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Subscriptions

Denise Adams
+44 (0)1462 471930

Circulation manager

Michael Emmerson
+44 (0)1462 471932

Editor

Kate Cracknell
+44 (0)1462 471906

Editorial director

Liz Terry
+44 (0)1462 431385

Assistant editor

Katie Barnes
+44 (0)1462 471925

Head of news

Jack Phillips
+44 (0)1462 471938

News desk

Tom Anstey
+44 (0)1462 471916

Product editor

Kate Corney
+44 (0)1462 471927

Designer

Clara Nicoll
+44 (0)1767 769645

Web team

Dean Fox
+44 (0)1462 471900

Emma Harris

+44 (0)1462 471921

Tim Nash

+44 (0)1462 471917

Michael Paramore

+44 (0)1462 471926

Publisher

Jan Williams
+44 (0)1462 471909

Sales

John Challinor
+44 (0)1202 742968

Astrid Ros

+44 (0)1462 471911

Julie Badrick

+44 (0)1462 471919

Financial administrator

Denise Adams
+44 (0)1462 471930

Credit controller

Rebekah Wilkinson
+44 (0)1462 733477

Creating 'wellness cities'



Recommendations made in January that two new garden cities be built in southern England to ease the UK's housing shortage have prompted fierce political debate.

However, politics aside, the chance to build two new cities from scratch represents a once in a lifetime opportunity for the leisure and wellness industries.

These could be truly incredible places to live, but we need to be innovative with the model. Things have moved on a long way since the original garden cities, and the Leisure Media team would like to see a new vision: one that has wellness at its very heart (see also *Leisure Management* issue 1 2014, p3).

It's acknowledged that, to combat the UK's increasingly sedentary lifestyle – an issue

provide innovative food for thought: labelling public staircases as exercise equipment and advertising the calories their use will burn, for example (see *LM* issue 1 2014, p10), and Sochi's 'squat for a free metro ticket' scheme (see *HCM* Feb 14, p20).

There's similar thinking at Technogym's headquarters in Cesena, Italy, with signs on the lifts urging staff to 'Take the stairs to burn more calories'. Indeed, the design of this futuristic building has wellness running throughout, from its use of natural light and air to its active meeting places and extensive fitness facilities (see *HCM* Jan 13, p44).

In the US, Delos has gone a step further in the residential market, developing a holistic Well Building Standard based on seven design categories – including light, fitness, water, nourishment and mind – that impact on 12 aspects of human health such as metabolism, longevity and cognition (see p80).

Also in the US, New York's Center for Active Design has been set up to encourage greater physical movement for users within buildings; to support a safe, vibrant environment for pedestrians and cyclists, with more inviting streetscapes; and to shape play and activity spaces for people of all ages, interests and abilities (see *HCM* Oct 13, p17).

In line with this thinking, the Open Streets Project has seen streets across the US temporarily closed for walking, biking and playing (see *HCM* Sept 13, p20); South American cities such as Bogotá have implemented similar projects. And then there's the 'pop-up' trend, which sees temporary fitness offerings set up in public spaces (see *HCM* Sept 13, p59).

So the inspiration is out there, from small initiatives to grand design thinking. The challenge now is to put politics aside and bring all this together into an exciting new wellness city concept for the UK.

The chance to build two new cities from scratch is a once in a lifetime opportunity, but we need a new vision: one with wellness at its heart

mapped out in detail in ukactive's recent *Turning the Tide of Inactivity* report (see p28) – we need to inextricably build physical activity into everyday lives. A purpose-built wellness city with places to walk, exercise and spend time outdoors, and with access to great leisure facilities, would enhance residents' quality of life, lead to better health – and lower healthcare costs – and serve as a shining example for others to follow.

And there are already some great ideas out there from which to draw inspiration, both in the design of buildings and in the outdoor space. Smaller-scale initiatives

Kate Cracknell, editor - katecracknell@leisuremedia.com / twitter: @HealthClubKate
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Subscriptions Tel +44 (0)1462 471930

Leisure Media, Portmill House, Portmill Lane,
Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1DJ UK



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WELCOME TO HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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p56 Our new management series kicks off with a look at strategy



p80 The wellness-focused buildings of the future



p20 Fitmob launches with a twerking-based workout



p86 Fitness, fun and new product launches at FIBO 2014

CONTENTS

05 Editor's letter

The health and fitness sector is being presented with a once in a lifetime opportunity to create 'wellness cities', says Kate Cracknell

08 Letters

The 'Fat v Sugar' programme on the BBC made good TV, but was it yet another unbalanced view of dieting, asks Debra Stuart of Premier Global

12 News round-up

Pure Gym and The Gym Group eye up a merger, ukactive report highlights inactivity crisis, GLL acquires Sporthouse, and Fitness Industry Education opens a new £1.2m London training academy

20 International news

New Fitmob concept launches in California, while the first Daily Fitness Olga Šipková franchise club opens in Prague

23 People news

Innes Kerr to head up énergie in Ireland, and Ceri Lewis joins SportsArt Fitness

24 IHNSA update

Pep Viladot of Holmes Place presents an update on the fitness club market in Spain

28 ukactive update

David Stalker, CEO of ukactive, on the findings of its groundbreaking report into physical inactivity

31 Diary dates

This month sees IHNSA in the US, and the International Fitness Showcase in Blackpool, UK

32 Everyone's talking about... Universal appeal

How can we broaden the appeal of health clubs to all socioeconomic groups? Are we trying hard enough?

34 Interview

Andrew Cosslett

The CEO of Fitness First talks to Kate Cracknell about putting behavioural psychology at the heart of the business, in a £270m repositioning and rebrand

40 Meet the Millennials

Vera Kiss of The Futures Company unmask the Millennial generation and explains what you need to know to be relevant to this market

44 Active ageing

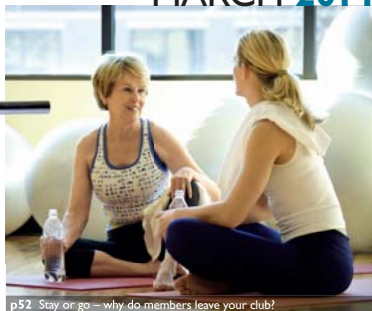
Can mainstream fitness clubs cater for the over-50s market, or are standalone, niche clubs a better solution? Kate Cracknell reports

52 Take your leave

In the final part of his series looking at member retention, Dr Paul Bedford takes a look at the reasons why members leave



p60 What do members really feel about your functional zone?



p52 Stay or go – why do members leave your club?



p70 Sports-specific resistance training in the spotlight

56 Strategic thinking

Michael Cassop-Thompson looks at strategic management of clubs, in the first of a series created with CIMSPA

60 The functional trend

The industry has gone mad for functional training, but what do members really think?

70 Sporting strength

A look at how fixed resistance equipment is being integrated into sports-specific training programmes

74 Cellular clean-up

US scientists have discovered a new benefit of exercise: its ability to remove debris in the body

76 Gymtopia series Recycled for rehab

Ray Algar reports on a Gymkit initiative to send refurbished gym equipment to rehab centres in Laos

80 Building for health

US real estate developer Delos has created the first set of building standards based on wellbeing. Its founder Paul Scialla explains

86 Show preview FIBO 2014

The world's largest trade fair for fitness, health and wellness takes place in Germany next month

89 Maximising return

Refurbishments require huge capital investment, so how do clubs make the most of them when complete?

92 Fitness-kit.net special Secondary spend

We look at the latest secondary spend products that can help drive revenue for health clubs

101 Lightweight

Pedal power desks for the office, and how about handstand yoga?

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For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p96



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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



A healthy balanced diet goes far beyond choosing between fat and sugar

Media must convey more accurate perspective on diet

The recent 'Fat vs Sugar' programme on UK TV (*Horizon*, BBC2, 29 Jan) was certainly good TV, but I'm not sure it dealt with the issue of diet in a way that was helpful, or indeed very balanced.

Without knowing viewing figures, it was clearly packaged up to be accessible, so I'm sure will have been watched by a lot of people – which is why I was slightly disappointed that it wasn't able to take a more rounded approach to the subject at hand. Of course the nutritional element is important (and particularly the not-wholly-made-clear distinction between natural fats and those found in processed foods) but there are all sorts of other contributory reasons that, in reality, get in the way of people being as healthy as they should be.

The programme didn't make reference to the psychological reasons for eating the wrong foods (food addiction, comfort

eating, etc) or indeed the economic barriers. Given the scale of the UK's obesity problem, healthy eating clearly isn't an easy problem to solve, and my worry is that the programme may have left people with a skewed view of what sort of diet will really help them achieve better health/weight loss – which can be extremely demoralising in the long run.

I'm sure the programme never claimed to be the answer to the UK's dietary missteps, but I do wish the mainstream media would acknowledge that diet is a far wider, more socially complex issue than whether you prefer bacon or a chocolate bar. Otherwise, even interesting programmes like this become about as useful as the next fad diet telling us to eat celery and blancmange seven days a week.

Debra Stuart
CEO, Premier Global

The leaving process is key to retention 'battle'

What a great article by Mike Hill in *HCM* Jan 14 (p62), looking at why members leave health clubs. If operators act on this kind of research, we might get somewhere with the eternal retention battle.

The two key areas for me in this research were members' first few visits, and the time after leaving. Clubs' desire to provide perceived value for money, coupled with industry recommendations to visit three times a week, set up many new members to fail before they've even started. A new exerciser might be aiming to visit once a week, which can already be a big step up. If the instructor says they need to come at least three times a week to see any results, this can destroy their motivation. Once a week is better than never; if we must encourage people to come more often, let's wait until they've built up the habit.

When members leave, regardless of how difficult or easy you make it, you have a duty to find out why, then re-engage them. Most established clubs have 1.5 times as many ex-members as paying members, and 25 per cent would consider re-joining (Mintel, *HCM* Aug 13). Sending regular communications to ex-members is a no-brainer.

Guy Griffiths
Director, GG Fit



Clubs have a duty to find out why a member has left

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800-calorie-a-day diet: "Too far below the recommendations for good health"

Crash diets won't aid long-term health and weight loss

I was interested to read your news story on new research that suggests a short-term crash diet can reverse the effects of type 2 diabetes (*HCM* Feb 14, p15).

Early speculation on the results of such a dietary trial need to be treated with caution: nothing has been conclusively proven at this stage.

Crash diets such as this often attract attention as they only require a short period of focus and promise quick results. As such, their appeal extends beyond the study's sample of type 2 diabetics to the many people who constantly struggle with their weight.

It's vital that the correct messages are promoted in the press; it needs to be made clear that this sort of crash diet won't support long-term health and weight loss.

This 800-calorie a day diet, studied by Newcastle University, is too far below the recommended daily calorific intake – 1,950 (women) and 2,450 (men) – that are advised for good health.

In the initial trial in 2011, the diet was maintained for two months; even then,

participants described how difficult it was to adhere to due to constant hunger and bouts of fatigue. In the proposed follow-up trial, the diet will be carried out for up to 20 weeks to determine safety over a longer period of time.

The experts who ran the trial suggested such an extreme diet should only be applied under close medical supervision. However, there's always a risk that the general public may try to copy such an approach on their own in their efforts to lose weight – and risk negatively affecting their health in the process.

Our advice to diabetic individuals is to reduce sugar and starchy carbohydrate intake, avoid processed foods where possible, and return to higher quality, nutrient-dense foods as a much more successful way to reduce and even improve their symptoms. This approach is underpinned by a significant body of scientific evidence that has been published in the last 10 to 15 years.

Ben Pratt

Northern tutor manager, Premier Training

Activity must be at the core of kids' development

Your recent news story on the lack of UK policy towards increasing children's exercise levels (*HCM* Jan 14, p11) was an interesting read. With the government not taking the necessary steps to create a national strategy for activity, it seems that we as an industry need to take action and support local communities and the education sector in generating behavioural change in early years.

At the end of last year, Precor launched a whitepaper – *Engaging Children and Young People in Physical Activity* – in conjunction with Unactive, which showed that activity levels plummet between the ages of 10 and 15 years. This is the window we should be most worried about, as despite the fact that the positive effect of activity is clear both on physical and psychological wellness, schools are finding ways to incorporate it ever more challenging.

The whitepaper summarises the main challenges for key groups – such as girls, boys, obese children and disabled children – and then outlines suggestions on how to tackle the issues, making sure everyone has the opportunity to participate in a physical activity during the school day.

With kids' obesity and physical inactivity levels rapidly rising, we cannot wait for the government to step in. The fitness industry can play a key role in ensuring our children grow up aware of the importance of being physically active. At Precor, we believe this should be at the core of every child's development.

Jonathan Griffiths
UK marketing manager, Precor



All kids must have a chance to be active during the school day

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Water Babies announces tie-up with Total Fitness

Infant swim school Water Babies has announced a new partnership that will see a new scheme offering classes at all 16 Total Fitness gym sites in the north of England.

The two companies have joined forces to complement each other's existing swimming programmes, aiming to provide quality-assured swimming instruction from birth, with a clear structure of progression.

Youngsters who have completed the ASA-accredited Water Babies baby and toddler programmes will now be able to progress into the Total Fitness Swim Academy for children aged four and upwards. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=S657x>*



DLL head of health and fitness Rob Beale

DLL launches interactive health and fitness website

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has created a new online health and fitness resource offering expert advice and demo videos to help people achieve their fitness goals.

The Engine Room website has been designed around a principle of three Fs – fitness, fuel and focus – aiming to circumvent fads and quick-fix diets by offering a sustainable approach to achieving a long term healthy lifestyle.

Hosted by experts, the videos appear on the Engine Room website and Youtube. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w9T9c>*

Fitness suite revamp at Nottingham water centre

The National Water Sports Centre (NWSC) in Nottingham is to unveil its new gym as part of a £500,000 redevelopment.

Redevelopment of the main sports building and the installation of new Life Fitness equipment in the gym was overseen by operator Serco on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council.

Equipment provider Life Fitness incorporated several product ranges into the design, with various resistance and CV equipment from its product range. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q8e6Y>*

Budget rivals hatch merger plan

Budget fitness club operators Pure Gym and The Gym Group have announced plans to merge, pending regulatory approval.

The deal marks the union of two of the leading brands in the competitive budget club sector, who have been jostling for market share.

As part of the merger, Pure Gym's Peter Roberts will become executive chair of the new group, while The Gym Group's John Treharne will be chief executive.

It will combine Pure Gym – owned by CCMP Capital Advisors, LLC – and The Gym Group, owned by Phoenix Equity Partners and Bridges Ventures.

