

# health club management

JANUARY 2018

No 253

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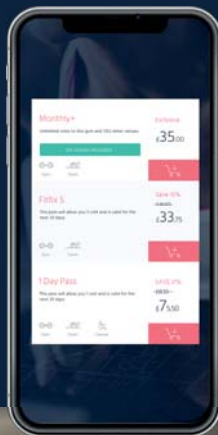
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A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a black sleeveless jumpsuit with blue stripes on the legs, is sitting on a white ledge. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. Her hands are clasped in her lap. She is wearing a gold bracelet on her right wrist and a ring on her left hand.

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## AVI YEHIEL

WeWork moves into fitness – we talk to their head of wellness **p54**

## ROBERT COOK

Virgin Active UK's MD reveals his plans for the brand **p30**

## PICTURE PERFECT?

Do images of fitness models in gym marketing do more harm than good? **p58**

# RHIAN STEPHENSON

Psycle's CEO on transforming an indoor cycling studio into a multi-concept brand **p42**



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# A new age of wellness

As public appetite for holistic health and wellness services continues to grow, are operators doing enough to ensure their clubs are addressing this member need?

The US\$3.7 trillion global wellness sector has long presented a great opportunity for the fitness industry. And it's an opportunity we've been tapping into in recent years with the steady rise of wellness services, such as meditation and mindfulness, in fitness settings. However, as the new year gets off to a start, it appears that 2018 may be the year that the fusion of these highly synergistic areas really takes off.

A case in point is Virgin Active UK. In this issue of *Health Club Management*, we speak to the fitness brand's MD, Robert Cook (p30), who cites the creation of the company's new 360-degree wellness concept Beyond Movement as its response to the question: what does the future of fitness look like? And while Virgin Active UK has claimed the 'Beyond Movement' name for itself, it's one that perfectly captures the current industry sentiment that it's time for fitness facilities to look beyond physical activity when addressing members' needs.

As we discover on page 42 of this month's magazine, London-based indoor cycling studio Psycle was clearly ahead of the game in this area. The appointment of a naturopath and nutritionist as CEO back in 2014 may have seemed like an unusual move, but under Rhian Stephenson's leadership the brand has grown from a single cycle studio to a multi-concept three-studio operation, with three more openings expected in the next few months. The secret to Stephenson's success? She told us: "We don't see Psycle as a ride brand, we see it as a wellness, lifestyle and fitness brand."

But it's not just the big-box clubs and boutique studios that are readily embracing wellness. On page 54, Avi Yehiel, head of wellness at WeWork, explains why a company that has made its name in shared workspaces recently chose to launch its own fitness and wellness concept. It's a move that suggests two things: the public is more aware of how intertwined all facets of life are and it's eager to place health at the centre of everyday life.



Gym-goers also need wellness services like physical rehabilitation

It's time for fitness facilities to look beyond physical activity when addressing members' needs

Gym operators must now respond by taking a more holistic approach to service provision. Those that don't risk not only being left behind, but also missing out on the new secondary spend opportunities presented by the introduction of tailored nutrition, rehab and physiotherapy offerings; and on creating a stronger community of happier, healthier and more engaged members.

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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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# health club management

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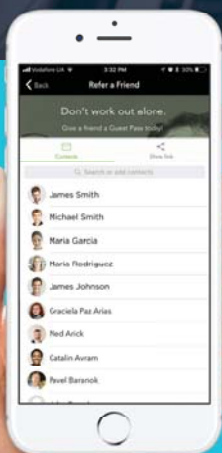
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# Write to reply

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)



Z-ers will need the fitness industry's support to thrive

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## The fresh perspective Generation Z brings to the fitness industry is needed to improve inclusivity and services

Laura Kavanagh, director, Sports Quest Ltd

I was pleased to see a spotlight shone on the importance of Generation Z in the last issue of *Health Club Management* (Introducing Gen Z, p46). As a former elite female rugby player and young fitness business owner, I'm very aware of the barriers the

young face, both in sports and business, and I feel certain that actively creating more opportunities for Generation Z will knock down participation barriers and help our industry progress.

That's why I started Sports Quest Ltd, which focuses on engaging the young in physical activity, and does so through fitness, sports, therapy and education. By opening up courses in connection with the YMCA, offering elite academy set ups, providing dynamic educational establishment services, career pathways, therapy and rehabilitation, we want to help Generation Z see the

wonders of working in the industry. And we're taking things further by creating higher levels of specialised development through Sports Quest's sister company Q Gym Ltd – an inclusive gym that focuses on core fitness values and meeting the requirements of people with special educational needs, mental health problems and an array of disabilities.

Inclusivity has been the exception rather than the norm until now. However, the

fresh outlook Generation Z is bringing to our industry provides the perfect opportunity for us all to evolve and establish a sector that places all in society on a more level playing field.

As a young entrepreneur who employs many Z-ers, I can confidently say that this generation has remarkable ideas that can transform our industry for the better. We now need to create the pathways to help them put these ideas into action.



Laura Kavanagh

***"Inclusivity has been the exception rather than the norm until now"***





An AED plus CPR can increase the chances of survival after a cardiac arrest

## Health club staff must be trained in using automated external defibrillators if operators are to safeguard member health

Martin Symcox, director, IQL UK

It was recently announced that London's black cab drivers will be taught how to use automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to help them handle emergency situations. I welcome this news. People can suffer cardiac arrest anywhere, and health clubs are no exception. On the contrary, gyms, sports halls and swimming pools are one of the most common areas for this type of incident.

Sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of premature death and an AED combined with CPR can significantly increase the chances of survival. According to the British Heart Foundation, for



Martin Symcox

every single minute a person goes without defibrillation, their chances of survival fall by up to 10 per cent.

With that in mind, we're working with forward-thinking operators to save lives with AEDs and are encouraged to see that so many installing

***"People can suffer cardiac arrest anywhere, and health clubs are no exception"***

AEDs in their centres. They're also training a wide range of staff – from gym and pool team members, to reception staff – in their use. And they boast some impressive survival rates as a result.

For example, Places for People Leisure has reported a 73 per cent survival rate after intervention with an AED, David Lloyd Leisure has saved over 100 lives with AEDs, while GLL staff saved lives

in 75 per cent of incidents in London in the last year alone. Bourne Leisure, Everybody Sport and Recreation, Leeds Active Lifestyles and Fusion are also achieving results after installing AEDs in every centre.

These few examples demonstrate the vital role of AEDs and echo how important it is for operators to invest in this life-saving technology and in training key staff on how to use it.



# PEOPLE

“

I strongly believe the fitness industry is at the beginning of an increasingly innovative period and it's exciting to be at the heart of that as part of the FIBO team

”

## SILKE FRANK

FIBO: EVENT DIRECTOR

**You were recently appointed the head of FIBO. Tell us about your road to that position.**

Having worked in the global trade show sector for Reed Exhibitions Germany for over 17 years, I've been able to gain experience in virtually all areas of the industry. Before joining the FIBO team, I served as the event director of PSI, Europe's largest promotional products trade show, held annually in Düsseldorf. The role involved a variety of tasks, including coordinating the show's global initiatives. That international experience has been immensely helpful in my new position with FIBO. Enhancing our global visitor marketing strategy and international network are key priorities for the company at present, so this makes my experience even more beneficial.

**What attracted you to your current role and what does it involve?**

As the world's biggest trade fair for fitness, wellness and health, FIBO influences the lives of millions of people who are interested in healthy living. It introduces the latest innovations of the industry into the global market; addresses the current issues of fitness and wellness professionals, offering them advanced training in pivotal topics and thus enhancing the professional quality in gyms; and last but not least, it helps consumers discover the best fitness and health solutions for them.



Silke Frank brings international experience to the role

It's an amazing trade show, which the FIBO team will be developing even further. As we in the fitness sector know, life stagnates without movement, meaning that even a hugely successful trade show like FIBO has to evolve on a regular basis.

**FIBO 2018 promises a change from the usual format.**

**What can we expect?**

We've implemented a different brand strategy to attract new show visitors, particularly from the global group fitness,



**FIBO 2018 has been designed to attract new visitors from group fitness, nutrition, health and retail**

nutrition, health and retail sectors. It involves taking a more holistic approach to our fitness content. Studio operators, trainers and instructors all face the same challenges today – they have to keep up with technologies, scientific and medical insights, and the increasing demands of consumers – which means that they all come to the show with similar questions. That's why we're organising FIBO 2018 to be categorised according to the issues the industry cares about.

Another change to FIBO 2018 is the improved Academy concept. This year we'll be offering the increasing number of trainers and presenters expected to attend a multi-faceted three days of advanced theoretical training, hands-on masterclasses with top presenters, and enhanced networking opportunities. We're also further developing FIBO as a platform for professionals and consumers interested in creating a healthy lifestyle, and that means we're placing more emphasis on medical training and healthy nutrition.

#### **What do you find most exciting about being in the fitness industry at this moment in time?**

The industry is becoming more diversified, personalised and more social, and as such, manufacturers, club operators and trainers alike are all developing more creative ways to enhance the fun and community spirit gained by working out at the gym. I love how companies are getting

bold about integrating even smarter digital solutions into their products and services.

As customers look for increasingly customised workouts to meet their individual training goals, it's likely that even more specialised and diversified fitness equipment will take centre stage. I strongly believe the fitness industry is at the beginning of an increasingly innovative period and it's exciting to be at the heart of that as part of the FIBO team.

#### **What are the greatest opportunities for our sector?**

As more people of all ages are adopting a healthy lifestyle, there's great

potential for the fitness and health sector to attract new customers for its services. We're also seeing a clear trend towards individual, specialised fitness concepts that allow gyms to offer services, such as at-home, outdoor and medical training, and to begin to establish themselves as competence centres for all fitness segments – including digital fitness solutions.

These are excellent opportunities, but as we all know, retention is the key to success. That means gym owners and operators will need to remain focussed on developing and implementing convincing retention programmes. ▶



**FIBO will highlight ways to enhance fun and community spirit**



The technology they have at nanoM can help to pinpoint potential issues before you even know about them



## FRANK LAMPARD

### NANOM: BRAND AMBASSADOR

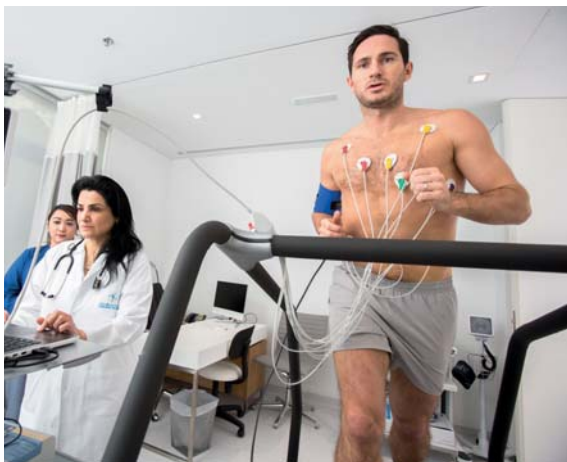
With a football career spanning 23 years, 609 match appearances and 177 goals to his name, Romford-born former professional footballer Frank Lampard is deservedly known as one of the greatest midfielders of his generation.

Despite hanging up his boots in early 2017, the Chelsea-midfielder-turned-children's-author has continued his association with high performance. He's now partnering with a cutting-edge health clinic for athletes in Dubai.

The nanoM clinic is a state-of-the-art 17,000sq ft (5,182sq m) centre located in the Golden Mile Galleria on Palm Jumeirah. Owned by the Emirates Healthcare Group, the facility offers cardio-metabolic and muscle activation testing, 3D posture and motion analysis, functional agility assessments and hand-eye coordination testing.

#### DEDICATED TRAINING

Throughout his career, Lampard was considered lucky with injuries, starting almost every Premier League game for Chelsea and enjoying an extended



Lampard is a fan of the clinic's focus on early-stage injury risk detection



Frank Lampard is partnering with the Emirates Healthcare Group

twilight to his career, with spells at Manchester City and New York City before retiring in February 2017, aged 38.

It's clear that one of the reasons he became the Premier League's highest goalscoring midfielder is his dedication to training, exercise and nutrition. He also had the luxury of working with world-class health professionals at facilities in Cobham, Surrey, and Stamford Bridge, West London – making him a tough customer to please.

Speaking at the nanoM launch, Lampard said: "This is exactly the kind of facility players today will really benefit from, especially when you consider the technology they have here can help to

pinpoint potential issues before you even know about them.

"To have everything under one roof is so unique and it means you don't need to visit multiple clinics and see multiple doctors and surgeons for different issues. That could have a big impact on how players detect and respond to injuries, which can only be a good thing."

Lampard is far from the first high-profile footballer to move into the fitness industry. Last year, Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo teamed up with US-based health club chain Crunch Fitness to launch CR7 gyms in Madrid; and former England footballer Alan Shearer is a Speedflex ambassador and investor. ▶



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“

Everybody agrees exercise offers many health benefits; however, the challenge is getting stressed-out, desk-bound employees to exercise more

”

## TIMO LEPPANEN

### STAIRFORCE: CO-CREATOR

#### ► Tell us about Stairforce – what is it?

Stairforce is an iPhone app designed to encourage incidental exercise by rewarding users for taking the stairs instead of an elevator. The app visualises the vertical distance climbed on the stairs as a slow and steady ascent into space. The idea is to boost incidental exercise by gamifying climbing as human-powered space travel. Stairforce offers more than 60 different milestones, such as climbing the equivalent of the Eiffel Tower or the Empire State Building, and users of the app can also compete against their Facebook friends.

#### How did the idea come about?

I work at Palmu, one of the biggest design agencies in Finland. While climbing the stairs to our sixth-floor office I started visualising myself climbing a stairway into space. This struck me as a cool way to encourage people to stop taking elevators. At the same time, I was reading a number of different books about forming habits and how redesigning habits may help encourage people towards healthier choices. Prompted by this, I shared my idea with the owners of Palmu who liked it so much they helped to fund its development, along with AVEK's – The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture Finland – DigiDemo programme.

#### What's your professional background?

I graduated from the University of Art and Design Helsinki with a Master of Arts and have since worked in advertising (branding, storytelling, marketing) and service design (concept and user-centred product design). Working on the Stairforce project has been a great way of combining these skills. But as Stairforce is an app, and I'm not a programmer, I've joined forces with a couple of programmers, including our chief technology officer Tapio Heiskanen, to bring the concept to life.



Leppanen got the idea for Stairforce climbing the six flights to his office

#### What is the attitude to physical activity like in your native Finland?

People don't do enough, and as a result, half of the adults are overweight, and one in five adults is obese. The weight of Finnish men has been increasing since the 1970s, and women since the 1980s, so it's a real cause for concern.

#### What is your ultimate goal with Stairforce?

Everybody agrees that exercise offers many health benefits; however, the challenge is finding a way to get

stressed-out, desk-bound employees to exercise more often. Our goal with Stairforce is to add physical activity into our users' daily lives without too much inconvenience. We want to make the world a better place, one step at a time. We launched the first version of the app last summer, so we're still at the beginning. We're trying to find our tribe and understand more about what our users want from Stairforce.

We're looking for funding and firms we can partner with to execute our vision, such as a player in the healthcare sector or an app/game company. ●





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## Les Mills' global Workout for Water raises US\$850,000

A global fitness fundraising initiative, Workout For Water, has raised more than US\$850,000 (€720,490, £633,620) to help combat ongoing humanitarian crises.

The campaign centred on a one-day exercise event organised by children's charity Unicef and global fitness brand Les Mills to provide funds to help children

and their families gain access to safe water, health care, nutrition and vital sanitation.

Workouts, involving Les Mills' 19,000 gym partners and 130,000 instructors, took place on 18 November 2017.

More than £36,000 (€41,000, US\$49,100) was raised in the UK alone – an amount Les Mills has pledged to match.

Unicef New Zealand's executive director Vivien Maidaborn said: "Water is central to everything we do. When children have access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, they have more than just life, they have a chance to be healthy, to gain an education and to have a brighter future."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=v7B7C\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=v7B7C_H)



Vivien Maidaborn, executive director, Unicef New Zealand



The one-day workout raised funds to provide clean water for children

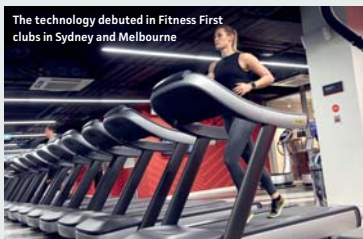
## Apple's GymKit debuts in Fitness First and Virgin Active

Fitness First Australia has become the first operator in the world to introduce gym floor cardio equipment that pairs wirelessly with Apple GymKit technology, with Virgin Active UK hot on its heels with a December launch at its Mansion House location in London.

Members with an Apple Watch will be able to pair it with TechnoGym kit.

Once connected, the watch and equipment exchange data without the need to download additional apps, press extra buttons or navigate menus.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=u4P9h\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=u4P9h_H)



## TRIB3 targets Asian market as part of global expansion

Boutique gym operator TRIB3 is in advanced talks to take its brand into Asia as part of its ongoing global expansion.

TRIB3 chief executive Kevin Yates told *Health Club Management*: "We're working with a partner to grow our international expansion throughout Asia."

The news comes as TRIB3 prepares to launch in Helsinki, after Sami Hurme bought the rights to open studios in the country, with a target of creating 18 new sites in total.

Hurme is hoping to shake up the fitness industry in Finland.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=D4j3m\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=D4j3m_H)



**“**  
We're working with a partner to grow our international expansion throughout Asia

Kevin Yates



## PTs not trained with the right skills, say European operators

**Around 35 per cent** of European fitness operators believe PTs are not trained with the skills they want, according to a survey of 213 European employers.

The findings, presented at EuropeActive's 2017 International Standards Meeting (ISM) in Rome, Italy, also showed that 61 per cent of operators have to provide additional training for newly hired PTs and only 16 per cent of employers find it easy or very easy to recruit the trainers they want.

