

# health club management

APRIL 2013 NO 201

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TECHNOLOGY EDITION

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## CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS

IS THERE A  
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INTERVIEW

## DENNIS PELLIKAAN

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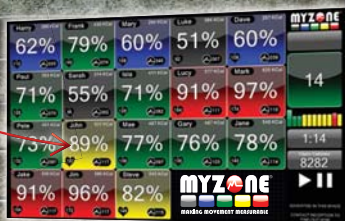
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## Strength in numbers



What might the gym of the future look like? Are we reaching a point where group exercise – far from being a mere complementary offering sitting alongside the gym in a full-service club – has actually become a strong proposition in its own right? And if so, what models might operators consider to ensure they tap into this?

There's certainly a lot of buzz around group exercise these days, from virtual classes and gym floor team training to standalone 'microgyms' (see p47, and *HCM* May 12, p3 and p28) – not forgetting the ongoing enthusiasm for Zumba, which won the John McCarthy Industry Visionary Award at IHRSA this year (see p22). When you combine all that with the potential of group exercise to boost both retention and revenues, now certainly seems to be the time for all operators – from full-service to low-cost – to be reviewing their offering in this area. So what are the options, and how can operators implement these cost-effectively?

Team training programmes are one possibility for existing clubs, with clear opportunities to drive

secondary spend. "Gyms must charge for team training," says Phillip Mills of Les Mills International, whose GRIT Series of HIT programming sits firmly within this category. "But it needs a separate studio, and you can't call the sessions 'classes' – millennials see these as things their parents did."

Meanwhile, virtual classes offer a cost-effective way of developing a group exercise offering, whether to give more choice during off-peak periods, to enhance live classes, or to make up the entirety of a studio timetable in clubs where the model doesn't allow for a live offering. Operators already using a virtual

All the evidence suggests that, provided the right model is selected, gyms could benefit in terms of both revenue and retention from giving their group exercise offering a bit of TLC

system even credit the all-day availability of group exercise with a rise in membership sales (see p58).

But for would-be operators starting from scratch, the standalone model is also worthy of consideration. Much has been said about the microgym, but we're also witnessing a new take on group exercise-only venues: less the specialist, one-activity venue, more a standalone version of the diverse class offering found in full-service clubs. With the news that Fitness First Middle East was launching such a studio, we recently asked if this approach represented the future of fitness (see *HCM* Feb 13, p28). The founders of 30-Minute Fitness certainly think so: this new franchise, which launches in the UK this month, focuses exclusively on group exercise, with franchisees able to choose from a portfolio of modules, from cycling to TRX to circuits.

And the numbers stack up for the standalone model, with minimal investment in kit, the option to charge a premium and, anecdotally at least, more loyal customers than gym-only members – anecdotes that look set to be given the weight of fact later this year in new research from Melvyn Hillsdon and TRP.

But however operators choose to enhance their group exercise offering, there's an important consideration for all UK gyms: the change to the PPL licence that takes effect on 1 May, and that places responsibility for music usage in the hands of the operator (see *HCM* Feb 13, p24). Tariffs are also rising, and clubs hoping to boost their class timetable will need to factor this into their budgeting.

Nevertheless all the evidence suggests that, provided the right model is selected, gyms could benefit in terms of both revenue and retention from giving their group exercise offering a bit of TLC.

**Kate Cracknell, Editor** – [katecracknell@leisuremedia.com](mailto:katecracknell@leisuremedia.com) / twitter: @HealthClubKate

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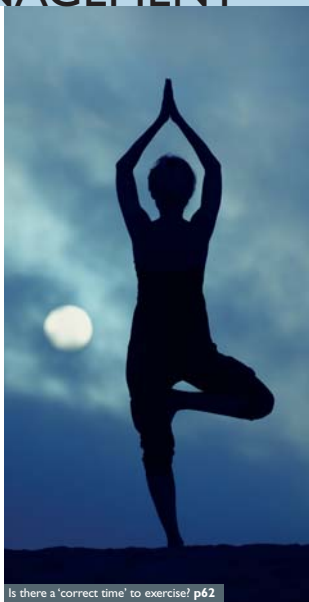
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## WRITE TO REPLY

Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry?  
If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)



**Clubs should not over-rely on social media to boost member retention**

### Retention still not given the necessary attention by gyms

Paul Bedford's letter last month hit the nail on the head (see *HCM* March 13, p6): there's a general lack of robust or clean member data in the industry, which can make retention analysis very difficult.

Two key factors for reduced focus on retention are: the financial downturn, which increases pressure on sales; and new technology, such as social media, which is seen by some as the silver bullet for member engagement.

The recession continues and shows no sign of abating, yet more new clubs are opening. We will only increase market penetration significantly beyond 12 per cent if we engage and retain members. Recruiting members will get more expensive, so focus and investment must shift to a balance between sales and retention.

Social media can be a good member engagement tool, but you need to invest a lot to get reasonable retention returns. Generally speaking, social media communicates with members who are already engaged – the equivalent of interacting with regular members who will never leave. Much greater effects can be gained from a decent induction, regular interactions in the club thereafter, and then messages to members who have missed a few weeks.

Budget clubs are doing wonders with data: collecting, monitoring and using rich member information to grow their businesses. Check your data accuracy, as Paul says, and set and monitor retention targets as you do for sales.

**Guy Griffiths**  
Director, GGFit

### We need well-rounded staff working in our gyms

I was interested to read last month's feature on whether we need staff with fitness know-how on the gym floor (see *HCM* March 13, p28).

Operator demand for instructors with the ability to communicate and engage effectively with gym members is growing – a good thing, as I believe such skills have been undervalued in the past. However, there's a balance to be struck: while we don't want instructors who drone on ad infinitum about the intricacies of performing a particular exercise, neither do we want instructors who are more akin to welcoming hosts than technically competent professionals.

The fitness sector has reached a tipping point, with the medical fraternity more prepared than ever to enter into a dialogue around preventative healthcare. This is a massive opportunity to broaden our appeal and establish a professional identity within the wider healthcare arena. But to do this, we must at all times work to enhance the professional credibility of the job roles within our industry. This will not be done by over-egging the importance of one aspect of the role of an instructor over another – we need well-rounded professionals who can positively impact on all aspects of a client's physical and psychological wellbeing.

**Julian Berriman**  
R&D director, Premier Training



**Gym staff: Soft skills cannot be a substitute for technical knowledge**

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## Gymtopia looking for 'social good' case studies

Gymtopia – a new digital platform – is looking for fresh case studies to highlight the wider social good undertaken by the world's health clubs.

It already includes a number of inspiring stories, such as The Gym Group raising approximately £50,000 for a range of charities after introducing a simple request for a one-off donation into its membership sign-up process. The aim of the website is to encourage other operators to follow suit and put social good at the heart of their business.

The initiative is operated by Oxygen Consulting. To get involved, contact Ray Algar at [ray@oxygen-consulting.co.uk](mailto:ray@oxygen-consulting.co.uk)



The Gym Group chief executive John Treharne

## The Gym Group among the best companies to work for

Budget gym operator The Gym Group has achieved 15th place in the prestigious *'The Sunday Times 100 Best Small Companies to Work For'* list.

Considered the most extensive research into employee engagement, the survey uses a wide range of criteria to measure each of the 896 companies on issues affecting employees in the UK today.

John Treharne, The Gym Group CEO, says: "We work tirelessly to ensure that we are a satisfying and rewarding place to work." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N2Yz5>

## New exercise studio for Downs Leisure Centre

Leisure trust Wave Leisure has unveiled a new £140,000 exercise studio at the Downs Leisure Centre in Seaford, Sussex.

Wave Leisure has invested £90,000 in the new facility, with a further £50,000 being provided by Sport England's Inspired Facilities Fund.

As a result, the centre now offers increased space within the existing classes, while Wave Leisure has also introduced indoor cycling classes to add to the growing programme of activities. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H1K2B>

## ukactive gets Sport England grant

A ukactive-led partnership - involving NHS Bedfordshire, teamBEDS&LUTON and local authorities - has been selected as one of 14 pilot projects to receive support from a £5.8m Sport England fund designed to support inactive people to get more active.

The partnership will see a motivational interviewing programme entitled Let's Get Moving being introduced to Bedfordshire. Aimed at getting the most inactive members of local communities more active, the initiative includes the target of placing an exercise professional in each GP surgery.

David Stalker, CEO of ukactive, says: "At ukactive, we have a strong belief that putting an exercise professional into every GP surgery can have a dramatic impact on the health of the nation - particularly so when armed with motivational interviewing techniques, the



The pilot will target the community's most inactive members

ability to signpost into welcoming sports and activity sessions, and direct access to patients as part of the practice team.

"With local authorities now taking on responsibility for public health, it's vital that we're able to work in partnerships to deliver the outcomes needed by commissioners, so as to be worthy of investment from the £5.45bn ringfenced public health budget."

## Women's physical activity levels on the up

The number of women participating in physical activity has increased by more than one million since 2005, according to the latest Taking Part survey. Released by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the survey examines participation in sport, heritage and the arts in England.

The latest report presents figures for the period January to December 2012 - which the report notes includes the period when the UK hosted the Olympics and Paralympics.

Since 2010, an additional 1.2 million people had participated in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week - including 700,000 women. The report also surveyed respondents' attitudes to London 2012, with



The number of women who are regularly active has risen steadily

69 per cent supportive of the Games and 16 per cent saying the UK winning the bid had motivated them to become more involved in sport. The survey has run since 2005 and involves face-to-face interviews and involved a sample size of 9,427 for the latest period.

## US-based Snap Fitness expands number of UK gyms

Twenty-four hour gym franchise Snap Fitness has lodged an application with Harborough District Council to open a gym in the town centre, as it expands its franchise in the UK.

The US-based company, founded in 2003, established its first UK gym in Sittingbourne

last June, followed by a second facility in Milton Keynes the following month.

Further locations are planned for London, Leicester, Swanley, Corby and Edgware. Snap Fitness has 2,200 locations worldwide. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=pom4S>

## Gym chains agree to OFT ruling

Three health club operators have agreed to change their contract terms following an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) which deemed some of the practices used by the gym groups 'unfair'.

Bannatyne Fitness, David Lloyd Leisure and Fitness First have now agreed to change their contract terms to make them more transparent and give members better cancellation rights. Among the changes to have been stipulated by the OFT are:

- Extended rights for members to cancel their contracts early should their circumstances change in a way that makes attendance at the gym difficult or unaffordable – for example, if they lose their jobs or suffer an injury.

- A commitment not to describe membership as being of a fixed duration, if the contract automatically continues on a rolling basis after the initial membership period has expired.

- Greater transparency about key membership features, including initial membership periods and cancellation rights, and for these to be provided upfront in the sales process.



Members' rights: Contracts will be more transparent

Cavendish Elithorn, senior director at the OFT, said he welcomed the changes, but that work still needed to be done within the fitness sector. "We're continuing our investigation into some other companies in the sector and will provide an update in the coming weeks," he said. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D9f8D>

## UK's public health below EU neighbours

Premature mortality in the UK is "persistently and significantly" below the mean of other European Union countries, according to analysis of British health data published this month.

The results have been published in medical journal *The Lancet* and compare the UK with the original 15 members of the European Union, Australia, Canada, Norway and the US.

The study found that the UK's ranking against other nations for mortality among those aged 20–54 years has "worsened substantially" over the past two decades and compared particularly poorly for breast cancer, ischaemic heart disease, respiratory infections, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and tobacco-related illness.

In response to the article, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has vowed to tackle the "big five causes of death" – cancer, heart, stroke, respiratory and liver disease. "Despite real



Jeremy Hunt vowed to tackle 'big five causes of death'

progress in cutting deaths, we remain a poor relative to our global cousins on many measures of health – something I want to change," he said. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P2f7Q>

## UK Fitness Network membership hits 15,500

Membership of the UK Fitness Network (UKFN) has reached 15,500 members, the highest since the scheme's formation in 2008.

The initiative allows members of health clubs and leisure centres that are operated by leisure trusts to make use of facilities run

by other trusts. UKFN now covers almost 100 centres across the country in 26 local authority areas.

The initiative was first launched as the London Fitness Network in 2004. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=g8W7d>

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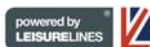


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## UPDATE

## UK NEWS

### Healthy citizens should be 'rewarded'

People who make healthy lifestyle choices should be prioritised for non-emergency hospital appointments as a reward, a report by think tank Demos recommends.

Released last month, the report – Control Shift – said NHS users could prove their responsible lifestyles by sharing data from their supermarket or gym, and that this would promote a public service culture of "getting back what you put in".

The report also suggested that government could top up benefit recipients' Universal Credit if they attended the gym regularly. In addition, it said the government could encourage the private sector and online retailers such as supermarkets to give shoppers a health tally of their weekly shop, encouraging shoppers to choose fruit and vegetables, and remind people of the health risks of buying too much alcohol and saturated fats.

Report author Max Wind-Cowie says: "These proposals are about more than just saving money. They are about helping people make informed decisions and take greater



Healthy-living individuals to get priority healthcare?

personal and collective responsibility – an attitude that has become even more salient now there is less in the coffers."

Last year, a report released by the Local Government Information Unit and Westminster Council recommended GPs prescribe patients physical activity at local leisure facilities. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q6O6l>

### Group workout makes members 'happiest'

A survey of 3,000 members at an Australian YMCA has found 85 per cent of respondents felt happy or elated after exercise, and group fitness was the activity that made people the happiest. The YMCA Victoria survey questioned people about their mood before and after exercise.

Before physical activity, 78.7 per cent of people felt 'normal', but afterwards 75 per cent reported feeling happy and 10.7 per cent felt elated.

Group fitness made people the happiest, followed by gym workouts and running. Women aged 35–39 years enjoyed group exercise the most, saying it made them feel part of a community.

YMCA Derrimut Health and Aquatic Centre group fitness expert, Leigh-Jay Ascension,



YMCA Victoria reports women aged 35–39 enjoy group fitness the most

says: "Men are missing out on the benefits of group fitness classes. When everyone is doing the same thing and they're working towards the same goals, it builds a real camaraderie." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K3T8o>

### £913m healthy cycling initiative for London's streets

London Mayor Boris Johnson has outlined a £913m plan to promote cycling in the capital, which will see the establishment of Dutch-style segregated cycle tracks over the next three years. In addition, semi-segregated routes will be established, as well as "quietways"

– continuous, signposted routes through side streets for people who do not enjoy cycling in traffic. Johnson says the route will run more than 15 miles, from the western suburbs to the heart of London and on to Canary Wharf and Barking. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=2n4qo>



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## First mi-gym opens in Essex

A new independently-owned health club, where the offering is focused around functional training, has opened in Chelmsford city centre.

The club, mi-gym, is owned by fitness coach and industry veteran Rachel Young. The aim of the club is to increase group participation and make the exercise experience engaging and fun, drive retention and, most of all, achieve results for members. The 130sq m (1,400sq ft) gym offers members a range of functional training techniques as well as group and personal training.

The site also runs CrossFit Chelmsford – a strength and conditioning programme involving varied, functional movements performed at a high intensity.

Young chose functional fitness specialists Jordan Fitness as the equipment supplier for the launch (see project profile, p82).

Allan Collins, director of education at Jordan Fitness, says: "For Rachel's new venture we really wanted to show how our new RBT (Results Based Training) service could assist her in making her vision a reality. Jordan Fitness advised her not only on equipment selection, but also on layout and other operational suggestions to allow her to maximise the effectiveness of the facility for results and profit."



The kit includes kettlebells, training discs, sandbags and punch bags

Young secured the site for the first mi-gym, com with the assistance of sports and leisure consultants Sports Solutions.

The gym is located in the centre of Chelmsford, with easy access to the station, offering convenience for its already growing member base.

Young says she plans to expand the brand in the future. "This first site is perfect for our members, and the support we received from Sports Solutions ensured that the process of successfully securing the premises and planning permission was straightforward.

"We're looking forward to working with the team at Sports Solutions again as we expand and offer more people the opportunity to enjoy group training, community and fun."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P9a9a>



A cycling studio formed part of the expansion

## Tamworth's LD Fitness keeps on growing

A PT has been able to grow his client base successfully enough to not only open his own fitness facility, but also to expand the premises to keep up with client demand.

Personal trainer and fitness entrepreneur Lee Drayton first opened LD Fitness in Tamworth in 2008. The aim was to give his PT clients a facility where they could access high quality equipment while still experiencing a level of personal care that could sometimes be missing at larger gyms. Drayton's model proved so successful that in 2011 he moved the business to a larger space – and he has been expanding ever since.

Drayton says: "When my wife and I opened LD Fitness, we never imagined that we'd expand to this extent, but our offering has been so popular that our gym is now four times its original size. We've had to invest in more CV and strength equipment to cope with demand at peak times."

As part of the most recent expansion, Drayton invested in Star Trac bikes to provide members with a group class option.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=WoT2r>

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## SUPPLIER & TRAINING NEWS

### 'Obesity-friendly' kit selling well

Workplace equipment supplier Slingsby has launched a range of bariatric products in response to rising demand from organisations across all industries – including leisure and sport – to modify their premises in order cope with the UK's obesity crisis.

NHS figures reveal more than a quarter of the UK's adult population are clinically obese, and research from this year's European Congress on Obesity predicts that nearly half of all British men and more than a third of all women will be obese by 2040.

Slingsby recognised a gap in the market for businesses such as hotels and leisure venues that can accommodate larger customers. It has therefore launched the new range and plans to continue adding products in the coming months.

Common workplace modifications include strengthening equipment, adding



There is an increased demand for equipment designed for obese clients

handrails, widening doors, installing larger toilets that are floor-mounted and offering sturdier seating. It's estimated that British theatre auditoriums have had to grow by 30 per cent in the last 20 years in order to accommodate the same number of people as those built 100 years ago. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=gob9C>

### énergie Group secures skills funding



énergie will use the grant to create new jobs and apprenticeship opportunities, as well as grow the company

Health club operator énergie Group has secured £400,000-worth of funding from the government's UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) to invest in its national training programme.

The grant was made by the Employer Ownership of Skills scheme – a competitive fund open to employers to invest in their current and future workforce in England.

énergie plans to use the grant to invest in raising skill sets and creating new jobs and apprenticeships – as well as helping drive enterprise and the group's economic growth. Karrin Simpson, training manager at the

énergie Group's National Training Centre in Milton Keynes will lead the project and manage the completion of all targets set.

Simpson says: "The funding will enable us to give franchisees and their staff an even greater structure of training, as well as developing our own internal team. We'll create a sustainable model using both internal and external resources to empower our training leaders to ensure longevity for the group."

The new training methods will include digital podcasts that can easily be passed on through multimedia channels. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z4NoA>



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## Special K teams up with Groupe Moving

Groupe Moving in France has teamed up with Kellogg's cereal brand Special K to launch a new group exercise concept – a 45-minute dance-based class called K DANCE, targeting women and designed to make exercise fun.