The two companies will continue to operate independently until regulatory approval and completion terms are finalised.

Financial terms will not be disclosed.



John Treharne will be chief executive of the new company

"We want to continue expansion across the UK and will look to open in excess of 30 gyms per annum, pending regulatory approval," says Treharne. "Research shows the UK market still has scope for growth – certainly compared to the US and Germany – so we hope to capitalise on that." *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=g7rv7>*

Fitness Date Club launches UK-only website

With Valentine's Day a now fleeting memory, an international dating website is vying for the hearts of UK fitness enthusiasts with a brand new launch.

Fitness Date Club, which aims to link health-minded singletons predominantly from the UK, US, Germany, South Africa and Sweden, has launched a new site exclusively for UK-based users.

The site encourages members to use gyms, fitness centres or sports clubs as a platform for dating activities, with the idea that people can stay fit, enjoy their hobbies and meet new people all at the same time.

Aside from its dating focus, the site also promotes healthy living through a recently added blog featuring articles on nutrition,



Martin Dagger built the site based on his dating experiences in Sweden

yoga, running, bodybuilding, and training tips.

According to founder Martin Dagger, the UK's commitment to wellbeing is strong enough to merit a stand-alone offering for the country's lonely (albeit extremely healthy) hearts. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x7B5X>*

Xercise4Less creates specialised training programmes

Budget gym operator Xercise4Less is attempting to differentiate itself from low-cost rivals by launching its Eat Clean Train Dirty project to help members achieve results.

This project includes the launch of four six-week training programmes which cover

the main goals for members wanting to join the gym: Get Strong, Get Ripped, Get Fit, Get Trim and Get Toned.

Members can buy the programmes in club for £1.49 or online for 99p. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n3Y8u>*

Bannatyne's gains unlikely rival

Duncan Bannatyne's ex-wife has expanded her growing chain of CrossFit-affiliated gyms with the opening of CrossFit Jacana in Durham, less than a mile from one of Duncan's health clubs.

Joanne Bannatyne, who divorced the entrepreneur and TV personality last year and was also managing director of Bannatyne's Fitness, has opened the Belmont Industrial Estate club with her business partner.

The move has generated headlines as it comes months after Joanne Bannatyne took out a large advert near her former husband's Darlington offices, to promote her CrossFit DL2 gym with the slogan "Welcome Your New Neighbours". However, she says the new opening is purely about business, with CrossFit Jacana fitting the brand's industrial setting profile and being



CrossFit Jacana offers a range of high intensity classes and an open gym

ideally located to attract new members.

"Given who she was married to, there's always going to be interest in Joanne, but she's just focusing on building her business," says Joanne Bannatyne's spokesperson.

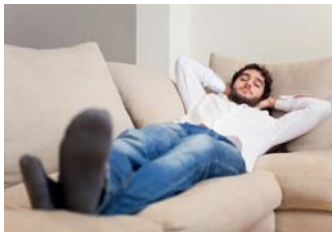
"It was all about finding the best setting – the fact Bannatyne's is nearby didn't even come in to it." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H5m4K>

ukactive report highlights inactivity crisis

Increasing physical activity levels by just one per cent a year would save the UK economy £1.2bn over the next five years, according to a new report from industry body ukactive.

Turning the Tide of Inactivity combines data analysis with public spending figures obtained under the freedom of information act (FOI) to produce an overview of the challenges faced in combating inactivity.

FOI figures show English local authorities will spend only £30m tackling inactivity in 2013/14, against £637m (2,000 per cent more) spent on sexual health. This is a mismatch when costs are compared, as the most recent estimate – by Professor Kevin Fenton of Public Health England – suggests



Physical inactivity accounts for nearly one-fifth of premature UK deaths

that inactivity costs approximately £10bn a year, while the Family Planning Association estimates costs for sexual health at £12.05bn. The report defines inactivity as carrying out fewer than 30 minutes physical activity over a span of 28 days. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=9A3s6>

Your GYM launches new HIIT concept franchise model

After a successful trial, Your GYM is offering a heart rate-based interval training concept as a new franchise model. A hybrid of HIIT and PT, it's backed by the science of EPOC.

Group sessions are broken down into short intervals of CV and functional

strength training, with every participant logged on to their own individual heart rate system. The first site is operating in Richmond, London, and the second will open in Queens Park in three months' time. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=s8p4t>

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UK NEWS

Liverpool leisure centres face axe

Two Liverpool leisure centres are threatened with closure as Liverpool City Council (LCC) weighs up how to save £156m over the next three years.

Under council proposals, which include 300 job cuts, £4m will be saved from the city's leisure facilities budget over the next three years.

LCC operates 13 Lifestyles Fitness Centres and the £4m figure is expected to be squeezed from these facilities.

A large proportion will derive from the proposed closure of Everton Park and Park Road – where Olympic bronze medallist Beth Tweddle trains – centres, starting with their swimming facilities.

A council spokesperson said the two centres were earmarked for closure as they were underused and expensive to run: "These centres are both near to other leisure



Liverpool Town Hall, where the centres' fate will be decided on 5 March

facilities, so the impact on residents will be less significant."

"This is not a done deal and we're actively seeking partners to come in and work jointly with the council to keep these centres open."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e3c8Y>

GLL expands portfolio with major venue

One of the UK's largest operators of public leisure centres, GLL, has expanded its wholly-owned portfolio of sports facilities with the acquisition of Sporthouse in Dagenham, London.

Sporthouse was opened by five times Olympic rowing champion Sir Steve Redgrave ahead of the London Olympic Games in April 2012.

It has the country's biggest multi-use sports hall at 5,000sq m, a large health club and two outdoor basketball courts. It also has capacity for 6,000 spectators.

The centre was an official Games training venue during London 2012, hosting both Olympic and Paralympic athletes in the run-up. However, the privately-owned centre



The Sporthouse was an official Games training venue for London 2012

hit difficulties and was placed in administration in 2013. Following the acquisition, GLL will rename the centre as Barking Sporthouse and Gym. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=p4Z7D>*

Loughborough Uni invests £5.6m in fitness facility

Work is under way at Loughborough University to build a brand new £5.6m health and fitness centre with capacity for 5,000 members.

The complex is being built by constructors Kier will contain state of the art equipment from fitness specialists Technogym.

Spanning 900sq m (2,952sq ft), the gym will feature over 80 pieces of cardiovascular equipment and more than 50 fixed and free weight stations, alongside a core stretching area. There will also be two fitness studios and a sports hall. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v4F4y>*

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Nottingham gym is a cut above

A new independent gym has opened in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, offering guests the use of over 70 pieces of equipment, a supplement bar and the services of a unisex hairdresser.

Ultimate Gym and Fitness has been developed by bodybuilder Christopher Law – who also owns Platinum Gym and Fitness in Ilkeston – alongside his two personal friends Dale Broome and Stephen Hamilton.

The facility is set out over 511sq m (5,500 sq ft) of space, with the gym featuring a variety of equipment, including treadmills, cross-trainers, bikes, free weights, strength machines and abdominal rollers.

The founders of the new gym now hope to gain increased custom at the facility thanks to a number of residential developments set to grow in the area over the coming years.



The new Nottingham facility is set out over 511sq m (5,500sq ft)

Ultimate Gym and Fitness is open seven days a week from 7.00am until 9.00pm Monday through to Friday, while weekend hours are 8.00am until 4.00pm.

The gym also offers a flexible pricing structure, allowing guests to pay on a daily, weekly or monthly usage basis.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v4V9x>

Balbirnie Gym completes refurbishment

The phased redevelopment of Fife club, Balbirnie Fitness Centre, is now complete offering members a better service than ever.

An extension has been added at basement level, adding 20 per cent more floor space and creating a three-room strength and conditioning suite, with new equipment, freeweights, benches and Icarian strength items. There is also a bespoke heavy lifting area.

The original external wall of the building – a former woollen mill – has been exposed to show the sandstone, whinstone and red brick.

The first floor has a cardio arena, resistance equipment and a functional suite – all equipment was provided by Precor.



Balbirnie's new basement gym features a range of strength zones

Jez Whitting, sales director at Precor, says: "Balbirnie Fitness Centre has successfully evolved. The development of its CV area and the strength zones has created an enhanced and extensive training facility which caters for all."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C2a9e>

Former kickboxing champ to open London HIIT gym

London's Bankside will be the home for the latest HIIT-based gym, when former kickboxing world champion Christian Thomson opens his HiIT Studios concept on 21 March.

Fitted out with Keiser equipment, the gym will combine hi-tech facilities with

science-based offerings such as live blood analysis to offer personal insights into metabolism. Each member will also be assigned a personal coach at the gym, which will eschew contracts in favour of monthly tariffs.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H7U8F>

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turning the
lights on



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Lanhydrock Hotel goes for Life Fitness gym gear

Lanhydrock Hotel and Golf Club in Cornwall has added a new fitness facility.

The facility offers 15 stations of Life Fitness' Discover Series SE Cardiovascular equipment, featuring LFConnect so users can plug in their iPhone or iPad, or simply log in to the LFConnect website on the console screen, to create new workout programmes. The gym also offers Optima Dual resistance, Life Fitness's first group exercise bike – the Lifecycle GX – and cable motion dual-assisted pulleys. In addition, the hotel has installed a range of free weights and other functional accessories. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=p7X6k>



First Legacy Games Day in Carshalton in June 2013

Fit for Sport and Everyone Active win Olympic mark

The partnership between Fit For Sport and Everyone Active has been awarded the coveted 'Inspired by 2012' mark for their Legacy Games Days for primary school children across the UK.

The initiative, which gained praise from Lord Sebastian Coe, was devised and delivered jointly by the two bodies. The 'Inspired by 2012' mark is awarded to organisations working in a range of areas – including sport, education and culture – for projects and events inspired by the London 2012 Games. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=5v7w8>

Wearable tech event set to take centre stage in London

The Wearable Technology Show 2014, Europe's largest dedicated event for the fast-growing sector, will gather innovators and industry leaders at London's Olympia Conference Centre from 18-19 March.

The event will showcase the latest technological developments in smartwatches, wristbands, Google Glass and a host of new wearable devices.

Over 80 speakers are expected, including figures from Intel, Google, Reebok, McLaren Technologies and Misfit Wearables.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e4K8Y>

Tracker app could be a life-saver

A new tracking device is currently in development, which not only keeps a record of your sleeping patterns, steps taken and calories burned, but also features a mechanism to alert others when you take a serious fall.

SenseGiz Star works as a complement to a smartphone through an app supporting Android and iOS platforms, with real-time data sent from the wearable device to your phone for presentation.

The accessory has been designed to detect if its user suffers a fall or crash using patent-pending algorithms, which automatically send notifications to family and friends listed in the app via an alarm along with a text message.

The Star also features a panic button, which can be pressed in an emergency and also a pre-set countdown timer to avert false alarms.



The accessory (worn here) can detect if its user suffers a fall or crash

Away from its safety measures, the device functions like a pedometer and also tracks sleep quality in terms of light sleep vs. deep sleep and interruptions.

The creators have now launched a fundraising scheme via Indiegogo in a bid to continue development of the Star.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v417n>

FIE opens £1.2m London training academy

Online training provider Fitness Industry Education (FIE) has launched a new £1.2m fitness instructor training academy in central London, following £350,000 worth of investment from asset finance specialist Academy Leasing.

The site will be used for the training and continued development of personal trainers and fitness industry professionals.

The funds were used to implement an entire fit-out of the premises, including the installation of gym equipment, furniture, an AV system, Rubbertech flooring and turnstiles.

"The establishment of a purpose-built training facility represents the next step in our expansion strategy and we expect it



FIE directors Steele Williams (left) and Michael Betts

to accelerate the company's already strong growth," says Michael Betts, managing director of the FIE. "This move will allow us to improve the customer's experience of studying with us. We believe it will deliver a strong return on investment." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w5N7c>


Cybox UK expands to new Coalville headquarters

Commercial fitness equipment provider Cybox International UK has moved to new headquarters in Coalville, Leicestershire, to house the growing UK arm of the business.

The new site will be home to the UK sales and ops teams and includes 511sq m (5,500sq

ft) of office space, including new training facilities and a specially built training room.

There is also 511sq m (5,500sq ft) of expandable warehouse storage space plus 279sq m (3,000sq ft) dedicated to spare parts storage. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=3W2u4>



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Strata Partners expands its medical fitness offering

Russian chain CitiFitness has opened its second medical rehabilitation centre following the success of its first site, which opened in Moscow in August 2012 (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 12, p30).

This second site, which has opened in Ekaterinburg, is three times bigger than the Moscow site, measuring 3,000sq m.

Both centres provide such services as medical rehabilitation, medical fitness and diagnostics, with a focus on sport and medical rehab and rehab post-trauma.

The model is not membership-based, with the centres selling only packages and one-time visits. All sessions are run by personal trainers – independent workouts are not possible – with doctors first developing bespoke training programmes for each individual client.

Anastasia Yusina, founder and president of Strata Partners – the parent company of the CitiFitness and OrangeFitness chains – says: “We wanted the next step in our strategy to be based on service diversification. We want to show our clients that fitness is even more than a preventative health tool – that it also has the power to make people healthy again.”

Further medical centres will be rolled out as the opportunities arise.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=jv3V>

Science museums put focus on food and nutrition

As part of the European Union (EU)-funded Inprofood project – which aims to bring together research, industry and civil society to figure out how to solve Europe's food-related health challenges, including obesity and related diseases – Ecsite, the European network of science centres and museums, has created a PlayDecide discussion game.

Designed for visitors between the ages of 14 and 21, the game stimulates discussion around tough food issues such as eating disorders, food waste, sustainable eating and personal accountability for food choices. The overarching question posed by the game is: who is responsible for rising obesity in Europe, and who must correct the problem – government or consumers?

Seventeen science centres in 11 countries are hosting the game, which has been translated into local languages. Results and ideas coming out of the game will be compiled and submitted to the EU when Inprofood finishes in November 2014.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H7P7e>

New franchise for Czech Republic

The first Daily Fitness Olga Šípková franchise club has opened in Prague, Czech Republic.

Located in a residential area, in the newly-built Krakov shopping centre, the key target market for the new 1,100sq m club is women aged 30–50 and living in the neighbourhood.



The 1,100sq m club predominantly targets women

The club therefore has a strong focus on group exercise, including aerobics, yoga, TRX, pilates, circuits and Zumba.