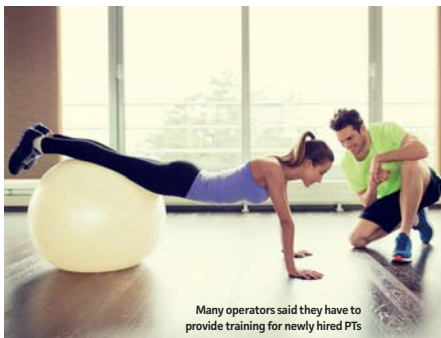
Findings from a second survey looking at PT skills across Europe were also announced. The study,

which was conducted by EuropeActive and the European Register



**“The survey revealed a lot of interesting views, such as PTs listing communication skills as a priority in their personal skills development**

Julian Berriman



Many operators said they have to provide training for newly hired PTs

of Exercise Professionals (EREPS), included insights from 4,200 fitness professionals, of which 3,000 were PTs, from 15 European countries.

All were asked about their satisfaction with vocational training, PT levels of education, happiness and job satisfaction, among other topics.

Julian Berriman, director of EuropeActive's Professional Standards Committee, said:

"The survey revealed a lot of interesting views, such as PTs listing communication skills as a priority in their personal skills development."

"My wish is that we can now develop this research and repeat this survey every two years. I hope it can become a benchmark for the industry because we need that."

More: [http://lei.sr?a=w9N3J\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=w9N3J_H)

## HIIT predicted to be top fitness trend for 2018

**High-intensity interval training (HIIT)** is predicted to be the leading exercise trend this year, taking the top spot from wearable technology, according to the latest survey findings from the US.

The training method returns to the number one position after four years, says the American College of Sports Medicine in its Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2018.

Group training, wearable technology, body weight training and strength training completed the top five.

The survey found that clinical professionals in medical fitness centres want to use HIIT with their patients, but would substitute high-intensity with moderate-intensity.

"Despite warnings by some fitness professionals of potentially increased injury rates using HIIT, this form of exercise has been popular in gyms all over the world," the report said.

Now in its 12th year, the survey was completed by 4,100 respondents worldwide – its largest sample to date.



HIIT returned to the number one position after four years, with group exercise named as the second biggest trend for 2018

Forty potential trends were given as choices, with the 20 most popular published.

Trends that dropped out of the top 20 this year included worksite health promotion initiatives and smartphone exercise apps.

Other trends that did not make the top 20 included boot camps, indoor cycling, pilates, and children's exercise for the treatment and prevention of obesity.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=t4f9a\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=t4f9a_H)

## Sport England launches £100m pilot to get poorer communities active

### Twelve areas across

England will take part in a groundbreaking pilot to help physically inactive communities get more active.

The public body Sport England will allocate £100m in National Lottery funding over four years in an effort to transform the way sport and

physical activity are offered – rallying local organisations and using “an intense focus” on barriers to activity.

Research from the body's Active Lives Survey showed a quarter of the general population is inactive, meaning they do less than 30 minutes of exercise that gets them slightly out of breath weekly.

The project aims to reach those on low incomes, women, older adults, people from certain ethnic groups and those with disabilities – groups proven to be less active.

By developing collaborations between social enterprises, local authorities, schools, GPs and parenting groups, it aims to break down barriers such as poor transport and cost.

“In this part of the country a monthly membership to the gym starts from £14.99, but people won't pay that if they can't put food on the table,” said Cheryl Dixon, a community worker from North Ormesby, Middlesbrough – an area selected for funding.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=X3a5k\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=X3a5k_H)



## FlyFit sets sights on three more airports by crowdfunding

**F**itness and wellness studio FlyFit is planning to expand to three more airports this year, while it puts the finishing touches to its first site at Heathrow.

The business, which offers instructor-led and on-demand classes for travellers, aims to raise £750,000 (US\$1m, €853,500) through crowdfunding platform Crowdfunder and has already achieved more than half of its target, attracting 68 investors.

A statement from FlyFit said: “We are already in partnership discussions with multiple leading lounges, airline alliances, luxury airport concierge and large corporations.”

As reported last July, FlyFit signed a deal with Heathrow Airport to open a studio in Terminal 2. The 3,000sq ft

operation, secured on a nine-year lease, is expected to open within the next few months.

The airport studio offers classes to travellers for £45.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=3P9y7\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=3P9y7_H)



FlyFit founders Brian Chappon and Lauren Perkins



## Places for People doubles number of low cost offerings

**P**laces for People Leisure has expanded its low-cost offering with the purchase of three Simply Gym sites.

The handover of the clubs, in Chesterfield, Hinckley and Telford, takes the operator's portfolio of Places Gyms to six, with sites also in Preston, Sheffield and Corby.

The sites will be run under the Places Gym brand,

which was launched in May 2015 to expand the operator's reach, and range in size from 16,500sq ft (1,530sq m) to 24,000sq ft (2,230sq m), with a combined membership of 9,000.

Staff will be transferred under TUPE and existing memberships will continue as normal.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=y8B6F\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=y8B6F_H)



## Virgin Active co-founder Frank Reed to roll-out Sweat! Gyms

**F**rank Reed's gym chain Sweat! has received £3.75m (US\$5m, €4.2m) worth of equity investment that will see a roll-out of five new clubs in the next 12 months – doubling its portfolio of sites.

The deal with Puma Investments includes an option for a further equity investment of up to £2.5m (US\$3.4m, €2.8m) after 12 months.

Since launching at the end of 2013, Sweat! has focused

its efforts on attracting female customers. Sweat! reports 600 to 800 visits to each of its five gyms every day and a customer base that is 55 per cent female.

Welcoming the investment from Puma, Reed, who co-founded Virgin Active in 1997, said: "We set-up Sweat! because we felt the budget gym sector lacked a fresh, fun and safe environment for women."

"Sweat! appeals to both men and women who want to



Sweat! launched at the end of 2013

feel more comfortable about going to the gym."

Last October the chain opened its fifth standalone gym in Chelmsford, adding to existing sites in Walsall,

Sheffield, Glasgow and Greater Manchester. It plans to trial its gyms within three Debenhams stores later this year.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=R3A3J\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=R3A3J_H)



Former NBA basketballer Amaechi received an OBE in 2011

## John Amaechi calls on sector to embrace diversity

**Former NBA star** John Amaechi has called for the sport and physical activity sector to embrace diversity and encourage inclusivity.

Amaechi, who became the first former NBA basketballer to come out publicly when he wrote his memoir, said businesses need to create a more diverse workforce and will soon realise the benefits.

"There's an old, but true, saying that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'," said Amaechi.

"Having an inclusive culture makes a difference – it means you have the best minds."

Speaking at ukactive's Active Training Conference, Amaechi added: "People think we live in a meritocracy, but when you look at most industries, it's impossible to believe the best brains available exist only in elderly white men – they can't have all the best brains."

More: [http://lei.sr?a=E9f9H\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=E9f9H_H)

## Warwick reveals £49m plan to become UK's fittest uni



The new sports and wellness hub is designed for the public and staff as well as the university's sports teams

**T**he University of Warwick is building a £49m (US\$64.6m, €54.9m) sports and wellness hub in a bid to become the "most physically active higher education campus" in the UK by 2020.

Set to open in 2019, the hub will include one of the largest gyms in higher education, spanning 16,684sq ft (1,550sq m),

as part of the university's mission to get "everyone active every day".

With 300 stations, it will include a high-performance strength and conditioning area; cardiovascular, weights and functional training area; dedicated group cycle studio and four fitness studios.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=4u7j3\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=4u7j3_H)

## More women swim as rethink over classes sees Serco numbers treble

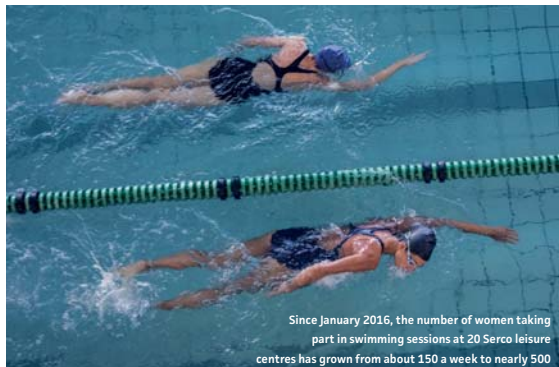
### Women-only swimming

sessions could hold the key to improving numbers, according to an initiative by leisure centre operator Serco.

The number of women taking part in sessions at the operator's facilities has more than tripled over the past two years, following the introduction of women-only classes.

Serco introduced the single-gender classes at 20 of its leisure centres across England in support of the This Girl Can Swim campaign, part of Sport England's nationwide This Girl Can campaign.

The number of female swimmers fell by more than half a million between 2005/2006 and 2015/2016 according to Sport England's Active People survey – over twice the fall seen among men.



Since January 2016, the number of women taking part in swimming sessions at 20 Serco leisure centres has grown from about 150 a week to nearly 500

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

However, since Serco introduced women-only classes in January 2016, the number of women taking part has grown from approximately 150 a week to nearly 500.

"We know fears over body image or swimming ability can be major barriers stopping some women from taking up swimming, so we wanted to do everything we could to

create an environment where women can feel comfortable," said Kate McKnight, head of aquatics at Serco Leisure.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=Y5S9F\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=Y5S9F_H)

## Bannatyne Group begins expansion into Northern Ireland with Virgin Active acquisitions

**The Bannatyne Group** has cast its net across the Irish Sea after buying Virgin Active's Belfast club.

The acquisition, for an undisclosed sum, is the first step in an investment strategy that's likely to include further deals and club openings in Northern Ireland and also the Republic of Ireland.

"Bannatyne Group is in an acquisition and growth phase and has significant resources to draw upon to fund the right deals," said Justin

Musgrove, the group's chief executive officer.

He added: "This agreement could be the first of several acquisitions north and south of the Irish border."

The operator intends to invest £1.2m (US\$1.6m, £1.4m) in the Belfast club, which will feature the latest fitness equipment and technology, including Technogym kit, MyZone and Bannatyne's own B:360 wristbands.

The club, which has a membership of more than

3,700 people, includes a gym, cycle studio, luxury spa, sauna facilities and a 20-metre swimming pool with children's pool.

This marks the second deal struck between the two operators in 2017. Bannatyne's bought Virgin Active's Humberston site in Lincolnshire last August.

Since its launch in 1996, the Bannatyne Group portfolio has grown to 71 clubs.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=C8H8Y\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=C8H8Y_H)



**This agreement could be the first of several acquisitions north and south of the Irish border**

Justin Musgrove

# *Physical*

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**LES MILLS**

## Paralympian Marc Woods is named as new chair of CIMSPA

**P**aralympic gold medalist and BBC commentator Marc Woods has been named as the chair of the



“It’s vital we have an experienced chair in place to help drive forward our agenda”

Tara Dillon

Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA).

Woods, who is also an author and conference speaker, succeeds Andy Reed OBE, who is standing down after serving as interim chair for the past year.

His appointment, which will last three years, comes after news in September that CIMSPA secured £1.2m in funding from Sport England to drive its workforce improvement project.

“I’m delighted to be made CIMSPA chair at an exciting time for the chartered institute, following the recent Sport England investment,” said Woods.

Marc Woods succeeds Andy Reed as chair



“I’d like to thank Andy Reed for all his hard work and look forward to building on the success achieved.”

Tara Dillon, CIMSPA CEO, added: “It’s vital we have an

experienced chair in place to help drive forward our agenda. Marc brings a wealth of experience to the institute.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=3v4Y\\_H](http://lei.sr?a=3v4Y_H)

## Industry veteran John Gamble announces his retirement

**J**ohn Gamble, the managing director of Core Health & Fitness responsible for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), has announced his retirement.

The former managing director of Fitness First, Technogym and Life Fitness has spent the past five years at Core restructuring its EMEA operations.

Core develops and manufactures cardio and strength training products.

Gamble said he wants to spend more time with his family, invest in his personal fitness and indulge his passion for road cycling.



John Gamble was previously managing director at Fitness First and Technogym

Current EMEA CFO and general manager Adrian Message will become the interim managing director.

More: <http://bit.ly/2j4J7UZ>

## Garry Spreadborough to lead key UK Keiser accounts

### Fitness equipment brand

Keiser UK has promoted Garry Spreadborough to UK key account manager.

He rises up the ranks from regional business manager for the South East and London.



Spreadborough has previously worked for Virgin Active and David Lloyd Leisure

Before joining the company in 2015, Spreadborough gained over 10 years of experience in the fitness industry, having held roles as a PT, operations manager, head of sales and general manager at other leisure companies, including Virgin Active and David Lloyd Leisure.

On his promotion, Spreadborough said: “The industry’s movement towards functional training means we can drive our core concepts with outstanding equipment and education.”

More: <http://bit.ly/2o2Xz5u>



## Fusion Lifestyle trebles number of apprentices to 500

**M**ore apprentices will be offered a route into the sports and leisure industry following Fusion Lifestyle's announcement that it plans to grow its programme from 150 to 500 over the next three years.

Latest figures from the Department for Education show the number of new apprentices in England fell by 59 per cent in the three months to the end of July.

However, Fusion Lifestyle is aiming to buck the trend by

growing its annual apprenticeship programme in partnership with sports and leisure industry training provider ICON Training, as it looks to boost employee engagement and retention.

The scheme, titled Fusion500, offers apprentices a career pathway using the Leisure Professional Apprenticeship from Level 2 through to Level 7, encouraging members of staff to become managers and leaders.

ICON director Gary Denton said: "Most providers in the sport and leisure sector offer either purely vocational skills or business, management and leadership development, but this programme combines the practical teaching



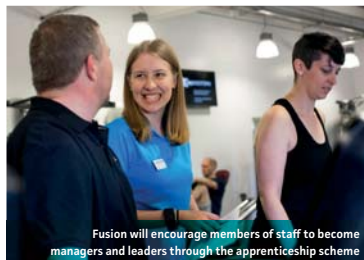
**This programme combines the practical teaching and knowledge elements in one course**

Gary Denton



and knowledge elements in one course, creating a multi-skilled, commercially focused frontline workforce."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=D9X7A\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=D9X7A_H)



Fusion will encourage members of staff to become managers and leaders through the apprenticeship scheme

## Winners of Active Training Awards announced

**T**he sector's best performers in workforce development were announced at the Active Training Awards 2017.

Life Leisure came away with the most awards, taking home Medium-Sized Employer of the Year, alongside an individual gong for Danny Drayson from Life Leisure Grand Central, who scooped Outstanding Individual of the Year.

Virgin Active landed the Large Employer of the Year award, while Training Provider of the Year went to Future Fit Training.

ukactive CEO Steven Ward said: "We have to celebrate the employers and training

providers who are dedicated to developing our sector's workforce. The onus is now on us to use this as a springboard for making rapid progress on the skills agenda."

More than 250 leaders from the physical activity sector came together at the Reading Hilton for the awards.

The conference was opened by ukactive chair Tanni Grey-Thompson, who urged the audience to pull together to drive progress on the skills agenda.

Recruitment and Employment Confederation CEO Kevin Green took attendees through the policy landscape facing the sector,



Active Training Awards winners are driving excellence

exploring how to navigate the challenges of the Apprenticeship Levy.

CIMSPA CEO Tara Dillon said: "Huge congratulations to the winners. We hope their success sets the tone for improvements in the sector.

Jenny Patrickson, managing director of the awards' headline sponsor, Active IQ, added: "These awards are so important in recognising those who lead the way."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=n9b5Y\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=n9b5Y_H)

# ELEVATE

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- Research Uncovered

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■ Sir Muir Gray CBE, Director at Better Value Healthcare



■ Dr Michael Mosley, Journalist, Producer and Presenter

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#### EVIDENCE BASE: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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This series of seminars will examine the evidence base behind physical activity and its potential contribution to health and wellbeing throughout an individual's life.

#### PERFORMANCE: MAXIMISING POTENTIAL

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# Events calendar

## JANUARY 2018

30 | January–1 February

### Spatex

Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK

SPATEX represents all sectors of the industry from pools, spas and saunas to hydrotherapy, wellness, steamrooms and children's play equipment.  
[www.spatex.co.uk](http://www.spatex.co.uk)

## FEBRUARY 2018

20–21 | Quest NBS and CIMSPA Conferences

Chesford Grange, Warwick, UK

The two-day Quest NBS and CIMSPA conference features Natalie Summers, co-founder of Bear Grylls EPIC Training, as the keynote speaker. The 2017 event attracted more than 300 leisure industry professionals.  
[www.questnbs.org](http://www.questnbs.org)



Take part in a tandem skydive to raise funds for dementia research

### CHARITY CHALLENGE

11 March | Alzheimer's Society One Giant Leap - Airfields across the UK

Experience the thrill of jumping out of a plane and free-falling while harnessed to a professional instructor in a sponsored tandem skydive. Join hundreds of others and support those affected by dementia.

Enjoy the exhilarating feeling of flying through the clouds at over 10,000 feet and at speeds of up to 120 mph. Registration is £35 with a fundraising target of £430.  
[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

The Royal British Legion Ride finishes at the Menin Gate in Ypres



### CHARITY CHALLENGE

28 June - 2 July | The Royal British Legion Ride London UK to Ypres, Belgium

Experience the poignant history of the First World War on a 295-mile bike ride. Visit battlefields, cemeteries and memorials on this scenic ride of remembrance. Four days in the saddle will take you from London through the historic Somme region of France, then towards Passchendaele and finishing at the Menin Gate in Ypres.

Transport, accommodation and most meals are provided. There will also be a historian en route to bring the stories of the region to life. Registration is £650 and participants are asked to raise £900 for the Royal British Legion.  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

21–23 | ACSM Team Physician Course Sheraton San Diego Hotel, San Diego, CA, US

The course gives physicians and other healthcare providers the core knowledge needed to care for sports teams in the community. Presentations include new perspectives in orthopaedic, primary care and emergency medicine aspects of sports medicine.  
[www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)

21–23 | ForumClub-Forum Piscine Gallery, Fiera di Bologna, Bologna, Italy

In its 19th year, this event will see 16,000sq m dedicated to the exhibition of products and services for those who design, build and restore private, public and commercial fitness clubs, pools and spas. A separate congress aims to attract more than 800 trade professionals.  
[www.forumclub.it](http://www.forumclub.it)

25–26 | Professional Beauty London ExCeL, London, UK

Showcasing skincare, spa and beauty products, Professional Beauty is one of the biggest events of its kind in the UK. It includes the Professional Spa & Wellness Convention for spa professionals.  
[www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/e/London](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/e/London)

# ROBERT COOK

After 30 years in the hotel sector, Virgin Active UK's MD is bringing a new perspective to the fitness industry. He talks to Steph Eaves about making the transition and his plans for the brand



Under Cook's leadership, Virgin Active UK is placing exceptional customer service at the heart of the brand

**F**resh from the hotel industry, Robert Cook is not shy about admitting he has many changes planned for Virgin Active UK. And – perhaps unsurprisingly, given his background – top of the list is broadening the brand's offer.

