO: PEOPLEIMAGES.COM/SHUTTERSTOCK/VURIA

Triumph of the weekend warrior

Doing the recommended amount of exercise during weekends is just as beneficial as spreading physical activity out across the week, a new study has found

An international team of researchers tracked 350,000 US adults over a period of 10 years to see how the health of "weekend warriors" – people who are highly physically active during weekends – compared with those who are active throughout the week.

The study suggested that the type and total amount of exercise were more important than the number of exercise sessions.

The key finding was that adults who perform 150 minutes or more of moderate physical activity (or 75 minutes of vigorous activity) per week experience similar health benefits whether the sessions are spread throughout the week or concentrated over a weekend.

Large study linked to Death Index

Led by a team of international researchers and published in the *JAMA Internal Medicine* journal, the cohort study included 350,978 adults who self-reported physical activity to the *US National Health Interview Survey* from 1997 to 2013. Results were linked to the 2015 National Death Index.

"The findings of this large study suggest that individuals who engage in active patterns of physical activity, whether weekend warrior or regularly active, experience lower all-cause and cause-specific mortality rates than inactive individuals," said lead researcher, Mauricio dos Santos, an exercise physiology researcher at the Federal University of São Paulo in Brazil.

> *Individuals who engage in the recommended levels of physical activity can experience the same benefit whether the sessions are performed throughout the week or concentrated into fewer days*

"Significant differences were not observed for all-cause or cause-specific mortality between weekend warriors and regularly active participants after accounting for total amount of Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA) – a standard measure of physical activity," he said.

"Therefore, individuals who engage in the recommended levels of physical activity can experience the same benefit whether the sessions are performed throughout the week or concentrated into fewer days."

● Read the report, *Association of the weekend warrior and other leisure-time physical activity patterns with all-cause and cause-specific mortality* at www.hcmmag.com/weekendwarrior

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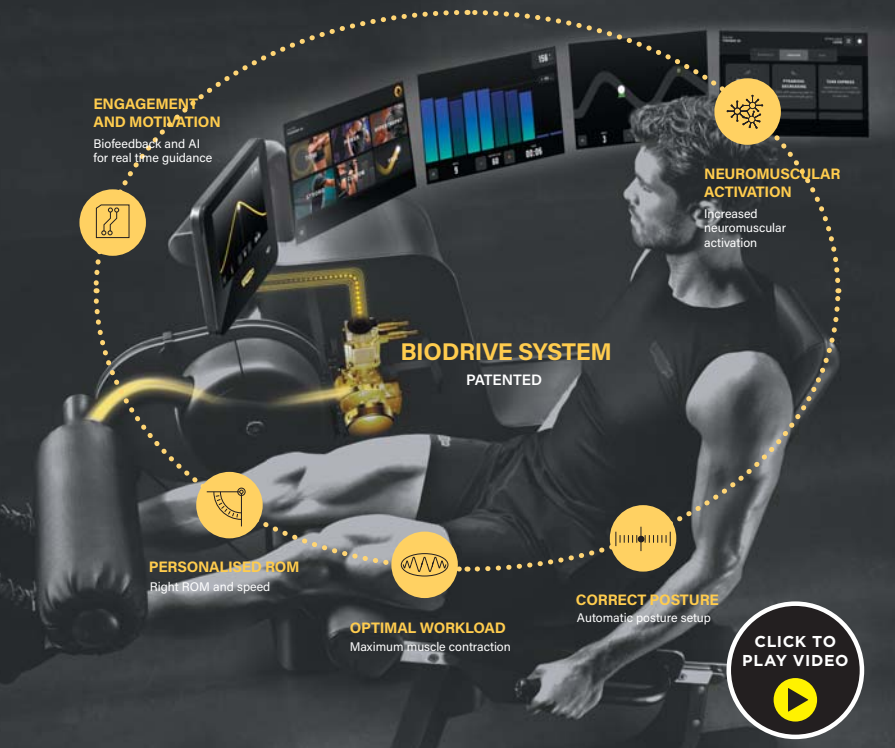

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