Owned by franchisee FAMILY & FITNESS, the club also offers a gym equipped by Star Trac, plus the H.E.A.T. Program. There are also programmes for parents to exercise with their children. Membership costs 850 Kč (US\$43, £26, €32) a month including gym and aerobics, or 1300 Kč (US\$65, £40, €48) a month including gym and all group exercise.

Daily Fitness Olga Šípková is a franchise of Fitness Olga Šípková, which already operates three company-owned clubs in Prague: Health & Fitness Olga Šípková, which opened in 2005; Family Fitness Olga Šípková, which opened in 2006; and Wellness & Fitness Olga Šípková, which opened in 2012 encompassing heat experiences, massage and manicures alongside group exercise options such as yoga, pilates and GRAVITY.

There are now plans to open clubs in other parts of the Czech Republic.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M2F4M>

Fitmob launches ‘use more, pay less’ service

Fitmob, which launched in the US in January, is a new fitness concept where classes take place in public spaces, and where the cost per session decreases the more you participate.

Co-founded by CEO Raj Kapoor, creator of the Snaphish photo website, Fitmob has an app and a website; anyone can sign up to run a class, which then gets a star rating and reviews from participants. The service launched with 30 classes, including ‘Twerkout Conditioning’. Currently only available in San Francisco, the aim is to roll out nationally and ‘put the economics of fitness back in the hands of the people’.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q3B3H>



Options include a ‘Twerkout Conditioning’ class

Fitness trade fair FIBO heads to China

FIBO – the annual international trade fair for fitness, wellness and health held in Germany – will stage its first event in China this year, aiming to provide the industry with a regional platform in the potentially lucrative Asian market.

In addition to a broad range of manufacturers exhibiting products and services, themed areas featuring physical therapy and training concepts will be featured.

The move demonstrates FIBO's confidence in what is a rapidly expanding market. The Chinese fitness sector gained fresh impetus from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, with an average annual growth rate for gym

memberships of 8.42 per cent in the five whole years since, according to FIBO.

FIBO also states that there are now 400 million Chinese aged between 18 and 50 years, but only 13 million belong to a gym, indicating significant growth potential for the fitness industry in the Chinese market.

Running from 10–12 September in Shanghai, FIBO China is a collaboration between FIBO organiser Reed Exhibitions Deutschland and its Chinese partner firm Reed Sinopharm Exhibitions. It will offer two days exclusively for trade visitors, plus a third day open to all.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n4Z5l>

New partnership to revitalise GX



The French launch event, held at the Grand Palais in Paris, included a four-hour exercise marathon

Reebok and Les Mills have officially launched their five-year partnership – originally announced late last year – with a series of global kick-off events taking place in locations including Dubai and New Zealand.

The latest took place in Paris, at the Grand Palais, and saw more than 5,000 attendees take part in four hours of Les Mills classes, from Bodyattack and HIIT format Les Mills GRIT to the new Bodyvive Active concept. Between classes, a fashion show displayed the new Reebok-Les Mills collection of fitness apparel, available to instructors and the public.

Reebok has only three global partnerships: CrossFit, Spartan and now Les Mills. The new Les Mills partnership has been struck with a view to reinvigorating the group exercise category and

ties in with this year's 25th anniversary of Step, which is set for a return to the limelight.

The joint venture aims to leverage the power of the Reebok brand and Les Mills programming to help more people 'fall in love with fitness', including driving awareness and penetration of Les Mills in the B2C market. At the same time, it aims to grow subscription to Reebok One – Reebok's social network for fitness professionals – with Les Mills instructors becoming Reebok ambassadors.

Further large-scale public events are scheduled to take place this year, including four Les Mills GXF events in the UK. The 'celebrations of fitness' are designed to show the public how easy and fun a healthy lifestyle can be.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=J8c8c>

New health club offering for Kosovo

FiveStar Fitness Club has opened its doors in Kosovo, in the capital city of Prishtina.

Set high on a hill overlooking the city, the 1,200sq m club cost over €1m to build. The 750sq m gym has been kitted out with 120 units of Precor CV and strength equipment, and features Preva networked fitness.

Gantner RFID technology is used to integrate club entry, lockers, vending machines and showers, as well as access to Preva Personal Accounts – a member's personalised exercise tracking account – all via one wristband.

The first fitness centre to be built since the war, and founded on a positive

relationship between a Serbian distributor and a Kosovo businessman, the new gym has become the 'in' place to be seen in the city – particularly the café, which hosts regular DJ nights, with music playing from a custom-built DJ booth made to resemble a Precor Discovery Strength unit.

The club is using social media to encourage membership sign-up and has recorded a YouTube video featuring Kosovo celebrity singer Dafina Zeqiri, known as Duffye, which promotes the benefits of Preva Personal Accounts – see: <http://lei.sr?a=D102m>

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Y6d5R>

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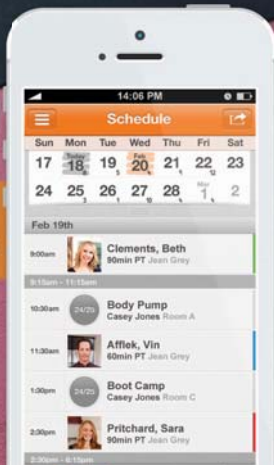
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Kerr to head énergie in Ireland

Fitness industry veteran Innes Kerr has been appointed managing director of Prime Fitness, a member company of Abbey Fitness & Wellness, which is rolling out Energie Group brands across Ireland.

Kerr, who brings over 30 years' experience in operations, sales, marketing, customer service and retention in the fitness and leisure industry, moves from his position as group operations director at the Energie Group in the UK to assume his new role.

In August last year, Abbey Fitness & Wellness announced an exclusive deal with the Energie Group to take control of and invest in the Energie Fitness Clubs, Energie Fitness for Women and Fit4less Brands across Ireland. Abbey plans to open 14 new clubs over the next five years, bringing the Ireland estate to 30.

Kerr has relocated to Dublin to oversee the roll out and growth of Energie brands across all Ireland territories.

"I am delighted to be asked to join the Energie Ireland team permanently," says Kerr.



Kerr will roll out Energie brands across Ireland

"I look forward to being able to apply my experience and expertise to achieve a very exciting and innovative strategy for growth."

He previously worked for Energie Fitness Clubs Ltd for five years as group ops director and prior to that held executive roles at the FIA (now UK Active), Fitness First and De Vere Group. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=f8B8G>*

SportsArt Fitness welcomes Ceri Lewis

Ceri Lewis has been appointed national accounts business development manager for equipment manufacturer SportsArt Fitness.

Lewis has 18 years' experience in the health and fitness and sports sectors, working for Life Fitness as a senior key account manager before moving to Fitness First as the UK fitness equipment purchase manager.

Most recently, he worked for LOCOG on the procurement of sports equipment and the operational delivery of sports equipment and contracts to 21 Olympic and Paralympic sports.

Lewis says: "This is a very exciting time for SportsArt Fitness, with over 100 new products and solutions coming to market in the UK in 2014." *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=S8f2G>*



Lewis has worked for Fitness First and LOCOG

Dan Rees joins YMCAfit to deliver training programmes

YMCAfit has announced the appointment of fitness industry training expert Dan Rees as senior training and delivery manager.

Rees, formerly operations director at Focus Training, joins YMCAfit as the fitness training provider celebrates its 30th year in 2014 and he will lead on developing and delivering its extensive range of courses.

YMCAfit's appointment of Rees follows that of former FIA (ukactive) chief executive, André Deane, as head of YMCAfit earlier this month.

"I've worked in the active leisure sector – developing and delivering qualifications, apprenticeships and training – for 20 years and I'm looking forward to helping the charity to enhance its reputation," says Rees. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D8P8S>*



Black says joining Star Trac was an "easy decision"

Duncan Black aims to make his mark at Star Trac

Fitness equipment provider Star Trac has appointed Duncan Black as export EMEA account manager to work closely with its distributors across the region.

Black is an industry lifer, having initially studied Sports Science and Recreation Management at Loughborough University. Over the past 20 years he has worked with firms including Life Fitness and Alliance Leisure. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C9G9g>*



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State of the industry: a note from Spain

• Pep Viladot • director • Holmes Place

The Spanish fitness industry has faced tough times over recent years. In addition to the ongoing economic crisis in the country, which has caused uncertainty across all sectors of the economy, the VAT increase of 2012 has had an impact on consumption – including in the fitness industry.

However, fortunately for us, fitness is increasingly associated with the physical and mental health of the population. Fitness is no longer considered a luxury, and people certainly don't consider it to be one of the first things on the list to cut back on when their household finances are suffering. Indeed, it's seen as an alleviator of two particularly important problems in these troubled times: stress and despondency.

As a result, one of the direct consequences we're seeing in response to the economy is an approximately 20 per cent increase in the daily usage of fitness facilities. While it's more difficult to attract new clients in troubled economic times, this is counterbalanced by an increase in existing member loyalty and usage, with more frequent attendance of the gym.

Perhaps also spurred by the recession, Spain has recently experienced the birth of low-cost facilities. In our opinion, this will have the following effects: first, an increase



Premium clubs such as Holmes Place and Metropolitan (above) must offer perceived value for money

in the number of people participating in fitness, with the base of the pyramid becoming wider – a positive step forward for the sector – and second, we expect a clear split or polarisation to occur in the market, as has already been witnessed in markets such as the UK, with low-cost versus premium clubs. Higher prices at the

premium clubs will now, more than ever, need to be clearly linked to a perception of value for money that the products and services provide.

This piece was excerpted from *The IHRSA European Health Club Report: Size & Scope of the Fitness Industry*, which was published in October 2013.

Ask the experts: Raising membership fees

What's the best way to raise membership fees, and how often should it be done? Brad Wilkins, vice president and general manager of Cooper Fitness Center/Cooper Spa in Dallas, Texas, US, offers his views:



In my experience, there are typically two reasons clubs will raise fees. The first is to pass on any operational burden to the consumer. The second is due to increased perceived value through club improvements (eg capital improvements, product and/or service offerings, etc).

Our goal as club operators should be to do both, and you should address how you are going to accomplish this goal through your annual strategic planning process.

I'm one who typically favours annual fee increases, although you must have both internal (inside the club) and external (outside the club) economic stability. For example, for most operators, raising fees during the recent (external) recession was not a realistic option, we were just trying to hold on during this challenging economic time and mitigate our losses by controlling expenses.

But as the external economy stabilises, club operators that have focused on maintaining internal economic stability, and who have focused on increasing



Should health clubs raise their fees annually if the economy allows?

perceived value should be primed to get back on track with a strategic and progressive fees structure format.

Read more answers to this question at www.ihrsa.org/industryleader

Global financial overview on offer at IHRSA

European CEOs, CFOs, club owners, general managers, investors, suppliers, press – and all who are interested in the current economic conditions affecting the worldwide health club market – should not miss the 18th Annual IHRSA Financial Panel: An In-Depth Review of the Industry's Growth Factors & Financial Sectors.

The session will take place on Friday 14 March during IHRSA 2014 – IHRSA's 33rd Annual Convention & Trade Show in San Diego, California, USA.

All of the presenters on the panel have been involved in at least one major health club transaction within the past year, and will provide a unique viewpoint on the financial factors that influence our industry. Last year, presenters noted the continued segmentation of the club industry, as well as the continued expansion of franchising.

Attendees at this year's session will gain an insight into the industry's strengths and weaknesses, how the panel see future trends, how our industry compares to analogous industries, how different segments within the industry are faring, and how the current debt and equity markets are behaving relative to our industry.

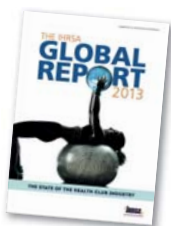
The 2014 panel will include Pierre LeComte, MD of TSG Consumer Partners; Sean Naughton, senior research analyst at Piper Jaffray; Nathan Chandrasekaran, principal at TZP Group; and Ben Chapin,



Rick Caro will moderate the Financial Panel

vice president at GE Antares Capital. Rick Caro, a 40-year industry veteran and president of Management Vision – a consulting firm specialising in the health club industry – will once again moderate this annual convention highlight. Caro, an IHRSA founder and past board president, received the inaugural IHRSA Lifetime Achievement Award in March 2013.

Deadline looms for 2014 IHRSA Global Survey



The 2014 IHRSA Global Report will be published in June. The company profiles section of this comprehensive annual report highlights approximately 300 leading club companies from around the world, including financial and membership information. To submit your health club company for possible inclusion in the report, complete IHRSA's 2014 global survey by the 21 March deadline. Eligible survey participants will receive a complimentary PDF of the final publication.

Visit www.ihrsa.org/research for details. Questions? Contact research@ihrsa.org

Want to be a speaker at IHRSA 2015?

It may still be a full year away, but plans are already well underway for IHRSA's 34th Annual International Convention & Trade Show, to be held on 11–14 March 2015 in Los Angeles, California.

Would you like to present one or more educational sessions to attendees during IHRSA 2015? If so, you will need to complete the application that can be found at www.ihrsa.org/speaker-application. The deadline is 31 May.

Please contact education@ihrsa.org with any questions.

About IHRSA

Founded in 1981, the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is the only global trade association, representing more than 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers worldwide.

To learn how IHRSA can help your business, visit www.ihrsa.org. Locate a quality IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

Events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

12–15 March 2014

IHRSA 2014: The Annual International Convention and Trade Show – San Diego, California, US

5–8 August 2014

The IHRSA Institute: Executive Education for Club Professionals – Chapel Hill, North Carolina, US

28–30 August 2014

15th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show – São Paulo, Brazil

16–19 October 2014

14th Annual IHRSA European Congress – Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Overweight? You could go deaf

Being overweight can increase your risk of going deaf, researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, US, have found.

In a 20-year study of nearly 70,000 women, those who gained the most weight were more likely to lose their hearing and the researchers say the findings apply equally to men. The risks of obesity were evident even when researchers took account of other factors known to affect hearing, such as smoking.

Until now it was thought the only way to slow age-related deafness was to protect the ears against loud noise. However, the study also found regular physical activity, such as walking at least two hours a week, could reduce the risk of hearing loss by around 15 per cent. It's not clear exactly how being overweight damages delicate cells in the ear. But the researchers suggested fatty deposits could clog up blood vessels in the ear.

What's hot, and why not?

What's hot in terms of fitness activity, and what's stopping people taking part? Kristen Walsh reports

The latest IHRSA research highlights the trends within the European fitness market, as well as identifying the reasons why people are still failing to participate. We round up the key findings:

Fitness trends

The biggest fitness trends in Europe are functional training, outdoor group fitness, yoga and high intensity interval training (HIIT). Meanwhile, activities such as boot camps (both indoors and outdoors), mixed martial arts (MMA) and boxing continue to grow in popularity, while group fitness activities seem to be gravitating toward more fun, dance-based formats.