Coupons are available on Special K packs, with participants then paying an additional €2 to the club on arrival. Classes are available throughout 2013 across the Groupe Moving estate.

## Vivafit & Vivaslim: new launch and new club

Vivafit – the largest women-only express fitness and nutrition franchise in Portugal – has launched Vivaslim, a weight management programme already available to all Vivafit franchisees, but now available as an independent franchise.

The programme focuses on a combination of targeted lifestyle advice – looking at people's eating and stress patterns – and computer-tailored nutrition education. Participants receive a personalised eating plan, with a registered dietician available to answer questions at any point. Meanwhile their eating and stress/coping patterns are coached weekly through the software to help the member make the necessary lifestyle changes for quicker weight loss and maintenance.

On the fitness franchise side of the business, Vivafit also opened its third club in India last month, in the city of Gurgaon. The site is the brand's second in Gurgaon, with one other site already operational in Bangalore. A fourth will open in Guwahati, north-east India, this month.

The Vivafit brand is currently present in six countries: Portugal, Spain, Uruguay, Singapore, Cyprus and India.

## Australian debut for ShockWave rowing class

Fitness First Australia has signed an exclusivity deal with WaterRower to host its latest group exercise class, ShockWave.

ShockWave is a circuit-based class that uses a WaterRower machine to provide short bursts of high intensity calorie-burning intervals, alongside functional strength and sculpting stations.

The class, which launched in Fitness First Australia in January, was designed by ultra-endurance athlete Josh Crosby and fitness educator Jay Blahniki.

## Latest club opening for Linzenich

Linzenich Fitnessgruppe, the German health club operator, opened its 13th site in the city of Cologne on 19 January.

The facility – which operates under the banner of SPORTSCLUB4 – offers a gym supplied by Pulse, Life Fitness, Matrix,



The club focuses on a fitness suite-only offering

Freeemotion and Star Trac. The bright, spacious area is spread over two floors with a large cardio zone and group exercise studio. There is also a Life Fitness SYNRGY360 functional workout zone.

Dietary advice is also available in line with the group's overall wellness concept, which focuses on the four key pillars of Fit, Slim, Strong and Healthy.

The club offers a fitness suite only, without any additional services such as a coffee bar or beauty treatments. "The club offers well-educated instructors and a friendly atmosphere, but the main focus is on your workout rather than on the social components," says a spokesperson.

Linzenich Fitnessgruppe, which was originally founded as a family business in 1982, now operates 13 clubs in Germany under a range of different brands: the high-end flagship brand FAMILY fitness club; low-cost TOPfit; SPORTSCLUB4; class-based concept KURSboutique; and weight loss offering besser schlank (which translates as 'better slim').

## Fitness First launches inaugural Kuwait club

Fitness First Middle East has opened its first health club in Kuwait.

Located at the prestigious 360 Mall, the club has separate facilities for men and women and spans over 2,300sq m. It offers extensive free weights, strength and freestyle studios, as well as a dedicated ladies-only group exercise and mind-body studio.

Luxurious changing rooms include a sauna and relaxation zone, and members also have access to an exclusive lounge with wireless internet and complimentary drinks.

Kuwait marks the sixth territory for Fitness First in the Middle East.



The new club offers a ladies-only exercise studio

## New Caesar Sports site in development

Hans van Os Holdings, in the Netherlands, has begun work on a new, premium health club in the centre of The Hague.

Due to open in December 2013, the club – which will operate under the Caesar Sports Health Club brand – is being built by Pelikaan Bouw (see interview p32).

An existing site, with a swimming pool originally constructed in 1883, the 4,500sq m club is being entirely rebuilt. When it opens, facilities will include a 900sq m fitness suite, 180sq m group exercise studio, 90sq m mind-body studio, 20m x 10m indoor swimming pool, sauna and beauty services, restaurant

and café. Equipment suppliers are yet to be confirmed. The club, which will sit over two floors, will also be located above an underground car park offering 200 spaces.

Hans van Os Holdings already operates two clubs in the Netherlands. Budget operation Just Fitness, a 1,300sq m site, offers gym-only for €15.95 a month, with classes available for an additional €5. Meanwhile The Fitness House is a mid-market offering for €29.95 a month – a 2,000sq m club with unlimited classes included in the price.

Other budget and mid-market sites are also in the pipeline.

## First Jewel Box opens its doors



The new jewel box concept is said to deliver 'a sensory-evoking, luxury eco-friendly experience'

Sports Club/LA opened the doors to its new jewel box club in Chestnut Hill – just outside Boston, US – last month.

The jewel box concept – a brainchild of Smayra M Million, CEO of Millennium Partners Sports Club Management – is said to be a first-of-its-kind health club experience that provides members with "an unrivalled sensory-evoking, luxury eco-friendly experience" delivered via a blend of cutting-edge technology and sustainable architecture.

The new club is the first of the Sports Club/LA family to be created outside of a downtown urban location, and takes on a more intimate format than the company's existing large-scale, multi-purpose clubs. However, it has been designed to offer the same state-of-the-art

health and wellness experience that members have come to expect from the brand.

Some unique features at the new club include a two-sided floating fireplace in the lobby; a 'sensory' member lounge with changeable floor-to-ceiling relaxation visuals; and a glass-enclosed, REV cycling studio featuring lighting special effects, heart rate monitoring and a panoramic screen offering simulated rides, races and tours set in locations across the world.

The gym includes a specialist weight training room equipped by Keiser. Other facilities include an 80ft artificial turf running track, yoga and pilates studios, saunas and salt-infused steamrooms, and a juice bar.

## Extension for UCD Sport & Fitness Centre

University College Dublin (UCD) Sport & Fitness Centre has unveiled its new gym, which has re-opened following site renovations that saw the facility more than double in size.

The 850sq m gym – which is kitted out with over 100 pieces of CYBEX cardiovascular and strength training equipment – will support over 2,500 members from the student population and local community, as well as athletes and sports students.

Indeed, while supporting the needs of its students and the local community, the gym at UCD is also used as a training site for professional rugby side Leinster.

Alongside the gym, UCD Sports & Fitness offers a 50m swimming pool, tepidarium spa, a range of indoor and outdoor pitches, a climbing wall, squash courts and a rifle range.

The innovative centre also has its own combined heat and power plant and generates its own electricity, the excess of which is used by the university. It also has a rainwater harvesting system.

Ciaran Magee, CYBEX sales manager for Ireland, says: "The new €50m UCD Sport & Fitness Centre is undoubtedly one of the country's top sports facilities and every component of the site reflects this."

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Colin Averis: Northern territory sales manager

### Averis is new sales manager at Keiser UK

Keiser UK has appointed a new sales manager for the northern territory.

Colin Averis will be responsible for managing sales in the north of England and Scotland. Having previously worked as an account manager for a large equipment manufacturer, as well as a leisure operations manager, Averis brings a wealth of sales experience to his new role along with a degree in business management and qualifications in leisure, sport and recreation.

Keiser has also promoted UK sales manager Gary Oleinik to national sales director. Oleinik joined Keiser in July 2009.



Karen Seers joins Octane Fitness from Star Trac

### Karen Seers joins Octane Fitness as sales manager

Karen Seers has joined cross-trainer supplier Octane Fitness UK. Seers joins Octane from Star Trac, bringing a wealth of equipment sales and fitness industry experience to the Octane team. She has previously also worked at Nautilus and David Lloyd Leisure.

Seers says: "I was genuinely excited when I saw the new Octane Fitness LateralX machine. It's easy to understand how different and unique the other Octane Fitness cross-trainers are too – they offer something extra to almost any gym."

Octane Fitness was founded in the US in 2001 by Dennis Lee and Tim Porth.

## Nuffield names new ops director

Nuffield Health has appointed Steve Bluff to manage the operations of the company's 19 Fitness and Wellbeing Centres, as the company's new operations director.

Having worked for more than 25 years in the retail industry – and recently moving from House of Fraser Department Store Group – Bluff is seen as an expert in the fields of customer experience and environment.

He says: "My number one objective is to drive home the new wellbeing proposition fully within the 19 Fitness and Wellbeing Centres.

"The Wellbeing Membership is an innovation in tailored support, which aims to provide members with their own health mentor and an option of four sessions with a physiotherapist, physiologist, personal trainer

or nutritional therapist. Most importantly, we want to ensure that our teams in the Fitness and Wellbeing Centres have the tools, training, skills and support needed to best help all our members to achieve their health and fitness goals."



Bluff: Driving home the new wellbeing proposition in the centres

## Team expansion for Fusion Lifestyle

Fusion Lifestyle has announced a series of appointments in line with its planned business growth over the coming year.

After successful new contract mobilisations for Braintree District Council and the London Borough of Haringey in the second half of last year, Fusion has expanded both its central and field-based teams.

Over the coming months, Fusion plans to transition towards establishing a new layer of senior management, with three regional business managers to oversee a number of existing divisions across the portfolio. Two internal appointments have been made – Mark Braithwaite and Francois Smit – with a third expected in due course.



Mark Braithwaite is one of Fusion Lifestyle's new regional managers

Penny Arnold, Fusion's commercial and operations director, says: "The team will oversee our existing divisions to drive our commitment to effective partnership, as well as delivering key commercial outputs as part of an ongoing continuous improvement strategy."

## Pure Gym appoints acquisitions director ahead of expansion

Pure Gym has appointed Stephen Rought Whitta as group acquisitions director.

Rought has vast experience in a number of retail organisations, having worked in the business-to-consumer marketplace for the past 30 years. Rought joins Pure Gym

from B&M Retail, the fastest growing retail organisation in the country, where he was head of property.

During his time at B&M Retail, Rought oversaw the opening of 45 stores in 2010, 47 in 2011 and more than 50 in 2012.

## PEOPLE PROFILE



## Richard Lee

A lifelong fitness enthusiast, Lee was forced to rethink his career as a Royal Marine commando following injury. The result is Spartan Race, an obstacle race concept taking the world by storm

### From a former Royal Marine to a race organiser – how did that happen?

My military employment was cut short due to a bad knee injury. I was planning to make a career out of the military, but found myself in a position where I had to rethink my plans. As luck would have it, it was during that reassessment period that I travelled to Canada on holiday and met my partner Selica. After a brief long-distance relationship, I returned to Canada to be with Selica and as part of my rehabilitation we decided to walk the 2,500-mile Appalachian Trail.

On the journey, we passed through Vermont and came across something called 'The Death Race', organised by a man called Joe Desena. The Death Race is a 48-hour, truly crazy endurance race for insane people, during which you never know what's going to happen next. We ended up competing in the race. Selica was the last woman standing and I finished joint first with an American marine. We realised that Joe's concept could work anywhere, so we approached him after the event.

### So you took the original concept and changed it slightly?

We realised that you would only ever find a few hundred crazy people to do a Death Race. What we wanted to ensure with our event was that we took the core elements of the Death Race – the unpredictability, the sense of accomplishment – and then made it more accessible. By doing that, I thought we'd have a model that could be easily replicated pretty much anywhere – and that's what we now have.

Spartan Races range from a three-mile sprint to the Ultra Beast event, which is a marathon-length (26-mile) obstacle course.

Every participant has something different to aim for, so we offer a range of accessible goals. This ensures that, no matter what their fitness levels, participants have the ability to progress up and eventually do one of our more 'insane' races.

### Have you always been into fitness and keeping yourself physically fit?

I've always been interested in sport and running, but I was more of a mountaineer. In my time, I climbed various peaks in the US before joining the marines. I was also a very active rock climber and skier.

### You now work together with your partner Selica. How does that work?

I think we've done a good job of segregating the roles and our understanding of the business. Selica does fantastic advertising, the branding, the merchandising, the theatrics of it all – making the experience incredible for the user. Her background is in TV and film, so she's very passionate that every Spartan Race offers an unforgettable experience, and that our brand is perceived in the way we want it to be.

### Where do the races take place?

At the moment, we have races in England, Australia, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Scotland, Canada and India. We're in talks with about seven other major countries that are signing up this year. We've set a goal of having races in 22 countries by 2015.

### Who's your target customer?

Age-wise, our core demographic is probably aged 21 years to late 30s. In terms of their profiles, as the races get harder, the participants obviously get fitter. Not everybody is going to sign up for a 26-mile obstacle course race, so we do get all shapes and sizes. We've had a 73-year-old, and the youngest participants are 14.

### What drives you?

When we first came up with the concept, I was driven by the fact that this kind of thing didn't really exist – we were breaking new ground. Now the drive to succeed for me is the amazing stories we get from our participants – people write to us telling us how much they enjoyed the experience.



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# IHRSA 2013

Kristen Walsh rounds up the news from IHRSA's 32nd Annual International Convention & Trade Show, which took place in Las Vegas last month



Bert Jacobs from Life is good spoke on optimism

Well over 12,000 people from around 80 countries came together for IHRSA 2013, which took place last month at the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, US.

More than 350 exhibitors welcomed attendees to the two-day trade show, while a range of seminars and conference sessions offered insights from leaders from within and outside of the fitness industry. The following are some of the event's highlights...

## On show

The sold-out show floor was packed full of new equipment, fitness apparel, flooring, software, toiletries, nutritional products



BILT fitness machines, developed by former tennis player Andre Agassi (above) and his coach, were on show

– and even some celebrities. Tra Thomas, a three-time pro bowler with the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, spent some time at the Technogym booth.

Tennis legend Andre Agassi – whose combination of power, agility and speed during his career allowed him to get to the ball and make shots that many of his opponents could not – also put in an appearance. Agassi never gave any insights into his training regime with coach Gil Reyes, for fear of losing his competitive advantage. However, a few years after he retired, he decided share the secrets. And BILT by Agassi & Reyes – a line of ergonomically-designed fitness machines

modelled after the customised machines built and honed by Agassi and Reyes over two decades – was born. BILT was showcased at IHRSA.

## Keeping active

Attendees had plenty of opportunities to stay in shape during the week. In an IHRSA convention first, Exercise Lab held a well-attended evening session: an H2o Lab class in the Mandalay Bay outdoor pool.

Other classes held on-site included Todd Durkin's I.M.P.A.C.T. Workout, Insanity, PILLOXING, MMA-style conditioning, and ZEN-GA Mindful Movement.

## Education and motivation

During his general session entitled Optimism Can Take You Anywhere, Bert Jacobs – co-founder of Life is good – three frisbees into the crowd while he explained how simplicity, humility and a sense of humour are three keys to his company's incredible success. "I'm not an optimist because good things have happened to me. Good things have happened to me because I'm an optimist," he said.

The following day, Nicholas Christakis, MD, PhD, MPH showed the audience scientific proof that obesity – and fitness

## IHRSA BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Brent Darden – owner and general manager of the TELOS Fitness Center in Dallas, Texas – was elected as the incoming chair of IHRSA's board of directors. His two-year term will begin in July 2013. Darden will succeed Bill McBride, the president and COO of Club One.

Joining the IHRSA board of directors from Denmark is Rasmus Ingerslev, fitness industry entrepreneur, co-founder of the Danish Fitness & Health Organisation, and now CEO of Fresh Fitness and Wexer Virtual (see virtual classes feature, p58). New US board members include Bill Beck, the owner, operator and president of Club Fit in New York; and Allison Flatley, COO for L&T Health and Fitness in Virginia.



Making a splash: In an IHRSa Convention first, Xercise Lab held an evening exercise session in the Mandalay Bay outdoor pool

– are contagious, during Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks & How They Shape Our Lives. “Our influence doesn’t stop with people we directly interact with. It spreads through our networks,” Christakis said. “Pay it forward’ is real.”

Chip Conley was the third general session speaker with his talk entitled PEAK: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo From Maslow. The founder of Joie de Vivre – California’s largest independent hotel company and America’s second largest boutique hotelier – Conley understands the importance of keeping customers happy. He has applied psychologist Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy Of Needs pyramid to his business, and it has flourished as a result.

Almost three-quarters of a company’s customers will readily leave if all you are doing is satisfying them, Conley told the audience. It’s when you meet their unrecognised needs – the ones they are not even aware of – that they are happy. This happened for his company at one hotel in the San Francisco business district. Conley decided, with no statistics or customer requests to support the decision, to put a yoga studio where a penthouse room could have been. Soon after, there was a waiting list for the daily morning classes. “We

connected with our customers on a personal basis, not a demographic basis,” said Conley.

On the final day of the convention, Peter Sheahan presented FLIP: Creative Strategies for Turning Challenge into Opportunity, and Change into Competitive Advantage. Sheahan is an author and the founder & CEO of ChangeLabs in Australia. During his session, he described five strategies for ‘going from why to how’. Sheahan urged attendees to make manageable bets when it comes to their business and their career. Start small, take controlled bets and then scale according to the success, he advised. “Don’t judge your decision by the amount of money it makes but by how quickly you learn how to make money,” he said.

#### Positive futures

The audience at the 17th Annual Financial Panel was a who’s who of the industry. Taking place every year at IHRSa, this is a must-attend session for CEOs, CFOs, club owners, GMs, investors, suppliers, press and all who are interested in the current economic conditions affecting the worldwide health club market.

Each of the presenters who made up this year’s panel has been involved in a major club transaction within the past six months,

#### Lifetime achievement

Rick Caro, a 40-year fitness and health industry veteran, was honoured with the



Veteran Rick Caro (left)

inaugural IHRSa Lifetime Achievement Award for his tireless work, innovative ideas and leadership.

Caro, a past IHRSa board president as well as a former owner and operator of health clubs, authored the pre-eminent industry textbook on financial management. He is now president of Management Vision, a leading consulting firm specialising in the health club industry.

and provided a unique viewpoint on the financial factors that influence our industry. The panellists included:

- Jon Canarick, MD, North Castle Partners
- Doug Lehrman, CEO, Pulse Equity
- Kayvan Heravi, partner, LNK Partners
- Diego Cordoba, MD, Teka Capital

### Missed a session - or the entire event?

Audio (MP3) recordings of nearly 80 educational sessions from IHRSA 2013 will be available for download from [www.ihrsa.org/store](http://www.ihrsa.org/store) later this month for US\$20 each (US\$25 for IHRSA non-members) or US\$499 (US\$699 for IHRSA non-members) for the full set. Contact [store@ihrsa.org](mailto:store@ihrsa.org) to have the order form sent to you.

► “The past year has seen several major club deals in the US,” reported moderator Rick Caro. “There are more buyers than in the past, which is exciting for us. Most people think 2013 will be slightly better for our industry.”

### Charity fundraisers

Two of IHRSA 2013's most memorable events served to bring attention – and much-needed funds – to the search for a cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). In 2005, Augie Nieto, co-founder and former president of Life Fitness and the current chairman of Octane Fitness, was diagnosed with ALS – a severely progressive disease of the motor neurons that can become life-threatening in only a few years following diagnosis. Since then, he and his wife Lynne have partnered with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) to form Augie's Quest ([augiesquest.org](http://augiesquest.org)), which

### Courage and excellence

The fifth Annual Julie Main Woman Leader Scholarship was awarded to Radka Dopotova Wilson, a fitness specialist at The World Bank Fitness Center in Washington, DC. This scholarship is awarded to a woman who exemplifies what Main stood for: courage, perseverance, excellence and professionalism with key contributions to the industry and the community.