"I came in just as Virgin Active was selling 35 clubs to Nuffield, and then six months later we sold 14 to David Lloyd," he says. "We were already going through a lot of change and so we had to get that calmed down. But it was the right thing to do, and it also gave me a bit of time to really understand the market and where we were going.

"We took the team away for three days and asked them, 'what does the future look like?' What we came up with was a 360-degree wellness concept."

The concept, says Cook, consists of body maintenance and rehabilitation, nutrition, mental wellbeing and movement. The first component, called Beyond Movement, has already been launched in several clubs, which now provide physiotherapy, sports massage and reformer pilates for members and non-members.

"The whole premise of Beyond Movement is 'moving freely'," says Cook. "If you join us because you want to run the London Marathon, we can get you fit for that. But we also think we've got a responsibility to keep your muscles and your body in great shape."

## DEVELOPING MENTAL FITNESS

With Beyond Movement already making an impact, nutrition and mental wellbeing are next on the agenda.

"We're working with some nutritional companies to come in and give advice that can be passed on to members through our PTs. And similarly for mental

**“** We took the team away for three days and asked them, 'what does the future look like?' What we came up with was a 360-degree wellness concept



A full-length portrait of Robert Cook, a middle-aged man with short brown hair, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a dark grey checkered blazer over a light pink shirt, a dark grey scarf with fringed ends, and dark trousers. A blue patterned pocket square is visible in his blazer. He is leaning his right arm on a black horizontal bar. The background consists of a white wall with large red horizontal stripes and a digital clock at the top showing '11:27' in red. The overall aesthetic is modern and professional.

Robert Cook photographed for  
Health Club Management at  
Virgin Active, Barbican,  
London, November 2017



The new MD has reshaped the Virgin Active UK offer following its sell-off of clubs to Nuffield and David Lloyd

► wellbeing, it's early days but we'll be looking to work with various companies on ways to develop mental fitness and agility, as well as cultivating a good state of mind.

"It's never going to be a white coat and stethoscope kind of thing, but we're looking at what kinds of interventions we can offer, whether it's through social interaction, buddying up, different forms of exercise, meditation or live chat lines," Cook says.

Movement, the "core pillar", is also being evolved, with an intensified focus on group exercise.

"We've got a lot going on there," he explains. "We've launched Punch – our boxing class – and Run Tribe and Ro – our respective running and rowing group classes. We've also brought in Israel Rivera – a big hitter from the US, who's going to be heading up the group exercise team."

### LESSONS FROM THE HOTEL WORLD

With a hospitality career spanning 30 years, Cook is well placed to bring fresh ideas into the company. "I was brought up in hotels," he says. "My parents had hotels in Aberdeenshire. I lived in a hotel bedroom until I was 18, when I went to university to study hotel management."

The Scot spent the early years of his career launching, working in and leading some of the UK's biggest hotel companies, including Intercontinental, the Balmoral Hotel, Malmaison Hotels and racing car driver David Coulthard's Columbus and Dakota Hotels. After seven years as CEO of Malmaison, during which time he oversaw the acquisition of Hotel Du Vin and grew the business from 12 hotels to 28, Cook moved to De Vere to run the Village Group.

"The Village Group has a big fitness component with some 80,000 members. That was my first foray into health and fitness in the real world. Hotel fitness is quite different – fewer metrics and smaller in size."

### ■ VIRGIN ACTIVE UK'S INNOVATIVE ADDITION - APPLE'S GYMKIT

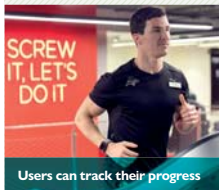
Virgin Active UK ended 2017 on an innovative note after becoming the first gym in Europe to introduce Apple GymKit-enabled cardio equipment in house. The breakthrough technology, which allows cardio equipment to pair wirelessly and seamlessly with the Apple Watch, had its European debut in December at Virgin Active Mansion House in London.

Using GymKit, members will be able to synchronise their data, such as speed, floors climbed and pace, captured by both the cardio machine they are working out on and their Apple watch, to produce what Apple has called "the most accurate measurements possible".

Andy Birch, Product and Fitness Director at Virgin

Active said:

"Technology is becoming increasingly part of everyday life and advancements like these allow us to track and monitor our fitness and wellbeing. We are excited to bring Apple GymKit technology to Virgin Active."



Users can track their progress





**Ro, a group rowing class, is one of three new group exercise concepts on offer at Virgin Active UK clubs**

He went on to run Macdonald Hotels, the UK's largest private hotel group, with a large health, fitness and spa component. "And then I turned 50. Life begins at 50, so I thought it was time to do something different," he says.

Not knowing exactly what this change might be, Cook was unaware he would be returning to his first passion.

“ It's early days but we'll be looking to work with various companies around ways to develop mental fitness and agility, as well as cultivating a good state of mind

"I always loved sports and being active. Funnily enough, I'd planned to study PE at Jordanhill College in Glasgow, but a car accident in my final year of school left me needing back surgery and there was no way I could go. So the obvious thing for me to do was to get into hotels."

After the first year of his hotel management degree, however, Cook found himself enjoying the field. Playing volleyball and golf satisfied his interest in physical activity, so he decided not to transfer to the PE course. Thirty years later, the opportunity to rekindle this interest arose.

#### **MAKING THE CHANGE**

"I'd gone to a couple of agencies and told them that I wanted to do something different. I got a call one day saying there was an opportunity at Virgin. I was excited, because I think Virgin is a very quirky, very cool brand. And when I found out it was running the health and fitness business, it sounded perfect."

After nine interviews, Cook stepped into the role and into the industry on 20 June 2016. "It was quite a hard transition, because for 30 years – my whole adult life – I'd been in hotels. And I'd always had a massive advantage because of my upbringing. My father and mother were fantastic hoteliers and that gave me a great start, which continued through my life, allowing me to become sort of an industry leader. When I came into the health and



**Cook is focussed on group exercise and building a social hub**



**Cook wants to focus on developing ways for members to socialise and spend more time with each other**

- fitness industry it was a completely new world. It was a lot more complex than I thought it would be.
- "I did a lot of listening, which was unusual for me. I was lucky I had Paul Woolf and then Matthew Bucknall as CEOs, particularly Matthew who has seen 20 years of cyclical trends and changes in this industry.
- "But to be honest, most of my listening happened internally, to the product guys, the PTs, the operations guys, just to understand what it was all about. I did a lot more listening than I usually would have done and learned a lot. But, I was hired for a reason, so it's now time for me to start taking action," Cook says.

### PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST

Now he's got the lay of the land, does Cook anticipate any significant threats to the business he's taken on?

"I think the diversity and speed of the competition entering the market is a huge concern for everybody," he says. "Inflationary pressures are also an issue for all businesses – the cost of fuel, utilities, rents and rates. We've just got to be smart about that, property-wise and people-wise, but at the same time, nothing should get in the way of the customer experience."

And it's customer experience that Cook hopes will differentiate Virgin Active from its competitors.

"I'm focusing on the first five minutes – reception, changing facilities, and so on. Those interactions are just as important as time in the gym," he says.

"Where I think boutiques let themselves down is the experience outside the class. In time, the consumer will be saying, 'great class, but I want a better shower than I



**Some clubs now offer physiotherapy and sports massage**

“ Yes, we want members to spend more money, of course we do, but I want them to spend more time with each other. Creating social hubs is really, really important



The fitness brand is eager to further develop its group exercise offering, having launched new concepts in 2017

have at home, I want great F&B'. That's the boutique of the future, and I think we've got the basis of that in play.

"I believe that we've got to be as good at delivering the 20 minutes that members spend off their bikes after their classes as we are at delivering the 20 minutes they're on the bike. That's really, really important to me."

### BOOSTING DWELL TIME

That, according to Cook, means creating clubs that function as more than just gyms – clubs that serve as lifestyle hubs for socialising, working and relaxing.

"My utopia would be to see a number of group exercise classes all finishing at around the same time in the evening and then seeing a big spike in the lounge and people dwelling longer in our clubs. And yes, we want them to spend more money, of course we do, but I want them to spend more time with each other. I think creating social hubs is really, really important.

"We put a lot of effort into how the lounge looks and feels. We want to make sure the Wi-Fi is good so people are able to work in the club. We've got to have good mobile signal, good papers, good magazines and great coffee. The lounge should be a comfortable, quiet space, and also an interactive space. It's a bit like the American country club model," he says.

### THE COOL FACTOR

Cook believes another strong differentiator for Virgin Active is the very thing that attracted him to the role – being part of the Virgin brand, which owns 20 per cent of the health and fitness business.

"We have a massive, massive leverage against the leisure industry because we work for arguably the UK's finest brand. Virgin has a massive following. That's fact. We've got the data to show it," he says with a smile.

"When I came in, I went out of my way to build on our existing relationship with Virgin and now I work very, very closely with the people team, and the values and brand team at Virgin. I also work a lot with my Virgin contemporaries in the other businesses.

"That was an area that I saw as an opportunity for us. We've got the Virgin RED loyalty programme, which means Virgin Active members get great deals with Virgin Experiences, Limited Edition, Airlines, Trains, and so on. I think that's a great point of difference."

### THE RIGHT DIRECTION

After a year and a half in the role, Cook's enthusiasm for the sector has continued to grow, and he's now looking to build on that by making a splash.

"Fitness is going through a revolution at the moment," he says. "It's reaching the top of more and more people's agendas, as well as the top of the governmental agenda. I think the industry's becoming more aware, more professional and, as such, a bigger contributor to society overall."

"We've scaled down the Virgin Active business, so I now want to concentrate on getting the jewel we've got properly polished. I also want to give myself a bit of time to see where the industry's really going. There are a lot of question marks around what the next big thing will be. We'd like to lead that, obviously." ●

# Is data-driven CV training a threat to the gym-floor PT?

More and more operators are investing in gym kit that uses data analysis to capture and relay user performance – a key role of the traditional PT. **Kath Hudson** asks industry experts if the growth of such tech could make the gym-floor PT redundant

**D**ata-driven training is becoming an ever greater part of the gym experience. By providing metrics, like power output, heart rate and leg speed, Wattbike has helped to transform British cycling fortunes on the world stage and is now a standard feature in many gyms. eGym can integrate with many cardiovascular (CV) equipment ranges, as well as apps, and many gym members are now using their own data-driven technology with Garmins, Fitbits and apps, such

as mapmyrun and Strava. Furthermore, when Apple's GymKit – which will sync with up to 80 per cent of CV equipment – rolls out worldwide, we can expect interest in data to skyrocket.

But how will data impact the industry and particularly the role of PTs on the gym floor? Will they see their responsibilities taken over by data-driven technology or could they use these innovations to make themselves more relevant than ever, helping members to achieve better results? We ask the experts...

## Steve Marshall

Wattbike: UK sales manager

**I think the** goals of club members who like using data-driven CV equipment and those of the majority of PT clientele are currently very different. Many PT clients have no prior knowledge about training with heart rate, power and leg speed. Instead, their motivation is to build strength or to change their body shape. This has been a rich vein for PTs and is unlikely to disappear.

What has changed is that those who are confident using technology and data have usually educated themselves because they are training for a specific goal or sport, such as a triathlon or cycling. These customers are unlikely to book in for a standard PT session, but would certainly seek out a sport-specific coach who understands the data they train with. There certainly is a gap here and

this is where the innovative PTs can really succeed.

In my experience, PTs don't automatically head for the data-driven CV equipment, but prefer to focus on boxing, functional, weights and hard

intervals. However, as more people are now using data-gathering technology, such as Garmins, Fitbits, fitness apps and our own Wattbike Hub app, PTs do need to make sure they stay educated on how they can use these tools, otherwise they risk missing out while customers get their PT advice online.

Currently, I don't think data-driven technology provides any threat to PTs. While the market expands and demographics widen, there is a great need for PTs who can create personalised programmes, provide expert motivation and keep their clients accountable.



**Many PT clients have no prior knowledge about training with heart rate – their motivation is to build strength or to change body shape. This has been a rich vein for PTs and is unlikely to disappear**



**Many people who use data are training for a specific sport or goal**





**PTs may use client data to give feedback during and after sessions**

## David Minton

The Leisure Database Company: director

As an estimated 80 per cent of CV equipment will be able to link up to Apple's GymKit within a few years, the future will be all about data. Rather than threaten the role of the PT on the gym floor, I think data-driven equipment will have the opposite effect and people will need more help, advice and reassurance on how to interpret it most efficiently. And, just as the car industry is having to adapt to the presence of electric cars, the fitness industry will also adapt. It will be more software than equipment led.

With Apple, the largest tech company in the world, moving into our space and making it a data game,

people's perceptions of exercise will change. The gym is likely to be incorporated into everyday wellness habits like walking and climbing stairs.

Data will give PTs the opportunity to get more involved with their clients between sessions, give personal push notifications, see what their clients are doing when not at the gym and praise them. This innovation will also involve more people from different levels of society, as one of the reasons why lower income groups don't engage is because they often don't know where to start. Operators will be forced to adapt, because their clients will adapt, but they should embrace the change.



**With Apple, the largest tech company in the world, moving into our space and making it a data game, people's perceptions of exercise will change**

**As fitness technology increasingly embraces data-based feedback, the scope for PTs is likely to increase rather than decrease**

## Craig Swyer

Technogym: marketing manager (commercial)

As a supplier of CV equipment that utilises data, we've done extensive research into this area and have identified two key groups of gym-goers who enjoy and seek out data-driven exercise. The first group is driven by a specific goal, such as improved fitness, weight loss or feeling more healthy.

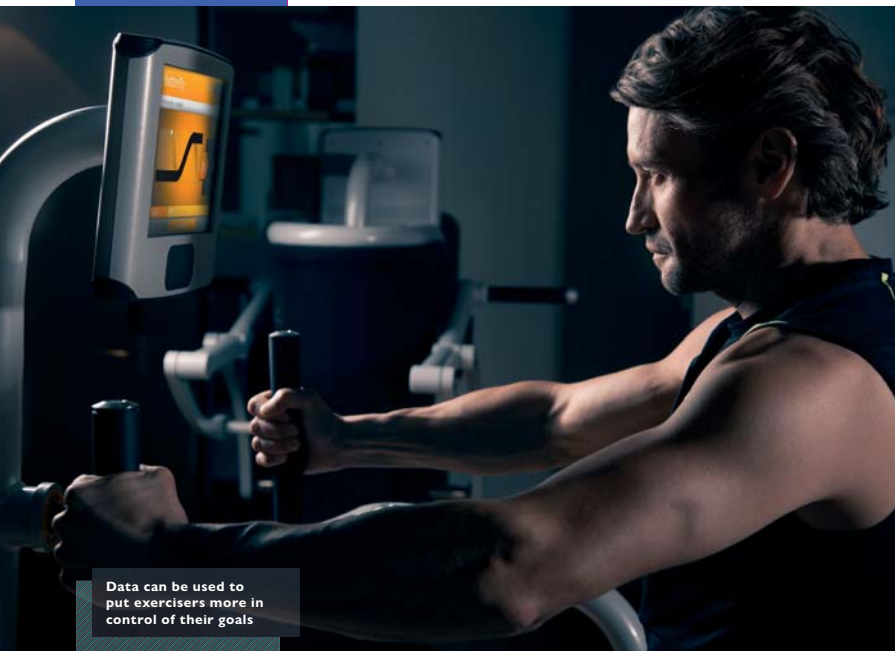
They understand the benefits of exercise, and are hungry for data and guidance whilst they workout, but they are happy to do this unsupervised.

The second group is experience focused and wants PT engagement to enhance their experience and bring the data to life. As long as this group persists, and we

believe it will, gym-floor PTs are unlikely to be made obsolete by technology.

We're focused on developing innovative solutions that cater to both types of data-driven exercisers. Our latest product, SkillRun, is such a solution, with features like recorded videos and data feedback – which allows the user to view their real-time data on metrics, such as running power, cadence, step length and ground contact time. Usefulness of the latter can be enhanced and supported by a PT, further showing that as fitness technology increasingly embraces data-based feedback, the scope for PTs is likely to increase rather than decrease.





Data can be used to put exercisers more in control of their goals

## ► Andy Hall

eGym: sales manager

**Members respond best** to a personalised service, so there will always be a place for PTs on the gym floor. Recent advancements in digital technologies and the move towards a totally connected environment support their role, as it means PTs now have access to a rich source of data to further enhance their service.

With data-driven equipment, real-time digital training plans and digital

tools available for managing members, PTs can improve their customer care while reducing time spent on

admin. This allows PTs to actually be able to grow their business further. Currently, between 8 and 12 per cent of members use PT services, but we believe effective use of data will drive up this figure.

Access to in-depth training data enables PTs to provide a more detailed and customised service. For example, by accessing and analysing data collected



Currently, between 8 and 12 per cent of members use PT services, but we believe effective use of data will drive up this figure

from multiple sources, including cardio equipment suppliers, body analysers, fitness trackers and apps, PTs can identify physical strengths and imbalances and set achievable, effective training plans tailored to the member's ability, routines and work life.

Data is the next significant evolution for the industry. Many clubs have the same equipment, concept and offering, so the collection and interpretation of data creates a significant

differentiator. It's not only the key to improving fitness results but also to creating social networks and meaningful trainer-to-member interactions, which will strengthen the member experience in the gym. In turn, this reduces attrition, improves retention and, as a result, has a positive influence on the club's revenue stream. Innovative clubs that embrace data and the opportunities technology brings will thrive, while those who don't will get left behind.