"Group exercise in its various forms is still strong, and the new trend of virtual classes is making inroads as well," says Hans Muench, IHRSA's director of Europe. While not a new trend, indoor cycling continues to be particularly popular, especially in Scandinavia.

Holistic approach

In Portugal, clubs are adding nutrition to their basic service. "Most clubs are now integrating physical activities with nutrition counselling in order to reduce obesity and transform behaviours about feeding," explains Armando Moreira, vice president of Portuguese trade association AGAP.

Another accelerating trend addresses the total member experience: not just the workout, but pre- and post-workout activities. "Expansive wellness and relaxation areas in various markets are worth taking note of," says Muench.

Triathlon to the fore

In Ireland, triathlon, outdoor small group training and cycling have all grown in popularity, according to Kilian Fisher, IHRSA Europe Council member.

The surge in the popularity of triathlon-related activities holds open-ended promise for not only Ireland, but also for Spain, where triathlons as well as standalone running and biking activities are popular. Club operators have the opportunity to provide programmes for swimming and fitness training for speed, endurance and agility to complement activities members enjoy outside of the club.



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Triathlon and standalone cycling events have grown in popularity, especially in Ireland and Spain

Exercise and ageing

Catherine Carty, IHRSA UNESCO representative, suggests that further opportunity exists within the older adult market. "With ageing populations comes increasing levels of disability," she explains. "Catering more to people with disabilities represents a major growth opportunity."

Challenging the model

The latest wave of low-cost clubs and microgyms is enabling the health club market to accommodate a wider range of budgets, but it's also shaking up the traditional structure of the fitness industry.

Notes Moreira: "Market polarisation is creating a lot of pressure in the mid-market. Low-cost operators are reporting good figures and expansion plans, out of line with traditional clubs, and some of the big operators and chains are now under a process of strategic redefinition and readjustment of their offerings."

Growth: barriers & opportunities

High obesity rates and low activity rates could be considered both a driver and a barrier for industry growth, with individuals who are categorised as either obese or overweight

also tending to be less active. While health clubs cater to, and would certainly benefit, this population, this group currently seems unlikely to be drawn to their offering.

For the foreseeable future, economic instability, high tax rates and competition for a limited pool of members will continue to hinder the industry's rate of growth. With banks reluctant to lend capital to the industry, existing facilities may also struggle with delayed expansion or upgrade plans.

On the plus side, however, leading club companies in Europe are experiencing growth, and several international brands – including Anytime Fitness and VivaFit – are pursuing expansion in Europe, suggesting that the European market holds promise for additional future growth.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This information is drawn from *The European Health Club Report*, which is available at www.ihrsa.org/european-report in PDF or print format for IHRSA members (€199.95 / US\$269) and non-members (€399.95 / US\$539).

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TURNING THE TIDE OF INACTIVITY



David Stalker, ukactive CEO, discusses the findings of its groundbreaking report into physical inactivity in the UK

Last month, ukactive launched its new report – *Turning the tide of inactivity* – which I hope will influence the direction of policy, and the sector as a whole, for years to come. It established for the first time the scale and impact of physical inactivity in the UK, on a borough by borough basis, and set out recommended actions to be taken at a national, local and sector level.

Why focus on inactivity?

Inactive people are more likely to develop chronic conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. They spend 38 per cent more days in hospital than active people and visit the doctor almost six per cent more often. This is costing the UK economy £8.2bn a year – an average of £18m per 100,000 people in each local authority in England every year.

Despite this, our report showed that 12.5 million adults in England are classed as physically inactive: one in four adults failed to achieve just 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week within a 28-day period in the last year. In the most deprived areas in the UK, this increased to one in three.

We also found a relationship between high levels of inactivity and high numbers of premature deaths in local authorities. In the most inactive local authorities, the average number of adult premature deaths was 342 per 100,000 people a year. In the best performing authorities, it was 242.

Towards a national strategy

The challenge we face is that the debate on inactivity has focused primarily on its contribution to reducing obesity, but this direction has started to change. The report set out new evidence that has helped provoke a change in emphasis, a change of direction and, above all, a move towards a new approach.

Inactivity needs to be seen as a standalone public health risk, separate

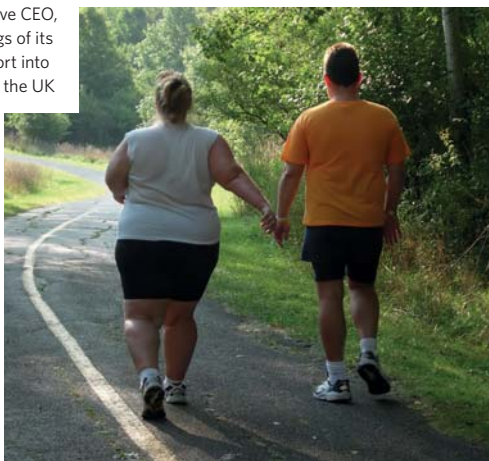


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/FRANCES I PRITE

A large-scale shift needs to happen so walking and cycling as modes of transport become society's norm

from obesity and weight management. As such, public health teams should be looking to prioritise and resource physical inactivity programmes to the same level as other top tier public health risks.

We've called for the government to develop and deliver a cross-party, cross-government and cross-sector national inactivity strategy; if local authorities in England reduced their inactivity levels by just 1 per cent a year over five years, they would make a £1.2bn saving.

This is a realistic ambition that would make a tangible improvement to the financial and physical health of the nation. Our report features many cases of best practice. Now is the time to ensure these are evidence-based and scalable.

Getting inactive people active

As a sector, we can have a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of communities by helping inactive people get active. Over a million people already walk through our doors every day, but our impact on the nation's health – and therefore our

importance as a key delivery partner for public health teams – would be so much greater if we developed evidence-based programmes designed to support inactive people in getting moving.

We need an industrial scale shift across society that ensures walking and cycling are the preferred modes of transport; that supports children to become physically literate from the earliest possible age; and that embeds physical activity as the norm in everyday lives.

Our sector has the potential to be at the heart of this shift, and I hope the report provides the basis on which we can take the critically needed action at every level to turn the tide of inactivity for good.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit www.ukactive.com/turningthetide for further details on the scale and implications of physical inactivity in the UK.

Your credit licence expires 31 March. Don't let your business expire with it.



Consumer credit licensing is about to change.

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Web-based WAM is easy to access and proving a powerful tool at health clubs and spas



FOR THE GOOD HEALTH OF YOUR ASSETS AND YOUR BUSINESS

WAM – Workflow Asset Management – is being hailed by centres around the UK as one of the easiest, most efficient and most affordable maintenance management systems on the market

Anyone who manages a health centre, leisure club or spa knows that their service and their customers' experience is only as good as the equipment, fixtures and fittings around them. Detail matters. The quality and comfort of the slatted seats in the sauna to the temperature in the pool, the lighting and floors in the changing rooms to the equipment in the gym...

This is where Workflow Asset Management (WAM) can make a difference. Hundreds of centres like yours across the UK have been discovering the power of this web-based programme to ensure they maximise the effectiveness of their assets. WAM allows them to create their own asset inventory which interacts with a fault reporting and repair system and planned preventative maintenance task schedule.

"This programme was created for our own leisure, health and spa facilities and worked so well we decided to take it to others," says Kris Price, who leads Halo Leisure Enterprises. "One of the many

advantages is that it is so easy to use. Staff simply access prioritised work schedules and then hit a button, type in update (be it 'checks made', 'fault reported', 'part ordered', 'work completed'...), hit a button and the system updates. Supervisors can see at a glance what is happening; including the progress of repairs, depreciation values of their assets, contractor servicing and the planned preventative maintenance tasks being carried out.

"What's more," says Price, "as organisations are being required to produce evidence that maintenance targets are being achieved, and the value of assets maximised, more groups are swapping paper-based procedures for a system like WAM which improves efficiency and distinguishes between statutory and desirable commitments."

"There are so many good things about this system," says WAM customer, Avalon Leisure's Malcolm Baker, whose centres in Somerset include spa and health club facilities.

"We have one huge database of assets, but WAM incorporates them all and

the vital checks and maintenance by a whole range of different staff – be it once an hour, once a day, once a week, or once a year," says Baker. "Once it's on the system you can allocate jobs to anyone on the rota, from lifeguards or gym staff to cleaners and technicians. Each member of staff simply accesses their own worksheets and, sitting here at my desk now, I can instantly check on progress," says Baker. "When you have multiple sites it saves so much time by streamlining worksheets, updating them with maintenance required as staff move around."

To find out more about WAM visit their website at www.maxyourassets.com

What makes WAM so affordable?

For groups like Avalon, Baker says it was the price of WAM that attracted them initially. WAM is not charged per user but is accessible for all staff on site for a one-off set up cost per organisation inclusive of training and helpline support and then via an ongoing license fee per location charged monthly and comparable with an average monthly gym membership. There is no minimum contract term.

"We can't put a figure on the savings it's brought us - in time, efficiency and more," says Malcolm Baker.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SHELJUNOV ANDREW

The Scottish Beauty trade show takes place in Edinburgh later in March

MARCH

21-23 | International Fitness Showcase

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK
Summary

The International Fitness Showcase is designed for fitness instructors and enthusiasts, providing three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, conditioning, lectures, workshops and mind-body sessions.

Web www.chrysalispromotions.com

23-24 | Scottish Beauty

Venue The Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh, UK
Summary

A trade-only event bringing together products, equipment, services and training from the leading beauty, nail, tanning and spa suppliers. It offers free admission (when registered in advance) for salon owners and managers, qualified beauty therapists, nail technicians, college buyers, final year students and complementary therapy practitioners.

Web www.beautyserve.com

30-2 April | SPATEC Spring, North America

Venue The Ballantyne Hotel, Charlotte, US
Summary

In a series of one-to-one meetings, the event will bring operators of leading US hotel resort, destination, athletic, medical and day spas together with key domestic and international suppliers.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

APRIL

1-4 | ACSM 18th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition

Venue Atlanta, Georgia, US
Summary

At ACSM's event, fitness professionals will explore the industry spectrum—from science to practical application. With over 1,000 attendees, the event offers PTs, students, owners, managers, programme directors and educators educational sessions, group workouts, hands-on workshops and networking.

Web www.acsmsummit.org

2 | EHFA European Health & Fitness Forum

Venue Congress Center Nord, Cologne, Germany
Summary

The first forum organised jointly by EHFA and FIBO. There will be talks from scientists on exercise benefits, while the 'Plan for Growth' session will suggest how the fitness sector can help combat lifestyle diseases. Latest EHFA/Deloitte EU market data will also be presented.

Web www.ehfa.eu.com

3-6 | FIBO 2014

Venue Koelnmesse Exhibition Centre, Cologne, Germany
Summary

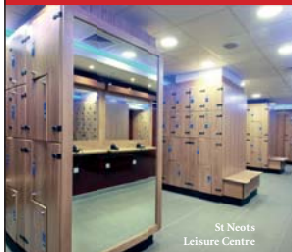
FIBO is the world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness, with the 2013 event playing host to almost 100,000 visitors and exhibitors attending from 30 different countries.

Web www.fibo.de



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EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Universal appeal

Research shows the middle classes dominate health club membership. How can we broaden the appeal to all socioeconomic groups – and how hard are we trying?

Research from Dr Paul Bedford indicates that the membership profile across the private and public sectors is increasingly similar (see *HCM* Sept 13, p64). A large proportion of members are from the middle classes and eight MOSAIC profiles are significantly under-represented, with gyms struggling to lure the highest and lowest income groups.

So why is this? Certainly there's more parity of offering between the sectors nowadays: the public sector has upped its game, offering high quality facilities at reasonable prices, while the private sector has struggled with ageing estates in tough economic times. Meanwhile,

the growing budget club sector, closer to traditional public sector offerings in terms of pricing, would logically appeal to those on lower salaries – but as with the budget airlines, in practice it appeals equally to gym-savvy, value-driven professionals.

Another factor to bear in mind is the high volume of casual users in the public sector – a group that can't currently be tracked, as operators can't provide data for them. It's possible that public sector participation is broader than the research reveals, but it still suggests lower income groups only participate as and when they can afford to, rather than committing to a new lifestyle.

Bedford explains: "The retention-focused research looked at who's paying and how well we retain them. While we might be able to access wider populations by providing discounted/subsidised activities, we seem unable to find ways of selling memberships to these populations."

If the industry is to tap into NHS funding and play a part in relieving the obesity epidemic, engaging with a broader demographic is vital. Even acknowledging the direct debit-based sample of the research, the question still needs to be asked: are we engaging with a sufficiently broad audience? If not, what are the barriers preventing lower socioeconomic groups from joining clubs?

IS YOUR CLUB ATTRACTING THE LOWER SOCIOECONOMIC GROUPS? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

JOHN TREHARNE

The Gym Group • CEO

"I'm surprised at this research, because I think health club membership has become less middle class.

In the 80s and much of the 90s, a health club membership was expensive and therefore a middle class badge: health clubs were associated with the nouveau riche. In my view, that has changed dramatically over the last five years. In the UK, Europe and the US, there has been a cultural change which has made health club membership less middle class.

As the recession has taken hold, there's been a shift towards value for money in all areas of life and among all socioeconomic groups, whether that's travel, flights or even daily necessities: 18.6 per cent of the AB socioeconomic group now shop at Aldi and perceptions are changing. Indeed, Aldi has as many products rated 'high' by its customers as Waitrose and Marks & Spencer.

That shift towards value is evident in health clubs too: our research shows our members are evenly spread across the socioeconomic groups – ABs as well as people on benefits – and the majority are new to health club membership.

We believe our business model creates an inclusive environment: once you're on a treadmill, it makes no difference what the person next to you earns."



KAREN CREAVIN

Birmingham City Council • Head of community sport & healthy lifestyles

"We're very proud of the fact that, in Birmingham, we have almost 40 per cent of the population registered and using our facilities – that's more people than voted in the last general election.

We've achieved this by identifying barriers and then removing them. Cost has proved to be one of the biggest barriers to attracting the lower socioeconomic groups, so since 2009 we've been offering Birmingham residents free access to our leisure centres at set hours during the day. Clubs in the most deprived areas offer the most free access.

Following the success of this Be Active programme, we also launched Active Parks in spring 2013. This offers free activities, such as Zumba, park fit and buggy fit, in parks. These sessions draw a lot of families: women tell us they don't want childcare – they want activities they can do with their children.