A native of the Czech Republic, Wilson is, like Main, a breast cancer survivor with a reputation in her community for touching the lives of cancer survivors through her cancer wellness programmes and training. One of the programmes she developed is Strong Women Enjoy Life, an osteoporosis prevention programme that teaches women the correct techniques and benefits of strength training and nutrition, introducing exercise to many who have never been in a gym before.



This year's sell-out trade show featured 350 exhibitors, with dozens of new product launches and live demos

supports fast-track, innovative research, seeking effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure for ALS. Since 2006, Augie's Quest has raised nearly US\$37m for this purpose.

This year's IHRSA saw Zumba founder Alberto 'Beto' Perez lead a Zumbathon charity event, which raised US\$200,000 for Augie's Quest. The following evening, the eighth Annual BASH for Augie's Quest was attended by over 700 people and raised an impressive US\$1.6m for ALS research.

The John McCarthy Industry Visionary Award – presented to an individual or company that has made a unique contribution to the advancement of the club industry as a whole – was also awarded to Zumba. Founded in 2001, the company is now the largest branded fitness programme in the world, with 14 million people taking classes on a weekly basis in over 140,000 locations across more than 180 countries.

### Community service

IHRSA's Award for Outstanding Community Service is given to an individual or group who has made a longstanding commitment to making a difference in, and beyond, their community. This year's award was given to Ron and Sandy Franco, owners of Franco's Athletic Club in Mandeville, Louisiana, US.

When it comes to working with charities and causes, the Francos have a simple rule: to never say 'no'. Over the past 25 years, the club has raised over US\$1.5m for charitable organisations. In addition

to donating memberships and services to school fundraisers, for the past 20 years the club has donated swimming pool services and free swimming lessons to children with special needs, providing them with mental and physical stimulation therapy.

Franco's Athletic Club is also a leader in providing employment to those with disabilities, and discounted memberships to public service employees such as police, firemen, coast guards and military personnel. For the six months following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, the club was a host site for the National Guard and housed volunteers helping with recovery efforts. ●

### LOOKING AHEAD



IHRSA's 33rd Annual International Convention & Trade Show will be held on 12–15 March 2014 at the San Diego Convention Center in sunny San Diego, California. Anyone interested in speaking at this event should log on to [www.ihrsa.org/speaker-application](http://www.ihrsa.org/speaker-application) to complete the application form.

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Delegates will gather in Sydney for the Australian Fitness & Health Expo

## APRIL

### 19-21 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo

Venue Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia  
Summary  
All the latest gym equipment, training aids, clothing, music, boxing kit and nutritional products, plus information on health, fitness and sports science.  
Web [www.fitnessexpo.com.au](http://www.fitnessexpo.com.au)

### 21-22 | Scottish Beauty

Venue The Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh, UK  
Summary  
Scotland's only professional beauty event, showcasing around 200 suppliers, brands and training providers.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

### 24-27 | SPATEC Europe

Venue Ritz-Carlton's Abama Golf & Spa Resort, Tenerife  
Summary  
A two-day forum involving 65 UK and European spa owners and operators and more than 70 leading spa suppliers.  
Web [www.spatecu.com](http://www.spatecu.com)

### 25-28 | Russian Fitness Festival

Venue Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia  
Summary  
A major event in physical education in Russia, the CIS and Baltic states, the festival aims to popularise healthy living.  
Web [www.fitness-convention.ru](http://www.fitness-convention.ru)

## MAY

### 17-19 | BodyPower

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK  
Summary  
New features include a preview day on sports nutrition products and The Super Gym, showcasing gyms of the future. The Academy will host expert speakers.  
Web [www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk](http://www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk)

### 19-20 | Holistic Health

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK  
Summary  
Holistic Health 2013 supports the holistic and complementary therapy market, showcasing new products, treatments, equipment and courses.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

### 19-20 | BeautyUK

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK  
Summary  
The Midlands' only professional beauty trade exhibition, linking products, equipment, services and training. Takes place alongside Holistic Health.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

### 21-22 | SIBEC UK

Venue The Belfry, Wistow, UK  
Summary  
SIBEC UK brings together influential suppliers and buyers from leisure, health and fitness. There are networking activities, meetings, education seminars, and a supplier showcase.  
Web [www.mcleaneventsinternational.com](http://www.mcleaneventsinternational.com)

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## The new public health landscape



David Stalker, CEO of ukactive, outlines the changes to public health commissioning that took effect on 1 April and examines the impact these will have on all providers, both in the health and wellness sectors and in the wider healthcare industry

Last March, the coalition government's Health and Social Care Act passed through parliament. It represented a radical shake-up of the NHS and has brought extensive changes to the entire NHS and public health landscape, setting out a major programme of reforms to restructure healthcare services and public health responsibilities.

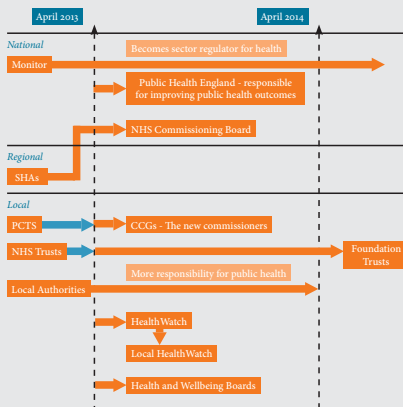
A new public health structure, born out of these wide-ranging reforms, came into force on 1 April 2013.

### Background

The coalition government's strategy for public health was originally laid out in the white paper *Healthy Lives, Healthy People*, which envisaged moving to a more local and patient-focused health system. The White Paper proposed changes to the way public health services are commissioned and delivered, which were subsequently formalised in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The rationale for the change is to better meet the needs of local populations, and to enable the integration of public

### Reform of the NHS Structures



### The new public health structures

#### NHS Commissioning Board (NHSCB)

An independent board established to allocate resources and provide commissioning guidance. It will have responsibility for a budget of around £80bn. Its functions will include delivering improved health outcomes, supporting quality improvements, developing commissioning guidance, championing patient interests, overseeing the commissioning budget, and supervising the development and overall outcomes of CCGs (see below).

#### Clinical Commissioning Group (CCGs)

CCGs replace Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) as the new health commissioning organisations. They will be responsible for commissioning the majority of local health services and will have a statutory duty to obtain advice from other health and care professionals and involve patients and the public.

In each NHS region, GP surgeries are grouping together to form CCGs (there will be 221 in total). They will be responsible for

around £60bn of the NHS annual budget, which will be allocated to them directly by the NHSCB.

Each CCG will have a governing board comprising healthcare professionals including GPs, nurses, hospital doctors and others including physiotherapists and patient representatives. CCGs will work closely with the newly established Health and Wellbeing Boards (see below) to ensure services are integrated and deliver the best quality health and care outcomes for their population.

#### Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs)

The aim of HWBs is to bring together local commissioners to improve the health and wellbeing of their population and reduce health inequalities. They will be made up of local commissioners across the NHS, public health and social care, elected representatives and patient representatives.

At a minimum, a HWB must include one local elected representative, the director of adult social services for the local authority, the director of children's services for the local authority, the director of public health for the local authority, a representative



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/COMPTON STOCK

Local authorities will now be responsible for all areas of public health, including increasing physical activity and tackling obesity levels

health into local systems and services, acknowledging the importance of local issues and the social determinants of health (eg housing, education, financial security and the built environment).

The changes are also driven by a need for the NHS to find £20bn of efficiency savings by the end of 2013/2014, as well as ongoing cost efficiency opportunities within a national health system that's

pressured by rising levels of chronic conditions and an ageing population with complex social care needs.

#### All change

The key changes that came into place on 1 April 2013 include:

- Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), giving greater control

to GPs in the commissioning of primary, secondary and social care.

- Local authorities will now be responsible for all areas of public health, including tobacco control, locally-led nutrition initiatives, public mental health services, increasing levels of physical activity in local populations and decreasing inactivity, managing chronic conditions and obesity levels, and initiatives on workplace health. ►

of the local HealthWatch (see below) organisation in that area, and a representative of each local commissioning group.

HWBs can expand their membership to include a wider range of expertise and have a statutory duty to involve local people. Boards will bring together CCGs and local authorities to develop a shared understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of the community. They will undertake the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and develop a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) on how these needs can be addressed, thereby driving local commissioning of healthcare, social care and public health. Other services impacting health, such as housing provision, will also be addressed.

HWBs will influence investment decisions right across the local authority, with the goal of enhancing health and wellbeing. Crucially, they will push to ensure public health is always considered when local authorities, GP consortia and the NHS make decisions.

#### HealthWatch England

HealthWatch will be a national independent body that enables the collective views of the people who use NHS and adult social

care services to influence national policy, advice and guidance. It will advise the NHSCB, local authorities, Monitor (the economic regulator) and the Secretary of State for Health. It will also have the power to recommend that action is taken by the Care Quality Commission (see below) when there are concerns about health and social care services.

#### Care Quality Commission (CQC)

The role of the CQC will be strengthened as an effective quality inspectorate by giving it a clearer focus on the essential levels of safety and quality of providers.

#### NHS Foundation Trusts

The Act requires "all trusts to become foundation trusts (or become part of a foundation trust)" as soon as is feasible, with a clear target of April 2014. This means semi-independence of Whitehall control with, for example, the freedom to earn money by treating certain numbers of private patients. Around half of the hospitals in England already have that status.

GP commissioning groups will be in charge of around £60bn of the NHS annual budget

- ▶ Local authorities will be guided by a new structure, Public Health England, on how to distribute their £2.7bn ringfenced public health budget.

- Local authorities will need to demonstrate improvements in public health outcomes, measured in terms of progress against indicators of local health needs. These needs will be set out by the local authorities and CCGs in Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and reflected in Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWS).

- GPs are charged with making decisions on commissioning – prescriptions will come out of their own budget, so they will be seeking cost-effective solutions and preventative interventions.

The reforms mark the first time there has been structural recognition of the importance of prevention in healthcare and the role of public health. Physical activity levels among the UK population are one of the indicators in the Public Health Outcomes Framework (see below) – that will be used to measure the outcomes of the changes detailed above.

## Measuring outcomes

The outcomes of these changes to public health delivery will be measured through a number of frameworks:

### NHS Outcomes Framework

A framework to provide a national overview of how well the NHS is performing, wherever possible in an international context. It will also act as a catalyst for driving quality improvement and outcome measurement in the NHS by encouraging a change in culture and behaviour, including a stronger focus on tackling health inequalities.

### Quality Outcomes Framework (QOF)

A voluntary annual reward and incentive programme for all GP surgeries in England, detailing practice achievement results. It's not about performance management but rather resourcing and then rewarding good practice.

### Public Health Outcomes Framework

From April 2013, all local councils will receive a ringfenced budget (a share of around £5.2bn based on 2012/2013 funding) for public health spending, and will be able to choose how they spend it according to the needs of their population. There are 353 councils in



England and their performance will be measured against this framework, of which physical activity is one of the sixty-six indicators.

Other indicators include: sickness absence rate, excess weight in four- to five-year-olds and 10- to 11-year-olds, excess weight in adults, recorded diabetes, falls and fall injuries in the over-65s, mortality from causes considered preventable, mortality from all cardiovascular diseases, mortality from cancer, and health-related quality of life for older people.

## So what's the situation now?

As of 1 April 2013:

- The NHS Commissioning Board has taken on its full statutory functions as the national independent body to allocate resources to CCGs and provide commissioning guidance for predominantly primary care services.
- Public Health England is established as an executive agency of the Department of Health and will allocate ringfenced budgets (weighted for inequalities) to local authorities to commission public health services, build evidence bases and co-ordinate service integration.
- Clinical Commissioning Groups are established and assume statutory responsibilities for the healthcare budgets of their local communities (211 in total). GP practices must be members of either an authorised CCG or shadow CCG.

- All Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts are abolished.

- Health and Wellbeing Boards are established and assume statutory responsibilities (see p24).

- Local authorities have taken on new responsibility to improve the health of their populations. They will have employed directors of public health, received ringfenced funding for public health, and started the process of developing their local JSNAs and JHWS through the new HWBs.

- Local HealthWatch is established to give local people a say in how health and social care services are provided.

- Monitor takes on the role of economic regulator for all providers of health and adult social care services, with all providers of NHS services expected to hold a Monitor license.

- Health Education England takes over strategic health authorities' (which previously oversaw local NHS trusts) responsibilities for the areas of local education and training. ●

## For further information

For more information on public health reforms, visit [www.ukactive.com](http://www.ukactive.com). See also p30 for expert comment on how these changes will affect the physical activity sector.



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## EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

## CCGs not PCTs

**L**ocal authorities are now charged with the responsibility for public health, with decisions about the commissioning of services being made locally by GPs and the directors of public health (see p26 for a full briefing).

Physical activity is one of the 66 indicators of the public health outcomes framework, so there's now structural recognition of the importance of physical activity in the role of public health. However, ukactive CEO David Stalker says we must still be cautious about what these changes mean: physical activity and leisure are not currently statutory requirements, despite their inclusion in the outcomes framework, so they will not necessarily be protected.

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have – as of 1 April – replaced PCTs, placing the responsibility for health with local authorities. How will this impact the fitness industry?

The wider determinants of health will also now be tackled for the first time, so housing, roads and other local authority services will be assessed to see how they impact the health of the local population. This could mean, for example, funding being found for mass participation initiatives, such as the provision of cycle trails for children to get to school.

The fact that local authorities will be charged with getting people more physically active is great news for the

health and fitness industry, as is the £2.7bn ringfenced budget. But how easy will it be to get a slice of the money – particularly for the private sector, which may not be as well-versed in the language of local government? And how much of this money has been allocated already?

On paper this looks like a good opportunity for the health and fitness industry, but what should be the first moves? Building relationships with the local decision-makers who will be commissioning services? Training staff and developing programmes to ensure facilities are equipped to deal with new audiences – people who are nervously embarking on a lifestyle change and who may be wary of gyms? We ask the experts...

WHAT WILL THE NEW PUBLIC HEALTH SET-UP MEAN FOR THE FITNESS SECTOR? EMAIL: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

## DAVID STALKER

ukactive • CEO

**"T**his is such a great opportunity: a whole new workstream of opportunity, with a £2.7bn yearly ringfenced public health budget in the hands of local authorities.

Clubs will have to be proactive in order to get a share of the funding and will need to work with other community service providers. Services will be commissioned based on the health needs of the local population, so clubs will have to find out the key statistics influencing the decisions being made locally. Providing a strong evidence base for cost-effectiveness of physical activity interventions is also important, as GPs make their decisions based on evidence. We're already getting more focused on this, with ukactive's Research Institute due to start publishing its findings in June this year. Clubs will also need to both speak and understand the language of local government.

If we're to get beyond 12 per cent penetration, we need to welcome people who require support. Historically our sector has focused on a member pathway, which doesn't necessarily align with a patient's care pathway. Helping people improve their health through physical activity means starting from the beginning and counselling them on how to think about being more active, before they even set foot in a fitness facility."



## STEVE BEDSER

LGA • Member of Community Wellbeing Board

**"T**hese changes potentially give the fitness industry access to a new customer base and new funding opportunities, but there is no quick buck. To access public health funding, any initiative must demonstrate the likelihood of improved health outcomes.

Much of the public health focus is on encouraging currently inactive people to adopt healthier lifestyles. As research into Birmingham's 'Be Active' initiative shows, one of the biggest barriers to regular exercise is poverty. Not only that, but inactive people are also far more likely to take the plunge if there is no initial cost. However, once people get the fitness bug, they are more likely to spend on further activities.

If the fitness industry is going to grab the opportunity to tap into this new market, it must take a more holistic approach. Adopting a healthier lifestyle is not just about exercise – it's about a healthier diet, quitting smoking and drinking less.

If the physical activity sector can come up with the right packages, it has the opportunity to be part of the solution. Our focus is on outcomes, so if the fitness industry can provide us with evidence to show it can help us produce a fitter, healthier population, the opportunities will be there."



Private clubs could get involved by reaching out to new groups at off-peak times



#### CHRIS HOLLIDAY

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council •  
Head of leisure & community health

**"I'm** ever optimistic, so I'd say these changes represent an opportunity for a more joined-up approach.

Nationally we want health and fitness and sport professionals to work together to make a real step change. It's not often that we've had an opportunity like this, where public health has been brought into the same room as leisure services, with both sectors aiming for broadly the same outcomes. As a discretionary service, that's great for our industry.

If a director of public health takes a holistic view and uses budgets imaginatively to create health opportunities, it could be exciting – there's an opportunity to jointly pull in the same direction. However, given all the public sector cuts and with more to come, I'm not sure how much new funding will be available.

Nevertheless, the health and fitness sector has a great role to play going forward. The agenda in sport, leisure, recreation and fitness will have to align closely with public health's to help them deliver against their agendas for obesity, smoking, alcohol and diabetes. Operators will need to think outside of the box to come up with innovative ways of drawing the physically inactive into exercise. My advice is to knock on the director of public health's door and show how you can help."



#### PROF GABRIEL SCALLY

University of England • Director of  
WHO Collaborating Centre for  
Healthy Urban Environments

**"A**s a result of these changes, I hope local authority leisure services departments will transform themselves into physical activity departments, so they are not just in the business of managing leisure facilities, but are integrating their efforts with other parts of local government – such as parks – to increase levels of physical activity.

There's an opportunity here for private sector fitness providers to broaden and expand their offer to welcome new audiences, particularly outside of peak times. But there's also an obligation for all leisure facilities to improve their food and beverage offer. I would like to see all sites taking part in the Food For Life catering mark, to guarantee the food and beverages they provide match up to the exercise opportunities they are offering. The sale of junk food in health clubs currently undermines their efforts to help people live healthier lives.

Each local authority will be in the process of preparing plans on how they will improve the population's health. The fitness industry needs to engage with local Health and Wellbeing Boards while they are preparing their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, to make sure they are part of the plan."





# DENNIS PELLIKAAN

The co-owner and company director of Pellikaan in the Netherlands talks to Kate Cracknell about rental models, integrating medical and fitness offerings, and differentiation through service

“My view is that, across the whole of the Netherlands, the fitness sector needs to get better at delivering the product people are actually asking for,” says Dennis Pellikaan, company director and co-owner, along with brother Patrick, of family-owned Pellikaan – a company that encompasses health club operations as well as construction (see *The Pellikaan Story*, p33). “That means better goal-setting, for example, really getting people into the habit of being active. But most of all it’s about creating a service culture.”

He continues: “Patrick and I have grown up in our family’s fitness facilities. I also used to work at the Harbour Club in London, UK. So sport and physical activity really runs through our veins – but not to the point that we’ve lost touch with the mindset of our members. In fact, that’s what drives me: I always strive to look through the eyes of the consumer.”