Technology can imitate world-class, tailored training with quantified results, but some members will still prefer to work with a PT



## Mary Obana

Koko FitClubs: president and co-founder

**Data-driven CV** equipment shouldn't be a threat to great trainers. Knowing some of the best trainers in the world, there is nothing that can threaten the value they uniquely provide: combining expertise and a fun, engaging experience, with a unique personal connection, to create a devoted following.

However, PTs who stand idly by, sipping a coffee while merely telling their clients what to do, will have to raise

their game. Data-driven personal training will replace them unless they model the success of the best trainers, creating deep personal connections with their clients.



Koko FitClub is a technology-centric fitness concept. Our patented Smartraining System delivers automated, real-time one-to-one coaching, customising every workout to each member based on their goals, what they did last time, what they

There is nothing that can threaten the value PTs uniquely provide; however, PTs who stand idly by, sipping a coffee while merely telling their clients what to do, will have to raise their game

are doing at every moment during that session and their level of fitness. The end result is that they can benefit from world-class training, on demand, tailored to them and with quantified results. Despite this, we have some members who still prefer working with trainers.

We have learned that effective training involves not only guiding clients on

each exercise or cardio session, but wrapping that guidance in an exceptional, engaging client experience so they continue to do it. Engaging client experience doesn't end with the session and, to that end, our technology also includes a platform that delivers well-timed recognition of accomplishments, triggered by specific client activity. ●

# THE POWER OF DATA DRIVEN STOCK MANAGEMENT

## SRS LEISURE INCREASES SERCO PROFITS 20 PER CENT

SRS Leisure has combined 25 years of retail experience with new technology to deliver progressive stock management solutions to the industry. Its long standing customer, Serco Leisure, is its latest automatic stock management success story

**T**echnological advancements within our industry are currently being felt more than ever, particularly by retail suppliers operating in front of house areas. Indeed, the traditional reception is now being challenged by a cashless, 'concierge' model. By automating everyday tasks, this model increases operational efficiency, allowing staff redeployment and/or reduced labour hours. SRS Leisure has always taken pride in being the first to market with innovative retail solutions to address challenges and change, and today is no different.

### DATA-DRIVEN AUTOMATED STOCK MANAGEMENT (ASM)

Empty shelves, damaged stock and an incorrect product mix are costs that leisure operators cannot afford to bear. SRS Leisure's ASM solution uses data and technology to fully automate stock management within facilities. It takes product data from point-of-sale equipment to measure and analyse stock movements, automatically generating fill-to-maximum replenishment orders specific to an individual facility.

**Implementing ASM with Serco Leisure**  
SRS Leisure has been working as Serco Leisure's exclusive supplier of swimwear and learn-to-swim products for more than 10 years. Over the past 12 months, SRS Leisure has implemented its new ASM system across Serco Leisure's



**Swimwear and learn-to-swim products are available at Serco Leisure's centres and make up a key source of revenue**

40+ swimming facilities, changing its goods-for-resale (GFR) operations.

Customisation was the key starting point, as every site was different in terms of visitors, programming etc. This meant that the bulk of the work involved getting the initial stock par levels correct. SRS Leisure spent time working with Serco Leisure to set parameters for each site – parameters as specific as product colours and swimwear styles.

After the initial set-up, an open flow of data was created to allow weekly sales reports to be received from each individual site. This was a vital step, as this data enables uplift to be tracked, trends identified and product listings refined to ensure responsive and exact offerings. Data is knowledge, and SRS Leisure's ASM system builds valuable insight and allows Serco Leisure to be more informed about every single one of its GFR decisions.

### The ASM in practice

Weekly replenishment orders are automatically generated to replace stock via a next day delivery service. Fully stocked shelves are more commercially attractive than half empty ones, but effective par levels require a balancing act: shelves should be fully stocked without exceeding maximum values, as this reduces the risk of shrinkage and stock damage.

The automation provided by the system has reduced Serco Leisure's labour costs, as manual ordering and stock checking are substituted by automatic ordering.





Serco Leisure has more than 40 swimming facilities across the UK, and each has its own specific customer and visitor profile

**"The results speak for themselves; we have seen a 25 per cent increase in sales of swimwear and learn to swim products at our leisure centres since installing the new ASM system"**

*Kate McKnight*

Data integrity is critical for this system to work, so cycle-counting is used to back up stock data. Instead of checking shelf stock at every order, SRS Leisure's system handles manual stock level checks every four to six weeks in order to ensure that data is as accurate as possible.

**Results: 25 per cent sales increase**  
GFR sales across Serco Leisure's sites have improved over the past 12 months that the system has been in place. Kate McKnight, head of aquatics for Serco, says: "The results speak for themselves; we have seen a 25 per cent increase in sales of swimwear and learn to swim products at our leisure centres since installing the new ASM system. Our front of house employees have been freed up from manual tasks such as counting and ordering, so can now concentrate on training and upskilling them to improve the

overall customer experience.

"SRS Leisure has acted as an extension to our business, delivering an effective technological solution and driving its implementation. This has resulted in better performance for both of our organisations and I hope to see continued growth over the next 12 months."

#### **KEY BENEFITS OF SRS LEISURE'S ASM SYSTEM**

- ◆ Integrates with numerous internal systems, including Legend and Gladstone, because it relies on an open flow of data to SRS Leisure
- ◆ Removes the requirement for purchase order numbers, as the risk of budgets being exceeded with replenishment orders is eliminated. This ultimately speeds up the process
- ◆ Reduces labour costs due to automation of traditional front of

house tasks. Staff can instead focus on welcoming visitors and upselling to further drive sales

- ◆ Smart, data-driven inventory management that improves performance of GFR by eradicating out-of-stocks, and reducing shrinkage and the need for price markdowns
- ◆ SRS Leisure conducts initial setup, including par levels and sales forecasting, and ongoing cycle-counting stock checks to maintain data integrity and accuracy ●

**For a free consultation, contact SRS Leisure:**

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**EMAIL: [sales@srsleisure.com](mailto:sales@srsleisure.com)**

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**serco**

# RHIAN STEPHENSON

Boutique fitness brand Psycle has been transformed from an indoor cycling studio into a multi-modal fitness concept. On the eve of an expansion that's set to bring three new studios to London, Lauretta Ihonor talks to the woman behind the brand's transformation



A barre concept was added to the Psycle portfolio in 2017

## How did you first get involved with Psycle?

I was approached by the management team while it was still in the concept phase. They wanted me to come in and consult on how to make Psycle more of a wellness brand. I'm a nutritionist and naturopath, and I was exclusively running my own wellness consultancy for lifestyle and fitness at that time. Given that I also used to be a national swimmer, the consulting role with Psycle seemed like the perfect position that brought together my interest and experience in fitness, nutrition and health. After a few months of consulting for them, I was asked to come on board full-time. And when the management team changed in September 2014, they asked me to take over as CEO. It was quite an organic move from being on the consultancy side to becoming more and more involved in the business and the product.

## That's quite a change. How did you find the transition from wellness consultant to CEO?

It was honestly one of the hardest things I've ever done. When I took over, I was completely solid on the wellness side of things – the product, fitness concept and nutritional offering – but then I suddenly became responsible for property, operations and all the other aspects of running a business. It also took us quite a while to find a new team, so the learning curve was steep and very challenging. Despite that, it's been an incredible experience and I've been supported by so many great people while we've built up the team.

## How has the brand changed since you became CEO?

It's changed in a lot of ways, the most obvious being that we've launched other concepts. Psycle started out offering indoor cycling only, but we've since launched barre, HIIT and yoga concepts. While the expansion of concepts is the most obvious change, I truly believe the



When I took over, I was solid on the wellness side of things, but I suddenly became responsible for property, operations and other aspects of running a business



Stephenson has a background in wellness consultancy, and was formerly on Canada's national swim team





**Psyche evolved from offering indoor cycling exclusively to offering barre, HIIT and yoga concepts**

- biggest change has been the establishment of a clear company ethos and brand. That included getting clear on what we wanted to achieve as a company and what exactly we wanted the brand to stand for.

When Psyche first launched, there really wasn't a defined mission. Clear values are central to guiding the decisions made in a company, so the first thing I did was to outline them, make sure the team was aligned with them and ensure that we were making key decisions, such as hiring, based on these values.

#### **So how would you describe the Psyche brand ethos?**

What we wanted to do with Psyche was create a brand that got people excited and passionate about their own health. That's really what we stand for. Psyche is about finding your confidence and strength through movement and personal challenge. It's about creating an inspiring community for you to be a part of. It's really about opening your eyes to these benefits rather than just focusing on weight loss. For us, if you're going to create a life long passion for fitness, it cannot be based on losing five inches in January because you've indulged over the holidays. Instead we like to show people how much exercise positively impacts all aspects of their life.

#### **Why did you make the decision to move beyond indoor cycling?**

I was initially in mixed minds about expanding beyond cycling. On one hand, I was concerned about diluting what we do at Psyche by adding new concepts. But on the other hand, I knew that in order to be truly healthy you need to

have balance, which involves doing strength training, flexibility and cardio. We couldn't honestly call ourselves a brand that stands for health and then only do cardio.

The other reason I was interested in moving beyond cycling was that we'd created such incredible communities and energies as a cycle-only brand. I felt that if we could achieve something similar in other concepts it would be fantastic, and we could create a ClassPass style model in one brand, so if you love Psyche you don't need to go anywhere else.

There was never any talk of a name change once we expanded beyond cycling. That's because we don't see Psyche as a ride brand, we see it as a wellness, lifestyle and fitness brand, so we never even contemplated changing it. We thought if we wanted to do a concept-only studio we might call it 'Concept by Psyche' or '360 by Psyche' but it would always remain Psyche.

#### **Tell us about Psyche's energy kitchen**

When I took over at Psyche, there was no real nutritional offering – there was just a fridge where you could buy water and energy balls. One of the first changes I made was launching the energy kitchen – a protein shake and smoothie bar.

After a workout is the best time to eat in terms of health. It's also the best opportunity we have to positively influence our customers because when they leave Psyche, not only are they hungry, they're often time poor because they have to go to work or similar. So adding in an offering to fill that need was important for me from a business and a health perspective.

I also wanted to make sure that we were providing truly nutritional foods. We could







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Recent investment in Psyche has allowed the brand to expand, with three new studios on the horizon

- have stocked bottled energy drinks that you can buy cheaply and sell for £2 to create a good margin, but I wanted to make sure our customers could trust every single thing we sold. So in our energy kitchen, we serve cold-pressed juices, energising smoothies and a grab-and-go range of food. And even though I could probably earn a lot more money if we started to use pasteurised products and ingredients with really long shelf lives, I'm not willing to do that because that's not what we stand for.

It makes things harder because we have to manage our inventory meticulously and we have to suffer higher amounts of waste, but I think our customers appreciate the fact that they know everything they buy from us is picked by a nutritionist who would eat it herself.

#### What are the expansion plans for Psyche?

It's an exciting time. We recently secured a £3m investment, which has helped us acquire three new studios, due to open starting from April. These will be in London, although we're not revealing the locations yet. We've also talked about expanding beyond the UK at some point, but before we do that, we want to be sure we have a solid and mature core offering in London. Expanding internationally before that would be too much of a distraction, but we certainly are talking about whether we want to franchise once we have that solid standing, or if we'll expand under our own brand.

#### It's often said that it's hard to make a profit in the boutique fitness sector. Have you found this to be true?

You can definitely make money from boutique fitness – as long as rent prices don't go insane – but it's not easy. It's very capital and investment heavy because it can cost between £600,000 and £900,000 to build a studio. It's important to also secure sites in areas that can sustain a pay-as-you-go model – which means a high volume of workers and high-value homes – but these are fast disappearing as competition is high. So, yes it's possible to make money in this sector, but it's challenging. ►

#### Do you think the boutique market will move away from pay-as-you-go and towards a membership model?

I don't think so. When you look at the metrics, it's just not feasible to offer a high-quality boutique experience using a membership model unless the membership is very expensive. We could never sell £100 per month memberships and still cover our rent alone.

It's hard enough to break even in boutique fitness with pay-as-you-go, while maintaining the quality of staff, instructors and small things like



#### ■ ABOUT PSYCLE

- The first Psyche studio opened on Mortimer Street in central London in 2014
- There are currently three studios based in London: Shoreditch, Mortimer Street and Canary Wharf, with three additional openings expected by June 2018
- A total of 7,500 customers visit the studios each week
- The brand has completely separate teams for each of its four concepts: ride, barre, yoga and HIIT
- Psyche is owned by Skillcapital founder Tim Macready and former head of Goldman Sachs' European energy private equity division Richard Butland



“ There was never any talk of a name change once we expanded beyond cycling. That’s because we don’t see Psytle as a ride brand, we see it as a wellness, lifestyle and fitness brand



Psytle customers learn that exercise can have a positive impact on all aspects of their lives

- great shampoo and products that deliver the luxurious convenience our customers demand.

What I do think will happen is that there'll be a shift in people's awareness of how expensive boutique classes are relative to everyday expenditure. There's a perception that being healthy is more expensive than being unhealthy, but when most people take a close look at how much they spend, they quickly notice that the amount of money they spend on unhealthy things is disproportionately greater than what they spend on healthy things. A £20 class is nothing compared to spending £200 on a single night out.

#### What are your predictions for the industry over the next five years?

If we look at what's already happening, a lot of the bigger gym chains are increasingly making use of studio space and offering boutique classes. That's because they know people want a prescriptive model – that's how people stay engaged. One of the biggest problems with going to the gym is that you have to do your own thing. You need the knowledge to create a workout for yourself and the discipline to follow it, but most people don't have these abilities because they haven't been taught them.

In the UK, we're always five to 10 years behind the US. A trend we're seeing there is specialised and tailored workout programmes. Members have a say in the goals they want to accomplish, and trainers help them to create a plan based on that. It's popular because there are so many more options available these days, and the choice and autonomy appeals to exercisers. I think we'll see something similar happen in the UK in the near future. ●

“ It's just not feasible to offer a high-quality boutique experience using a membership model unless the membership is very expensive. We could never sell £100 per month memberships and still cover our rent



**Stephenson believes UK gyms will move towards creating tailored exercise programmes for their clients**



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# STAYING ON TREND

**Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson** of US-based research and consulting firm ClubIntel share the take-home messages from the *2017 International Fitness Industry Trend Report*

**I**n business, trends can be considered an essential truth. They inform us of where the market is headed, what competitors are doing, what consumers are embracing, what business leaders are thinking and what opportunities are ripe for the taking. The *2017 International Fitness Industry Trend Report* reveals the

current trends in the global fitness industry. The new report, which was generated from 1,349 responses and represents over 14,000 fitness facilities around the globe, tracks over 90 industry practices across four key segments: programmes/services, equipment, facilities and technology. The study also explores

differences in outcomes according to region: Asia Pacific, Canada, Europe, Latin America and the US.

## OVERARCHING INSIGHTS

The first key insight unearthed by the report is that high price points are associated with trend setting. Essentially,

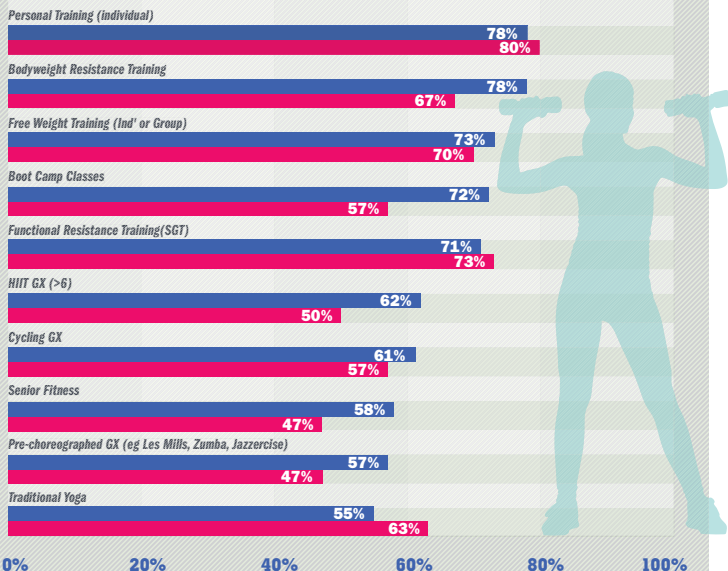


Group exercise has become the preferred approach to fitness



**GRAPH I - TOP TEN GLOBAL PROGRAMMING TRENDS BY LEVEL OF ADOPTION - COMPARISON TO EUROPE**

**GLOBAL** **EUROPE**



the higher an operator's monthly price point, the more likely it is to be a trendsetter. In the majority of cases, fitness businesses with the highest price points – commercial luxury clubs, commercial premium clubs or medical fitness centres – held or shared the top position in respect to the trend practices across programming, equipment, facilities and technology.

The next key insight from the report relates to the impact of fitness programme selection on business operations. The survey findings indicate that the type of fitness programmes a business adopts ultimately dictates the equipment it acquires and the facilities it uses to house those programmes.

However, programming is not only a crucial influencer of business operations, it also appears to be unique to each region of the globe. Of the top 10 global programming trends for 2017 (see graph: The top 10 global programming

**Despite the inescapable influence of mobile technology in society today, the fitness industry remains a surprisingly slow adopter of technology**

trends by level of adoption), yoga, functional resistance training and one-to-one personal training have a marginally better uptake in Europe compared with globally, whereas bodyweight resistance training,

pre-choreographed group exercise and senior fitness have noticeably better uptake globally than in Europe.

When observing programming trends by level of adoption, the power of group programming is clear to see. Whether it involves HIIT, cycling, barre, boot camp, yoga, pre-choreographed group exercise or suspension training, exercising in a group setting appears to have become the approach of choice.

Despite the inescapable influence of mobile technology in society today, the fitness industry remains a surprisingly slow adopter of technology. The survey findings show that other than the use of social media (mostly used to sell and promote products) – which has been adopted by 57 per cent of operators – only three of 13 technology platforms have achieved 30 per cent adoption.