These services are funded by the NHS and independent evaluation has shown that for every £1 spent, £21.30 is returned to the system. Our research shows we're reaching all the groups, but are over-represented by those living in the poorest postcodes. People feel comfortable in the club when they're among those who look and dress like themselves."





Operators could extend their reach by going out and delivering low-cost programmes in the community

JULIAN BERRIMAN

Premier Training • Research and development manager

“I would agree that health clubs are not attracting the groups at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale. However, since April 2013 – when local authorities were charged with public health provision – there’s more funding available to target this population than ever before, and more onus on local authorities to find preventative measures to combat the rising tide of chronic illness in our communities.

To attract those most in need, provision needs to be more accessible and appealing: currently there’s a lack of community emphasis. Clubs need to start interacting with the communities they sit within and taking activities to where people already go.

To this end, Premier Training has designed a certificate: Promoting Community Health and Wellbeing. The certificate focuses on how to support behaviour change and long-term adherence to healthier living, and how to empower individuals to set their own goals. It covers four main areas of health: becoming more physically active, smoking cessation, healthy eating and alcohol awareness. Negative engagement in these behaviours is placing a huge financial burden on the wider economy and must be addressed at all levels of our society – but perhaps most urgently among the least well-off.”



KEVIN YATES

Leisure Connection • Head of leisure

“I have the utmost respect for this research, but I do have to question whether it paints a full picture. As a public access provider, it’s our job to target hard to reach groups including children, older people, disabled people and those on low incomes, whose participation often won’t be reflected in our membership numbers. For example, at one of our leisure centres we have 3,000 direct debit members, but a total of 11,000 users on the database and 750,000 visits a year.

I believe Leisure Connection is becoming increasingly innovative at targeting and reaching key socioeconomic groups. For example, the wellness activity bus in North Kesteven in the East Midlands – which takes activities to people in deprived areas – has 5,600 users and is just one example of how our teams are taking activities outside the four walls of our centres, to engage with hard to reach groups within their own environments. Often this is delivered free of charge, or at a discounted rate, to ensure participation.

The launch of health and wellbeing boards have made local authorities increasingly proactive in engaging the lower socioeconomic groups, but it’s important that, as providers, we can demonstrate outcomes in order to avoid cuts.”





ANDREW COSSLETT

The CEO of Fitness First talks to Kate Cracknell about putting behavioural psychology at the heart of the business in a £270m global repositioning and rebrand

“If you were to stop 100 people in the street and ask them if they wanted to feel happier and look better, how many of them would say ‘no thanks?’”

asks Andrew Cosslett, CEO of Fitness First, when I meet him at the company's offices in Marylebone, London. “The real question is: what's that worth to you? What are you willing to give up in the pursuit of that health and happiness?”

“And the problem is that, so far, the fitness sector hasn't really given consumers a reason to place much worth on its offering.”

Cosslett is firmly of the belief that blaming lack of participation on cost is “invalid when gym membership costs no more than the price of a coffee a day”. But it is, he acknowledges – and particularly in tough economic times – up to operators to offer “a product, a proposition and a way of dealing with people on their own terms”.

He says: “Actual cost is irrelevant. We simply haven't done a good enough job of explaining ourselves and putting an offer in front of people that they find good value. You have to join all the dots and present a proposition that satisfies customers' needs, making it easier for them to take that step and make a commitment to the gym.”

Faced with the huge challenge of turning around the fortunes of an embattled Fitness First, Cosslett

Cosslett has worked in hospitality and for big brands like Unilever



The new approach is based on behavioural psychology to get members engaged

therefore began by seeking a better understanding of consumer needs within the fitness sector. The result was a paper, produced in partnership with professor Stuart Biddle of Loughborough University in the UK, which outlined the science behind motivation and how the principles of behavioural psychology inform whether we will – or won't – be successful in maintaining exercise.

"We peeled it right back to two questions: why don't people get involved in the first place?; and when they do get involved, why do so many stop coming?" says Cosslett. "These aren't new questions, but I do think we're getting some different answers.

"The three things that matter to customers are being made to feel welcome, comfortable and as though they belong; being given a sense of competence and therefore confidence, which makes them feel empowered; and being given lots of feedback, encouragement and support about how they're doing and how they can go further. Those are the three critical components. While they're not rocket science, they're strangely absent in a lot of places I've been in this industry."

It's around these key components that the new Fitness First has been born.

ASKING THE QUESTIONS

Whether Fitness First will actually have struck upon the answers to the

Fitness First: Evolution & Growth

Fitness First's £270m global investment programme will see a revitalised brand bidding to return a sense of value to its offering.

But that won't mean lowering prices to compete with the budget operators, as CEO Andrew Cosslett explains: "I've always struggled with our 'affordable fitness' positioning in the UK – that's not really a place to be given there will always be a budget operator to undercut you. Neither do we want to be seen as some sort of boutique super-brand.

"If you look at Asia, Australia, Germany – our more successful markets where we have the best brand reputation – Fitness First is positioned towards the upper end of the mid-scale market."

Although the company does currently still operate five low-cost Click clubs in the UK – the legacy of its venture into this segment of the market in 2011 – the focus of the estate is shifting upwards, with major investment in clubs, staff and technology. By 2016, all 300+ clubs in 16 countries around the world – including 82 in the UK – will have been refreshed with a new look and feel that embraces everything

from club design and facility mix to technology and staffing.

However, prices will not necessarily rise. In the UK, some London clubs will see their prices go up, but as Cosslett explains: "We've taken a much more local view of pricing, because it's just not credible to imagine that everywhere operates in the same economic environment. Fitness First was quite slow to acknowledge that and do anything about it, but it's something we're actively addressing now."

There will also be new clubs. Here the focus will be primarily on Asia as a growth market – 15 new clubs this year and the same or more predicted for 2015 – with new sites also planned for the UK, Germany and Australia.

And while it isn't aiming to become a 'boutique super-brand', Fitness First will also – where demographics and high local penetration of Fitness First clubs allow – be dipping a toe in the microgym market after the success of The Zone, its group exercise-only concept in Sydney, Australia. One such site, provisionally named The Beat, will open this month in London – a take on The Zone that also incorporates heart rate training.



► industry's ever-present retention challenge remains to be seen – as will its ability to put these theories into practice – but Cosslett seems quite confident, if measured in his response: “We’ve set out our stall and believe it’s the way to go, but joining the dots is very difficult and it will be a long journey. We’ve moved the brand renewal programme through at pretty high speed and we’re still learning.”

That said, he has a strong and diverse team in place, their experience in sectors such as retail and airlines complementing his own background in brands and hospitality. Having learned his trade in the 1980s at the “great university of marketing” that is Unilever, Cosslett progressed into general management for Cadbury-Schweppes in Australia and Asia before moving into hospitality at hotel group IHG in 2005.

“A lot of the same issues apply in hospitality as in fitness,” he says. “The hotel industry is very inward looking – it continues with practices that have been around for many, many decades. What we did with IHG was overhaul it and challenge some of the preconceived notions of how things should be done.” That included the relaunch of the Holiday Inn brand: 3,200 hotels around the world in a “four-year journey of massive organisational challenge”.

Listening to Cosslett speak, particularly with the strong customer and brand insight his experience at the likes of Unilever has given him – as well as his clear personal passion for fitness – you get the feeling he could be the man to turn Fitness First’s fortunes around.

Classes and small group training help to create a sense of community in the clubs

“I’m willing to ask the crazy questions,” explains Cosslett. “When I got here, I saw an opportunity to do something a bit different.”

“From an outsider’s point of view, it’s always struck me as strange that an industry that should be seen as a paragon of virtue in society wasn’t portrayed that way. We’re saving people’s lives, making them happy, helping them fulfil their dreams and go further in life, yet the industry’s reputation was nothing like that. It was way down the pecking order in terms of appeal to executives to join it; the Office of Fair Trading was all over it for its overcomplicated contracts and terms and conditions; and there was little trust from the public. And as an observer and user, I agreed with a lot of what was being said.”

“Fitness First in particular was a brand with quite a lot of reputational damage. It wasn’t the case in Asia or Germany, but in the UK it had run out of money and hadn’t been able to invest in its infrastructure. We live in a world of design-led environments and Fitness First had been left behind, so we have a big programme of renovations underway.”

“The company also had a reputation as a selling machine, and that needed to be addressed. If you come through our doors as a potential new user, we want all your early contacts with us to

be positive ones. We want you to feel you’re talking to someone who knows their product and knows what’s involved. When you walk into the Apple Store, you aren’t confronted by someone who can’t answer your questions. They don’t have to go and find someone else for you to talk to. They know their product inside-out, they understand it and they’re advocates for it.”

With this in mind, every single member of staff – from receptionists and sales people, right up to Cosslett as CEO – is now being trained towards a fitness qualification.

MISSED CONNECTIONS

But perhaps Cosslett’s biggest concern on joining Fitness First was the lack of what he calls ‘connecting the dots’ across the fitness sector as a whole: “My 30 years in business have been about running international brands, but I walk into fitness and I see no brands – just names over doors.”

“I also don’t see much focus on the customer. I see a lot of knowledge and focus on fitness and what that means, with an assumption that the world knows what we’re talking about. But in practice, the connections just aren’t being made.”

“In the UK, penetration is stuck at 12 per cent or thereabouts, in spite of everything we know about the benefits of exercise, an ageing population, activity being on the government agenda... So something’s missing. Something’s wrong. And it’s partly because the industry doesn’t connect the dots. Some companies in the industry know a lot

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► about fitness, some offer very seductive environments and some have good customer contact – but not all three.

"Fitness is still quite a young sector, and I think a number of the inflection points we've seen appear recently, like the arrival of the low-cost operators, are evolutionary. They're signs of an industry moving forward, which is great news, because that always spurs more innovative thinking, which in turn drives penetration and drives more people into the industry. But for now, I don't think we have enough understanding about the things that drive demand."

A SENSE OF BELONGING

And this is where we return to Fitness First's new behavioural psychology-based approach, based on belonging, confidence and encouragement as the key to maintaining the appeal of – and demand for – the gym.

Delivering on this philosophy, one of the most visible shifts in the design of the rebranded clubs has been the introduction of extensive 'freestyle' areas for functional training, with small group training sessions included within the membership. Open-plan reception areas have been introduced to create a more welcoming first impression.

"A lot of the thinking about our club layouts revolves around the casual interaction between members, and between members and our staff," explains Cosslett. "A sense of belonging is key and, while everyone has a different mindset when they're in a club – some want to be left alone, some want to be engaged, that's the same in the hotel business too – the skill is to train your people to be smart enough to

The rebranding doesn't stop at the ad campaigns, but rather penetrates company structures

know the difference and to be able to engage with customers on their terms, but still engage them, because that's the precursor to keeping them as members."

Creating a connection with members outside the club is also vital to engagement, and Fitness First is in the process of building a digital platform, the likes of which Cosslett believes "doesn't exist out there at the moment". He adds: "Fitness First needs to use its scale better, investing in R&D rather than relying on manufacturers to tell us what's happening next. Our new platform will be the start of a new form of relationship with members and everything that's made possible for them as a result of being a member."

Another significant proportion of the company's £270m, three-year global investment – which will cover everything from refurbishments to rebranding to building new clubs – will go into developing its people, with fitness qualifications for all just the start.

"In any business I've ever been involved with, the primary driver of difference is how you engage your people, what you ask them to do, how you empower them, what you teach them, how you teach them. It's about helping them feel enriched and empowered. It's about setting standards and rigorously training them in – ensuring gym staff know members' names, for example.

"It's also about who's on your team in the first place, and we'll be

recruiting and training for attitude. We want people who are confident and empowered but who are also sociable. I know that's obvious, but it still doesn't happen routinely in the fitness industry."

REPUTATION BUILDING

He continues: "When you move a brand on, you can't do it in bits. As someone once said to me, you can't jump a chasm in three easy steps. You have to take the whole brand and the whole business to a different place. The brand look and feel is just the face of it – everything has to change. Your understanding of your customers has to change, meaning how you train your staff, what they say, how they engage, where they stand, what they wear – all that has to change. Your fitness products must have points of difference that make you distinctive and make people talk about you.

"What all great brands do is build relationships with their customers, keeping them loyal for longer and making them greater advocates of their brand ahead of others. That's what we're aiming to achieve."

But how easy a task is that for Fitness First, given all its negative baggage? How does it re-engage a disillusioned public?

"Changing your logo as we've done is like an announcement, a way of flagging to the world that you've changed," says Cosslett. "However, brand reputations are built – and particularly in these days of social media, they're built by people talking about you. So it's about winning over one customer at a time, day by day, encouraging them to walk back through the door and see that change has really happened and it's not just cosmetic. That's how we'll earn our stripes." ●

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MEET THE MILLENNIALS

VERA KISS OF THE FUTURES COMPANY UNMASKS THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION,
EXPLAINING WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO BE RELEVANT TO THIS POPULATION GROUP

Much has been said and written about millennials, a 2.2 billion-strong cohort that spans people who are in their late teens today to people in their early 30s. They have been described as an open, socially conscious, optimistic and technologically connected generation. What could not have been predicted is the profound effect of recent economic trends on their outlook and behaviours. In today's stagnant developed markets, many young people have had to recalibrate their horizons as the affluence of their parents and grandparents may no longer be in their reach. On the other hand, in emerging markets, many millennials now enjoy unprecedented incomes and opportunities for new experiences.

Despite these differences, there are three key trends shaping the lives of millennials that open up opportunities for spas, health clubs and wellness facilities to connect with them.

Firstly, millennials across the world are facing new types of pressures, whether from the bleak job market and sluggish career ladders of the developed world, or from the rapid urbanisation and social transformation of emerging

markets. This places a premium on experiences that help them switch off and relax, even if it's a small treat or affordable luxury.

Secondly, millennials have come of age alongside growing public concern about alarming obesity rates and the rise of healthcare costs. This means that health and wellness, and personal responsibility for these, are much more at the forefront of their awareness. This opens up many opportunities to connect with them through holistic health and wellness propositions.

Finally, many millennials want to be collectors of experiences rather than simply focusing on accumulating possessions. They increasingly define themselves by what they do, rather than what they have. Social networks give them ample opportunity to gain validation and status through sharing these experiences, whether that's a special journey or an exquisite meal.

It has to be said that material status markers still remain important for many millennials, especially in the developing world, but even in these markets we see seeds of a post-materialist mindset on the rise. A generation that increasingly seeks validation through experiences

presents a unique opportunity for operators who are able to make an impression on their imagination.