“Not everyone is sports-mad – we know it’s an effort for people to get active – and we therefore focus on the total experience at our health clubs, doing everything we can to make them places in which people want to spend time. Service levels are key to that, and this is an area in which we aim to constantly improve, learning not only from other health and fitness businesses but also from restaurants and hotels, for example.”

## Taking on the budget gyms

This focus on service is particularly important in the Netherlands, says Pellikaan, where the budget sector has

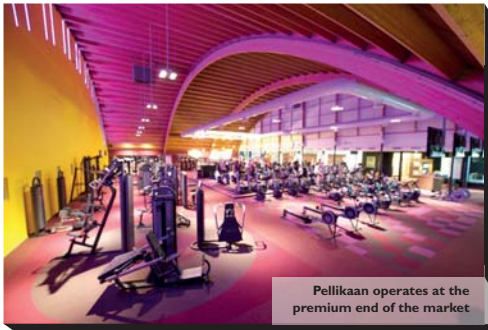
taken a firm grip: “Our facilities are beautiful and very extensive, and we invest heavily in maintaining their high quality. But our membership fees, which average around €65 a month, put us very much at the top end of the market. We therefore aim to differentiate ourselves on more than just our facilities, with a strong focus on lifestyle as well as complementary, value-added offerings. However, we believe the only real way to set ourselves apart from the budget sector is by focusing on service.”

Pellikaan continues: “Most gym operators in the Netherlands are either converting their clubs to a budget model or else launching a budget arm to their business. And the low-cost sector is doing very well here – it’s all but killed off the mid-market.”

“We’re perfectly happy with that, as it puts our product firmly where we want it to be: at the premium end of the market. However, the budget clubs’ product isn’t bad, which makes it hard for us to compete for members who are only interested in fitness: if all they want is a gym, they’re not going to pay €65 a month when they could be paying €15.”

## A new medical offering

Nevertheless, Pellikaan’s focus for now is on continuing to justify his clubs’ premium price tag. “It’s about adding value to the membership, trying to attract a different type of person to the club – someone who’s still willing to pay our prices in exchange for the facilities we offer,” he says. “Our medical health clinics are a good example of this – they are bringing



Pellikaan operates at the premium end of the market



Pellikaan was the first company to bring the full health club offer to Holland 20 years ago

## The Pellikaan Story

“**T**he Pellikaan business began with my grandfather,” says Dennis Pellikaan. “He used to play for the Dutch football team and was very into sports, so when his football career ended and he launched his construction company, he focused heavily on building sports facilities for the local councils – swimming pools, sports halls and so on.

“Then, 36 years ago, he started his own multi-functional tennis centre – a concept he’d seen in the US. He built and operated the facility and the model proved a success in the Dutch market, so he built more – not only in Holland, but also in Germany and Belgium, where he also had construction companies.

“The clubs attracted all the top tennis players: David Lloyd, for example, played for my grandfather’s first team in the Netherlands. In fact, it was this experience that encouraged David to go back to the UK and build a tennis club just like my grandfather’s. At the time we didn’t have a construction company in the UK, so we didn’t build the first ever David Lloyd club, but we built the second and still build a lot of their facilities for them now.

“In the end, my grandfather operated three facilities of his own – big tennis clubs with indoor courts, squash, a restaurant – which at the time were unique in Holland. Of course, the product has evolved a lot since then to become

the full-service health club offering we have nowadays, but that’s how it all started 36 years ago.”

He continues: “My grandfather continued to run the clubs when he retired. Meanwhile my father took over the construction business, building clubs for the likes of David Lloyd Leisure in the UK. My father soon realised the tennis club model wasn’t really evolving any more, so he decided to introduce to Holland the model he’d seen working in the UK: the full health club offering with a monthly membership. The first such facility opened in Amersfoort 20 years ago. It still had indoor and outdoor tennis, as well as squash, but now it also had 1,000sq m of fitness, two aerobics studios, a swimming pool, sauna and so on.

“Fast-forward to today and we now have seven clubs in the Netherlands: six branded as Club Pellikaan, with a seventh – an older-style tennis club – due to be overhauled and rebranded as a Club Pellikaan in the next couple of years. We had wanted to do it sooner, but the economic crisis delayed the project. For now, we’ve created a budget gym on-site, so there is at least a fitness offering.”

Pellikaan concludes: “There continues to be great synergy between the construction company and the health club business, because both parties have the same expertise in operations. The construction people understand how the clubs work and the whole co-operative relationship works very well.”

**“We wanted to create what we call our ‘3Cs’ approach – a philosophy of cure, care and control – by fully integrating medical expertise into our club offering”**



There are six Pelikaan clubs, with a seventh to follow after a rebrand

- people to our clubs who never would have joined or visited before.”

Originally launched in 2010 and currently available at three sites, both for members and non-members, the medical offering is designed to broaden the health club model to address what Pelikaan sees as the two key trends in society: an ageing population, and the growing issue of obesity.

“We already had in-house physiotherapists, but essentially they just rented a room – there wasn’t any real connection between our product and their expertise or facilities. We wanted to create what we call our ‘3Cs’ approach – a philosophy of cure, care and control – by fully integrating medical expertise into the offering at our clubs.

“Our medical centre model comprises on average six or eight consultation rooms rented out to physiotherapists, nutritionists, psychologists, oncologists, podiatrists and so on. We offer vitality checks (V-Checks – see *HCM* Oct 10, p29), obesity programmes, special physiotherapy for cyclists. We even go into local companies to offer fitness advice and occupational health checks.

“It’s been a deliberate decision that all our medical professionals are local people – we don’t have agreements at a national level to cover all our clubs. We want people who are proactive within our clubs, marketing their services to our members. But we also want people who have strong streams of business locally – relationships with nearby hockey clubs, tennis clubs and so on – as this brings new prospects into our facilities.”

Pelikaan continues: “The biggest challenge, of course, is to create a seamless connection between the fitness and medical elements of our offering. We’re trying to treat the medical health team in the same way as we do our reception, sales or F&B teams, meeting on a monthly basis so everyone’s fully briefed on what everyone else is doing.

“But we also work together on developing programmes that involve everyone in the club, and that everyone feels ownership of. We don’t leave it to the medical professionals to introduce their own, standalone initiatives – we take the lead to ensure the bigger commercial picture is taken into account. Where do our staff come in? What information are we sharing with our fitness team when a member has a V-Check, for example, to help them put together a good programme for that member?

“It’s about creating and constantly refining the communication channels between medical and fitness, as well as evolving training ideas together as a team.”

**The clubs offer a wide range of facilities – but service remains the USP**

The medical centre concept will now be rolled out to the other clubs – two this year and the sixth in 2014 – once, explains Pelikaan, the right medical professionals have been found. “That’s not easy, because the market in Holland has changed a lot,” he explains. “The government is trying to cut healthcare costs, and of course insurance companies still want to make their margins, which means consumers are having to pick up more of the costs themselves. Physiotherapists, nutritionists and so on are reporting a drop in demand of around 15–20 per cent as a direct result of this.

They’re therefore more hesitant about committing to paying rent to us. Once our centres get up and running they go very well, and we get lots of interest from local professionals. But finding the right people in the first place takes time.”

The effort is worthwhile though, as Pelikaan explains: “The medical offering is very important for our brand as a whole. As I explained before, we need to differentiate our offering and add value to our facilities and product, and a medical health clinic is a great way of doing that. It generates a lot of publicity and makes the club more professional in the eyes of the consumer.”

#### A rental model

Although the medical centres are performing well, the income from renting out the space remains small when compared with membership revenues. However, says Pelikaan: “We have big clubs and we weren’t effectively using all of the space, so the rental model makes perfect sense.”

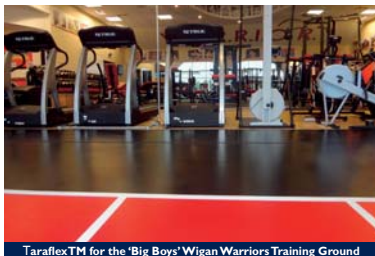
There’s also an additional bonus for the clubs’ bottom line: “With the ►







New Look - Cardinal Heenan School



TaraflexTM for the 'Big Boys' Wigan Warriors Training Ground

# New Regional Show Sites for Liverpool and Wigan - It could be your facility next!



As the public purse strings tighten, manufacturers are having to offer innovation in products, services and solutions. Gerflor now offer 4 products that can ensure the existing sports floor stays in position and allows a new Taraflex™ surface to be overlaid. This innovation reduces down time, refurbishment cost and environmental impact. Taking advantage of Gerflor's REGIONAL SHOW SITE programme, was a major contributory factor which enabled a recent project in Liverpool to proceed.

Founded in 1958 Cardinal Heenan excels in sport. The school, which is a regular finalist in the National Schools Cup for football, is always looking to improve and invest in the sports stars of tomorrow. No pressure, but Steven Gerrard was a former pupil at the school. The main sports hall had seen better days, the old timber floor had become slippery and had an ongoing financial cost with a need for sanding, polishing and re line marking every several years. With the expectation of both students and local community members reflecting their ambitions to do well in sport, an upgrade was inevitable.

"We wanted to provide the pupils, staff and local community with a new and modern sports facility and we looked at a number of solutions that would enable us to do that" comments Jake Collins, Director of Community Sport who helped project manage

**The feedback so far from the students, staff and community users has been fantastic**

Jake Collin, Director of Community Sport, Cardinal Heenan

the scheme. "The walls were re painted, repairs to the lighting system were undertaken and a brand new TaraflexTM Sports floor was installed. This has given us what looks like a million pound venue for a fraction of the price, in fact we spent just £45k"

Other recent Regional Show Sites include: Abbey Park Badminton Club - Sheffield, Croft School - Stafford on Avon and Wigan Warriors RLFC, the professional Rugby League Club needed a sprint track, functional zone and boxing area installing that would protect their key assets - Their Players. The project was very time sensitive

as Pre Season training beckoned and a full renovation programme was out of the question.

Andrew Coley - Player Welfare Manager, Wigan Warriors comments: "We searched the market for a flooring product that could

offer both player protection and also cope with the extreme exercise and conditioning demands you would expect to carry out in professional sporting environment. It quickly became apparent it had to be TaraflexTM. The fit out was seamless and every thing was planned and executed with quality precision and Wigan Warriors were consulted fully throughout the process".

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**A partnership with a national childcare provider has created new revenue streams**

- medical centres, not only do we get rental revenues, but we're also slowly seeing income from personal training going up due to referrals from the medical centres."

Meanwhile, a partnership with national childcare provider Kinderstad has provided the clubs with an additional rental-based revenue stream. "Children represent a key opportunity for the health and fitness sector," says Pellikaan. "However, although our health clubs are very family-orientated, we decided we should stick to what we do best and bring in a third party to run our daycare offering."

"Kinderstad has dedicated areas within our clubs to run after-school

clubs for kids while their parents are still at work. That also allows it to introduce sports into its offering, using our facilities – which again brings in additional revenue for us, as the kids pay for sports sessions, swimming lessons, karate and so on."

Given the large footprint of the Pellikaan clubs, are there any plans for further rental-based agreements? "Yes," says Pellikaan. "I'm currently busy working on a deal with a big dental operation. If I'm honest, that's purely a commercial venture: although there's some synergy between dentistry and the rest of our medical offering, there's no real connection with our health club facilities. Really it's just about driving

revenue from our spare square metres. That said, if it helps the member in some way – through convenience of location for example – then it's one more way of adding perceived value to our offering."

### Future plans

So if we project forward 10 years, where does Pellikaan see the company? "I'd definitely like to have more clubs – around three or four in that sort of timeframe, perhaps one of which could be international. We have considered going into markets such as Belgium, for example."

"I think our focus on families and children will continue to grow, as will our medical offering and our programming for the older population. And no doubt we'll continue to enhance our offering in ways we're already working on, to ensure it remains relevant in the future: improving service for our members, introducing IT to help deliver results, cutting costs, introducing much more measurement across all departments to ensure we're being as effective and efficient as we can be."

"Ultimately I don't see obstacles. I just see opportunities. Patrick and I are both still young – he's 40 and I'm 35 – and we have a lot of appetite for this industry. We're both very, very positive about the future." ●



**After-school clubs bring in extra business**

**"Our focus on families and children will continue to grow, as will our medical offering and programming for the older population"**

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PHOTO: RUE YOGA

Gyms should use data from apps to give members personalised wellness plans



Today's consumers are increasingly taking control of their own health. Louise Kennedy of The Futures Company looks at how this will shape the future of the fitness industry

As our population ages and we approach a world where people are living longer than ever, it's important that people feel confident they will lead healthy lives as they age. However, while life expectancy is increasing, modern lifestyles are taking their toll on quality of life, with an increasing number of people globally suffering from chronic and lifestyle-related diseases.

People need to feel they can trust healthcare providers and professionals

to facilitate a long-term healthy future. However, rising healthcare costs in markets such as the US, combined with a crisis of trust in markets such as the UK – with its recent NHS care scandals (see BBC News coverage: <http://lci.sr7a=YOLIL>) – are eroding consumers' confidence that healthcare providers will deliver.

As a result, people are seeking greater personal control over their health. In the UK, 64 per cent of people in the UK say they take proactive steps to manage their health, even when they

are not ill. Self-diagnosis is also fast on the increase, with 44 per cent of people researching medical conditions themselves, often circumventing traditional, professional healthcare paths (source: *TFC Global Monitor 2010*).

## Taking control

As part of this trend towards the self-management of health, we're seeing more people adopting a range of 'DIY health tools' that help them stay in control of their



## "We're seeing the rise of the 'Quantified Self' – people using smartphone applications to capture details about their health"

▶ wellbeing – whether that's prevention, monitoring or management.

According to Diane Fruge, director of family health at The Pritikin Longevity Center in Miami, US, this is an important move for both consumers and the healthcare industry as a whole: "Prevention and health education are key to better and healthier living. Knowing how to take care of yourself can eliminate unwanted illness and disease, and could potentially help reduce healthcare costs." (see Fox Business report: <http://lei.sr?a=Zfz5V>)

The trend is facilitated largely by the increasing adoption and development of mobile technologies and innovative devices. In the 2013 Mobile App Behaviour Survey – conducted in February by apigee ([www.apigee.com](http://www.apigee.com)) among over 760 smartphone users in the UK, US, Spain, France and Germany – 82 per cent of respondents felt there were critical apps they couldn't go without for even a day, with email leading the way.

Spain topped the chart, with 93 per cent of those surveyed saying they couldn't go one day without apps; in the US, 50 per cent of respondents claimed not to be able to last four hours. Meanwhile, in France, 18 per cent said they couldn't order dinner without an app; 23 per cent of Spaniards felt apps were the only way they could find a date; and 40 per cent of Germans would rather stop drinking coffee than delete all the apps on their phone forever.

With health and wellbeing applications estimated to make up approximately 40 per cent of new smartphone apps being developed (see *The Guardian* online article: <http://lei.sr?a=K1b6A>), self-management of health represents big business. Indeed, when it comes to monitoring existing conditions and diagnosis of potential problems, we're seeing a huge increase in mobile applications and devices – from monitoring moles to identifying malaria – that allow people to receive instant information and diagnostics about their current state of health.

Meanwhile, as social networking continues to be a valuable source of personal connection and influence – while trust in professionals has wavered – we're seeing online citizen support networks such as CureTogether grow in popularity. CureTogether is a network of 26,000 members offering curative advice and support for people across hundreds of illnesses ([www.curetogether.com](http://www.curetogether.com)).

### Data analysis

However, the story doesn't end with short-term solutions. Advancing technology has brought with it a data-driven movement. People are gaining comfort in, and confidence with, data, facts and measurements, and this appears to be particularly true within healthcare and fitness.

We're therefore seeing the rise of the 'Quantified Self' – people using smartphone applications and devices to capture details about their health over time, in order to shape their lives based on enhanced knowledge and insights. Behaviour change is the goal of this movement, as Gina Neff, associate professor of communication at the University of Washington, explains. "Data leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to action," she says.

A wide variety of self-tracking and data capture applications and monitoring devices exist across the market, from the Zeo Sleep Manager that measures sleep cycles, through Jawbone and the Nike+ Fuel Band that measure daily movement, to the Withings range of apps that monitor everything from heart rate and activities to weight and calorie intake.

However, according to Christiaan Vorkink, principal at health technology company True Ventures, adequate analysis of this data remains a challenge:



"A huge Quantified Self problem is that our ability to measure has outpaced our modes and models for analysis."

Analysis expertise is essential if data is to be translated into the right course of action for the user, in terms of a tailored healthcare plan. Knowing about yourself is one thing, but knowing what to do with that information is another thing entirely.

So what might happen next? In the future, we will see a greater focus on the importance of data analysis and healthcare integration. We may see the advance of remote healthcare, for example, where doctors monitor patients remotely – analysing data generated by monitoring apps and devices to give tailored treatment advice – thereby saving on GP visits and healthcare resource. Already devices such as Sensimed's Triggerfish system – a wearable, sensor-filled contact lens for glaucoma sufferers – are able to wirelessly send data that doctors can monitor, adjusting medication as necessary.

As technologies advance, new devices will emerge that not only monitor health, but that can also administer treatments. Contact lens manufacturers are again leading the way, with a breakthrough drug-dispensing product – which sandwiches medicine between two layers of lens, administering it at constant rates over time – tested as long ago as 2009 (see *Scientific American* article: <http://lei.sr?a=f8XT7>).



The Nike+ Fuel Band is one of many new activity monitoring devices



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### Tapping the trend

So what might this mean for the fitness industry? The emergence of self-monitoring and data-driven behaviour change is of huge significance. As healthcare management becomes more people-centred, it's important for the fitness industry to encourage and allow people to feel comfortable and confident in taking a proactive role in managing their own health and fitness activities.

As we have seen, new and accessible technologies have a vital role to play, and this cannot be ignored. The apps and device markets are growing and advancing, driven by the need for convenient and tailored solutions. These will become central to the way people plan their health and fitness activities, so it's important for the industry to actively embrace these new technologies.

Here we outline three ways in which the fitness industry should tap into the up-and-coming 'DIY Health' trend:

#### Make lifestyle apps compulsory:

Gyms and health clubs should offer a lifestyle app including training, calorie and exercise functions as standard, to be used by all members from sign-up. This should be integrated into all fitness activity, making its usage compulsory both inside the gym and out. A bespoke branded gym app would be the ideal, helping to drive brand loyalty.

#### Deliver ultra-personal training:

Application and device data should be central to all fitness activity, both within and outside of the gym. Fitness professionals could be trained to spend time analysing the holistic lifestyle and fitness data received from the apps in order to offer the most personalised fitness plans and health advice possible.