While the global fitness industry leans toward being prehistoric in its approach, European operators show a greater



**Cycling classes remain popular and are one of the top programming trends by level of adoption**  
*Image courtesy of The Gym Group.*

propensity for adopting technology as a tool of the trade (see graph: The top 10 global technology trends by level of adoption). Furthermore, in respect to technology, the report highlights that the majority of operators have adopted technology that helps them sell rather than engage and immerse customers.

#### INDUSTRY FIRESTORMS

A firestorm describes a force that is intense and highly destructive in nature. Trends can be firestorms when they experience rapid and exponential growth and, in doing so, change the landscape of a particular industry. In the case of the fitness industry, there are three trends that have experienced enormous growth over the past four

**The rise of non-traditional kit, such as tyres and kettlebells, has transformed conventional strength training equipment into niche products**

years, and their growth has changed how fitness businesses operates:

#### Barre and HIIT classes

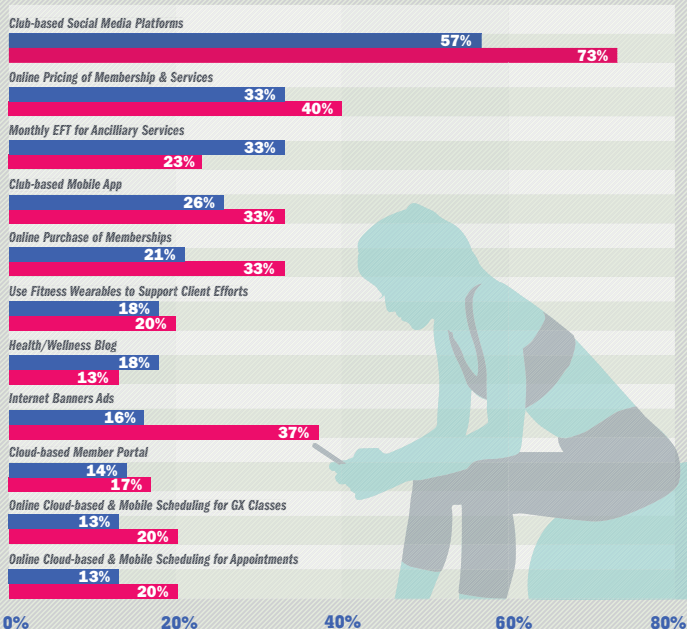
These experienced more growth over the past four years than any other programme – 30 percentage points – as evidenced by the fact that barre and HIIT studios are among the most popular types of boutique studios. Two of the largest fitness studio franchisees in the world are built around these programme formats: Pure Barre with over 450 locations and Orangetheory with over 700 locations.

#### Non-traditional functional training equipment

This group – comprised of tyres, battle ropes, sandbags, rings, kettlebells and

**GRAPH 2 - TOP TEN GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY TRENDS BY LEVEL OF ADOPTION - COMPARISON TO EUROPE**

**GLOBAL** **EUROPE**



other more recently established pieces of training equipment – experienced the greatest growth of any type of equipment over the past four years, approximately 20 percentage points. In fact, this category of equipment has grown so rapidly that it has turned conventional strength training equipment into a niche product based on its overall level of industry adoption.

#### **Social media and club-based mobile applications**

Use of these digital platforms has grown by more than 20 percentage points over the past four years – a significant level of growth when compared with other technologies, like on-demand and live-streamed group exercise classes, or

the use of internet middlemen such as ClassPass and PayasUgym.

#### **APPLYING THE LESSONS**

Virtually every player in the fitness industry has much to gain from staying abreast of existing and emerging trends, as such intel can be used to guide the business decisions of companies while helping them to strategically position themselves within the industry. To that end, the ClubIntel 2017 International Fitness Industry Trend Report builds on the overview provided in this article and paints a comprehensive picture of the industry's areas of opportunity and growth, which stand to benefit operators, developers and suppliers alike. ●

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**



**Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson** are the co-founders of ClubIntel – a US-based research and consulting firm for the health club and fitness industry.



A full copy of the report can be downloaded from ClubIntel at [www.club-intel.com](http://www.club-intel.com)



# AVI YEHIEL

New York brand WeWork is best known for providing shared workspaces. However, the company is now casting its net further afield by adding fitness and wellness to its offerings.

Head of wellness Avi Yehiel tells Kath Hudson about its innovative new wellness concept, Rise by We

“We see Rise by We as the future of wellbeing,” says head of wellness at WeWork, Avi Yehiel. “It’s a new concept of social fitness brought to life in an architecturally stunning environment that combines human connection with great training programmes and mindfulness.”

Cherry-picking aspects from both health clubs and spas, Yehiel says the model is groundbreaking because it’s the first wellness facility to offer group fitness, multiple boutique studios, wellness programmes, personal training and a complete spa experience all under one roof.

Members no longer need to jump from studio to studio, but can service all their wellbeing needs under one roof: a Muay Thai class, followed by a sauna and meditation one day and a HIIT class followed by yoga and massage the next.

Although a health club and office space may seem unlikely bedfellows, the concept fits with WeWork’s mission to make every facet of people’s lives as enjoyable and sociable as possible. Launched in 2010 by entrepreneurs Adam Neumann and Miguel McKelvey, WeWork sets out to curate office space where “people work to make a life, not just a living.” The company’s



“ We want to make wellness easier to access at work, because making time for meditation or a quick workout in the middle of the day has so many great health and mental benefits

Members and non-members can use the Fight studio space for boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts



#### WEWORK AND 'RISE BY WE'

WeWork founders Adam Neumann (left) and Miguel McKelvey wanted to make working a sociable experience, while making wellness more accessible. In October 2017, the Rise by We fitness concept was launched in the WeWork office space at 85 Broad Street, in New York's financial district. Rise by We consists of a gym, yoga studio, boxing studio and spa.

workspace service ranges from a simple hot desk for solopreneurs to a custom build-out for companies. WeWork has now expanded to 170 offices in 58 cities around the world, with 150,000 members. Valued at almost US\$20bn, it's in the same league as Uber and Airbnb.

#### SPACE TO BREATHE

In keeping with its aim to make the working environment sociable and keep workers healthy, the company has organised sporting events at its offices from the outset, including weekly football and basketball matches, fitness classes, meditation and retreats. Yehiel says Rise, the first physical site, is simply an extension of this philosophy. The company tested the idea early last year with WeWork Wellness, a pilot programme offering 20 to 30 classes per week, including yoga, HIIT, pilates, kickboxing and meditation, to WeWork members in New York City.

The success of the pilot encouraged the company to launch Rise last October at one of its New York offices – a site that serves about 2,500 WeWork members.

"We want to make wellness easier to access, because coming down for a meditation or a quick workout in the middle of the day has so many great physical and mental health benefits," says Yehiel. "The need for



WeWork's shared workspaces are expanding to offer users a wide range of fitness, wellness and spa facilities

- holistic wellness is now bigger than ever. People are working harder and for longer, so increased stress in the workplace is one of the biggest problems in modern life. Our aim is to offer a place that lets members take a moment or two to breathe, relax, and get ready for what's next."

### SENSE OF COMMUNITY

So what is it that makes the Rise experience so special? Many of the elements that have proven popular with WeWork users have been translated into the health and fitness setting. First is the brand's highly stylised environment and distinct design. Yehiel says that, like all WeWork spaces, the Rise space has been designed to feel curated, special and connected as a whole.

"We have juxtaposed elements of hard and soft, and light and dark, both visually and texturally," he says. "The design team set the building's structural steel components against polished finishes and natural materials, such as stone, marble and wood. Custom artwork has been added to create a timeless and layered aesthetic."

Next is the social element that WeWork has created at its office spaces, which permeates the experience at Rise. "WeWork's mission is to humanise work, so putting the social experience at the centre of fitness

### WELIVE

Last year, the company made its first move out of the working environment by applying its philosophy to living spaces. WeLive rents out co-living, furnished apartments of various sizes in buildings where laundry rooms double as bars and event spaces, and there are communal kitchens, roof decks and hot tubs. There are now two locations – one in New York City and one in Crystal City, Virginia. A third has been announced for Seattle in 2020.

“Rather than coming to the gym, putting your headphones on and running on a treadmill alone, Rise by We's group classes and semi-private training encourage community and connectedness

is how we intend to reinvent the traditional gym experience," says Yehiel. "It's personal when it needs to be, social when it needs to be, and always welcoming."

"We're also bringing WeWork's focus on community to wellness, which is apparent from the moment you step inside and are greeted by our Rise by We community team. Rather than coming to the gym, putting your headphones on and running on a treadmill alone, Rise by We's group classes and semi-private training encourage community and connectedness, while providing the instruction and encouragement you need to push further and reach your goals."

Thirdly, WeWork has been selective about the mix of services it offers for rejuvenating body, mind and spirit. There are four different workout areas. The Fight studio





The Rise design team juxtaposed concrete and steel structures with natural materials like marble and wood

is where boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts take place. Flight is designed for high-intensity cardio activities and strength training. It incorporates traditional training equipment on one side and battle ropes in the middle. The third studio is Mindfulness, a sanctuary for relaxation, where yoga and meditation take place. Finally, Turf is home to a high-performance training programme, which uses science, technology and coaching. Members have an in-depth assessment, including a 3D body scan, which is used in the creation of a bespoke training programme.

### NEW BATHING TRADITION

The wellness offering is another essential element that binds the experience together and the concept for the Rise superspa was inspired by the traditions of communal bathing. "From the Greeks to the Russians, every culture has its own bathing tradition," says Yehiel "We wanted to create our own culture around that type of traditional relaxation and recovery. We see it as another way of bringing people together."

The spa area also offers aromatherapy and has steam rooms and saunas, a communal hammam area, as well as a cold-water plunge. Three forms of therapeutic massage are available, rather than cosmetic treatments like pedicures and facials. "We see recovery as a key aspect of fitness and exercise, and we see relaxation and rejuvenation as key to maintaining focus and success in both our professional and personal lives. Therefore, we have focussed on offering the most therapeutic treatments in line with these goals," says Yehiel.

Although WeWork has been delighted with the positive response to Rise and plans to grow the community in the future, there are no immediate plans to launch more sites. However, the company certainly won't stand still.

**“** WeWork's mission is to humanise work, so putting the social experience at the centre of fitness is how we intend to reinvent the traditional gym experience

It will continue to look for ways to bring its progressive outlook to contemporary lifestyles. A testament to that is WeWork's recent acquisition of Meetup, a company whose mission it is to get people to meet up and create physical communities, rather than digital ones. ●

### ■ WEGROW

WeWork isn't stopping at living, working or working out spaces. Instead it wants to create opportunities wherever it sees a gap in the market. One of these is WeGrow, a micro-school where mindfulness, yoga, farm-to-table cooking and other less traditional subjects are on the curriculum. Children learn reading and maths skills by growing their own food at the school's farm and selling it at a farm stand in the WeWork offices. Going forward, the company would like to open WeGrow schools in WeWork offices, so that families can travel to work and school together and meet at lunchtime.

# PICTURE PERFECT

Whittled waists and bulging biceps often take centre stage in gym marketing, yet in reality, few people have such physiques. **Kath Hudson** starts a discussion about the impact this has on the reputation of our industry and the mental health of gym members

**T**he fitness industry has voiced a desire to widen the appeal of gyms in order to bring in different audiences and demographic groups. It has launched numerous initiatives to achieve this aim. Yet, take a look at the marketing materials used by health clubs and you're likely to see images of svelte women with shiny pony tails and perfect skin, or ripped, handsome men.

Many people have preconceived ideas about what gyms are like and often feel certain that they won't fit in. Unfortunately, the current imagery used by clubs seems to support gym stereotypes. In this respect, Sport England's This Girl Can campaign has been a breath of fresh air and has mobilised 2.8m women.

In fairness, it's not just the health and fitness industry that's guilty of using unrealistic models in its marketing. But as an industry that promotes good health, should more operators be focused on images that show realistically achievable physiques rather than unattainable levels of perfection? Or is using real people a risky strategy that's likely to destroy the aspirational element of fitness?

**Matt Cresswell**  
New Energy Fitness and New Energy Yoga: director

**I think** the fitness industry has evolved in so many exciting ways in recent years but, for the most part, the marketing seems stuck in the past. Stock imagery of beautiful, muscular, perfect-looking people can be very disenchanting and actually quite intimidating for many gym users. The modern consumer is also a lot more savvy about marketing: they see through this type of stock imagery and it makes the business seem generic, lazy and lacking in authenticity.

I can understand the argument that such images can be inspirational for those whose goal is to be a bodybuilder or a fitness model, but this isn't why the majority of people go to the gym, nor is it a realistic goal for them. In many cases it can further entrench a mindset that puts people off exercise before they get started: they feel they aren't fit enough to belong in a gym environment.

At New Energy, we want our clients to be able to relate to our marketing material, to be able to see something of themselves in it, and to feel reassured that our gym is full of normal people, just like them. For that reason, we don't use fitness models in our images and instead use real-life gym-goers.



"It can further entrench a mindset that puts people off exercise before they get started: they feel they aren't fit enough to belong in a gym environment"

The New Energy approach to marketing has helped us to stand out from the local competition. We've attracted a lot of clients who say they had never seen themselves going to a gym before and they were pleasantly surprised when their experiences didn't match their preconceived ideas of what a gym would be like.



Marketing materials with images of perfectly sculpted models may intimidate potential gym members

## Jenny Cromack

Motive8: personal training  
director

**It's good to** start the conversation because the industry needs to make sure it has a broad enough approach to reach out to everyone – not just those people who are already in good shape.

However, I think the imagery used should depend on the target market. An operator like Gold's Gym has a very different audience to a multi-generational provider, and the choice of images should vary accordingly.

In a recent website launch, we purposely chose to use pictures of a cross section of clients, who look strong and fit, but not like models. It



was a move away from stock images, as we realised this was out of step for our target market, many of whom are 40-something professionals. Showing a picture of a real member boxing with a PT presents a more realistic, and inspirational, image of the club.

“The imagery used should depend on the target market. An operator like Gold's Gym has a very different audience to a multi-generational provider, and the choice of images should vary accordingly”

The industry should also consider using images that inspire people to take up an activity for reasons other than the physique they perceive to be associated with it. For example, you could show people having fun in a group exercise class or enjoying the outdoors on a bike. ►



# I'm slow but I'm lapping everyone on the couch.



This Girl Can inspired 2.8m women to get moving

► **Kate Dale**  
Sport England: head of brand and digital strategy, This Girl Can

Using perfect-looking people in marketing isn't just a fitness industry issue, it's an endemic problem across marketing as a whole, which simply doesn't accurately reflect society. However, it's encouraging to see a shift with some brands, such as ASOS and Missguided, now featuring models of different shapes and sizes.

The insights we have learned through This Girl Can's research tell us that women who can self-identify with an image are more likely to be inspired by it: seeing themselves represented encourages people to get active. If women see people like themselves

exercising in the industry's marketing, it ignites a confidence that they can become active themselves and helps them overcome the fear of judgement they might experience. Fear of judgement is a common thread we've identified as one of the main reasons for the gender gap in physical activity.

Since the This Girl Can campaign launched in 2015, we've acted as cheerleaders for 2.8m women who have become active as a result of seeing our brilliant women doing their thing. We've brought together a strong and ever-growing community of women who support This Girl Can, which is a fabulous example of girl power at its best.



"Fear of judgement is a common thread we've identified through our research as one of the main reasons for the gender gap in physical activity"

**Justin Rogers**  
Ten Health & Fitness:  
creative director

Our photography reflects our brand, so from my point of view, the most important considerations are that the pictures are well lit, that they are appealing to the eye and that they show what a dynamic reformer pilates class is about. That means the images need to demonstrate expertise, so the people in the pictures need to have good form and technique. As a result, we tend to use our staff in our photo shoots – and not just the instructors, but massage therapists, back-office staff, physios or

whoever is available at the time. We're lucky to have a photogenic team!

We do between 10 and 15 shoots a year and haven't used models for about three years. In fact, the last time we used a model was for a glossy fashion magazine that wanted images which resonated with their editorial style.

Ultimately, your brand's values should dictate the kind of imagery used. For instance, 1Rebel and Fierce Grace have similar target markets, but very different brands. Fierce Grace is known for its inclusivity and quirkiness, so typical fitness model casting wouldn't work. Ten has a similar target market to premium cosmopolitan gym brands, but while such brands may use images of muscly fitness models, that just wouldn't suit our brand.



"We do between 10 and 15 shoots a year and haven't used models for about three years"



Gyms could focus more on images that show the physical and mental benefits of exercise, rather than weight loss

**Holli Rubin**  
Holli Rubin Body Image Specialist:  
founder

I spent five years working in the fashion industry in New York, and the fitness industry is similar in its unrealistic portrayal of how people look. Only a very small number of people look like the photos routinely used by either the fashion or the fitness industries.

I think that body image problems are on the rise. That's partly because people are now more prepared to discuss how they feel about their bodies, but also because the advent of social media has made the situation even more challenging, given the constant bombardment of unrealistic imagery.

It's true that some people may find images of svelte girls and heavily muscled men aspirational and will be motivated



to join the gym. However, for so many, this will turn to disillusionment when they discover that so few people can attain that body shape. Also, I believe such imagery is alienating to many who believe they don't look right and conclude that the gym is not for them.

It's time the industry moved away from this type of photography so a wider range of people can see themselves represented.

"The message gyms need to put across is for people to feel comfortable in their own skin, rather than aspire to look like someone different"

The message gyms need to put across is for people to feel comfortable in their own skin, rather than aspire to look like someone different. It is important to create an authentic picture, not a photoshopped world, and for people to be incentivised to become active with the emphasis placed on the physical and mental wellbeing aspects of exercise, rather than focusing on weight loss. ●



# SCIENCE MEETS FITNESS

Designed to help gym users assess their general fitness through non-sports specific measurements of fitness, FitQuest is fast becoming a key tool for giving gym goers greater control of their fitness outcomes. CEO of MiE and FitQuest Brian Firth explains more about the innovative fitness platform

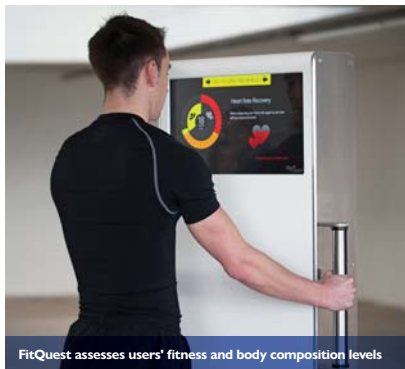
## What was the inspiration behind FitQuest?