MILLENNIAL TRIBES

Millennial lifestyles and perspectives are as diverse as those of any generation before them. In order to unpack some of the nuances of this generation, understanding how to engage with their passions and needs, The Futures Company has created a global segmentation based on two unifying millennial characteristics.

The first is the way they use technology in their lives. Technology is essential for the way millennials engage with the world around them. What sets them apart is whether they value its functional aspects or the creative connections digital technology allows. The second dimension is the way they express their identity and the extent to which they prioritise meaning and experiences over material pursuits. Looking at millennials through these two dimensions highlights four distinct tribes:

Striders

These individuals maintain their confidence and enthusiasm and are still

Millennials want to collect experiences rather than be the accumulators of things

Businesses should know which or how many of the four tribes they're targeting



riding the wave of materialism. They have been relatively unscathed by the recent economic downturn and are keen for success and all the material status markers that come along with it. Predictably, this segment is more likely to be found in fast-growing emerging markets such as China and India.

Steppers

This group is cautious and treading carefully. The economic downturn affected them strongly, leaving them price-conscious and less optimistic about their future. They're taking things step-by-step, considering each purchase decision with care and trying to choose wisely. This tribe is much more likely to be found in recessionary markets such as Spain and France, where many young people have seen their opportunities narrow in recent years.

Satellites

Millennials in this tribe are all about number one for the moment. They are technology-mad and always keen to have the latest gadgets and shiniest software. Their world-view is both narrow and performance-focused. Green issues simply don't float their boat – they're

“FOR MILLENNIALS, HEALTH AND WELLNESS, AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE, ARE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THEIR AWARENESS”

flying solo and tend to have few responsibilities. Our segmentation shows that the Satellite tribe is important in the UK and is also well represented in China.

In China, we can explain this by the high pressure on young people to perform and strive for economic prosperity. This also drives a more single-minded pursuit of the technologies that both facilitate and express the achievement of these priorities.

In the UK, the story behind Satellites is different. UK millennials face tough economic times in a previously prosperous economy. With a squeeze on jobs and rising prices just as they're coming of age, 'looking out for myself' becomes important to a greater number of people, as well as their need for getting things done both faster and safer.

Spirits

Spirits are poster children of the millennial generation. They are open,

connected and socially conscious, directing their attention and purchasing power towards the things they're interested in. They move through different spheres comfortably and are more likely to seek out fluid lifestyles that enable them to succeed in life while also exposing them to a variety of experiences and personal passions. This tribe is important in the Americas – in the US and Brazil in particular. It's also significant in Europe, where the recent rise in a tempered economic optimism is likely to help the Spirit mindset come more to the forefront.

CONNECTING WITH THE FOUR TRIBES

The four tribes have different needs and aspirations – a 'one size fits all approach' will not be enough. However, there are opportunities to appeal to all four, and successful millennial brands have the ability to combine marketing modes that resonate with each segment differently. ▶

Spirits are the most connected and socially aware tribe – and more open to wellness offers



► Satellites get excited over technology and performance and will seek out services that deliver against this. In the fitness space, Nike has been very successful with reaching this group through its diverse performance tracking innovations, from Nike+ to the Fuel Band. Operators can engage with this segment if they're able to spark enthusiasm over new and shiny technological solutions.

On the other hand, Striders will be looking for services and experiences that enable them to express their achievements and status. Premium and luxury propositions are most likely to resonate with them, as much as experiences with a show-off factor. Nike has also been successful in connecting with this segment by designing iconic and must-have items, such as some of its Airmax range, and by launching these through savvy social media strategies that pique the curiosity of this exclusivity- and appearance-conscious tribe.

Just because Steppers are financially constrained, it doesn't mean they're out of range. Nike has also been able to connect with this group in the height of the recession, marketing some of its ranges as more durable and giving longer guarantees to reassure value-conscious Stepper shoppers. This tribe is unlikely

METHODOLOGY

The millennials segmentation is based on data from Global MONITOR, The Futures Company's annual global tracking survey, which covers 26,000 respondents in 22 markets. The segmentation was based on 20 countries across the globe, drawing insight from the responses of more than 8,500 millennials (people aged between 16 and 31).

to indulge in luxurious splurges, but they will look for ways to disconnect from daily pressures and anxieties, seeking out much-needed boosts. Small beauty treatments or day passes to spa facilities are some concrete treats they would be willing to give themselves. Operators that show solidarity with this group, by guaranteeing value for money and access to much-appreciated small luxuries, will find a grateful audience among Steppers.

Spirits, the most connected and socially aware tribe, are the most likely among all tribes to give a strong priority to seeking experiences and exploring the world around them. This means that operators have an opportunity to connect with them through novel and meaningful experiences, including

more holistic wellness treatments. They are also the most engaged with social and environmental issues, hence sustainability-driven propositions will also resonate well with them – as also seen with Nike's numerous Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives that build credibility among the Spirits tribe.

MIX AND MATCH

Each tribe has distinct characteristics that require different approaches to marketing and service design. Businesses that are able to mix and match their strengths to appeal to the millennial tribes will be more successful in connecting with the next generation of spa and health club audiences. ●

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Active AGEING

Are older adults best catered for in bespoke, standalone clubs, or can mainstream gyms successfully engage with this audience?
Kate Cracknell reports

Society as a whole is beginning to acknowledge that exercise and physical activity is one of the most important 'medicines' an older adult can take for managing chronic disease, decreasing the rate of cognitive decline and improving functionality. But where should this activity take place – are standalone over-50s facilities the way forward, or can any health club or leisure centre successfully cater for this growing population group? We ask the experts....

© NIFTY AFTER FIFTY



Nifty after Fifty's evaluation identifies frailties

SHELDON S ZINBERG, MD

Chair and president,
Nifty after Fifty, US



While any exercise is better than no exercise at all, we believe that older people need individually customised, clinically supervised and monitored wellness programmes, offered within centres that are specifically designed to provide a safe, senior-friendly ambience. Most older adults won't participate in traditional fitness clubs for a number of reasons: the intimidating atmosphere created by the presence of younger, fitter individuals; the noise levels commonly

present; and the lack of frequent, affordable supervision.

At Nifty after Fifty, each individual receives a thorough evaluation – conducted by graduate kinesiologists and supervised by physical therapists – that identifies overall fitness, specific areas of more advanced 'de-fitness', and frailties associated with specific chronic diseases. These can then be remedially addressed in a bespoke programme.

In an effort to avoid the potential for injury associated with inertia, pneumatic equipment is used for strength training rather than weight stack machines. For aerobic training, we prefer seated stair steppers, ellipticals and cycles that measure the member's peak exercise capacity in metabolic equivalents (METs).

To improve social interaction, make it fun and improve eye-limb co-ordination, group exercise is offered in the form of balance classes, yoga, cane aerobics, Cane-Fu, Zumba, line dancing, Wii bowling contests, Volley Ball-oon and so on. Our evidenced-based techniques and innovative programmes are researched daily and incorporated only after testing at our corporate centre and approval by our advisory committee.

In spite of all this, many still require added inspiration to participate. We've found a healthcare provider's written prescription is most effective, leading to over 80 per cent compliance for the initial visit. Making the programmes safe, effective and fun provides reasonable assurance of continued compliance.

“As a general rule, this market doesn't like to be made to feel 'older'”

JACKIE HANLEY
Senior health & physical activity
development officer, OCL, UK



OCL has a long track record of attracting older people into exercise and, from experience, I believe a standalone offering is unnecessary, offering no significant benefits either for the audience or commercially.

Older adults are our biggest user group, especially during the day, and we run more than 110 classes via our 'Easy Does It' programme, plus a further 50 specialist classes aimed at people with health conditions, who also tend to fall into this age bracket.

In my experience, this audience varies dramatically, both physically and mentally, but older adults are consistently straight-talking, rejecting over-promotion or PR hype and spending time carefully selecting their activities. Our most successful promotions include clear, readable information with exact descriptions,



OCL's 'Easy Does It' programme runs over 100 classes for the older adult market

focusing on the fact that sessions are fun and have health and lifestyle benefits.

As a general rule, this market doesn't like to be made to feel 'older'. Were we to launch a dedicated older adults gym brand, I believe it should be aimed at over-65s. With people living longer and age increasingly becoming just a number, 50 is too young to be termed an 'older adult', with the inference that you need specialist facilities. A bespoke/targeted facility would also need incredibly careful branding and PR, to ensure it didn't alienate the market it's targeting.

AMY TOMKINS
Associate director,
The Futures Company, UK



A study run by The Futures Company in 2012 revealed that nearly 50 per cent of 50- to 60-year-olds agree that their age group is not portrayed accurately in society. This increases to 65 per cent of over-70s, suggesting that it's easy to get it wrong, particularly if gym operators single out this age group as 'different'.

Gym providers therefore need to be careful not to alienate the senior audience: being singled out by a gym as 'older' – whether through targeted classes within a mainstream gym or through a standalone over-50s positioning – could deter rather than encourage.

Brands in other sectors are adopting a more inclusive approach, with retailers such as M&S regularly using older models in their campaigns, positioning them as 'one of the girls' and recognising the similarities between their hopes and dreams and those of a younger audience. Gyms should take note: many of the barriers preventing over-50s from signing up are similar to those facing younger generations. Gyms hoping to target the over-50s should focus on communicating accessibility and inclusivity across age groups, highlighting that we all have similar fears when it comes to signing on the dotted line.

DENNIS KEISER
Founder, Keiser Institute
on Aging, US



While mainstream gym brands could be the answer for the older market, they generally have too much going against them to be successful in this market. They already have a reputation for appealing to the younger crowd. Everything they know about the gym business and how to be successful centres around the younger market.

Older adults are a totally different breed. Staff must be more educated, which means they demand more money, which affects profitability. I seriously doubt we'll see a normal health/leisure gym brand lead the way to the older adult market. My bet would be on the newcomers, unfamiliar with the gym business, building a model around older adults without the prejudice of success with younger adults.

This could start with just one centre: based on how long it takes to make it profitable and establish the brand – and of course their desire and ability to expand – they can become the mainstream name. This is how Nifty after Fifty started in the US. But it has to be profitable, and therein lies the challenge: it costs a lot more money in staffing to cater to the needs of the older adult.

Other challenges in dealing with the over-50s include the diversity of functional ability. This varies little between the age of 20 and 50 years compared to ages 50 to 80, to say nothing about 80 to 100. We shouldn't be talking in terms of age but rather functional ability. The normal health club/leisure centre environment should be able to cater for the more functional 50- to 70-year-old. The less functional will require a facility dedicated to their needs, which understands medications, chronic diseases and pain, depression and other things that come with age.



SHAWMS FITNESSBOOK COMPANY/GETTY IMAGES

Pensioners may just as easily be fit and sporty as frail or infirm

STEVE COLLINS

Freedom Leisure fitness manager, Crowborough Leisure Centre, UK



The vital thing to remember is that over-50s don't constitute one market: a pensioner could be a triathlete or frail and infirm. If you're going to specifically target this group, you'll have to hone in on a specific tribe within it.

For example, there's definitely a market for a centre dedicated to programmes such as exercise for stroke, falls prevention and so on. However, it may not be financially viable in the UK, as people aren't used to paying for healthcare once something's medicalised, and private health insurance companies tend to only pay for physiotherapy. Away from the more affluent locations, it would take a change in medical and healthcare culture in this country for such a centre to work.

I believe it's more feasible to cater for this market within existing centres, where a broader range of services



Gyms could have over-50s instructors as role models

meets the varying needs of the diverse over-50s population. If chair-based exercise is what they need, it's there, but if they want to do Body Combat, play badminton or do HIIT in the gym, that's available too.

We offer a range of over-50s sessions and comprehensive exercise

referral schemes. We also have studio instructors aged over 50 as role models. But mainly it's about not patronising people and assuming that, because of their age, they're only going to like certain things and not be fit. Listen to the customer in front of you and find out what they actually want and enjoy. ▶



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COLIN MILNER
CEO, International Council
on Active Aging (ICAA)



Evidence suggests some older adults prefer to work out with people like themselves. However, this market is very diverse and there are many who enjoy working out with younger people too, as long as there's respect and the facility can meet their needs. The need is, therefore, not for 50-plus clubs alone, but for a sector-wide focus on this growing population group, from suitable equipment and staffing, to design of centres and policy. The goal is to create a centre that can meet the diverse needs of the

older population, and the diversity of older adults themselves – their life experiences, income, capabilities, culture. The nine principles of active ageing (see <http://lei.sr?a=K8a0c>) provide an excellent framework for organisations to follow, no matter what type of facility they run.

The key is to focus on helping people maintain their functional abilities, both physical and cognitive. The European

alongside the typical running club, or highlighting classes that are suitable for all age groups, for example.

We've started holding regular Wellbeing Workout group exercise classes for over-55s, with the emphasis on low impact exercise. We also have a premium membership that includes physiotherapy, nutrition, physiology and PT, all guided by a qualified Health Mentor. This option is popular with the older demographic, who tend to have more of an interest in components outside of exercise to keep them feeling well and healthy. We're also going to be piloting schemes in the community, providing support and exercise prescription for those who are less mobile and less likely to join a gym.

We believe we all need to be doing our bit to get this segment of the population more active.



Group activities are important for a population where social isolation can be an issue

“Whether you run 50-plus clubs or a mainstream fitness centre, no operator can afford to neglect the older adult market: by 2017, the 50-plus group will account for 70 per cent of all discretionary income in the US”

Commission's active ageing index provides indicators on which to focus, but essentially it comes back to the basics: strength, cardio, balance, flexibility and cognitive maintenance.

Whether you run 50-plus clubs or a mainstream fitness centre, no operator can afford to neglect the older adult market: by 2017, the 50-plus group will account for 70 per cent of all discretionary income in the US.

NATALIE CORNISH
Fitness & wellbeing director,
Nuffield Health, UK



Joining a gym at any age can be intimidating, but for older members in particular we need to break down barriers in terms of the look and feel of our clubs and the services we provide. However, I don't think there's a need for a boutique older demographic club when, with a few adjustments, we can create nearly everything that's required within our existing model.

Nurturing a sense of community in your club is absolutely key, as the social aspect is very important for this group, tackling potential social isolation. Expanding your group exercise timetable is also an easy win, adding a walking club

JOHN RATEY
Clinical associate
professor of psychiatry,
Harvard Medical School, US



In the US, people aren't afraid of physical ailments any more – they think it can all be solved with drugs. However, they are afraid of losing their minds, so the mental health message is something health clubs can latch onto if they want to attract an older audience: exercise can delay the onset of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's by 10–15 years.