#### Reward lifestyle change:

The continued usage of lifestyle apps and devices should be rewarded as a positive lifestyle change through discounts on other products or health club services, such as at-home equipment for additional workouts, or massages and other holistic treatments. ●

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# EXERCISE IS MEDICINE

Exercise has a positive impact on many aspects of our lives, from the physical to the emotional and social. Recently there's been a vast amount of research that continues to support this point, highlighting the many and varied benefits of exercise. Kristoph Thompson rounds up some of the latest published studies

## Exercise mends a broken heart

**R**egular and strenuous exercise can reactivate dormant stem cells, leading to the development of new heart muscle, according to research published in the *European Heart Journal*. These findings indicate that the damage caused by heart disease or failure could be partially repaired by exercise.

Researchers from Liverpool John Moores University in the UK showed that healthy rats undertaking the equivalent of 30 minutes of strenuous exercise a day demonstrated activity in 60 per cent of previously dormant heart stem cells. After two weeks of exercise, there was a seven per cent increase in the number of cardiomyocytes – the ‘beating’ cells in heart tissue.

While previous research has shown that injections of chemicals known as growth factors can coax dormant stem cells back to life, this is

the first study to show that regular exercise can have a similar effect by stimulating growth factor production.

Researchers will now examine the effects of exercise on rats that have suffered heart attacks to determine if the results are even more pronounced. Dr Georgina Ellison, who led the study, says: “We hope exercise might be even more effective in damaged hearts, because you have more reason to replace the large amounts of cells that are lost” – ie the body has a greater need to adapt and repair itself after a heart attack.

While an exercise programme is normally included in cardiac rehabilitation, “maybe to be more effective it needs to be carried out at a higher intensity, in order to activate the resident stem cells,” adds Ellison.



Waring, C.D. et al. (2012). The adult heart responds to increased workload with physiologic hypertrophy, cardiac stem cell activation, and new myocyte formation. *European Heart Journal*. Oct 25. [Epub ahead of print]



“To be more effective in cardiac rehabilitation, exercise may need to be carried out at a higher intensity, in order to activate the resident stem cells”





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Exercise is thought to increase exposure to antioxidant enzymes which may help boost sperm count

## Exercise improves male fertility

**R**ecent research from Harvard University has reported that moderate exercise boosts the chances of fatherhood. Men who undertook 15 or more hours of moderate to vigorous exercise each week had, on average, sperm counts that were 73 per cent higher than those who exercised for less than five hours a week. Interestingly, mild exercise had no effect.

Sedentary activity, measured by the number of hours spent watching television, had a negative effect on sperm count. Those who watched 20 or more hours of television each week had a 44 per cent lower sperm count than those who watched very little TV.

According to the researchers, one of the reasons for the higher sperm counts was an increase in the exposure to antioxidant enzymes, which have been shown to have beneficial effects on sperm count. Being inactive has the opposite effect, leading to high levels of oxidative stress and poor sperm production.

However, researchers warn that too much exercise can be harmful to sperm production. Previous studies involving professional marathon runners, cyclists and triathletes have reported poor semen quality among these groups. This reduction is caused by the stress to the body brought on by prolonged periods of intense exercise. In this situation, the rate of various bodily processes changes, affecting sperm production.

Gaskins, A.J. et al. (2013). *Physical activity and television watching in relation to semen quality in young men. British Journal of Sports Medicine. Feb 4. [Epub ahead of print]*

## Exercise protects the brain from fat attack

**A**diet containing lots of fatty foods is associated with a decline in brain functioning, elevating the risk of conditions such as Alzheimer's. Exactly how this occurs is unknown, but researchers think that fatty acids from food infiltrate the brain and jump-start a process that causes damage to the regions responsible for memory and learning.

A recent study by the University of Minnesota in the US examined the result of a high-fat diet (where at least 40 per cent of calories were from fat) on memory in rats, and then the subsequent effects of exercise. Memory declined after four months of the high-fat diet, but then improved once exercise was introduced.

After seven weeks, the rats on the high-fat diet were scoring as well on the memory test as they had at the start, whereas the memory of those not exercising continued to decline. The results suggest that exercise stimulates the production of substances that fight the effects of fatty acids on the brain. The amount of exercise wasn't excessive – the rats did the equivalent of 30 minutes' jogging a day – but researchers stress the same protective effect might not be noted in humans.

Mavanji, V. et al. (2012). *Exercise reduces cognitive decline induced by dietary fat. Presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience.*





## ► Exercise lowers prostate cancer deaths

In a joint study from Harvard Medical School and the University of California, US, researchers tracked 51,529 male health professionals over an 18-year period.

Among the 2,705 who were diagnosed with prostate cancer, the amount and intensity of exercise undertaken was correlated with risk of death.

Any form of activity conveyed a protective effect, but the most significant reductions in risk were associated with vigorous exercise. Compared to those who did the least amount of activity, those doing 10 or more hours of non-vigorous activity a week had a 49 per cent reduction in risk of death from all causes.

Those doing more than three hours of vigorous activity a week had a 61 per cent reduction in risk of mortality.

Kenfield, S.A. et al. (2011). *Physical activity and survival after prostate cancer diagnosis in the health professionals follow-up study*. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. 29(6): 726-732

from prostate cancer – even though they had already been diagnosed with this condition.

Researchers proposed a number of different mechanisms by which exercise conveys its protective effects. Previous research has demonstrated that higher levels of insulin production and inflammation are associated with increased risk of prostate cancer death. Exercise has been shown to increase the body's sensitivity to insulin, resulting in lower insulin production, and reducing the levels of inflammation. Physical activity has also been shown to boost the activity of the innate immune system – the body's first line of defence against infection or disease.

While the present study was unable to identify which of these mechanisms was responsible, it was considered likely that one or more contributes to the protective effects of exercise.

## A fitter outlook – exercise improves vision

According to a review of the current research, exercise is associated with an improvement in two measures of visual prowess: contrast sensitivity and visual acuity.

Contrast sensitivity is the ability to distinguish between overlapping, stationary and poorly outlined objects. For example, those with low contrast sensitivity may not be able to detect black letters on a poorly-lit white page, while those with high contrast sensitivity may be able to distinguish between two overlapping, near-identical objects from a distance in poor light. Visual acuity, meanwhile, is the ability to see fine detail.

Athletes display higher levels of contrast sensitivity, and while exercise may or may not directly improve this measure of vision, previous research has suggested that the chemical dopamine may play a part. Dopamine levels increase with exercise, and higher levels of this chemical have been shown to increase contrast sensitivity.

In addition, the review showed that those who exercised had better visual acuity than non-exercisers. Indeed, visual acuity was shown to improve during exercise – as the intensity of the participants' cycling increased, so visual acuity improved. Researchers repeated the eyesight tests two days later and found that visual acuity remained higher than before exercise, indicating that you may be able to retain these gains in the longer term, not just during exercise.

These improvements in visual acuity are thought to result from the temporary boost to various systems and functions in the body that occur as a response to physical exertion: the body interprets exercise as a form of stress and instigates the primitive 'fight or flight' response. As part of this process, pupil size increases, allowing more light into the eye and enhancing visual acuity.

Zimmerman, A.B., Lust, K.L., Bullimore, M.A. (2011). *Visual Acuity and Contrast Sensitivity Testing for Sports Vision*. *Eye & Contact Lens*. 37(3):153-159



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Study: Walking appeared more beneficial than cycling

## Walking women less likely to suffer stroke

Women who walk at least three hours a week are 43 per cent less likely to suffer a stroke than women who walk less or not at all, according to new research from Spain. In the study, researchers surveyed nearly 33,000 men and women and divided them by gender, the type of exercise undertaken and their total weekly exercise time.

Interestingly, women who walked for 210 minutes or more each week had a lower risk of stroke than those who cycled or did other higher-intensity workouts for a shorter amount of time. Another notable finding was that no reduction was seen for men based on type and frequency of exercise.

The researchers did point out that their findings might not translate directly to the general population due to certain characteristics: the majority of subjects in the study were blood donors, who tend to be in good health in order to give blood. These characteristics make the group studied very specific, with notable differences versus the general population.

That said, there is evidence to show exercise is related to a reduced risk of stroke and other diseases, and that 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day can help prevent disease.

Huerta, J.M. et al. (2013). *Physical activity and risk of cerebrovascular disease in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition-Spain study*. *Stroke*. 44(1):111-8



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# MICRO-MANAGEMENT

'RESERVE YOUR SEAT' TECHNOLOGY AND A FOCUS ON EXCELLENT INSTRUCTION – ALISON BLEDGE REPORTS ON THE OPENING OF LONDON'S LATEST CYCLING-ONLY MICROGYM



Cyclebeat uses technology, new to the UK, that streams riders' performances live onto a board at the front of the class

Visit any major city in the UK and you can't fail to notice the boom in microgyms over the last few years. These smaller, specialist and often independently-owned studios are steadily growing in popularity, with cycling-only gyms at the forefront of this trend.

In the United States, in spite of a premium price tag, SoulCycle attracts a very loyal following. And now the options are growing for London-based exercisers, with a new studio – Cyclebeat – joining the swelling ranks of the cycling-only microgyms alongside the likes of BOOM!Cycle.

## THE CYCLEBEAT REVOLUTION

Cyclebeat, which opened in the City of London on 13 February, was founded

by two London-based lawyers, Greg Allon and Justin Crewe. Both huge fans of indoor cycling, nevertheless their experience of attending classes had led to frustration due to the varying standards of club facilities, as well as class timetables that failed to fit in with their busy schedules.

On a trip to New York, the pair visited a number of boutique cycling studios and the idea of a business venture took shape. Allon says: "After experiencing some really great classes Stateside, we returned to London very excited about the potential to create a studio that offered only indoor cycling, but that delivered it really well.

"Cycle studios in the US have certainly helped create a buzz and sense of excitement around indoor cycling.

While London has seen a small number of boutique studios open in the last few years, we believe Cyclebeat is leading the vanguard of smart fitness boutiques that offer customers a far richer cycling experience than they would get in a traditional gym."

Crewe adds: "We set out to create an indoor cycling environment that provided a consistently high standard, and we identified three key factors to ensure we stood out from competitors. Firstly, and most importantly, Cyclebeat has some of the most talented instructors in the country, offering inspirational classes and a fantastic playlist. Secondly, we've introduced technology that makes for a much richer experience, enabling riders to book a specific bike, compete if they choose ▶



Over 600 members signed up in the first month



Reception features a huge mural of the London skyline

► to, and track their progress. And finally, Cyclebeat offers a flexible membership system, where new riders can buy a 30-day pass for just £30, then decide whether to pay as they go or buy a flexible membership. Either way, there's no long-term commitment for riders."

### INSPIRATIONAL SPACE

The 325sq m (3,500sq ft) studio sits on the site of a former City pub, The Red Lion, and a number of original features have been retained, giving the studio a unique feel. Fortunately for Cyclebeat, Crewe's wife and Allon's sister is Olga Allon, an architect and also founder of Hot Bikram Yoga, which has three boutique yoga studios in London. Olga therefore advised Crewe and Allon on the design of the Cyclebeat studio.

Cyclebeat is built over two floors, with a reception area and main studio space located on the ground floor. Meanwhile spacious changing rooms and a stretch zone can be found in the basement, with doors leading out to an open-air courtyard. Allon explains: "The spacious layout and design have been arranged to give the best possible



The studio occupies a former City pub site

### FLEXIBLE CLASSES AND MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

Cyclebeat classes are scheduled throughout weekdays and have been designed to appeal to workers in London's City district. The timetable features 45-minute sessions from 6.45am to 7.00pm, with 35-minute sessions during lunchtime hours.

The studio offers flexible membership, where everyone starts on an introductory offer that allows unlimited rides for 30 days, starting on the day of the first class. Riders can then either pay as they go (£15 a class), buy a 10-class card for £120, take out a monthly subscription for £75, or buy an annual pass which, costing £750, offers 12 months for the price of 10.

Cyclebeat is located at 8 Lombard Court, London EC3V 9BJ; [www.cyclebeat.co.uk](http://www.cyclebeat.co.uk)

experience. The bright, spacious communal areas are inviting and friendly, while the studio space is dark and low-lit. The use of Cyclebeat's signature blue lighting creates an ambience and sense of excitement for each class."

He continues: "It was important that the studio design was an extension of the Cyclebeat brand – a brand that plays on song lyrics. Well-known lyrics have been stencilled on the studio walls using Cyclebeat's unique font, which has broken lines through it to illustrate speed and movement.

"As Cyclebeat's branding is multi-coloured, we chose grey as a background colour for the interior, with splashes of brightly-coloured signage around the studio." The changing rooms have splashes of lime green on the lockers, while the back wall of reception has a huge, multi-coloured backdrop of the London skyline – a striking feature for riders checking in for their classes.

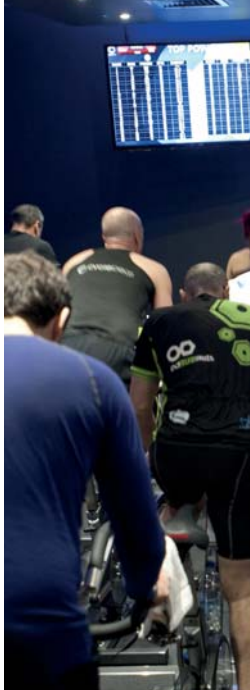
Allon adds: "The studio design offers a space consistent with the brand and design that members see on the website. It feels fresh, unique and gives a sense of the importance of music and movement."

### INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

As well as a well-designed, high specification studio space, Cyclebeat offers riders a unique experience which starts the moment they log on to the studio website. Having decided which class they would like to attend, riders can reserve a particular bike – just as they would when booking a seat on a plane. This management software, provided by US technology company Zingit, has been specifically designed for cycling studios. Prior to a class, participants can also view their instructor's profile online and even listen to a sample playlist on Spotify.

The innovation continues into the studio through the introduction of the 'Beatboard', which is based on cutting-edge performance technology provided by US-based company Performance IQ. Cyclebeat is the first studio or gym in the UK to use this new system, which allows riders to see their performance streamed live onto a board at the front of the class.

Allon explains: "The Beatboard only identifies riders by their bike number, but it provides the ultimate experience





Cyclebeat aims to recruit the most talented cycling instructors in the UK

for competitive riders to lead the pack and is highly motivating for every rider, spurring them on to work harder. When the ride ends, performance data from each ride is stored in the rider's account, allowing them to track their progress over time. It's a fantastic tool for helping riders meet their fitness goals."

Cyclebeat's emphasis on innovation is further illustrated through its partnership with Keiser UK: the cycle studio features 50 Keiser M3+ bikes. Tim Colston, MD of Keiser UK, says: "Cyclebeat has harnessed the popularity of indoor group cycling and enhanced the classes by adding the latest technology. The cutting-edge Beatboard locks onto the competitive nature of each participant, and our M3+ bike – which features an onboard computer that provides heart rate, calorie, power and resistance level monitoring – is the perfect partner for this innovation. It means everyone from athletes to beginners can enjoy a truly effective workout."

Colston continues: "The ambience in a class also has a huge effect on the participants' exercise experience.

Cyclebeat's clever use of a stadium-style layout and immense sound system offers an experience that's hard to beat. From an equipment perspective, the M3+ matches Cyclebeat's aspirations, with whisper-quiet performance that means class participants only hear the motivational music and the instructor, without any 'equipment soundtrack'.

"Cyclebeat has sought to secure some of the most talented and inspirational instructors in the country, and Keiser UK is proud to partner this new studio in its quest for excellence."

#### FUTURE PLANS

In the first month after opening, the studio saw more than 600 people sign up to its introductory offers. So what plans does Cyclebeat have for the future? Allon explains: "First we want to firmly establish our City site as the premier indoor cycling venue in the country. We believe we're at the start of a wave of boutique cycling studios opening across the country, and our aspiration is to consolidate our position as the market leader, initially in London, and subsequently nationally." ●

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# BE 'APPY

**I**n some ways the physical activity industry is forward-thinking and advanced, and in other ways it's a long way behind enabling the consumer to consume its product in the way they like to consume, which is to look online," says John Tucker, director of strategy and partnerships at ukactive. "If people are changing how they buy, then we need to change how we sell," adds Neil Harmsworth, co-founder of payasUgym.com. "Increasingly people are buying online, and even if they don't buy, they go online to do their research."

However, 2011 research by communications agency McCann showed that, while most other industries were rated eight out of 10 for booking online, sport only managed three out of 10.

## Consumer demand

As an extension of this need to tap into online buying processes, the fitness industry also needs to get more app-savvy. According to Luxury Institute 2012, 64 per cent of affluent app users say they view brands with mobile apps more favourably. Not only that, but time spent using mobile apps is starting to challenge TV viewing, with consumers spending 127 minutes a day on them.

And it's not just about fitting in with customer demand: apps and booking websites offer great marketing opportunities for clubs and help ensure classes run at capacity, as well as

For years it's been possible to book hotels and trains online from smartphones, but not fitness classes. Now the tide is turning. Kath Hudson looks at some of the booking sites and apps on offer

cutting queues and freeing up reception staff to do other tasks. And with a proliferation of apps and booking websites to which clubs can subscribe for a reasonable fee, it's easier than ever to offer customers the ability to book into classes online.

Pure Gym is one of the early adopters of an app: it has already launched an app for the iPhone, with an Android version to follow later this year. The app enables users to locate the nearest Pure Gym, book and cancel classes, refer friends and access fitness tips from personal trainers, as well as view instructional videos and other information.

The experience of Huntingdonshire District Council's One Leisure also

reflects the growing appetite for booking online. Three months after the soft launch of online booking at one of its five sites – a pilot that was carried out three years ago – 60 per cent of all class transactions were carried out and paid for online; online booking has now been rolled out to the rest of its sites. "As a business, online booking has helped us become more efficient, as well as reducing unpaid use," says leisure systems co-ordinator Michelle Schwick. "For customers, it saves time as they can see at a glance what's available and swap between sites if classes are full."

Meanwhile online booking has enabled Sport Sheffield, the university's sports offering, to re-allocate resources on-site. With bookings moving online, it was able to convert the now under-used reception area into a café, creating a secondary revenue stream. When the centre started receiving a growing number of complaints about busy reception desks and telephones not being answered, it introduced an additional 50p fee for booking in person, while freezing online prices. The result was a rise in online reservations to now account for 78 per cent of all bookings – and no more queues.

Facilitating class bookings online or via an app is something clubs need to consider to stay ahead of the curve. We take a look at some of the options.



▲ It's currently free for venues to join spogo, with around 90,000 sport and fitness facilities now listed



▲ payasUgym's deal with Tesco takes its customer base to 16.5 million people

## SPOGO

A Lottery-funded project led by ukactive, spogo currently lists 90,000 venues, making it the biggest aggregated database of venues in the UK. Its brief is to make finding and booking sport and exercise online as easy as booking a train ticket. Still in beta phase, not all venues offer online booking, but the number that do is growing all the time.

At the moment it doesn't cost anything to be listed, but going forward commissions may be taken on bookings.

"spogo will give us a true insight into the customer journey," says project director Richard Pearey. "We'll be able to use the data to observe customer behaviour and use this to inform initiatives on how to get people active – another overarching aim of the site."