The machine was developed by MiE Medical Research, which specialises in human performance monitoring instruments used in bioengineering, ergonomics, sports sciences, medicine, physiotherapy and work diagnostics. As CEO of MiE and FitQuest, I have over 30 years' experience in medical technology innovation. I was involved in developing the first diabetes home testing kit and the world's first digital pregnancy testing kit. Recognising the opportunities for cross sector collaboration, I wanted to bring my experience in the medical sector to the fitness industry. I believe we're about to enter a new era of evidence-based exercise programmes to tackle health and fitness issues, which will require solid data.

## What makes FitQuest different from other fitness monitoring systems?

FitQuest is the only machine that assesses the factors for fitness measurement defined by the American College of Sports Medicine. It's a state-of-the-art concept that brings full bio-mechanical lab technology to the gym.

The platform comprises a user-friendly touch screen interface and a custom computer that runs MiE's unique algorithms, housed in a strong steel chassis to minimise maintenance. The machine measures motor sensory control, explosive leg power, upper and lower body strength, endurance, speed ability and cardiovascular fitness as users perform exercises such as press ups, explosive jumps, and cardio and balance tasks. To assess a user over these eight parameters takes just four minutes, after which the FitQuest machine provides an



overall fitness assessment known as the Fitness Quotient. Members are subsequently given ongoing testing to help them track their progress and reach their fitness goals.

## What are the benefits for the operator?

Knowing key data about your members increases your ability to deliver a tailored programme. Personalisation will be the next battlefield, and data-driven



**“I believe we’re about to enter a new era of evidence-based exercise programmes to tackle health and fitness issues, which will require solid data”**

*Brian Firth, MiE and Fitquest*

programming will be fundamental to this. By offering users individual, tailored exercise programmes, the machine creates an enhanced member offering, while the operator benefits from increased levels of retention due to improved member engagement.

### Who are FitQuest customers?

We have several market-leading customers around the world including The Bundeswehr, Elements and SportsPass in Germany, Cityfit in Poland, Manulife in Hong Kong and after a successful pilot programme with The Gym Group earlier this year, we recently installed machines in 40 Gym Group locations across London. The machines were the first of their kind to be fitted with the MIE FitQuest Body Composition Analyser, which uses medical industry standard techniques to determine body composition.

### Who is the typical FitQuest user?

There really is no 'typical' user. Anyone can benefit from a FitQuest assessment and a personalised, prescriptive fitness programme. The service expectations of consumers are growing and they now expect more for their money. Today's gym goer already expects the gym to offer more than just a room full of equipment; they want additional help to meet their goals, such as tracking and personalised programming. FitQuest allows users to access their measurement results, which is key to tracking progress and meeting goals, whether you've never stepped foot in a gym before or you're an experienced gym goer.

### Are there further plans for growth?

Absolutely. We're expanding internationally and currently working on installations in several countries, including Spain, Germany, Poland, Egypt, Dubai, Brazil and China. Our clients range from gym chains and sport camps, to luxury hotels, so the opportunities are endless. To help with this next phase, we recently hired Jim Graham, previously COO of The Gym Group, where he was part of the team that tripled the size of the business. We're looking forward to continued expansion in 2018.



Explosive leg power, and upper and lower body strength are among the measures of fitness assessed by the device



**FitQuest**

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UFIT is focused on improving health club accessibility and provisions for people with all types of disabilities



# FOCUS ON INCLUSIVITY

As inclusivity moves higher on the agenda of gyms, health clubs and leisure centres across the globe, **Lauretta Ihonor** looks at the organisations going to great lengths to make health and fitness easily accessible to all

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**Name: InstructAbility**

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**Location: United Kingdom**

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**Focus: Helping disabled individuals become fitness professionals**

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**InstructAbility** was established by the UK spinal injury charity Aspire in 2010. After noticing that Aspire's own leisure centre attracted a high number of disabled clients due to its accessibility and use of staff with first-hand experience of disability, InstructAbility was developed. The national scheme provides disabled people with free gym instructor training and voluntary industry work placements, during which instructors strive to encourage more disabled people to use leisure facilities and lead an active lifestyle.

Funded with an initial grant of £850,000 from Sport England in 2013, the scheme has helped more than 300 disabled people qualify as fitness professionals. This, says InstructAbility's national project manager Hilary Farmiloe, "has had a positive impact on their lives in terms of employment, independence and confidence, and has had the added benefit of disabled fitness professionals championing inclusion within their facilities".

She adds: "Hundreds of leisure operators across the country and many organisations such as GLL, Everyone Active and Places for People have really embraced and supported the programme by offering industry work placements and leading the project at a local level."

According to Farmiloe, InstructAbility is "in an exciting phase". Projects currently in the pipeline include an online management system to support students and leisure operators, and a pilot programme with the Institute of Swimming, designed to encourage more disabled people to become swimming teachers.

She adds: "Once this phase completes we will be looking to set up more programmes across the country. We already have a number of leisure companies and disability organisations wanting to host a programme in their area."

InstructAbility is currently working with the University of Birmingham to research the experiences of disabled people working in the fitness sector, and assess how industry training providers, awarding organisations and employers view disability. The initial findings are expected to be revealed later this year, followed by the publication of best practice guidelines for training and employing disabled people in the fitness industry.  
[www.instructability.org.uk](http://www.instructability.org.uk)



**Hundreds of leisure operators across the country and many organisations have really embraced the scheme**

**Hilary Farmiloe**

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**Name: Universal Fitness Innovation and Transformation (UFIT)**

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**Location: Europe and the Americas**

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**Focus: Improving the inclusive service offerings of health clubs**

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**Global social change** movement UFIT was created in Marseille, France, in 2015 as part of a European Commission-funded project from 2013 to 2015. Its aim was, and remains, to increase fitness opportunities for people with physical or intellectual disabilities. Led by the UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Fitness at the Institute of Technology Tralee in Ireland and IHRSA, the initiative connects health clubs worldwide with local disability service providers, to assist club managers and staff in the development of the skills and knowledge required to create a practical but truly inclusive service offering. Clubs that join the initiative are given access

to a wide variety of resources, including online learning units, training sessions and mentor support, to achieve the level of transformation required.

As Catherine Carty, head of the UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Physical Education, Sport, Fitness and Recreation explains, UFIT's global programmes were developed, partly, in response to "the professional and personal opinions of many that the fitness sector could be a key player in 'inclusivising' sport and society".

She adds: "The sector caters for all age groups, adapting to the needs and interests of the clients it serves. It is based in communities, for communities and its scope to respond to the inclusion call is vast."

UFIT is currently running pilot programmes in 10 clubs across the US, Ireland and Peru. These clubs include Newtown Athletic Club in Pennsylvania, USA, which hopes to improve offerings for children with cerebral palsy and adults with multiple sclerosis; and two Atlantic Club sites in New Jersey, which have joined the pilot to improve provisions for people with Parkinson's disease.

Kilian Fisher, IHRSA international public policy advisor and UFIT global industry lead, says: "In the last years, we have established over 50 partnerships across the globe and set up UFIT Taskforces, which are intersectoral partnerships with organisations, such as the American Council of Exercise (ACE), that aim to nationally promote the UFIT movement."

"The response from the sector has been very positive and we hope to scale in 2018 and make UFIT available to many more clubs and professionals."

[www.justdoufit.com](http://www.justdoufit.com)



**The sector caters for all age groups in individual and group settings, adapting to the needs and interests of the clients it serves**

**Catherine Carty**



The Sport for Confidence programme uses occupational therapists to help participants achieve their goals

► **Name: Sport For Confidence (SFC)**

**Location: Essex, United Kingdom**

**Focus: Encouraging people with additional needs to use leisure centres and get active**

As an Essex-based social enterprise, SFC works with leisure partners, such as Everyone Active, Fusion Lifestyle, GLL and Essex County Council to deliver activity sessions for people with a variety of additional needs, ranging from dementia and mental health conditions, to Down's syndrome and autism. Not willing to accept that traditional delivery methods employed by the NHS are always the most effective way of achieving positive patient outcomes on a large scale, Lyndsey Barrett created the SFC programme, which combines the expertise of an occupational therapist with that of a sports coach to ensure that participants reap bespoke life-changing occupational outcomes.

“



We've had an incredible response to the initiative. We are currently hosting 25 sessions every month and delivering more than 800 interventions

Lyndsey Barrett

SFC officially launched at Basildon Sporting Village in 2012, catering for a very small group of regular participants, just once a week. However, the programme has grown significantly over the last five years. Now attracting more than 500 participants across five venues each month, SFC helps participants to move from a sedentary to an active lifestyle, while reaping all the mental, social, physical and health benefits associated with increased physical activity.

Barrett says: "We've had an incredible response to the initiative. We are currently hosting 25 sessions every month and delivering more than 800 interventions. Most of the individuals we engage have never visited a leisure centre before and prior to our intervention were leading sedentary lives."

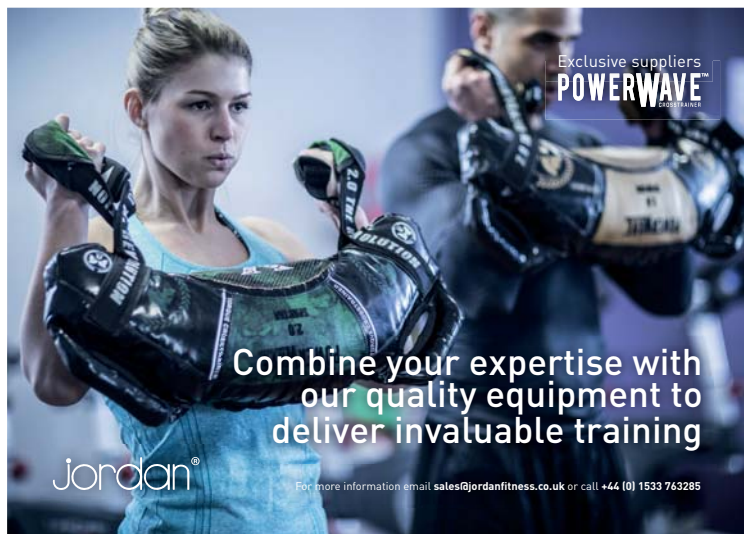
She adds: "Participants have gotten so many benefits from SFC, including increased independence in daily tasks, heightened awareness of self, improved teamwork, self-expression and decision-making, enhanced communication skills, reduced dependency on others and greater self-confidence."

Barrett believes that inclusive fitness remains the exception rather than the norm because of a lack of commitment by sectors to work more collaboratively to deliver a whole-system approach. "By working together, the health, physical activity and sports sectors can achieve so much more than working in isolation," she says.

SFC's ultimate goal is to see an occupational therapist working alongside a sports coach in every leisure centre across the length and breadth of the UK.

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► **Name:** Enable Me

**Location:** West Sussex, United Kingdom

**Focus:** Disability awareness training for fitness coaches, leisure centres and businesses

**Driven by a mission** to build a society that values people with disabilities and supports their equal participation in everyday life, Enable Me was created in 2005. With the help of local government funding, the West Sussex-based charity began providing children with disabilities with opportunities to be involved in physical activity. Today it provides disability awareness training for sports coaches, gym instructors and employees of leisure centres that wish to promote inclusivity. All training is provided by Enable Me staff, who also have disabilities.

The charity grew from insight gained after speaking with parents and children at clubs and workshops the group ran for children with disabilities in its infancy.

Enable Me executive chairman Chris Jay says: "It was through talking to parents and children at these clubs as well as fellow professionals, that we discovered that there was a great lack of understanding about what people with disabilities could actually achieve within the general sporting community.

"In response to this, we started offering disability awareness training to sports coaches and sports science students at various universities. After this, our training was then driven by the leisure centres that approached

us, as they also showed a need for the development of a more inclusive sports and leisure environment."

Jay reports that the response to the training offered by Enable Me has been incredibly positive, with participating coaches and leisure centre staff voicing improved levels of communication and a better understanding of disability on the whole.

He adds: "It enables them to feel confident they're using the right language and allows them to better adapt and create improved environments for people with disabilities."

According to Jay, the biggest obstacle currently faced by Enable Me is that while leisure centres that don't recognise the need for disability awareness education are most in need of training, they are the hardest to reach.

"They don't see the value of inclusivity, misunderstand what is required to be inclusive or feel that budgets are best spent elsewhere," says Jay.

The charity is now focused on building on its current momentum and expanding its reach across the UK. ● [enablemeproject.org.uk](http://enablemeproject.org.uk)



“ They don't see the value of inclusivity, misunderstand what is required to be inclusive or feel that budgets are best spent elsewhere

Chris Jay



Enable Me is striving to ensure that leisure centre staff feel confident when working with disabled members



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**“The true test of a partnership, is when suppliers' first consideration and focus is what's right for our members. This falls down when a supplier is simply interested in hitting a sales target”**

Paul Batty

# PAUL BATTY

What factors influence decisions made by the industry's top buyers? **Tom Walker** speaks to the head of procurement at David Lloyd Leisure about how the company keeps its offer fresh

## Tell us about your job

My role has evolved over the years. When I started at David Lloyd Leisure 15 years ago, the business was part of Whitbread, so I was a link between their procurement team and the clubs. Once the business was sold, I took on sole responsibility for procurement.

My role now covers all areas of the business, from F&B to services, consumables and fitness.

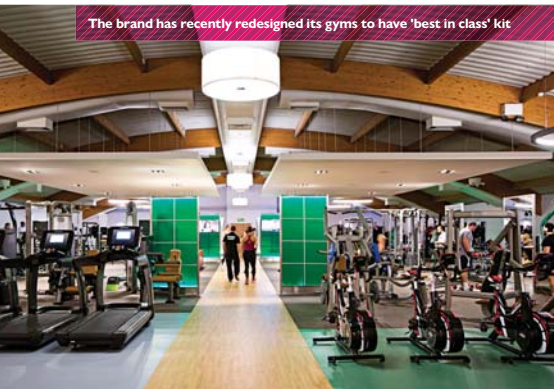
There's no typical day, which is what makes the job so enjoyable. I believe the key to success in my role is ensuring clubs are well supported in delivering the most appropriate products and

services for members. This translates to ensuring we're innovative and deliver consistency and quality at all times.

## What's hot at the moment?

We've transformed our gyms in the past few years with investment in 'best in class' products, the look and feel of the space and ensuring we buy the right equipment to fit members' needs and significantly improve their experience.

The brand has recently redesigned its gyms to have 'best in class' kit



## How do you innovate?

I work very closely with our product team, headed up by Michelle Dand. We both regularly liaise with suppliers, and visit industry shows and other clubs to understand what's working and what we believe members want. As a business we also seek a lot of direct member feedback.

Michelle and the product team have been trialling a number of exciting new concepts – such as PRAMA, an interactive fitness platform for both group exercise and family sessions.

## How does the buying process work?

We have a detailed process in place for investment in equipment in each of our clubs. This is a constant cycle, which normally begins at least six months prior to the start of the financial year.



**Member feedback is vital – only products that are used and liked by members will be kept in the club**

**David Lloyd Clubs is focused on maximising the member experience**



## **PAUL BATTY** My three tips to suppliers

### **Focus on the customer**

Don't sell me things members don't want or need.

### **Innovate constantly**

Many suppliers don't see the need to change or evolve, however, continuing to innovate is vital to the health of the buyer/supplier relationship.

### **Find the right fit**

Make sure the products you sell us are a good fit for the environment – this is vital: if members don't like or use the products, we'll remove them

Some of our most successful suppliers are those who constantly invest time and effort in our clubs. This can vary from doing club visits and supporting our marketing, to providing training or detailed reporting to ensure equipment is working and problems are fixed quickly.

Our suppliers are crucial. If any fail, we fail in delivering the member experience. This can vary from a broken treadmill, to a member's favourite drink being unavailable in the café.

### **Do you have “trusted suppliers” and partnership deals?**

Our suppliers will jokingly tell you I only call them partners when I want something. I do, however, strongly believe that developing very effective supplier partnerships is crucial.

The true test of a partnership, is when suppliers' first consideration and focus is what's right for our members. This falls down when a supplier is simply interested in hitting a sales target.

### **How involved is the wider team?**

We always work closely with our suppliers, as (in the case of fitness equipment) this allows us to fully understand the age and condition of the equipment at each of our clubs.

After this, we work closely with our product team to research new and interesting types of equipment innovation. Our suppliers can help influence this by putting forward suggestions they feel will have a positive impact on our members.

Our operations teams also ensure investment meets the needs of members.

Ultimately, suppliers who deliver stand out to us, and that's important. We're more likely to invest money with those who achieve this level of service. ●



# Bringing EMS personal training to the classic low-cost gym

Entrepreneur Frank Hassler has been a successful German gym operator for many years. After witnessing the benefits of EMS technology both as a customer and as an operator, he set about combining his traditional budget studio with EMS personal training. The result was a synergistic pairing that led to an increase in revenue and customer loyalty

**F**rank Hassler's studio, the easy Fit in Schwenningen, Germany, is a well-equipped premium discount gym. In addition to training equipment, the studio, which is open 14 hours a day, seven days a week, offers numerous extras rarely found at a low-cost gym. These include courses, a drinks bar and a sauna. In all, the concept is attractively positioned and has successfully established itself as a premium low-cost studio.

## IN-GYM CONCEPT

Hassler has also been working with a successful German EMS franchise that has been growing and expanding internationally in recent years. As a result, Hassler could be called a 'child of two worlds'. He understands the goals and needs of the traditional clientele, but he also appreciates the high willingness of EMS customers to pay for efficient and time-saving personal training. After eight years with the leading EMS studio concept, Hassler knew that he wanted to find a way to take advantage of both worlds for himself. To that end, last year Hassler opened his own EMS studio



Frank Hassler has opened his own EMS studio, which is called bodyloft

called bodyloft, and placed it within his existing fitness centre. The concept has worked so well that a second in-gym EMS studio opened in another one of his fitness centres in December 2017.