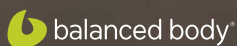
But once you've attracted this market, what's the best way of catering for them? When you hit 50, specialist fitness offerings start to emerge, but 50 isn't old nowadays: there are plenty of over-50s in the mainstream gyms I use and they're regular participants in group cycling and so on. I can only see that increasing as generations who are more familiar with the gym environment get older and continue with their existing exercise routines.

However, over-50s programmes can be a good idea for those who aren't used to the gym, giving them the confidence to get started. Group activities are particularly important, providing a sense of community for a population group where social isolation can be an issue. I believe mainstream gyms can do this perfectly well though – I don't think standalone facilities are really necessary. In fact, for many over-50s who still feel young at heart, a separate 'older person's' gym might be off-putting. ●

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Pure Gym has agreed a merger with The Gym Group

Strength in data

The UK's leading low-cost operator Pure Gym is rolling out the centralised chain management system from Exerp to facilitate its ambitious plans for expansion

Pure Gym is the UK's leading affordable gym chain. Formed in 2009, the operator is a major force in the rapidly growing low-cost segment of the £4bn UK gym market with some 61 clubs. The company currently serves more than 350,000 members offering gym memberships from £10.99 a month with no fixed contract. All memberships are processed online to keep fees as low as possible. Members have access to a wide range of free exercise classes in some of the UK's largest gyms 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Ranked 23rd in the *Sunday Times* Fast Track 100 in 2013, a league table of the UK's most successful private companies, Pure Gym was acquired by US private equity firm CCMP Capital

Advisors last May. The company has just agreed a merger with 42 club chain The Gym Group, which is pending regulatory approval. Detailed plans for the merged business have still to be announced, however further expansion will inevitably be high on the agenda.

A new IT system was crucial for the company's growth plans, says Andrew Forsyth, IT manager at Pure Gym: "Our previous system had been developed bespoke for us and had served us very well. But it was designed to support just six or seven sites, and although it had grown as the chain expanded, we needed to move to the next level to get a better understanding of our members."

Pure Gym chose the centralised chain management system from international software provider Exerp.

EXERP FACTS

- Exerp serves some of Europe's largest fitness operators with +100 sites.
- Versatile, scalable and well proven
- Over 1.5 million active members in one live system powered by an Oracle back-end
- Comprehensive API allowing easy integration of third-party systems
- A 100 per cent successful track record

The Copenhagen-based company provides software solutions exclusively for some of Europe's largest health club operators including SATS and Holmes Place Europe. This was a key attraction for Pure Gym, says its chief financial officer Adam Bellamy.

"We have large volumes of members using our fitness facilities. The Exerp system is designed specifically for the fitness industry unlike some of the other more generic products available."

Robust reporting

"Pure Gym has got off to a racing start, but as we develop it's vital that we understand exactly who our customers are, what they want and how we can meet their needs," says Bellamy. This poses more of a challenge for a low-cost



With its plans for expansion, Pure Gym wanted a software solution that was designed for the fitness industry and could cope with a high volume business. It chose to work with Exerp



operator like Pure Gym. The business is heavily reliant on IT; members join online or via a kiosk in a club and contact a call centre for any payment and club enquiries. This means it has less opportunity than a full service club to engage with members face to face.

Robust reporting was therefore a fundamental requirement of the new system. With Exerp, Pure Gym can feed more information into its database, which in turn provides greater visibility of members and their usage patterns.

"We now have a much clearer view of members from how often people use our clubs and how far they travel to get there to which classes they've booked. It allows us to identify trends and better target our members," says Forsyth.

The new system also gives general and regional managers greater insight into each club's performance allowing them to measure how well the clubs are doing against KPIs and sales targets on a daily basis. The system also needed to satisfy the reporting requirements of its new owner CCMP, says Bellamy. "Data is really important to private equity firms. They buy businesses with great growth prospects, but in order to understand how these businesses can grow further, they need access to good data."

Before implementing the Exerp solution, Pure Gym held data in three

systems. Now merged into one solution, the company has a single, holistic view of its customers, says Bellamy: "We don't burden our members with contracts so we can't sit back having locked them in for a 12 month period. We have to be alert to the way our members use our clubs. Having all the data about our members from their payment history to their usage habits in one place is a massive advantage for us."

Exerp's comprehensive API was another attraction. Based on the standard web service SOAP, it allows external systems to read and update almost all member related data.

"As a fully online business, it was crucial that the new system could easily integrate with third party systems from the joining process and class bookings to member services. Essentially, everything members see on our website feeds back to the Exerp system," says Forsyth.

The new system has also allowed the company to take its billing services/ direct debit collection in-house and now members can pay any debt online.

Pure Gym is the first Exerp client to do daily direct debit collections. "Exerp were able to incorporate this functionality for us, which shows just how flexible the system is," says Forsyth.

However, this placed tight deadlines on the implementation process, which

launched at a pilot site in November and rolled out across the entire group in January. A smooth and speedy implementation was crucial, says Bellamy: "We are highly dependent on IT in a number of key areas, it is truly business critical for us. We couldn't afford for the system to be down for even one day and thankfully Exerp were able to accommodate our needs."

Robust, flexible and proven, thanks to several successful past conversion experiences, Exerp was able to safely migrate 300,000 members in a period of just four hours.

With the support of the new system, Pure Gym can concentrate on its rapid expansion and serving its members, says Bellamy: "The fitness industry has high attrition rates and these can be higher in the low-cost sector where there are no contracts. We need to satisfy our customers every time they visit us, because they can choose to just walk away if we're not meeting their needs. Our new IT system will help us to reduce attrition, which is positive for both us and our customers."

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TAKE YOUR LEAVE

In the final part of his retention series,
Dr Paul Bedford takes a look at why members leave

We've known for some time that the reasons people give for leaving a gym don't necessarily reflect the actual factors that drove them to leave. Equally, the reasons people quit clubs are generally different from the factors that motivated them to join in the first place, or to stay as a member.

In our recent qualitative research (*The Black Report*), we asked members what reasons they gave their club for quitting, but also asked them if these were the real reasons they quit their previous clubs. The figures alone would suggest not: for example, the number of people who claimed to be moving house is much higher than the national average, which is actually about 5 per cent of the population annually.

Blaming finances was also a popular reason to give, but not as commonly the real reason for leaving. Of course not all those who claim financial circumstances as their reason for leaving a club are lying: the global economic change has influenced and encouraged members

across the board to review the value they feel they're getting from their club.

However, some individuals have certainly used the struggling economy to their advantage. Respondents in our research explained that clubs put up little resistance to early cancellation of memberships when the media was full of stories of companies closing down and unemployment going up.

"Club staff find it difficult or uncomfortable to discuss the situation when you say you've lost your job. You can use that to your advantage," said one. "All you need to do is time it with a big news story. You don't even need to be working for that company – you just need to get your timing right."

Tables 1 and 2 (below) highlight the many discrepancies between given and actual reasons for leaving.

A need for change

When investigating why members actually leave it becomes apparent that, for seasoned exercisers, it's far more likely that the major factors influencing their decision will be either the way the club operates or a loss of personal motivation.

To stimulate members over the long term, some degree of change needs to be experienced by the member. These changes fall into two major categories: achieving results is the most important, followed by updates and changes to the physical environment.

Members stay when they get results. Simple. They join to achieve physical and psychological changes:

the obvious change in shape of their body or its ability to perform at a certain level, and the feelings that accompany these changes – which include more confidence and happiness and lower levels of stress. When these changes are experienced, they stay, as the results are associated with the club.

However, members have many undisclosed expectations about what it will be like when they join a club. They're full of enthusiasm to begin with and believe that joining a club will lead to a changed life. The gap between what they expect and what's delivered is often where the major issues lie. When members fail to achieve the changes they expected, they look elsewhere.

So why is there such a gap between expectations and what's delivered?

First of all, expectations in the early stages of membership regarding frequency of exercise are often much higher than can actually be maintained. Among experienced exercisers, we see a much more realistic approach to visit frequency. These members have already adjusted to the idea that, due to lifestyle commitments, they won't be able to exercise as often as they would like. Alternatively, they will already have adjusted their lifestyles to fit exercise in on specific times and days.

The challenge for operators is to understand how those members who are unable to attend more frequently are still able to achieve their goals or recognise the change process that's occurring before they begin to question the value of membership. Some health and fitness clubs seem to rely on encouraging people to purchase personal training to drive through quicker change, but this will not work with a large proportion of members.

As one respondent explained: "You work out for a while and you begin to

Table 1: Top five reasons given for leaving

Reason given	Percentage of respondents
Moved house/job	32%
Change in financial circumstances	16%
Poor service levels	12%
Generally unclear	8%
Pregnant or illness	7%

Table 2: Actual reasons for leaving

Actual reason	Percentage of respondents
Club didn't meet my expectations	17%
Loss of motivation	15%
Bored with the environment/classes	11%
Lack of support from staff	10%
Didn't meet my needs	7%



Members who feel part of something, rather than just having access to the facilities, are far less likely to leave a club

see changes, but then these changes slow down. You become frustrated, but when you ask for help they try and sell you personal training. You begin to wonder if the programme you started out with has any long-term effect. I asked the question of one of the instructors: 'Do you know how to help people change without them having personal training?'

A change of scenery

As previously stated, updates to the physical environment are also important in keeping members motivated. However, operators have been challenged by the economic downturn and rising costs of running facilities, with years of under-investment leading to tired-looking clubs and managers fire-fighting to keep operations running.

Members are therefore beginning to question where their money goes, and why prices continue to rise despite an obvious lack of investment in facilities.

"They haven't changed anything in here for years; it's the same all the time," said one. "They tell you they're investing a fortune in the clubs and then they just paint everything red. In practice, I'm training on the same stuff we've had for years and I'm bored."

The social aspect of being a member is very important. Not all members will want to use their club just as a utility

As well as refreshing the exercise environment, operators need to consider that their most valuable members will also need the exercise experience to be refreshed. As one respondent explained: "If you went to the same restaurant every week for three years, in the end you'd get bored with the menu. The staff may be providing a quality of service, but you just fancy something different."

We may be looking at a situation where three to four years may generally be the limit to which clubs can retain members. Approaches that may combat this include refreshing visuals on walls, organising equipment in ways that grow a member's experience over time, and replacing activities that are less popular.

That said, the social aspect of being a member is very important. Not all members will want to use their club just as a utility – a place where they

train and leave. Some seek a greater experience, wanting to feel part of something. They expect to meet people with common interests and develop friendships with staff and other members (see HCM Feb, p62).

Where this is available through various member-to-staff and member-to-member activities, a sense of belonging develops and members feel they're part of a club rather than just having access to facilities – and are less likely to leave as a result.

They just don't care

But when members do decide to leave, it's generally handled badly. Members interviewed believe operators just don't care whether they stay or leave – a finding that backs up the recent research conducted for *Health Club Management* by Leisure-net Solutions (see HCM Jan 14, p62).



Plenty of members expect to meet people with common interests and make friends with staff and other club members

- Experienced exercisers repeatedly described terminating their memberships with no questions asked – not even an exit interview or any attempt to save them.

"Someone called me once when I quit to ask why I'd cancelled my direct debit. When I told her I'd had enough, she just said 'oh'. She tried to explain the cancellation policy but made no attempt to understand why I was leaving or to stop me. They made me feel even less valued than before," commented one survey respondent.

Indeed, experienced members often believe clubs have no interest in them beyond the income they provide. They feel clubs operate in a manner that's solely based on financial transactions, with no attention paid to whether the member is enjoying the club experience or achieving the results they desire.

Frequency of use

Finally, although it's already been seen that lack of usage leads to membership cancellation, clubs need to bear in mind that, among experienced exercisers, irregular usage of the club due to work and life commitments may not necessarily lead to cancellation.

Members do not always adhere to the behaviour of exercising at the same

Experienced exercisers repeatedly describe terminating their memberships with no questions asked – or any attempt to save them

time on a certain number of days a week. Those who have been members of multiple clubs, or of the same club for a long period, do not always achieve the recommended frequency of exercise – but they do continue to exercise, and consider themselves exercisers even when there's an extended break in regular training.

"I've been a member of five clubs and I work out around work and family commitments," explained one respondent. "I mostly do the same type of workouts each time, and when I train regularly, I notice that my fitness changes. But when I'm busy at work or when there's a lot on at home, I train less. I've been training for more than 12 years and I don't think I've strung together more than six weeks of consistent sessions."

This calls into question the idea that experienced members will use their clubs every week. Being able to predict member behaviour through analytics

based on more than just visit frequency will begin to unlock the next wave of strategies that will help to improve member retention.

Until then, we must rely on developing member experiences that are consistently delivered by quality health club staff, providing support and guidance in environments that are refreshed more frequently to reinvigorate the senses, and with exercise programmes and classes that are designed get members the results they're looking for. ●

Paul Bedford PhD has worked in the fitness industry for more than 20 years. His business, Retention Guru, helps health club operators increase retention, reduce attrition and improve member loyalty.

Email paul-retentionguru.co.uk

Twitter @guru_paul

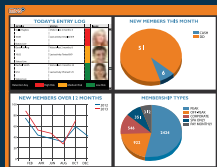
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STRATEGIC THINKING



In the first part of our new management series, produced in collaboration with CIMSPA, Dr Michael Cassop-Thompson looks at the strategic management of health clubs

Duncan Bannatyne recently claimed that cutting prices in three of his health clubs had damaged the brand, stating that the “wrong sort of customers”, displaying poor behaviour, had taken advantage of the reduced rate. It was therefore with interest that I read the subsequent feature in *Health Club Management*, which canvassed experts for their views on Bannatyne’s comments (see HCM Jan 14, p36).

One point in particular caught my eye: Dr Paul Bedford explained how one of his clients dropped his price “to compete with budget gyms... it destroyed the business”. This example is illuminating: seemingly minor decisions have far-reaching effects. In the same

feature, ukactive CEO David Stalker made the point that “altering price is a strategic decision” and that moving to a low-cost operation is a “more complex science than pricing”. I would agree.

Indeed, in his low-cost sector report of 2012, Ray Algar reminds us that a budget gym is about more than just a low price, with tech-driven, self-service, 24-hour opening, a narrow proposition in terms of range of services, minimal staffing – and a low price.

On reflection, what strikes me is that – rather than this being a problem of discounting (which in itself can devalue a brand if not carefully applied) some health and fitness clubs have fundamentally changed their strategy without fully realising the implications.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, to provide a perspective as to how strategy may be addressed – specifically, traditional, deliberate, competitive strategy.