## FITNESS FREAK

Launched just before Christmas 2012, this booking site has hit the ground running, with 96 London venues on-board offering between 3,000 and 3,500 fitness classes a week.

Founder Shara Tochia wanted to launch the health and fitness equivalent of restaurant finder/booking website

► Some classes booked on Fitness Freak come with a discount

toptable.co.uk. Customers can search Fitness Freak for classes according to type of activity, area and time, and then book and pay online. Classes cost the same, or cheaper, than booking direct, and operators pay a 10 per cent commission per booking.

The site also has a lifestyle element to help build its client base, with a magazine section where resident journalist Booty Blogger reviews classes. There are also guest and user reviews.

A loyalty scheme is set to be launched soon, and Tochia is planning to take the concept to three more cities this year, with Manchester and Edinburgh currently on the list.

## PAYASUGYM

Through payasUgym.com, people buy gym passes online and are sent a code, by SMS and email, to show at reception. One- and three-month passes are also offered. Operators pay a small commission on passes redeemed.

Currently 1,000 venues are listed – a number that's growing all the time. The site was founded to allow flexible gym membership for those who travel, but co-founder Neil Harmsworth says people are actually using it to try gyms under the radar before joining. It has therefore proved a successful lead generator.

A new tie-up with Tesco Clubcard has taken payasUgym's customer



► **Gladstone's Connect system can apply a £2 fine for no-shows**

- base to 16.5 million people, while a partnership with O2 means users get a priority message when they are near a registered gym. This year a new mobile site is being launched and the concept is being expanded overseas.

## GYMSYNC

Brand new GymSync is a package that's currently being trialled by a handful of independent health clubs in the UK. It's self-managed by the gym and operates in real time: clubs input their own timetable and the system integrates with live bookings.

GymSync publishes timetables online and enables people to book into classes, put themselves on a reserve list and if necessary cancel their place. In the event of a cancellation, the next person on the reserve list automatically receives a notification, making booking into busy classes much easier.

The system works via a free app on smartphones; if people don't have a smartphone, they can log in via the GymSync website and complete the process by email. The system also sends out reminders about the class and, if the instructor needs to cancel for some reason, this can be done instantaneously via a text box. Payment can't yet be taken, but there are plans to add this facility at a later date.

Subscription to the service costs £30 per club per month. For operators, the benefit is that classes will be as full – and therefore as profitable – as possible. There's also a reporting tool that can help measure the profitability of classes and inform timetabling.

## CLOCKSUSHI

ClockSushi offers a booking system on a subscription basis for £49 a month per club, where people can book and pay online. It sends out confirmation emails and SMS reminders about the class.



► **ClockSushi can link online bookings with a POS system**



The system can also be run with a POS till, so the website links with bookings taken on reception. A number of new features are currently in the development pipeline, including a reserve list.

## BOOKING BUG

Booking Bug is a cloud-based booking system for clubs, meaning that the availability is always live, whether being viewed by admin or by clients looking for a class online.

For a monthly fee, Booking Bug enables online bookings to be taken and paid for, and sends out automated confirmations via email and SMS. The appearance of the booking page can be customised to look like the fitness club's own website, and an app can be run alongside it.

Of further interest to operators, Booking Bug offers integrated marketing tools to develop and disseminate online and mobile marketing communications, and can administer promotions, offers, discounts and daily deals. There are also reporting tools to analyse data.

Prices start at £14.95 a month for personal trainers, rising to £49.95 for larger businesses with up to 20 'resources' – such as swimming pool, gym, sports courts, etc.

## GLADSTONE

Gladstone's online booking module, Connect, works in real time with Gladstone's Plus2 leisure management software, enabling customers to view, book and pay for classes, sports courts and courses, amend reservations, manage and renew memberships and sign up for direct debit.

Gladstone also offers an iPhone booking app, allowing members to make bookings that can also link



► **Booking Bug page can be made to look like a club's own website**

to Facebook, allowing them to tell their friends what activity they have booked and where.

Many Gladstone customers have installed kiosks on-site to act in lieu of – or in addition to – reception. These kiosks also allow visitors to book sessions and buy money-saving multi-class packages. Tickets can also be collected from the kiosks for class bookings made online at home.

Connect also has a 'dishonoured bookings' functionality, introducing a £2 fine for no-shows. When South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture introduced this, it led to a reduction in no-shows of around 35 per cent.

## BIG WAVE APP

Big Wave Media has created an app that can be tailored for each facility, showing timetables and enabling class booking. Simon Beer, head of PR and digital services at Big Wave Media, says most operators are using this as a value-added service rather than charging for the app.

Big Wave Media charges a monthly fee of £225 for one facility; multiple sites get a discounted rate per site. As part of the package, there is an analytics suite, allowing operators to see how many people opened the app, viewed the timetable or booked a class. ●



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# CREATING COMMUNITIES

Abigail Harris takes a look at the latest software designed to help members feel a sense of belonging to their gym 'community'

**A**s individuals increasingly take control of their own health and fitness (see p39), using apps to train outside of a gym environment, operators need to work even harder to retain their members. Indeed, it's widely thought that health clubs will only survive into the future if they can create a true sense of community – of club – for their members, giving people a reason to continue training within the health club community.

The impact of this on long-term retention is so strongly felt that sophisticated software is being developed to engage with members – software that extends outside of the club to make members feel valued and supported in their daily activities, drawing them back into the club, as well as being embedded into fitness equipment to interact with members while they train.

## Technogym – Ecosystem

People today are connected to each other like never before, according to Alex Bennett, Technogym UK's TG network manager. "At Technogym, we recognise the tremendous opportunity this represents to provide end-users

with 'wellness on the go': seamless access to the tools they need for a wellness lifestyle, anywhere, at any time, through any device."

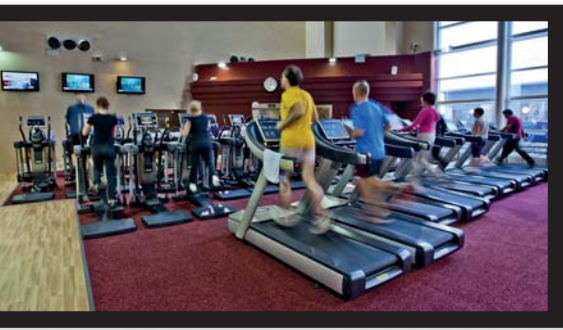
The Technogym Ecosystem is a cloud-based system that facilitates precisely this sort of 'wellness on the go'. From network-enabled equipment with interactive touch-screens to smart apps that pre-empt customers' needs, it promotes retention by creating strong connections with health club members, both inside and outside the facility. The mywellness cloud is a core ingredient, offering web and mobile applications that help operators provide a personalised training experience.

"The Profile, Challenge and Communicator applications help clubs create engaging communities," continues Bennett. "Profile is a questionnaire that scientifically maps users' aspirations so staff can bring like-minded people together. The Challenge application sets targeted group or individual challenges that can motivate members to reach new heights through friendly competition, and the Communicator app publicises these challenges, and other messages, to members using the cardiovascular machines."

Sheffield International Venues recently trialled the Communicator and Challenge applications at Hillsborough Leisure Centre's Fitness Unlimited gym. The first challenge involved six teams competing to burn the most calories and was promoted via instructor engagement and messages sent to CV machines via Communicator. Within a week, 200 members joined the challenge, with a total of 68,000 calories burnt to date.

"Members really appreciate the spirit of friendly competition sparked off

**Technogym's Challenge and Communicator applications helped create a buzz at Hillsborough LC**







Clubs can harness the power of technology, giving members the option to access 'wellness on the go'

by the challenge," says Peter Clark, corporate health and fitness manager at Sheffield International Venues. "It has helped build emotional engagement with the centre and helped members embrace the fact that intelligent technology can help them measure results and stay motivated."

#### **The Retention People – Customer Experience Management**

The Retention People's (TRP) suite of Customer Experience Management software is used to deliver improvements in retention, participation and customer service, and facilitates 'community' by turning customers into a powerful sales force for their club.

TRP's Digital+ allows operators to develop closer relationships with members when they are not in the club, either online via their club Facebook and Twitter feeds, or via automated personalised emails and texts based on attendance and bookings activity.

"However, no operator can really claim to build an effective community of members unless they are confident their club feels like a great place to be – somewhere members want to keep coming back to," says Justin Mendleton, sales director at TRP. TRP's Interact+ module encourages this by signposting staff to members who are most at risk of not returning. Interactions with these members can be measured to understand what types of interaction,

and which staff, deliver the most increases in visit frequency.

Active Nation, a campaigning charity that manages 16 facilities in the UK, uses TRP software to help foster a sense of community among its members. Active Nation initially implemented Interact+ at one centre in January 2011 before adding four sites in Southampton and then, having driven interactions that were proven to increase visits and retention, rolling it out across all fitness sites during 2012.

Around 75 per cent of all interactions within Active Nation's sites have been shown to be effective, resulting in a repeat member visit within the following seven days. The charity has also seen a year-on-year increase in ▶

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### RETENTION SOFTWARE



Preva (above and below right) allows members to set their own motivating goal

- ▶ the length of stay of its members since implementing the TRP system.

Stuart Martin, group commercial manager, says: "TRP software is an integral part of measuring and managing member retention proactively. We are serious about making a difference to people's lives and keeping people active, and we can only demonstrate that seriousness by using software."

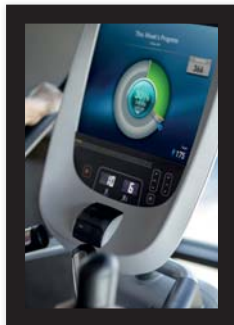
#### Precor – Preva networked fitness

"Precor understands the importance of establishing a relationship with exercisers in order to keep them motivated and help them achieve their goals," says Brent Brooks, Precor's VP of networked fitness. "That's why we introduced our cloud-based platform, Preva networked fitness, on our P80 touch-screen console."

Preva's suite of tools offers three main elements: Preva Net, Personal Accounts and Business Suite. All are designed to drive engagement and participation while simultaneously enabling operators to better manage their business and ultimately drive revenue.



TRP shows who is likely to drop out, and who will recommend their gym



Tools include Preva Net's Message Manager, which allows clubs to communicate directly with members while they are working out. The Park Inn Hotel in St Helen's, UK, knows just how powerful and persuasive it can be: it ran a competition using Message Manager which actively encouraged members to speak with staff and thereby build relationships – members had to contact staff in order to enter the competition. Fifty per cent of people using the gym during the competition's 30-minute timeframe responded.

Meanwhile Personal Accounts was created to help members interact with their club, not only in the gym but also outside of the club via a new mobile app, thereby enhancing the member-club relationship. Users can set personal weekly workout goals, choose targets relevant to them – distance, calories or duration – and select a long-term focus, such as losing weight or toning up. Weekly progress is measured with a goal summary that alerts exercisers if they are on- or off-target, automatically recalculating remaining workouts so they can still reach their goal. To keep them motivated and engaged, users



Pulse's SmartCentre allows member communication, interaction and feedback

"It's popular with all ages, is a talking point between members, and gives instructors more reason to interact"

earn recognition rewards and milestone badges which they can share online – again enhancing the sense of community.

"Preva Accounts is truly engaging our members, encouraging them to try different workouts as well as building a sense of club," says Paula Pocock, fitness manager at Wellington Health and Fitness Club at Wellington College, UK, which saw more than 1,000 different workouts performed by 116 individual members in less than one month. "Members are logging on to each piece of kit to see their progress towards the weekly goal they've set. It's popular with all ages, has been a talking point between members, and has given instructors more reason to interact with members in the gym."

Precor has also teamed up with TRP to offer its retention system via Preva. Preva Retention works like Interact+ to help clubs have meaningful interactions with members identified as being at risk of drop-out. Clubs can also measure and track members' Net Promoter Score (NPS) – their likelihood of recommending their gym to a friend or colleague.

"Member experience is at the forefront of everything we do," says Brooks. "As well as engaging members while they exercise, we want to help operators deliver a better member experience through meaningful interactions, which will ultimately improve their retention rates too."

#### Pulse – SmartCentre

Mclub Spa and Fitness in Stoke, UK, opened in September 2011, installing Pulse Fitness equipment and its gym management software solution SmartCentre. As a former Esporta club with a high membership base, Mclub's

first objective was to re-engage with the existing members, highlighting the key changes and improvements within the club and building the foundations for an ongoing, sociable fitness community.

Pulse SmartCentre is a single software solution for the entire fitness suite operation, seamlessly connecting members, equipment and staff for improved efficiency, retention and profitability. For members, it makes the user experience more motivational and enjoyable through communication, interaction and feedback.

Mclub proactively uses many of the software's functions to help create a fitness community. These include: Reports Centre, sharing user statistics in competition format on leader boards and via social media sites; Messaging Centre, keeping members up-to-date with club news; Personalised Virtual Workout Plans, a bespoke digital workout designed to meet the member's goals; and Two-Way Recognition, through which members can see a picture, name and job title of staff available, and staff can see which members are in the gym so they can easily approach them.

"One of our primary goals was to build a community, and to achieve this we needed a proactive approach to interaction with members," says Richard Stonier, fitness manager of Mclub.

"SmartCentre has been at the centre of this. We use the messaging system to send weekly newsletters, information on events and to encourage feedback. Staff use the data to know when to engage with members, offer workout reviews, further guidance, etc. You can see members are motivated by the instant feedback and in-club competitions." ●

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# Virtual Reality

Are virtual classes bringing a new lease of life to group exercise studios? Rasmus Ingerslev takes a look at this growing trend

**V**irtual classes, teacherless classes, video-based classes – this new phenomenon, seen in both group exercise and cycling studios, is growing fast and has many labels. But what is it exactly: how can it be used, how does it work, and what is its value?

## A strong logic

To start with the why, imagine investing in 30 treadmills and turning them off for 70 to 80 per cent of the day. It wouldn't make sense, would it? Yet the same thing is effectively happening in group exercise and cycling studios around the world, which are not in use for 70 or 80 per cent of the day.

There is, of course, an obvious reason for that: any club will always consider the potential number of members who would be able to attend a class before putting it into a schedule and taking on the cost. It simply doesn't make sense to offer live classes during the majority of the day. This is where virtual classes come into their own, allowing studios to add value to the club throughout the day – members can do the classes they want, when they want, while clubs optimise the use of expensive floor space and bikes they are already paying for.

Surveys in the UK and the Nordics (over 1,100 responses) suggest that, in clubs with a virtual offering, around two-thirds of new members have been influenced in their buying decision by the fact that classes are available throughout the day.

"Utilising dead space by offering classes all day will no doubt sell additional memberships for us and add value for our close to one million members – without detracting from the quantity or quality of our live class experience," agrees David Patchell-Evans, CEO and founder of GoodLife Fitness in Canada, which is

currently trialling virtual classes in six of its 300 sites. "We will ultimately add something like 25,000 virtual classes a week across all clubs, at a minimal cost."

It's too early to tell if virtual classes can also benefit retention. However, with numerous reports – IHRSA's guide to membership retention, for example – and myriad anecdotal evidence indicating that retention rates are higher for group fitness members than for gym-only members, it's likely that virtual classes will have a positive impact on retention as well as new member acquisition.

## How does it work?

The technical set-up for a virtual class system is very straightforward: you basically need a screen, a projector and a computer connected to the internet that stores and runs your classes. It's typically possible to run the sound through the existing audio system in your group exercise studio.

There are currently a number of systems on the market, such as Fitness On Request, Fitness On Demand, MyRide (cycling only), Virtual Instructor (from Cyber Coach) and Wexer Virtual. Most systems allow clubs to either pre-schedule classes or let members choose classes on-demand. Since most clubs will not allow a single member to decide what happens in the group exercise or cycling studio – at least during hours where more participants are expected – most clubs prefer either only pre-



Virtual classes can be used to complement a live class timetable





Virtual classes can include on-screen footage that brings the outdoors into the studio

scheduled classes or a combination of pre-scheduled and on-demand. The benefit of offering pre-scheduled classes is that clubs can promote an extensive group exercise schedule that can exceed that offered by the competition.

Prices for installing a virtual class system vary, but the cost is typically in the region of US\$3,000–20,000 (£2,000–13,000 / €2,350–15,600). Most providers also charge a monthly licence fee, typically ranging from US\$100–300.

### Substitution or addition?

Like other offers in gyms, virtual classes are not a 'one size fits all' feature and judging from user feedback, instructors should not feel threatened in any way. Fewer than 10 per cent of participants say they prefer video-based instruction to a

live instructor, and most choose virtual classes simply because it allows them to participate in a class when no live options are available. Indeed, statistics show that the majority of those who participate in virtual classes also participate in instructor-led classes, suggesting that members will do live classes when they can, and virtual classes at other times.

Based on available data, the average member uses a virtual class once or twice a week, typically a 30- to 45-minute beginners' or intermediate class. Longer and/or more advanced classes are available but less used, suggesting that virtual classes appeal predominantly to members who are either new to group exercise or who need flexibility to fit in more group exercise workouts on a weekly basis.

Although virtual classes can work as a standalone solution – in budget clubs where the model does not allow for live classes, for example – in most sites it's more likely they will serve as 'feeders', ultimately driving traffic to live classes.

Zumba Fitness has recently started to offer Basic Steps videos to virtual content platforms for this very reason: the videos allow members to learn and practise the steps in preparation for joining a live class with an instructor. "Our decision to offer Basic Steps videos on virtual content platforms is consistent with our mission to make our instructors successful," says Alberto Perlman, the founder and CEO of Zumba Fitness.

Phillip Mills, CEO of Les Mills International, agrees: "Our research has revealed a correlation between



Wexer Virtual is currently being trialled in six of GoodLife Fitness's 300 sites in Canada





**MyRide virtual cycling classes may also include an instructor to create a combined experience**

- members moving on to live group exercise classes after trying virtual workouts. In that sense, technology will act as a feeder to the live experience."

Virtual class systems can also be used to enhance live classes. Take Virtual Active: a first-person, forward-motion video experience designed to enhance cardio workouts. The videos feature iconic trails, roads, cities and landscapes, helping turn indoor exercise – instructor-led cycling classes, for example – into an outdoor adventure.

As another example, think of a traditional group exercise class for beginners with more than 30 people attending. This would be a challenging task for any instructor, since giving each individual the attention the instructor would like is difficult to achieve without leaving the rest of the class to fend for themselves. However, if the class were virtual, an additional live instructor would be freed up to fully focus on the attendees without having to worry about anyone being left behind when giving one individual special attention.

### Additional considerations

A significant consideration – besides choosing a system that's stable, well supported and easy to use – is content. Members will want high quality classes, great instructors and variety in level, duration and type of classes.

Some would argue that, for health and safety reasons, beginners should not do a class without a live instructor present. However, Fresh Fitness Denmark has offered virtual classes for more than two years, without a single injury reported. Meanwhile, the cardio areas and strength machines in most clubs are not supervised constantly, with members working out unsupervised. Why shouldn't that also be acceptable in



a studio where, thanks to virtual classes, members are in fact also receiving guidance from top instructors?