Existing easy Fit members who want to undertake EMS training are given additional contracts with bodyloft,

which offers highly effective EMS personal training at regular market prices. At bodyloft, and in EMS studios in general, EMS is performed for 20 minutes once a week with a trainer, and customers can still make full use of the easy Fit facility at the same time.

## ADDED BENEFITS

Those new to the idea of an in-gym EMS studio may believe that placing an EMS studio within a gym facility will lead to direct competition for customers; however, Hassler has found the opposite to be true.

He says: "The goal is to get our people from easy Fit into bodyloft. There, they

**The concept offers a more effective personal training alternative to the traditional gym, and unlike members of stand-alone EMS studios, bodyloft customers also receive access to a complete fitness centre and its extra services**



**bodyloft has a different appeal from the more affordable easy Fit brand, although they are from the same provider**



pay higher contributions for highly efficient personal training with EMS. With fixed appointments and personal support, EMS is very motivating and results in improved customer loyalty. In principle, EMS customers become members of both the classic gym and the EMS studio."

Hassler adds that original gym customers who sign up for EMS training are not lost to the EMS studio because as soon as the customer quits EMS, their original gym contract is automatically reactivated.

He explains: "Gym customers get a new contract on joining bodyloft, making both the EMS studio and the gym available to them. Since the old contract is simply paused and reactivated at a later date, there's no real migration to the EMS concept. If a customer no longer wishes to have EMS sessions, he or she is automatically returned to the easy Fit contract, rather than lost."

### UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

Anyone visiting bodyloft would struggle to guess that it has the same provider as easy Fit. This is because bodyloft has a very different appeal to the more affordable easy Fit – in terms of appearance, advertising and design. Starting from the EMS studio's entrance, customers are given the impression that the space is entirely separate from the gym. It has its own distinct branding, which is more elegant and sophisticated,



and bodyloft's EMS trainers wear a noticeably different uniform to their easy Fit colleagues. Both concepts also have different opening hours and, as usual with EMS training, there are always fixed appointments.

The bodyloft clientele receive special, platinum-coloured membership cards with which they can also access the classic easy Fit studio, if desired. And an added bonus is that bodyloft memberships include access to all of easy Fit's services, such as use of the sauna and drinks bar. According to Hassler, this is a first for an EMS studio. He says: "Nobody in the EMS sector offers that much – the bodyloft customer has everything."

### THE USP ADVANTAGE

The in-gym studio provides Hassler with multiple unique selling points. Specifically, the concept sets itself apart from other classic studios by offering a more effective personal training

alternative to the traditional gym, and unlike members of stand-alone EMS studios, bodyloft customers also receive access to a complete fitness centre and its extra services.

The in-gym bodyloft concept has been in existence since the end of 2016. Its second studio launched in December 2017. Approximately 75 per cent of bodyloft customers are from the existing easy Fit fitness centre and the remaining 25 per cent are new external bodyloft clients. Hassler broke-even with bodyloft after just six months. ●

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# FITNESS NUTRITION

Today's fitness consumers are more knowledgeable than ever before, often demanding nutritional offerings that are personalised to their health goals. **Laura Swain** from innovation research company Stylus, examines how in-gym nutrition is responding to this need

**T**he one-size-fits-all approach to 'healthy' eating has had its day. Indeed, health and fitness has become a major lifestyle focus for consumers, with many now taking their diet and nutrition very seriously. The result of this shift in thinking is that only solutions that offer wholesomeness and balance will do, and the latest figures appear to support this.

Specifically, the Global Wellness Institute values the global healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss sectors at US\$648bn, and latest figures from market research provider, IRI, show that sales of the currently on-trend health foods avocados, almond milk and coconut water grew by £41m, £15m and £11m, respectively, in 2016.

As time-poor consumers search for the right balance in work, life and wellbeing, the growing need for better support systems, particularly around food consumption, is becoming increasingly apparent. This demand for nutritional solutions, which can be delivered in a timely manner, is spurring a global wave of new product development, and represents a huge up-selling opportunity for the health and fitness industry.

## MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Having already secured the trust of their customers from a physical perspective, fitness providers are well placed to act as advisors on nutrition. Gym-goers often view diet and nutrition as a natural extension of their fitness habits and

goals, and as such, the key up-sell opportunity lies in on-site food offerings.

On-the-go snacking is a trend that has been adopted by brands, with increasing numbers looking at launching healthier options for active consumers. One area where this has taken off is dairy.

## FOCUS ON DAIRY

Traditional dairy has been making a comeback for some time thanks to convincing health propositions, inventive product development and innovative ingredients. Both Arla and Nesquik, for example, have launched added protein products to their portfolios, which now feature protein-rich yoghurts, shakes and milk-based beverages. Currently stocked in many UK supermarkets,

**“ Sales of the currently on-trend health foods avocados, almond milk and coconut water grew by £41m, £15m and £11m, respectively, in 2016 ”**



### Gym-goers are paying more attention to eating in a way that supports their health and fitness goals

these products have been created with convenience in mind, offering transportable, on-the-go, portion-controlled solutions that can be consumed pre- or post-workout.

FUEL 10K, a protein-boosted breakfast brand, has created something similar with its Quark and Fruit pouches that focus on active consumers who take a snack-like approach to meals.

The development of such products responds to a need for food solutions that bridge the gap between meal times while offering added nutritional benefits. Such products would fit seamlessly within health club cafés or fridges, and there's scope to extend this further.

#### HEAT AND EAT

Consumers are feeling the pressure – due to a lack of time and knowledge – when it comes to cooking balanced evening and lunchtime meals. This nods to a need for health clubs and fitness centres to offer a breadth of mealtime solutions, such as ready meals or meal kits that could be bought on-site.

One company working to meet this need is Musclefood. While this meat and protein delivery company is best known for delivering its products to the homes of consumers, it reports that it now stocks its frozen and ambient-temperature protein-rich foods in more than 200 gyms across the UK. Protein pizzas, chicken and rice pots, protein pancakes and steam cooked chicken are among the fitness-focused products on offer. Gym-goers can buy the food on-site and cook it at home or, in some cases, the food can be cooked on-site for consumers to take home.

#### MAXIMUM CONVENIENCE

While the provision of ready meals that can be either heated on-site or taken away to heat at home are one option for gym-goers, there's also potential for health clubs to act as a place where people can order or collect meal kits. The Prep Kitchen in Glasgow, for instance, delivers prepped nutritious meals to gyms for pre- and post-workout replenishment. A number of food-

delivery services are building sports nutrition into their menus, while the meal-kit business model has also stretched into the sports nutrition space.

Other examples of meal-kit delivery services include Prepp'd, which is aimed at individuals with specific fitness goals who still want to feel as though they're indulging. Menu bundles are arranged into 'fat loss' and 'muscle gain' categories, and range from offering just one meal per day through to providing all meals and snacks for an entire week.

#### GOING GLOBAL

In the US, famed NFL star Tom Brady has teamed up with fresh ingredients delivery company Purple Carrot to launch a pre-prepped meal-delivery service aimed at sports enthusiasts and aspiring athletes. Based on his own strict plant-based diet, the three meals provided by the service each week include crispy turnip cakes with tabbouleh, white lentil risotto with roasted vegetables, and ramen with gingered greens and broccolini. ▶

- On-site dining is becoming a bigger opportunity too, through the integration of nutrition-focused restaurants serving dishes and drinks aimed at time-poor, active and nutritionally aware consumers. First movers include Raw Fitness, in Beijing, which offers both a Crossfit gym and an affordable post-workout on-site restaurant called Glo Kitchen. Active members have access to meals like kimchi bone-broth bowls and activated charcoal Thai chicken wraps.

Private members health club KX in Chelsea, London, has a gym, spa and restaurant that offers a selection of healthy foods, created by its head chef in collaboration with its team of resident experts including personal trainers and a nutritionist. The meals can be eaten on-site, taken away or delivered, fitting around its customers' schedules.

#### THE NEXT STEP

Attitudes towards food and healthy eating are shifting. Consumers are acknowledging the connection between food, mood, fitness and energy, but they require guidance and solutions to help them achieve balance as they strive to meet the demands of everyday life.



Exercisers desire convenient ways to fit healthy eating into their lives

This means that there's a real opportunity for health clubs and gyms to become one-stop-shops for health and fitness. On-the-go and mealtime solutions are two areas of secondary spend to be explored. For those with the capacity to extend their on-site dining offering, this is a great way to further integrate your brand into your customers' daily lives, offering a more holistic solution to healthy living. ●

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Laura Swain** is assistant editor at innovation research company Stylus, tracking everything from global health food trends to hotel and hospitality innovations. [www.stylus.com](http://www.stylus.com)

## CASE STUDY PARKWOOD LEISURE AND MUSCLEFOOD



*"We're exploring new F&B products that have the potential to work well with our different customer bases"*

Stuart Shopland, Parkwood Leisure

**Leisure management** company Parkwood Leisure has been quick to explore the opportunities that selling more nutritionally balanced meals-to-go in a fitness centre can offer – both in terms of boosting customer experience and secondary spend.

Partnering with meal delivery company Musclefood in late 2017, Parkwood Leisure has placed free-standing upright freezers stocked with ready-to-heat meals designed with gym-goers in mind – such as protein pizzas, chicken and rice pots and steamed chicken – around the reception areas of six of the 85 UK leisure facilities it manages.

Stuart Shopland, National Retail Manager for Parkwood Leisure said: "We often explore new types of products that have the potential to work well with our different customer bases, and this really fits that bill. The meals are convenience products that are healthy and complement the lifestyle of a large proportion of gym users, so we decided to trial the concept in a few of our centres."

"We're currently seeing varying levels of success," he added. "We've got a couple of leisure centres where it is extremely popular, and some that are doing a little less well. As



Ready-to-heat meals give gym-goers a healthy option

expected, this varies with demographic and the exact location of the freezer in the centre. That's why we're looking at this as a trial, as it allows us to tweak how we execute the idea according to customer feedback."





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# OLYMPIC DREAMS

Eddie 'the Eagle' Edwards was the keynote speaker at SIBEC Europe 2017. He talks to *Health Club Management* about how fulfilling his Olympic ambitions changed his life

SIBEC Europe marked its 21st year with the gathering of over 230 industry figures at the Don Carlos Resort in Marbella on the 8 to 11 November 2017. The event provided UK and European operators from the private, local authority and trust markets with an opportunity to meet with key suppliers. With ongoing Brexit discussions dominating the political stage, more delegates than

ever valued the opportunity to explore solutions and identify challenges in uncertain economic times as the UK prepares to leave the EU on Friday 29 March 2019.

The event was opened by the keynote speaker, Olympic ski jumper Eddie 'the Eagle' Edwards, who shared the dramatic story of how he became Great Britain's first Olympic ski jumper since 1929, representing

the country at the Calgary Winter Games in 1988. Following the runaway success of the 2016 Hollywood blockbuster film 'Eddie the Eagle', his story is now reaching a new, younger audience and the Olympian has been busy visiting schools and universities, inspiring students with his never-say-die attitude. We talk to Eddie about how sport has transformed his life

## Where did your Olympic ambitions come from?

My dream to get to the Winter Olympic Games started when I was about eight years old. I loved watching sport on TV, especially the popular sports show Ski Sunday. When I was 13, I had the

opportunity to go on a school skiing trip to the Italian Dolomites and luckily enough, just 10 miles away in Gloucester, I had access to one of the biggest dry ski slopes in the country where I could practice and have a few lessons. I did my first ski jump on the school ski trip,

which I did as a dare after only skiing for a day and a half. Just 11 years later, my love for the sport took me to the Winter Olympics.

## Have you always been a determined individual?

I've always loved proving people wrong. Since I was a boy, people were always telling me I couldn't do things. In my life as a skier, the more people told me I couldn't do something, the more it inspired me to prove them wrong. I proved everybody wrong when I went to the Calgary Winter Olympics.

## How has having a strong mental attitude been a factor in your career?

In ski jumping, you can't have any doubts whatsoever. When you're sitting 550ft up, on the bar of a 120m jump, you just want to jump the furthest you can. To achieve that, you will risk more than you've ever risked before. If you get any part of the take-off sequence wrong, the consequences can be horrendous and if there's any doubt, that will magnify as you start to go down the jump. I've always had great self-belief and even now I still get just as excited when I put



Edwards addressed an audience of hundreds at SIBEC Europe 2017

**I'd like to see skiing become a more accessible sport. There needs to be far more investment in grassroots participation and it's an ideal time to start afresh**

on a pair of skis as when I did when I first started 40 years ago. I just love the sport and I was very lucky to find something that I was so passionate about and it still excites me now.

### What have been your enduring memories of the 1988 Winter Games?

A memory that will never leave me is sitting on the bar, high on top of the 120m ski jump and there were 90,000 people in the arena, all chanting 'Eddie, Eddie'. It was such a special moment for me and even now, 30 years later, it still makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end when I think about it.

### Where did you get your nickname?

It was a name given to me by a group of supporters from Shell Oil's head office in Calgary after they saw an interview I did for BBC News. Despite being Britain's first Olympic ski jumper, I didn't have any sponsorship deals but I had an amazing response from the public, who all wanted to help. People were sending me thousands of pounds via the BBC and a reporter was sent over to Calgary. The BBC interview was then shown on Canadian TV and the media interest just escalated from there.

### What was the biggest sacrifice you made to get to Calgary?

I don't feel like I made any sacrifices, but something that had to take second place

was my education. Once I started skiing at 13, it was all I wanted to do. Although I did reasonably well at school, all I wanted to do when I left was to get into skiing. When I came out of retirement in 1995, I had the original ambition of getting into the 1998 Olympics. However, I ended up going back to education after I was blocked from competing by various federations. I did some GCSEs through distance learning, took my A levels, then studied for a law degree at De Montfort University in Leicester. If my children wanted to follow the same path, I would support them and explain that you can always return to education at any stage of your life.

### What is your involvement in the sport?

Although I'm no longer involved in British skiing, I ski and continue to undertake promotions for various initiatives. I've worked with the Chill Factor, the UK's longest indoor ski slope in Manchester, to encourage six to 18 year olds into the sport. I've also supported Sport England, and I also visit schools and universities to give talks about never giving up and following your sporting ambitions.

I'd like to see skiing become a more accessible sport. It seems very little has

changed since I first started. There needs to be far more investment in grassroots participation and it's an ideal time to start afresh. Dry ski slopes and indoor ski slopes are great for getting more people involved, but it has to be affordable and more inclusive.

### What would you do to help more people get involved in skiing at grassroots level?

We hear a lot of talk about the Olympic legacy and I would absolutely love to see more and more people taking up the sport. In the UK, we don't have real snow ski jumps or ski jump centres, but it's something that I'd like to see happen in the future. It's vital if we're to start investing in homegrown talent. With the right facilities, I believe that in 10 years we could have some world-class ski jumpers and that's something I'm looking at getting involved with in the future. ●

To find out more and to keep up to date with SIBEC EU news, visit [www.sibec-events.com/](http://www.sibec-events.com/)



In 1988, Edwards became Britain's first Olympic ski jumper since 1929

Edwards' story was turned into a hit Hollywood film in 2016





# KIOSKS, CONCIERGES & CONVENIENCE

As consumer expectation grows and technology takes centre stage, we look at how operators can use the latest innovative self-service kiosks to restyle the front of house customer experience

**D**espite being faced with economic challenges, the fitness industry has seen continued growth. Not only have consumers become increasingly aware of the benefits of an active lifestyle, the introduction of new technology has provided social and motivational impetus, so much so that UK market penetration has now risen above 15 per cent.

This positive trend is being driven by the convenience of new technology that meets the needs of consumers in more efficient and customer friendly ways. As the information economy transforms the traditional concept of gym-going, consumer expectations are also changing. In the face of increased competition and new business models, operators must modernise and embrace change if the industry is to continue to grow.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The most important phase of the customer experience is the first 15 seconds after entering a gym. This is why the conventional reception area is morphing into a welcoming customer service focussed space, where the exact needs of customers can be met rapidly – without queues or other bottlenecks. GLL's associate director of marketing, sales and e-commerce Steve Ward says:

"In five years' time traditional health clubs with reception areas staffed by front of house staff answering phones will be a relic of a bygone era because the future is all about convenience. It's not a matter of 'if' you change the way you manage your service, it's a matter of 'when'."

Christopher Puszczynski-Phelps, management information manager at Serco Leisure, reinforces this point: "Almost every single experience at the current front desk can be improved with technology. Automate the automatable, streamline customer journeys and put the

purpose back into staff roles. Making the really basic things frictionless allows staff to be redeployed into more rewarding customer service concierge roles – an invaluable asset to your business."

Indeed, it is this provision of seamless customer service via intelligent automation and rejuvenated front of house staff that is the key to a transformed customer experience.

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY

The potential of self-service kiosks to create a frictionless customer service environment can be seen beyond the leisure industry. Banks, cinemas, restaurants and high street stores are all increasingly experimenting with cashless, digital environments where technology replaces the traditional 'counter top sale' and staff function as 'concierges' or customer stewards.

Ward explains: "Turning staff into people who can actively help our customers is a really positive way to



**In five years' time traditional health clubs with reception areas staffed by front of house staff answering phones will be a relic of a bygone era**

*Steve Ward*

frame kiosk uptake, streamline customer journeys and transform a business. It means that customers who know exactly what they want to do can do so seamlessly, while those who need additional support can get it from a dedicated member of staff."

### FAST-PAYMENT KIOSKS

In October 2017 Legend launched the industry's first Fast-Payment Kiosk that offers two interchangeable modes on one kiosk platform: Fast-Payment and Fast-Track. With contactless payment using card, smartphone or app, Legend's new cutting-edge kiosk facilitates a seamless customer journey through front of house; the platform for a friendly, well-managed concierge area. The solution is designed and engineered to minimise queues and make it easier for customers to pay for services.

But it is vital that the customer journey is fully considered. As Sean Maguire, managing director of Legend Club Management Systems, comments: "We've learnt so much from the incredible adoption of self-service by our customers. What we're now seeing is the need for specialisation and tailoring of journeys. Customers either require Fast-Payment or Fast-Track, but the two functions are incompatible on the same kiosk because the one requires a transaction speed of less than ten seconds, while the other might need the customer to make booking choices. Wasting your customer's time is the ultimate sin in today's digital world. This is why we no longer recommend a multi-use kiosk – it doesn't work in practice because Fast-Track customers cannot tolerate waiting behind a customer doing a longer transaction."

A key feature of the new Legend kiosk design is the branding potential and customer signposting built into the materials. Unlike kiosks of old, which were clunky and unattractive, the new Legend kiosk sports an ergonomic design that features full 360-degree customer branding with eye-line signposting. The intention is to create an aesthetically pleasing branding impact at reception, helping operators make a better first impression with members.

### GLL'S KIOSK SUCCESS STORY

While the leisure industry's adoption of kiosk technology might be in its infancy, there are outstanding examples of success. GLL began implementing Legend's Fast-Track kiosk in 2012. Today,



Legend's Fast-Payment Kiosk makes it easier for customers to pay for services

GLL has in excess of 7.4 million kiosk transactions a year, which translates into a lot of time freed up for staff to positively interact with customers.

Steve Ward concludes, "In Wembley and Belfast, GLL no longer has any front of house reception desks. The desks have been dismantled, phones and cash processing removed, and kiosks installed. We have found that footfall hasn't been affected by this change, income is increasing and customer experience levels are going up.

"Customers who can't or don't want to book online or use kiosks need a higher level of interaction, and this is what we are focussing on now. By using staff to greet people out the front, we are now able to spend more time on hard to reach groups and customers who need extra time to improve their experience, and less

time on those who know what they want and how to get it."

### EMBRACE THE FUTURE

Ward concludes, "If you haven't yet started selling online or transacting with customers through kiosks you certainly need to. New kiosk technology, such as Legend's, can be a valuable enabler of change and provides another important platform with which to fashion the future delivery and growth of our business."



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# Making 2018 the year of action



As a new year begins, ukactive's CEO **Steve Ward** explains the not-for-profit's plans for making 2018 the year that physical activity makes its biggest impact in society to date

**I**f you're a brand and you want to do something exciting, partner with ukactive because we will make a difference and we will change people's lives."

This was the call-to-action made by rugby legend and children's activity campaigner Lawrence Dallaglio during his keynote speech at the ukactive National Summit late last year.

It's a massive vote of confidence in the collective power of ukactive and its 4,000 members, which is why our focus for the year ahead will be to convert these words of promise into action.

## WINNING OVER WESTMINSTER

Westminster remains a key battleground for our sector and we enter 2018 confident that we will land some significant wins around some of our key policy strands – particularly in the workplace, community leisure and the children's activity agenda.

As ever, the arguments for these policies will be underpinned by insightful research from our world-class ukactive Research Institute. Expect a raft of high-impact reports from our research team over the coming months, while the business intelligence provided by the DataHub will continue to sharpen as more operators buy into the value of shared data.

For 2018 we're committed to breaking with tradition to open up new possibilities and this will see our Flame Conference and Awards move to Manchester, with an exciting new format. We're taking the physical activity sector's best-loved show to a city that's pulsing with potential through its newly-devolved status and I can't wait to share more details of these plans in the coming months.

Learning and development (L&D) will be a central strand of this year's Flame meeting, incorporating the ethos of the Ignite learning strand we launched last year and expanding it to address some

Lawrence Dallaglio was a speaker at the 2017 ukactive Summit



**The outcomes of the next 12 months will be determined by how bold and collaborative we are in our approach**

of the biggest challenges faced by our sector at club level. We're opening up development pathways at every level and this L&D focus in Manchester dovetails with the latest instalment of our Future Leaders programme, as well as Global Active Leaders – a new programme at IESE in Barcelona for global CEOs of the sector eager to continue their learning.

## CHAMPIONING INNOVATION

Innovation remains front and centre of our thinking and the return of our startup accelerator ActiveLab will unearth new, dynamic solutions for how we can stimulate physical activity among new audiences and at the same time better serve our existing clients.

Furthermore, 2018 will see ukactive unveil an array of campaigns, events and member services dedicated to supporting our sector's mission of getting more people, more active, more often. The outcomes of the next 12 months will be determined by how bold and collaborative we are in our approach.

And by heeding Lawrence's call-to-action, our sector can transform lives at a greater scale and pace than ever before, laying the foundations for a truly active society. ●



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# DEREK GALLUP

Last June, executive VP of fitness for private-equity firm New Evolution Ventures (NeV) Derek Gallup became chair of IHRSA. Here, Gallup, who has worked in the industry for more than 20 years, provides an insight into NeV's operations and shares his intentions for his time at IHRSA

## You joined IHRSA six months ago. What has the experience been like?

It has truly been great, especially as I've been able to meet so many hard-working and inspirational industry leaders, who are also extremely innovative. For example, I recently had the privilege of giving a presentation on leadership during the 18th Annual IHRSA/Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference and Trade Show in São Paulo, and at the IHRSA European Congress in London. These events gave me the opportunity to interact with so many great people. The board has also formed a new international committee that's made up of four members whose businesses are primarily located outside of the US. The goal is to better address the biggest issues and opportunities that the global industry faces today.

## Tell us more about how the private-equity firm you work with operates

On the fitness side of things, NeV's portfolio consist of the likes of UFC Gym, Crunch Fitness and A-Rod Energy Fitness. Mark Mastrov – NeV's chair – has been an amazing presence in the team. He seems to operate years ahead of everyone else, quickly generating ideas that may precipitate a new brand. For example, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) concept was born when he and Jim Rowley, the CEO of NeV, had one meeting with the former owners of UFC: Dana White, Frank Fertitta and Lorenzo Fertitta.

Then there's the influence of Mike Feeney, our executive vice president. He lays out every location and decides on the equipment that will go into each club. This creates the symbiosis of our various brands. We bring some

brands together because they work synergistically or because we have successful operators who we know can manage several platforms.

## Celebrity partners or franchisees are commonly affiliated with NeV's brands. Why?

It's true that nearly every NeV Brand has a celebrity involved with its corporate or franchised clubs. Crunch, for example, has partnered with football star Cristiano Ronaldo

to create CR7Crunch, which has opened its first location in Madrid, Spain. Joakim Noah, of the New York Knicks, is working on plans to open five Crunch facilities in Chicago.

UFC Gym has joint venture partner sites with UFC stars B.J. Penn, Frankie Edgar, Urijah Faber, Michael Bisping and Cub Swanson. A-Rod Energy Fitness involves a partnership with baseball legend Alex Rodriguez, who also partners with us on UFC Gyms in Miami.

Finally, there's Hard Candy, which was created in partnership with Madonna. Involving celebrities, who are also known as personal fitness enthusiasts, is important in building these brands because they are well placed to help get the active and healthy lifestyle message out to the masses.

## You're the executive VP of fitness and retail at NeV. Tell us about that role

My role involves both fitness and retail because I've had professional experience in both fields. I started my career at Macy's and then went to Liberty House – a specialty store chain in Hawaii. When I was at 24 Hour Fitness, I led the growth of its retail business to US\$70 million a year. Today, NeV's nutrition,



Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo and basketball player Joakim Noah are both affiliated with NeV's brands

**“Personal and group training is the key differentiator for the NeV brands. It's where we create the deepest relationships and produce the best results for our members”**



accessories and apparel arms constitute 6 to 15 per cent of total revenue, per location, depending on the brand.

#### **How much of a contribution do those three categories make?**

Nutritional products make up the largest part of our retail business and that's because our brands are focused on delivering successful training programmes that produce results for members. A nutrition component that includes menu-planning and nutritional supplementation is needed to produce such results. Our partner, dotFIT, led by Neal Spruce, has created a programme that delivers the right nutrition at the right time; we use it with all of our North American brands.

Accessories make up our second largest retail segment. This includes workout accessories, such as foam rollers and home exercise equipment, recommended by our trainers. At UFC Gym, we also offer mixed martial art accessories (MMA), in keeping with the brand's USP. We also produce some branded apparel, but that's not a huge part of our revenue. The retail business – nutrition, accessories, and apparel – is our third-largest revenue stream behind membership fees and personal training.

#### **And what contribution do fitness offerings make to NeV's overall revenue?**

Personal and group training is the key differentiator for the NeV brands. It's where we create the deepest relationships with our members and also produce the best results for them. Training is responsible for 25 to 35 per cent of total revenue, per location. In fact, training revenue is actually larger than membership fees in some locations.

With respect to fitness, we always strive to be at the tip of the spear especially in terms of who we choose to join our team, how we train them, and the technology we use to enhance the club and team member experience both in and out of the gym.

**Gallup began his fitness career at Gold's Gym Hawaii, overseeing retail**

#### **Finally, what do you hope to have accomplished by the end of your tenure with IHRSA?**

There are two key things I would really like to achieve. Firstly I'd like to have had a hand in providing IHRSA members with the information and services that makes it possible for them to offer improved programming options to their members, and to significantly increase their membership bases in order to have a greater impact on their local communities.

I'd also like to see the IHRSA board recognised for having created a highly visible footprint, so it can grow, promote, and protect the industry – reversing the physical inactivity epidemic in the process. It may sound grandiose, but basically, I'd like to save the world through fitness! ●

**IHRSA is the global trade association which represents 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers. Learn how IHRSA can help your business at [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org)**

# PRODUCT INNOVATION

**Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest health and fitness products and services**

## **Randy Hetrick** on TRX's new app and at-home training system

Functional training equipment supplier TRX has launched a new app and at-home training system, which clubs can sell onsite to members to help them continue their training at home.

The TRX Home2 System is an updated version of the

Home Suspension Trainer. Designed to be used with the TRX app, the Home2 System provides an at-home training experience that users can personalise. The straps themselves have also been updated, and now boast a sleeker appearance and adjustable foot cradles.

The TRX app offers in-ear audio coaching that is designed to deliver a similar experience as working out with a personal trainer. Audio coaching is available for more than 80 different workouts.

Additionally the app features an extensive workout library covering a variety of disciplines, as well as a scheduling function that allows users to plan their workouts up to months in advance.



*"We've created a solution that allows users to achieve their goals more quickly and efficiently than ever"*

**Randy Hetrick**



The updated system features adjustable foot cradles

Randy Hetrick, founder and CEO of TRX, says: "By combining our industrial design, training and education expertise with our app technology to deliver audio coaching and biometric tracking,

we've created a solution that allows users to achieve their goals more quickly and efficiently than ever."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD TRX**

Device users can now cross-crawl

## **Neil Kelford** introduces the Versaclimber contra-lateral climbing edition

Vertical climbing machine Versaclimber has undergone a makeover, moving from its original up-down climbing pattern of movement to a contra-lateral or crawling pattern.

Contra-lateral movement, also known as cross-crawl, occurs when the arm and leg approach each other on one side of the body, while the opposite arm and leg separate.

Released on 1 Jan 2018, the contra-lateral movement function now comes as standard across the full range of Versaclimbers. However, the traditional standard climbing pattern



*"We are really excited to be offering this as an option as we think new users will find it even more intuitive"*

**Neil Kelford**

still remains available to purchase via special order.

The Versaclimber can also be used alongside an angle bracket, which attaches to a wall, squat

or utility rack, allowing users to change their climb pattern from upright to horizontal.

Versaclimber managing director Neil Kelford says: "We are really excited to be offering this as an option as we think new users will find it even more intuitive and current users will discover they progress their fitness further, which they then find very rewarding."

"Cross crawl provides a new alternative to the standard climbing motion where the arms and legs move in unison on both sides of the body."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD VERSACLIMBER**





## John Halls explains Physical Company's combat fitness range

Physical Company has launched a comprehensive range of combat fitness equipment.

The line is available in a number of fabric options

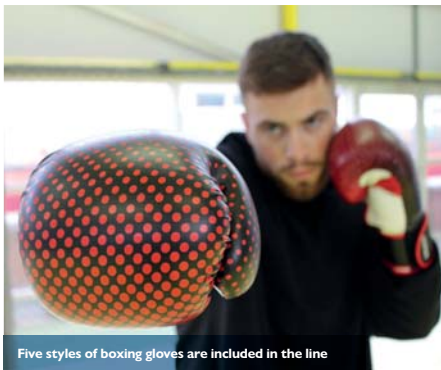


*We can supply all that trainers and operators need to support their clients and members in boxing pursuits*  
**John Halls**

and consists of five styles of boxing and sparring gloves, three styles of punch pads and a strike shield. It also features a range of safety and comfort accessories including a full head guard, hand wrap tape and glove liners.

Designers worked with mixed martial artists (MMA) and safety experts during the design process, while protection, safety, durability and hygiene were taken into consideration throughout to ensure the safety and efficacy of the products.

Physical Company's MD John Halls says: "Our range has something for everyone – from beginners and those who incorporate occasional



Five styles of boxing gloves are included in the line

combat moves into sessions right up to MMA enthusiasts and entry-level fighters."

Halls adds: "By offering a comprehensive range of gloves, mitts and pads, plus important safety accessories,

we can supply all that trainers and operators need to support their clients and members in boxing pursuits."

**fitness-kin.net KEYWORD**

**PHYSICAL COMPANY**

## Nerio Alessandi introduces Technogym's SkillRun

Technogym has launched the SkillRun, a new treadmill that combines both cardio and power training in a single solution.

The SkillRun, which was launched in December, is the third product to be added to Technogym's growing Skill line – a range of fitness equipment designed for both elite athletes and fitness enthusiasts. Other products in the range include the SkillRow and the SkillMill.

The SkillRun is designed to provide users with the 'ultimate running experience', and features a top speed of 30km and an incline that ranges between -3 and 25 per cent.

The SkillRun also uses Technogym's interactive Unity platform, which is designed to keep users engaged and motivated by offering a completely customisable workout including data tracking, digital content and personalised training programmes.



*"The new Skill line represents the ideal solution for providing consumers and operators with athletic performance training"*

**Nerio Alessandi**

In addition, it includes four different patents: Multidrive technology, Parachute training kit, Biofeedback and SkillRun Class.

The Multidrive technology is a patent-pending innovation that enables users to change between cardiovascular and power training modes without dismantling the equipment.

The Parachute training kit is designed to reproduce the sensation of running outdoors in optimised conditions. It consists

of a steel frame support and an ergonomically designed belt that can be used for parachute resistance training.

Biofeedback is an exclusive interactive technology that tracks the user's performance in real time and offers colour-coded feedback.

SkillRun Class allows health club operators to manage group running workouts more effectively, from booking to results and data management.

Nerio Alessandi, founder and president of Technogym, says: "The new Skill line represents the ideal solution for providing consumers and operators with athletic performance training in response to the growing market trend for high intensity training, both in boutique studios and in full service clubs."

**fitness-kin.net KEYWORD**

**TECHNOGYM**



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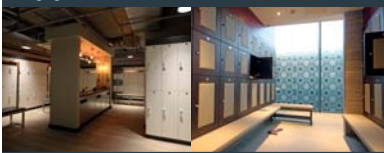


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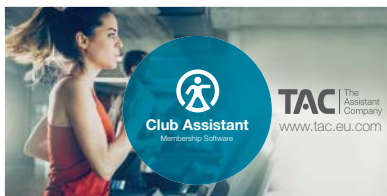
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Doing more exercise could potentially help glaucoma patients

# Vision of fitness

Researchers from the University of California, Los Angeles, have found that regular exercise can significantly reduce the risk of glaucoma – a leading cause of blindness

**G**laucoma is a common eye condition that arises from a build-up of fluid in the eye, which in turn damages the optic nerve – a structure that's vital for vision. It most commonly affects those aged over 40, but can strike at any age. And as a condition that typically presents without symptoms in its early stages, it's the second leading cause of blindness in the world.

Despite having a high incidence, little is known about how to best prevent the condition, which has no cure; however, new study findings presented at the 121st Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in November 2017 suggest that regular exercise may play a key role.

## LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

A team of US researchers, led by Victoria Tseng, analysed data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey – a large study that has been assessing the health of US adults since the 1960s – to see if the data sheds any light on the link between exercise and eye health.

"We chose to study this relationship because the currently known risk factors for glaucoma are things that we can't change, such as age, race and family history of the disease," said Tseng.

"We were interested in identifying potential risk factors that could be changed based on lifestyle modifications with a plausible biological basis. Exercise is an activity that fits this description."

The researchers began by defining moderate to vigorous activity in real-life terms: taking 7,000 steps a day for seven consecutive days was considered to be the same as doing 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on at least five days a week.

## HIGHER SPEED, MORE STEPS

Working with this definition, Tseng and colleagues found that participants' risk of glaucoma fell by 6 per cent for each 10-unit increase in walking speed and number of steps taken per minute. And glaucoma risk decreased by 25 per cent for every 10-minute increase in moderate-to-vigorous activity per week.

"Our research suggests that it's not only the act of exercising that may be associated with decreased glaucoma risk,

but that people who exercise with higher speed and more steps of walking or running may even further decrease their glaucoma risk compared to people who exercise at lower speeds with less steps," Tseng told *Health Club Management*.

"We know that blood flow to the optic nerve and the front of the eye plays a role in glaucoma development and progression, and we also know that blood flow in the body changes with exercise. Therefore, it is not surprising that the two are associated," she said.

However, Tseng added that the findings, which are yet to be published, "are only preliminary and do not suggest a cause-and-effect relationship between exercise and glaucoma."

Tseng concluded: "Further studies are needed to examine the relationship between the two entities. If further studies support our findings, it may be worthwhile to consider suggesting increased amounts of exercise to patients with glaucoma." ●

**“ We were interested in identifying potential risk factors that could be changed based on lifestyle modifications with a plausible biological basis ”**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Tseng, V et al. Another reason to exercise: protecting your sight. American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), 13 Nov 2017

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