This calibre of trainer is another selling point: virtual classes offer access to world-class instruction and a huge variety of trainers. Virtual systems could also be used to complement training for existing staff, exposing them to best practice from leading instructors.

### Future trends

We have not yet reached tipping point with virtual classes, but given their ability to generate value from dead space, it's likely that more clubs will incorporate them into their offering going forward. The fact that major brands such as Zumba and Les Mills have entered the virtual arena suggests that it's on the brink of rapid growth.

Not only that, but the virtual class system is a customer-focused innovation that mirrors those in other industries – innovations such as Netflix, which allows customers to watch what they want, when they want to watch it, and which is challenging the traditional cable TV providers that force viewers to follow their programme schedules. Similarly, virtual classes allow members to do the classes they want, when they want to do them. Operators can

therefore meet, and indeed exceed, customer expectations by laying on hundreds of additional classes every week – all for the price of a couple of treadmills. Not that it is an either/or question, but operators might want to ask themselves which would give the stronger competitive advantage.

"Convenience is key, and virtual workouts where participants are guided by on-screen instruction will become prevalent," concludes Mills. "Originally I was something of a sceptic on non-instructor-led exercise, but having trialled a virtual product at Les Mills I'm now a convert. Offering members the convenience of receiving a group exercise experience at any time of the day is compelling. For clubs, it's a massive way to add value as facilities increasingly become 24/7 operations." ●

**Rasmus Ingerslev** is the CEO of Wexer Virtual, which has clients in the UK, US, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. He is also CEO of Fresh Fitness Denmark and a newly appointed member of the IHRSA board of directors.  
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# clocking in

Is there a 'correct' time to exercise based on our internal body clocks? Kate Cracknell reports on recent findings and asks HCM's panel of experts for their thoughts

**I**s there a correct time to exercise – a time at which we can reap more benefits from our activity than if we exercise at another time of day? And if so, is that correct time universal or specific to the individual?

Two US newspapers published interesting articles on this topic towards the end of last year. *The Wall Street*

*Journal* looked at the positive impact of organising all daily schedules around the body's natural rhythms, noting everything from improved mental alertness to enhanced creative thinking if we synch the relevant activities with our body clocks – our circadian rhythms. A recent study by Yale University in the US, published in the journal *Immunity*, even indicates a direct link between circadian rhythms and the immune system.

The problem is that these rhythms can be easily disrupted, whether as a result of our daily schedules being dictated more by school timetables and work deadlines than by our natural body clocks, or the prevalence of artificial light in today's society which throws our inner clocks out of synch.

## Broken body clocks

*The Wall Street Journal* article quoted Dr Steve Kay, a professor of molecular and computational biology at the University of Southern California in the US. Kay observed that a disruption of circadian rhythms has been linked to problems such as diabetes, depression, dementia and obesity, adding that when the body's master clock can synchronise the functioning of all its metabolic, CV and behavioural rhythms in response to light and other natural stimuli, it gives people "an edge in daily life".

The article also looked specifically at how to select the 'correct' time of day to exercise, quoting a number of sports science experts. Michael Smolensky, an adjunct professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Texas, pointed to 3.00pm–6.00pm as the best time for physical performance, as well as the lowest risk of injury. Muscle strength was said to peak between 2.00pm and 6.00pm, at levels as much as 6 per cent above the day's lows, while joints and muscles were reported to be 20 per cent more flexible in the evening. Meanwhile a study of 4,756 patients led

by Boris Medarov, an assistant professor of medicine at Albany Medical College in New York, suggested that the lungs function 17.6 per cent more efficiently at 5.00pm than at midday.

*The New York Times*, meanwhile, asked whether exercise can influence the body's internal clock. Our bodies and therefore our health are ruled by rhythms, explained the article, quoting Christopher Colwell, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California: "The heart, the liver, the brain – all are controlled by an endogenous circadian rhythm." As with Kay, Colwell noted the potential for serious health consequences resulting from a disruption in circadian rhythm, from obesity to certain types of cancer. He and his team therefore set out to investigate whether it was possible to 'fix' a broken clock, specifically looking at exercise as a possible solution.

The studies – published in the *Journal of Physiology* in December 2012 – were conducted on mice. However, the findings suggest exercise does affect circadian rhythms, and that the effect may be most beneficial if physical activity is undertaken in the afternoon. This was, says Colwell, a surprise; he and his colleagues had expected morning exercise to be most productive.

However, Colwell acknowledged that the implications for humans aren't yet clear, and that it's impossible to say at this point whether we should favour afternoon exercise over a morning workout. All he could say with certainty was that exercise is a good idea to avoid health problems linked to a disrupted circadian rhythm; further research might show afternoon workouts to lead to better results, but any exercise was likely to be better than none.

*Health Club Management* decided to investigate further, asking an expert panel for their thoughts on the question: is there a correct time to exercise?



AL PHOTOSHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Studies suggest that joints are 20 per cent more flexible in the evening



“It’s increasingly a 24/7 world – embrace diversity, broaden your definition of exercise”

#### DR CHRIS BEEDIE

Head of ukactive Research Institute  
and senior lecturer, Department  
of Sport & Exercise Science,  
Aberystwyth University – UK



Is there a correct time to exercise? It’s a good question and the answer – as with so many of life’s big questions – is ‘yes but...’.

It’s highly likely that, for a range of reasons, there is an optimum time to exercise for each person. What time of day that is, however, will depend on such a large number of factors that it’s likely that – for anyone but the elite athlete, competitive bodybuilder or exercise obsessive – identification of the time in question is more trouble than it’s worth.

For example, while research suggests that the lungs function best late in the day, certain hormones that regulate response and adaptation to exercise peak in the morning. Likewise,

while muscle force might peak in the evening, motor co-ordination and concentration are way past their best by this time, as is pain tolerance.

If you know the exact balance of physiological, cognitive, emotional and performance variables required to perform at your best and to recover optimally, you might be able to identify the optimal time of day for your specific goals. But here’s the problem: you probably can’t rely on the published

research to do so. Research conducted on large populations rarely generalises to individuals, meaning that you will have to use a lot of trial and error to identify the optimal times of day for each variable for you. And to make things even worse, there’s a strong chance that relationships between time of day and performance variables might change with the season, temperature, stress and a number of other factors.

Train when you can as best you can. If you feel better training in the morning, if you see results, and if it works for your lifestyle, that’s the time to train, irrespective of what the research says. If you want to be a champion, you may need to look deeper into your internal rhythms, but be prepared for a complex journey! ►



### Complex issue: There's a Chinese philosophy which maintains that there's an ideal training time for each muscle group

#### JIM GAVIN

Professor of  
Applied Human  
Sciences, Concordia  
University – Canada



The best answer I can give to this question is: 'it depends.' Humans are both complex and adaptive. We have diverse

patterns and personalities, and we're constantly adjusting to shifting life conditions. Time is only one factor to consider in relation to exercising – and it's not necessarily the dominant one. As personal validation, I dislike evening exercise, yet that's when my aikido classes are. Will I give up my beloved aikido because of its timing? Never. For people who have a particular practice or sport, time is not the pivotal factor.

Let's consider personality. My research shows that we gravitate toward activities that mirror our psychology. If you're extroverted and a thrill-seeker, you want to be social and stimulated. Your biological clock may urge you to exercise at 2.00pm, but friends you 'play' with aren't around then, and the exercise world at that time looks like a treadmill. So you'll need to apologise to your internal clock and exercise when the racquet court – and your preferred partner – are available.

Here's another thought: exercise has many faces. No matter what, I cannot get myself to reliably tie on my running shoes at 6.00am, but I do exercise in the morning. I do yoga and, in the summer, I eagerly leap into the lake for a half-hour swim. However, I don't think I've ever pumped iron before breakfast. Some movement forms feel better to us at different times of day, and these can slide in seamlessly at appropriate moments.

Final comment: is your life schedule predictable and totally under your control? If so, you're in a distinct minority. It's increasingly a 24/7 world that we have to navigate as best we can. Embrace diversity and broaden your definition of exercise.

#### JAN DE JONG

CEO, Vital  
Balance Group –  
Netherlands



The ideal training time is different for each muscle group. According to the Chinese Organ Clock philosophy, each muscle is

associated with an internal organ in the body, and each organ has a circadian rhythm that includes daily phases of elevated activity (ideal training time) and recuperation (unfavourable training time). While muscles are improved by physical activity and sports, the state of organ function is therefore co-responsible for muscle health.

This is valuable information when it comes to drawing up a personalised training schedule, as it means there are ideal times to train each muscle group. For example, avoid isolated training of hamstrings and biceps femoris between 5.00pm and 7.00pm (recovery phase of connected large intestines), and focus on training abdominal and quadriceps muscles between 1.00pm and 3.00pm (optimal time for small intestine).

If a person has muscular problems, this may be due to anomalous stress or injury, but it might also be related to hidden problems with the organ associated with that muscle group. Muscle regions identified as problematic therefore need to be trained gently and at the right times: if function-impaired muscles are stressed by inappropriate training, then (besides unsatisfactory training results) negative repercussions in the associated organ system cannot be ruled out.

Of course, it isn't always possible to train at the ideal time for each individual muscle. In this case, when working out at less favourable training times, the training should support the muscle's recuperation through stretching and light, steady work designed primarily to stimulate metabolic exchange. ●

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# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In new outdoor fitness classes report, *Is It Better Outside?*, 100 per cent of public sector operators questioned said they planned to offer some form of outdoor exercise in 2013. Wendy Golledge takes a look at how their plans are taking shape

**T**he first market intelligence report of its kind, *Is It Better Outside?* – produced by Leisure-net Solutions – examined the outdoor fitness group exercise market in detail. “As one of the most vibrant growth areas within the industry, we felt the time was right to find out more about the burgeoning business opportunity that is the outdoor fitness market,” explains Mike Hill, managing director of Leisure-net Solutions. The aim was to provide an insight into the prevalence and perceptions of outdoor exercise, as well as the benefits to consumers and the sector.

“We know from other Leisure-net research carried out in 2012 that 51 per cent of consumers want to exercise more, yet as an industry we’re still struggling to diversify and break through the 10–15 per cent participation barrier,” says Hill. “This is where an outdoor fitness offering can play a crucial role, giving customers the chance to engage with us in previously untried ways.”

The report revealed that close to half of consumers (44 per cent) now say they prefer to exercise outdoors. The opportunity for operators lies in the fact that outdoor and indoor exercise can complement each other; one need not take precedence. “In the last 12 months, operators have begun to realise that an outdoor offering isn’t just an added value retention tool for existing members. It can bring new

“Operators have begun to realise that an outdoor offering isn’t just a retention tool; it can bring new members in and be a revenue generator in its own right”



▲ Freedom Leisure's popular running clubs have required very little investment

members in and become a revenue generator in its own right,” says Hill. “It offers the diversity that consumers are indicating they would like – gyms that aren’t one-size-fits-all.”

Over half (55 per cent) of operators currently offer outdoor fitness classes – either directly (80 per cent) or via third-party operators (20 per cent) – and more than three-quarters (80 per cent) feel an outdoor environment is an important part of the class timetable. With 100 per cent of operators questioned keen to have an outdoor fitness offering, we caught up with six to examine their outdoor classes and how they’re affecting business.

## FREEDOM LEISURE

A not-for-profit leisure trust, Freedom Leisure introduced running clubs at 10 of its centres in the last year, with plans to set up more during 2013. All are registered with Run England, the official England Athletics recreational running project.

“Some clubs started from scratch while others ‘adopted’ local running clubs,” says Holly Sutcliffe, community sports development officer for Freedom Leisure. “Sessions vary from instructor-led outdoor runs that start and finish at the centre to interval sessions located outdoors but on-site. The leaders are all qualified running



▲ The WOW (Women-Only Walkers) Group from Live Active Leisure targets the local South Asian community

coaches: some Freedom employees, others brought in from outside."

Freedom's running clubs required very little investment, as costs are offset by the payment from participants – around £2 for a member and £3 for non-members. "The running clubs add a very social dimension to our offering and are an important tool for introducing outdoor fitness to our members," says Sutcliffe. "We also have a number of non-members who now use our facilities having initially come to us for a running club. We encourage interested centres to tailor the running club to suit the demands of the members."

### DC LEISURE

DC Leisure plans to launch outdoor bootcamp sessions, either at its centres or in nearby council-maintained parks, throughout 2013. "Bootcamps will be

high-intensity, fun and results-based sessions run by our fitness team," explains group fitness manager Sarah Leonie. "Aimed at both new and existing users, in some cases

they will be available as part of membership on the group exercise timetable. At other sites, people will be able to either pay casually or purchase a block of sessions."

DC Leisure's aim in introducing outdoor classes is to retain existing users by helping them achieve their health goals, as well as attracting new members who may not be lured by the current offering. "Centres introducing bootcamps will need to invest in equipment and staff training, but there are no other associated costs," continues Leonie. "We also have plans for further in-house designed outdoor courses to keep our offering fresh, as well as working with partners such as Les Mills and Escape to keep up-to-date and on-trend."

### NB LEISURE TRUST

This month, NB Leisure Trust is set to offer its members at Pingles and Bedworth Leisure Centres all-weather, extreme outdoor training for the first time. The explosive outdoor workout sessions will use functional training kit including hammers, tyres and sandbags – all equipment already in use at the centres, which keeps start-up investment to a minimum.

"We want to offer something more for members who are perhaps training for a sport-specific challenge, wanting to test their limits or just looking to improve

their fitness in inspiring surroundings," says business development manager Jason Field. "Our instructors will lead the sessions in park areas around our sites. Every participant will take part in a 'fit test' and set a personal goal, which we'll review after a month of sessions."

Alongside this, the outdoor classes will include a free Body Stat measurement service every two to three months to motivate those looking to improve their lean muscle mass percentage. The outdoor sessions will be free to health and fitness members, or £4.30 pay-as-you-go. "If these initial sessions prove to be popular, we will certainly look at making more available," says Field.

### LIVE ACTIVE LEISURE

Perth & Kinross-based leisure trust Live Active Leisure (LAL) has for many years been hosting weekly running clubs, Jog Scotland, Stride for Life walking clubs, annual 10k races and triathlons.

Based on the success of its current outdoor offering, last year the trust implemented The WOW (Women-Only Walkers) Group – a weekly walk led by trained volunteers from the South Asian women's community in Perth, supported by staff from the Stride for Life team. "The WOW Walks take part in the local park, which provides a flat and scenic route on the doorstep," says



◀ DC Leisure's new bootcamps will be high-intensity, fun and results-based



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▲ The Tandridge Trust Running Club has so far attracted 25 new runners

Gill McShea, programming, health and inclusion manager. "Staff and volunteer time were the main investments. Funding was provided by Paths for All to train local people to lead walks."

WOW is free of charge and open to all women, but targeted specifically at South Asian and other ethnic minorities. "LAL has promoted other activities to the group, whose members now regularly book badminton courts," adds McShea. "WOW is self-sustaining and Stride for Life aims to roll out the approach in 2013 for other minority groups, particularly in rural areas."

### IMPULSE LEISURE

For an initial investment of just £100, Impulse Leisure introduced weekly outdoor bootcamp sessions to members at three of its centres in March last year. "We wanted a broad spectrum outdoor class that would appeal to all fitness levels and ages, encouraging members to try something new while offering something to attract new users to our centres," says Charlotte Gardner, group exercise co-ordinator at Impulse.

At £6.25 for non-members, £5.25 for standard members and free to platinum members, the sessions offer bespoke training – instructors modify the content to ensure all participants feel included whatever their fitness level.

"We've been thrilled with the success of the bootcamp sessions and plan to invest in new equipment later this year, to keep the classes fresh and attract new users, as we enter the run-up to people's summer holidays," says Gardner.

### TANDRIDGE TRUST

The Tandridge Trust Running Club was set up in the summer of 2012 with funding from Sport England. The classes are aimed at beginner runners looking to improve overall fitness as part of a group, using the great outdoors instead of treadmills.

The sessions – which cost £3 for members and £3.50 for non-members – are led by running fitness leader Chris Osborn, from de Stafford Sports Centre in Caterham, Surrey. They have so far attracted more than 25 runners, averaging around six to eight a session. Osborn set up the club after completing a one-day Leadership in Running Fitness course with Run England.

"The only investment was some high-visibility vests and armbands for evening runs," says Osborn. "Already all our runners have progressed from only being able to run for one to five minutes before resting to covering at least 5.5km a session. We will continue to grow the club and increase our running numbers, and possibly introduce beginner and intermediate runs in 2013." ●



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# SHAKE IT UP



DO YOU HAVE A VIBRATION PLATE LYING IDLE IN THE CORNER OF YOUR CLUB? KATH HUDSON TALKS TO THE MANUFACTURERS ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS ASSET

**V**ibration training is, according to research, a valuable training method for a diverse user base. At one end of the scale, studies suggest significant benefits for people suffering from conditions such as MS. Meanwhile, Kevin Barclay-Webb of True Vibrations says he has given footballers like John Terry and Frank Lampard 12-minute workouts that can burn more fat and build more muscle than 120 minutes in the gym.

Nevertheless, at many gyms, vibration training platforms sit unused for large parts of the day; when they are used, it's often just for a few squats or a massage. Many instructors seem unsure what to do with them, while members – not having received education in their use – opt for other pieces of gym equipment.

How can we get instructors and members excited about vibration training? And why should operators invest in it? We ask the manufacturers. ►



Power Plate says vibration training should be part of member inductions, with instructor-led classes offering exercise inspiration

**MATTHEW PENGELLY**  
Senior VP, performance health systems,  
Power Plate



Most people don't realise that just three vibration training sessions a week can not only help improve fitness, muscle tone, strength and flexibility, but can also be used to improve bone density, circulation and cardiovascular function.

At many clubs, high staff turnover means trainers are not adequately trained in vibration training and are therefore unable to pass on the many benefits to end-users. We suggest that clubs invest in ongoing training, as well as specialist courses – such as the Power Plate Post Natal Course – which can gear clubs up to attract new types of member.

Those who have never used vibration training before may feel reluctant to use the equipment. Including vibration training

in the gym induction will help combat this, as well as offering instructor-led classes that provide members with inspiration on how to correctly use the equipment themselves. Our latest model, the pro7, is also the first commercially available Power Plate to offer integrated video coaching. It comes with over 1,000 exercise videos and 250 progressive full-body workouts, so users will always find new exercises regardless of their goals.

Varying the programmes on offer – including sports specific offerings – is also a good way to get members excited about vibration training. We also offer a wide range of marketing materials that clubs can use to inspire members.

Virgin Active is one chain that does vibration training well, as it invests in continuous education and training. We train Virgin Active master trainers so they can deliver internal training. The operator builds vibration training into PT sessions and offers instructor-led classes two or three times a day, all of which gives end-users greater confidence in using the machines.



**Clubs could sell  
vibration training  
memberships**

**GRAHAM TAYLOR**  
MD,  
VibroGym UK



The effects of vibration training are considerable and proven, if done properly. It's not conjecture – it's science. We're currently working on clinical research, in conjunction with a university in Holland, that will provide irrefutable evidence of the benefits of vibration training.

Unfortunately, vibration training is misunderstood. Men are generally allowed to think it isn't for them, and lots of gym users don't know how to use the platforms. In my opinion, it all comes down to the education of the instructors. We run a one-day

course aimed at instructors who are working with regular gym users; they can progress to further courses for other user groups. We try to foster an understanding of the science. At the end of the day, they have to complete a paper to show they have absorbed the information and have the necessary skills to teach the programme.

Marketing vibration training to non-gym goers is an avenue that hasn't been explored to its full potential. Vibration training memberships could be sold, for example: clubs could charge £5 a session for a group workout with trained instructors, using three machines and with six participants – three working and three resting. If three or four of those classes were run each day, it would soon pay off the cost of the machines.



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Vibration plates have been used within functional training areas with great success



**MONIKA AKABUSI**  
Director,  
Powrx



Vibration training adds another dimension and stimulus to physical training. Like functional training, it requires constant new muscular adaptations, which ultimately leads to better training results as well as offering variety to the gym member.

To gain the maximum use out of vibration training, clubs must ensure fitness coaches and trainers are adequately trained to teach it, and that they are enthusiastic about its benefits.

Clubs also need to find interesting ways of integrating the platforms into members' exercise routines – for example, offering vibration training as part of a group exercise circuit

class. The placement of the vibration plate in a gym setting needs to be thought through too: they make a fantastic addition to the free weight or functional training areas.

The David Lloyd Club in Milton Keynes, UK, has five vibration plates in its functional training area, with plenty of space around each plate for free and safe movement on and off the plate. All personal trainers are trained to teach vibration training and every new member has the opportunity to sign up for a free introductory session, giving them a basic understanding of how to get the best out of a vibration plate. The club also offers small group sessions on a weekly basis.

There are a number of exciting developments in the pipeline at the moment, and we will soon see resistance machines with built-in vibration technology. This is likely bring vibration training even further into the mainstream.

**KEVIN BARCLAY-WEBB**  
CEO,  
True Vibrations



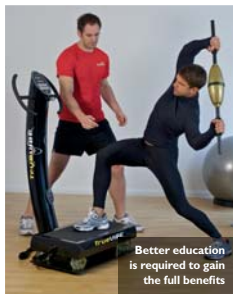
Vibration training platforms are often wrongly perceived – as the lazy person's exercise machine, for example.

Another problem is the lack of buy-in from trainers, who don't understand how to properly use vibration training. To get trainers enthusiastic about vibration training, there needs to be better education, both on how to use it and on its benefits. To this end, we run a one-day REPS-accredited Level 1 and 2 training course. We will also be offering free seminars on how to use a vibration

plate in a safe and effective way, and how to market your services to maximise your investment.

Used well, a vibration plate can give trainers a USP, can complement other training methods to help clients reach their targets, and can help attract new markets. Most clubs only aim vibration training at existing clientele, whereas they should also be marketing it to people in wheelchairs and MS sufferers, or as an elite training tool.

We've worked with a number of clubs, including Cadbury House in Bristol, that have marketed vibration training as a USP and gained members as a result. It also runs multiple group sessions each week, which are always fully booked. ●



Better education is required to gain the full benefits





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\* In 2012 over 400 clubs took part with an average membership of 2,500 per site

## Studio equipment



### Escape offers high impact Dynamax Balls

Dynamax Balls, available through Escape Fitness, are intended for sports strength and conditioning training in studios. The equipment is designed to absorb high impact and can be used as part of training programmes for core strength, plyometrics and cardio fitness. They are available in nine different weights and are made from 70 per cent recycled, waterproof fabric.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

escape



### New AC Performance bike for studio workouts

Stairmaster has developed a new indoor cycling experience with the AC Performance Plus. The new bike offers greater fore-aft seat and handlebar adjustments for refined positioning. It has lightweight handlebars with a new adjustment system for easier set-up and increased range, as well as better grip for comfort. A wider step-through space has been developed and the stretch pads have been strengthened.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

stairmaster

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### Handy 6kg Jordan kettlebell now in pink

Functional fitness specialist Jordan Fitness has launched a new pink kettlebell to add to its range of coloured neoprene-covered kettlebells. Available in a 6kg weight, the new pink kettlebell is made from cast iron with a neoprene-covered base, and comes with a one-year guarantee. The neoprene covering protects both the floor and the bells from damage. The kettlebells have a handle-to-bell distance designed for comfort and safety, by sitting on the forearm and not the wrist.



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

jordan

### Pro training kit by TRX for studios and outdoors



TRX has launched the new TRX PRO Suspension Training Kit for professional trainers. It's designed to be durable, anti-slip, ergonomic and easy to clean with rubber handles. It has a theft-detering locking carabiner, an ultra-durable DuPont Kevlar equalizer loop to guarantee high-use performance, and a range of anchoring

solutions (door and suspension anchors and an Xtender Strap) for studio or outdoor use. Each PRO Kit comes with the new TRX Trainer Basics video, with instruction in more than 35 exercise variations and advanced strength and flexibility training.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

trx



## Kamagon Ball by Hedstrom for unstable training

Functional equipment supplier Physical Company has signed a deal with Hedstrom Fitness to act as sole UK distributor for The Kamagon Ball – an over-sized rubber medicine ball with two handles that can be filled with water to create variable, shifting loads of up to 20kg. The ball uses Hydro-Inertia technology to recruit more muscle fibres than when performing the same exercise with a static weight, and brings the benefits of unstable training to kettlebell and medicine ball exercises for small and large studios.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **physical company**



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD  
**merrithew**

## New Stability Barre for studio pilates

Merrithew Health & Fitness has released its free-standing, dance-style Stability Barre, suitable for use with all barre studio workouts including STOTT Pilates Stability Barre training and new Total Barre Programme. The Stability Barre supports a variety of flexibility and strength training. Easily adjusted from 36.5 to 44 inches, it disassembles easily for storage when not in use (no wall mounts needed) and is portable. With group training or for more cardio-based work, attach the Stability Barre connectors to the uprights for additional steadiness. The barre is available in grey or white.



## CoreFitnessRoller an all-rounder for studios

The CoreFitnessRoller is a new model of studio equipment. The portable modular machine is a cable machine for group exercise in studios or personal training sessions and also acts as a durable roller for myofascial release and rolling classes. The dual-pulley arm also detaches. The machine is designed to challenge balance, mobility, flexibility, strength and control.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD  
**fitness-mad**



## Fitness and feedback with the fitLight system

The fitLight Trainer system is a wireless light system for studios consisting of eight RGB LED-powered lights and a central PDA controller. The lights are used as targets for the athlete to activate or deactivate as part of the training routine. Various measurements can be captured for immediate feedback in relation to the athlete's performance, or can be downloaded later to a central computer for analysis.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD  
**saq**



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# SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

A LOOK AT RECENT PROJECTS FROM TECHNOGYM, ESCAPE FITNESS AND JORDAN

## MOTIVATION TO MOVE

SUPPLIER: **TECHNOGYM**

CLIENT: **LARNE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Through its leisure centre gym, Larne Borough Council runs a Health Matters programme for people with acute health issues who have been referred by their local GP. Over 12 weeks, these clients work closely with activity professionals to plan an activity schedule that they can carry out in their personal time, with a weekly hour-long meeting to monitor their progress.

Activity consultants soon found, however, that it was difficult to truly monitor activity levels every week. Being unused to sports and physical activity, clients found it difficult to describe the exercises they did, meaning that the consultants could not estimate or measure their progress accurately.

The council therefore decided to carry out a trial of Technogym's mywellness key to complement the Health Matters programme. A portable device that measures the intensity and duration of physical activity wherever its user is, the mywellness key provides immediate visual feedback and syncs seamlessly with a cloud-based portal, [www.mywellness.com](http://www.mywellness.com), allowing both user and coach to view the data at any time.

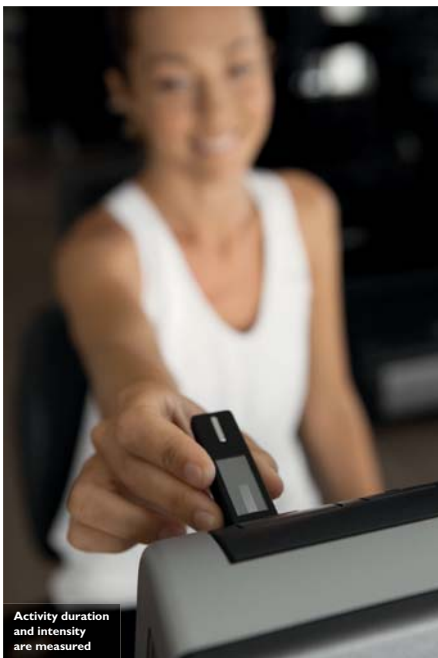
Clients who achieved good outcomes after the 12-week course were chosen to use a mywellness key. They were asked to continue as they had done during the activity programme, and consultants were on-hand to assist with any queries.

The results were very promising. Over 10 weeks, the group had collected over 360,000 moves, equating to an average of more than 850 moves per person each day.

The clients also indicated that they appreciated the compact, simple-to-use design of the key. It provided them, they said, with a clear indicator of their daily activity targets, as well as motivating them to exceed these targets. One participant, a woman over the age of 40, explained: "The key provided me with the extra motivation I needed to get active again. I know I'm not doing enough physical activity, but to have something that tells you that every time you look at it is very motivating. Once I began to exceed the target that was set for me, it was a great feeling!"

Meanwhile, for consultants, the key acted as a tool they could use to independently measure and view each client's leisure activities, with analytical data on the intensity and duration of

Clients found the key compact and easy to use



Activity duration and intensity are measured

each exercise. This data helped them spot trends and draw conclusions from specific results.

Programme co-ordinator Niall Curneen says: "The biggest challenge we have with Health Matters clients is changing their habits in their own spare time, when they aren't in the vicinity of the leisure centre. The keys give us a unique opportunity to see in good detail what clients are doing, and identify what they need to do differently.

"This allows us to be proactive when results aren't as expected. It also takes the support we offer our clients to another level, as we're effectively with them all the time, not just at one weekly meeting."

For more information: [www.technogym.com/mywellnesskey](http://www.technogym.com/mywellnesskey)

## FUN-FILLED RESULTS

SUPPLIER: **JORDAN FITNESS**

CLIENT: **MI-GYM.COM**

**M**i-Gym.com – a new independent operator located in Chelmsford, UK – has chosen functional fitness specialist Jordan Fitness as the equipment supplier for the launch of its club.

Launched by industry veteran Rachel Young, Mi-Gym.com is a revolutionary concept in functional group training, personal training and CrossFit (it encompasses CrossFit Chelmsford). Targeting health club users who feel they are not getting the desired results from a traditional gym environment, the aims of the club are to increase group participation, make the exercise experience engaging and fun, drive retention and, most of all, achieve results for members.

The club website explains: "We are all about fitness and lifestyle choices that you make.... We are results driven but not elite and we do not take ourselves too seriously. Our goal is that you come to the sessions, work hard, have fun, go home.... We understand the benefits of group exercise, community and fun, the importance of Functional Training to become fit for purpose for everyday life."

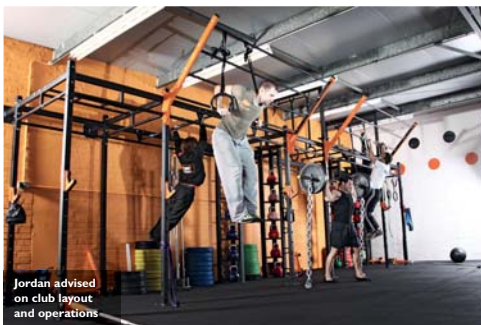
The Mi-Gym.com site has been extensively refurbished to offer 130sq m of open-plan training space in the heart of Chelmsford. In addition to group and personal training, it also offers coaching, Olympic lifting, boxing, combat and suspension training. Jordan Fitness has supplied a wide range of functional fitness equipment including Olympic training discs, kettlebells, slam balls, sandbags and punch bags.

Jordan Fitness also implemented its new Results Based Training (RBT) service at the site – its comprehensive service for facilities wishing to implement functional training areas. The three key stages of the RBT process are: Evaluate, selecting the type of area clients want for their business needs; Enhance, helping clients choose the right equipment, flooring and layout; and Engage, providing marketing materials to help clubs get their members excited about the new offering.

"We wanted to show Rachel how our new RBT service could assist her in making her vision for Mi-Gym.com a reality. Jordan Fitness advised her not only on equipment selection, but also layout and other operational suggestions to allow her to maximise the effectiveness of the facility for results and profit," says Allan Collins, director of education at Jordan Fitness.

He continues: "Rachel is very much aware of the importance of education in the delivery of a new and exciting fitness brand, and we have supported her in setting up something not seen before in the UK. The Mi-Gym.com facility will be a fantastic place for both clients and progressive trainers who are looking for something exceptional. I foresee this type of facility will become a template for many others."

For more information: [www.jordanfitness.com](http://www.jordanfitness.com)



Jordan advised on club layout and operations



New kit includes kettlebells and slam balls



Jordan's Results Based Training service was used

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CLIENT: **LARNE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**N**uffield Health recently unveiled a brand new functional training space, occupying a redeveloped area in its flagship Fitness and Wellbeing Centre in Cousin Lane, London, UK.

Club fitness manager Will Toal, along with national fitness and wellbeing lead Rick Crawford, were the key figures behind the project. Recognising the growing trend for functional training, they wanted to create an industry-leading, contemporary area that was specific to their members' needs.

Nuffield Health approached Escape Fitness with the brief, and within 10 weeks the club's on-site café had been fully redeveloped, creating a multi-use area which the club believes has the all-important wow factor.

"We conducted a survey to see what our members wanted and what was important to them," says Toal. That process took place in August 2012 and, by September, a feasibility study was well underway. The café closed its doors at the end of October, with the area converted and open for business by the first week of January.

The newly created space got the full Escape Fitness treatment, from the PU System Seamless flooring to the full

quota of functional training equipment, including a Queenax functional training rig. Escape's training partners Ushomi then completed a thorough training course to ensure all staff were educated on the equipment.

Crawford says: "We didn't want this new area to be limited to just PTs. We wanted to be able to use the area for group and team training, and we also have physiotherapists using the area for rehabilitation work. This reflects our multi-disciplinary approach to our business, both in the way we work and in the services we provide to our members."

The new-look area has reportedly already helped attract new members to the club, as well as enhancing the experience for existing members. Toal explains: "We've had a really positive response – the members are loving the new area. We've programmed a new timetable around group exercise, which is free to members as part of their package."

Matt Morton, head of strategic accounts at Escape Fitness, says: "Working with the team at Nuffield Health was fantastic. The whole team was driven and determined to create a truly exceptional training space, and that's what has been created."

"This wasn't just about putting some new equipment in a room, but rather about creating a great space for the club's members to achieve their health and fitness goals in a fun, attractive, hygienic and cool-looking space. This made selecting the right interior design, branding, flooring, equipment and education imperative – and they've succeeded in this task."

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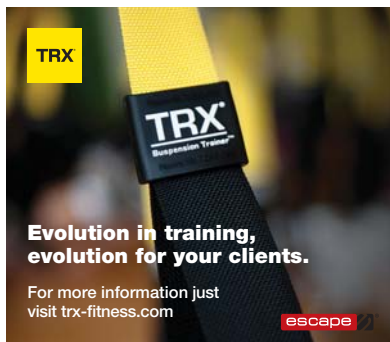
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## exercise equipment (continued)



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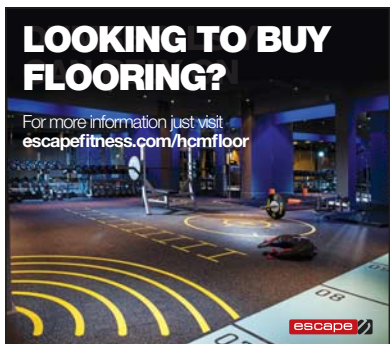
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## LIGHTWEIGHTS

### BEGGING FOR A BOW WOW WORKOUT

A fitness club with a difference in Illinois, US, has two target customers – dogs and humans! The K9 Fit Club in Hinsdale has been opened to help pet owners and their pooches tackle weight problems.

The club, which has the motto 'don't sit, get fit' was set up by veterinary nurse Tricia Montgomery, who lost a staggering nine stone after working out with her Basset hound Louie, who himself lost 22 per cent of his bodyweight. She teamed up with certified fitness trainers and dog trainers, with input from vets, to create exercise classes that involved more than just walking.

The classes, which cost around US\$20 per session, include weight training (lifting the dogs) and 'dogstale' courses alongside cardio and core training routines. While humans tend to work out harder, dogs still join in. In the case of Thi Chai Woof Style, the dogs also learn obedience – sitting and standing in time to t'ai chi moves of lowering and raising hands. Details: [www.k9fitclub.com](http://www.k9fitclub.com)



### WOMEN PUT ON MAKE-UP FOR THE GYM



Getting ready for a workout?

Seven women in 10 admit to wearing make-up at the gym, according to a survey by supermarket chain Asda.

While some could inadvertently be made up as a result of going for a workout straight from the office, a quarter of women said they preened themselves 15 minutes before taking to the treadmill.

Despite the risk of sweat ruining their look, 34 per cent of women said they wore foundation and 17 per cent even had a spray-on tan.

Other popular choices included wearing lip gloss (21 per cent) and lip balm (19 per cent) or making the eyes stand out with mascara (20 per cent).



### SURVEY SHOWS SHOCKING SOCK STATS

The hygiene of gym footwear has to be questioned following a survey which reveals that most men's socks are more than three years old.

The survey, by Socked.co.uk, found that 82 per cent of men say they wear socks over three years old and that they will rarely – if ever – go shopping to buy new ones.

Seventy-three per cent of men admitted that people had commented on the distressed state of their socks. Yet despite this, 64 per cent said they only replaced their footwear when they were bought new ones as a gift, while 14 per cent never bothered to replace them at all.

Seventy-five per cent of the respondents also said they were guilty of wearing odd socks in public. Details: [www.socked.co.uk](http://www.socked.co.uk)

### wives vs sport – what do men pick?

Although women may feel their boyfriends or husbands put their love of sport first, research has found the opposite is true – men actually prefer their partners five times more than their beloved team.

In research by the University of Bristol, Newcastle United fans – reputedly some of the most loyal in the world – were asked to cut up pictures of their football team players as well as their wives or girlfriends. The men's

stress levels were measured and shown to be five times higher when slicing through photos of their partners.

Many fans had opted to stick pins in voodoo dolls of their partners rather than their favourite player – meaning they'd rather their partner be ill for a week than the footballer be injured for the next game – but when it came to the crunch in the photo test, their stress levels betrayed their true feelings.

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