What is strategy?

Strategy is a concept that has multiple meanings and levels. What is strategy? Can strategy be planned? Does strategy emerge? Or do markets simply decide which organisations, irrespective of organisational strategy, are successful? All these are questions of merit, and the approach you adopt will be informed by the way you answer them. Generally though, strategy tends to be viewed as “the long-term direction of an organisation” (Johnson et al, *Fundamentals of Strategy*, 2012).

Deliberate strategy – as covered in this article – is concerned with how an organisation achieves a competitive advantage over its rivals by using a



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Competitive advantage isn't just about price, as at low-cost gyms, but offering benefits that aren't easily replicated (Boom Cycle, left)

Strategic Analysis Tools

Key tools used in a strategic analysis might include:

- External analysis tools: PESTLE analysis and scenario planning
- Competitive analysis tools: Five Forces analysis, strategic groupings, industry lifecycles and market segment analysis.
- Internal analysis tools: value chain, capability analysis, benchmarking and SWOT analysis.

number of strategic management processes: strategic analysis, strategic formulation and strategic implementation. This final element includes monitoring and control.

Although portrayed as a science by many, the number of components and decisions inherent as the strategic processes unfold – and as the various processes overlap – suggests that to view strategy making in this light may be unwise. Basically 'you pays your money and you takes your choice'.

However, implemented effectively, these strategic processes can be used by companies to identify competitive advantage in the shape of a differentiated blend of unique activities that prospects and customers of their specific business will value: the unique experiential features found at some high-end health clubs, for example, or the combination of low price, convenience and functionality found at low-cost clubs.

Strategic analysis

Strategic analysis is concerned with understanding the organisation's position within its environment. This includes an analysis of the organisation's external environment, its competitive environment, its market segments and an assessment of the organisation's internal environment – including understanding its strategic capabilities, which may help or hinder strategy.

Overall then, a strategic analysis is concerned with knowing your external business context, your competitors and how you fare against them, your potential and actual customers and your internal strengths, weakness and capabilities. This knowledge allows organisations to use their strengths to exploit opportunities while minimising their weaknesses and threats.

The value of this deliberate approach can be viewed within the health club sector itself. UK health club operators

struggling to combat the emergence of low-cost competition from the likes of Pure Gym and The Gym Group would have seen weak signals from the external environment as far back as 2006, and in the years since then. These signals could have been detected during a strategic analysis and strategies formulated to mitigate their impact.

Currently, other signals from the external environment suggest that future provision of physical activity may involve, as Algar calls it in his 2014 market report, 'salami slices'. For example, group indoor cycling classes – traditionally provided by health clubs – are now being appropriated by specialist microgym providers such as Boom Cycle and Psyche, particularly in markets like London.

Strategic analysis aids the formulation of strategy by alerting health clubs to these signals, rather than being blindsided by them.

Furthermore, a bridge can be created between the strategic analysis stage and strategy formulation by incorporating an additional piece of analysis: analysis of organisational purpose. This includes considering organisational stakeholders and understanding organisational culture. Also critical is having a clear sense of why the health club exists (its mission), knowing its desired future state (its vision) and having objectives that need to be achieved for health club success.

In light of the totality of this strategic analysis, future strategic objectives may be set. From there, strategies can be formulated to try to achieve objectives.

Strategic formulation

Competitive strategy concerns setting the health club apart from its competitors. Although competitive advantage can be short-lived, as other



Cost leadership and differentiation are two strategies to help gain a market advantage

► clubs attempt to imitate and erode the advantage, correctly formulated strategy may prevent this. Certainly, the attempt to mimic low-cost provision resulted in failure for Dr Bedford's client, while Bannatyne was less than happy with the results of his attempt.

Competitive advantage that supports customers' true value seeking (which might just as easily be a high-end, experiential, service-driven offering as a low price tag), that's built on rare strategic capabilities, that's difficult for competitors to replicate and that has no obvious substitutes is desirable.

Many strategies can be used to try to achieve competitive advantage. However, Michael Porter's 1985 suggestions endure. In *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, he suggests organisations should select from cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies.

Firstly, cost leadership concerns the health club minimising its own costs through efficiencies in equipment, staffing and processes. This allows a lower price to be charged to customers while still offering an acceptable quality – a strategy that local authority leisure centres might have adopted prior to the arrival of the low-cost health club.

Secondly, differentiation strategy concerns – as the name suggests – making your health club different from other health clubs. Differentiation could be created in the elements of your offering most valued by customers: unique services, excellent quality, different customer experiences, continuous new innovations – or indeed many other dimensions in which differentiation may be achieved.

Finally, focus strategies concern using either cost leadership or differentiation, but targeting the health club's efforts

towards meeting the needs of a very focused market segment. For example, specialist cycling microgym Psycle will, according to founder and CEO Colin Waggett, "feel nothing like a gym or your typical indoor cycling class". As Algar observes in his 2014 report: "What consumers really like about these concepts is that they are highly focused."

Strategic implementation

Once strategy is formulated, the organisation needs to be appropriately configured and resourced to implement the strategy. The old cliché that strategy failed because the implementation was poor does hold water. Four key areas are of relevance: organisational structure, organisational systems, being able to lead organisational change, and monitoring and controlling strategy.

Organisational structure concerns having the correct workforce configuration to ensure facilitation of effective and efficient communication, establishing clear roles, responsibilities and knowledge dissemination. The structure adopted needs to be flexible enough to deliver the strategy.

Organisational systems guide various activities within the entity, to support the structure adopted. For example, planning systems (ie resource utilisation), cultural systems (ie behavioural requirements), performance and control systems (ie measurement of outputs), and market systems (ie procurement) are all fundamental to successful strategy implementation.

Strategy also involves change, and an organisation's leadership needs to be able to diagnose the type of change required, be familiar with the environment within which the change takes place, understand the levers to help stimulate change, and be capable

of leading strategic change programmes. No mean feat, but these are key areas worthy of serious consideration.

Finally, to ensure strategy is progressing suitably, monitoring and control needs to be ongoing. Monitoring is concerned with tracking key elements of the strategy, while control is taking action to correct variances as they arise.

In their 2006 article, *Using the balanced scorecard as a strategic management system*, Kaplan and Norton suggest that putting metrics in place to monitor a wide range of measures – financial, customer, learning and growth and internal processes – can facilitate both monitoring and control. Each area is broken down into KPIs, with the aim being to close any fractures that may arise between strategy and action.

This approach allows club managers to monitor and control progress holistically, rather than focusing on narrow financial measures alone.

Seek further knowledge

Strategy and how it's approached is a much-debated topic, and this article has proposed a single perspective. To address organisational requirements, I'd encourage multiple perspectives to help gain a richer understanding of strategy. In the health club sector, application of deliberate strategy processes as detailed in this article may be one such perspective – but certainly not the only perspective worthy of consideration. ●

Dr Michael Cassop-Thompson is a CIMSPA Fellow. He has worked in the education, leisure, sport and physical activity industry for more than 25 years.

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Push or pull?

THE FUNCTIONAL TREND

Functional training is the buzzword among operators, but what do the end users think? HCM teams up with GYMetrix to get the real story, and see how clubs can get the most out of their zones. Kath Hudson reports



With colourful mats and equipment, music and lights, functional training areas can provide a striking addition to a gym. They provide an effective workout in half an hour, in a more varied way than the same time spent on a bike or treadmill. But according to the findings of GYMetrix, not many gym-goers know this.

GYMetrix measures usage of gym equipment by detecting movement using load sensors and accelerometers. These findings are backed up by interviews on the gym floor.

"I thought there was something wrong with the sensors when I saw the initial data, because the readings were so low," says Rory McGown, founder of GYMetrix. "The media portrays functional training as a growing trend that must be tapped into, like an oil well that will explode, but we're seeing

the opposite. When gyms first install a functional zone, the demand is zero. It's a push trend, not a pull trend, and it won't grow without staff intervention."

McGown has even seen some clubs lose members as a result of taking out popular equipment to install functional training areas. "The problem is people don't know what functional training is," says McGown. "Members are creatures of habit: they need to be given a reason to get out of their comfort zone."

He continues: "Usage 20 per cent of the time – or 65 hours a week – is considered a success story for an entire functional rig, but one piece of busy resistance equipment can routinely get this much use." Twenty per cent is also some way off the GYMetrix benchmark of 40–60 per cent usage – a point at which investment is generally paying off but members aren't frustrated about not being able to get onto equipment.

Does this mean that clubs should stop investing in functional training? Not at all. However, there are some essential points to bear in mind. Functional training has to be actively sold to gym-goers. Instructors need to be able to impart this enthusiasm to the customer through inductions, programmes, demos and workshops. Because while inductions are quick on most CV and resistance equipment, functional training equipment can be used in many different ways and this takes time to learn. It's less intuitive than fixed equipment and people are scared of looking stupid while they try to work it out. So while functional training areas can be a centrepiece, a discreet corner may actually be the best position for it.

We speak to a selection of health club operators who've used GYMetrix's findings to learn some lessons and implement changes.

Ainslie Park Leisure Centre – Edinburgh Leisure

"The results showed that the functional training equipment was vacant 98 per cent of the time," says David McLean, fitness manager, Edinburgh Leisure. "This might suggest that we should get rid of it, but I don't see it like that." The results were used to inform

changes. Firstly, Edinburgh Leisure invested in staff training on the functional equipment, to encourage them to incorporate it into programmes and inductions. Then a 4.5m x 7m designated space was created, as previously members had to take the

equipment and find somewhere on the gym floor to use it.

Classes were introduced, but rather than being named after the equipment – TRX or kettlebells classes, for example – they have been given names like 'Fat Blast' to engage people.

Six months later, usage up to 18 per cent, heading in the right direction for McLean's target of 40–60 per cent. "There's a big future for functional training, but operators must support staff, giving them the training and space to deliver what we expect," he says.

Sportspace, Hemel Hempstead - Dacorum Sports Trust

Out of 170 gyms surveyed, this is the only site where McGown has advised buying more functional equipment, as the site is hitting 60 per cent usage on suspension training straps and 46 per cent use on the punchbags.

Dave Cove, CEO at Dacorum Sports Trust, says staff and layout is the secret to success. "We put the

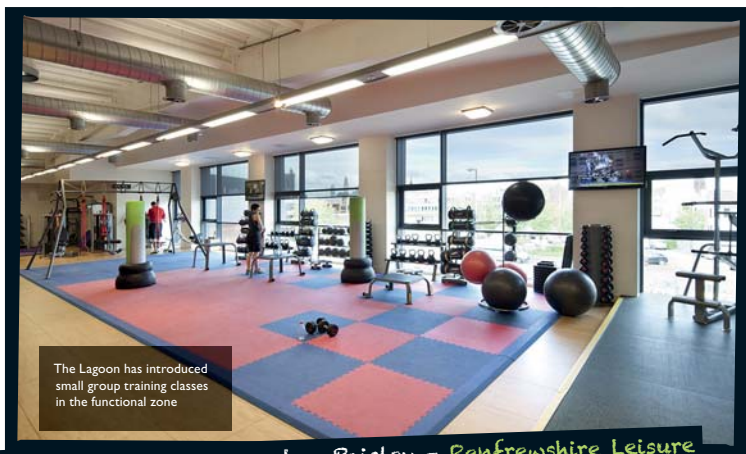
functional training area at the back of the gym rather than making it a centrepiece, as that can be intimidating if you don't know what you're doing," he says. "But it's the enthusiasm of the staff that's selling it. The training Matrix delivered on the Absolute Performance kit was excellent, so our staff all buy into it and use it."

Around 10 programmed sessions are run each week – called HIIT sessions, or toning sessions, rather than functional training sessions. PT is also at an all-time high.

Cove concludes: "It's easy to get bored on a treadmill, but with functional training there's so much to do – it offers a varied workout. However,

I absolutely agree with Rory that it's a push trend. The industry got excited, but the customers didn't know what it was.

To make functional training work, you do have to work hard and get instructors enthused. Also get the key members on board, so that they become advocates on your behalf."



The Lagoon Leisure centre, Paisley - Renfrewshire Leisure

"The GYMATRIX study confirmed our thinking that the functional training area at The Lagoon isn't as popular as we would like," says Mark Tokeley, leisure operations and development manager for Renfrewshire Leisure. "Members said they weren't comfortable with the equipment, didn't know what they should be doing and wanted some guidance and structure."

Interestingly, the functional zone had enjoyed higher usage when it was first installed: when GYMATRIX measured it in August 2012, equipment was used for 84 hours a week, but this had fallen to 51 hours a week in August 2013. So what happened in those 12 months?

"Several functional, CrossFit and conditioning gyms opened in the vicinity of The Lagoon in that time, which may

Members said they weren't comfortable with the equipment, didn't know what they should be doing and wanted some guidance and structure

have attracted some of our members who previously used our zone. We also opened our own £25m new-build site – OnX Linwood – six miles away in March 2013, including a functional zone. There was a huge migration of members, which has now tailed off, but the profile of The Lagoon is now a little older, and perhaps less confident in this style of training."

Nevertheless, small group exercise sessions have been introduced in the

functional zone at The Lagoon to meet members' expressed need for guidance and structure. These sessions have proved popular, with weekly hours' usage rising once more.

"The success of these classes has highlighted how functional training zones need to be dynamic and instructor-led to meet members' desire to learn how to use the kit correctly and which kit to use to reach their goals," says Tokeley. ►

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING

St Peter's Leisure Centre - Burnley Leisure

Burnley Leisure invested heavily in functional training in 2013, with a 8.2m x 8.2m functional training area, complete with vibrant music and lights, installed at St Peter's Leisure Centre. The 12 programmed sessions each week – which can accommodate 35 people – have proved popular, and last November the centre won Functional Gym of the Year at the UK National Fitness Awards.

According to Neil Hutchinson, leisure facilities general manager at Burnley Leisure, the subsequent GYMetrix study confirmed what they had thought: that the investment has paid off, but that – for some of the more advanced equipment – extra education and demos are still needed to drive independent usage outside of classes.

"Functional training is certainly working well for us, with the classes being a huge success. We're now working hard to educate and demonstrate the benefits of functional training to further drive up usage outside



The zone at Burnley Leisure Centre includes vibrant lights and music

of the programmed sessions," says Hutchinson. This includes incorporating more functional exercises in inductions, ad hoc instructor demonstrations when they have five or 10 minutes free, and filmed demonstrations running on TVs in-club and on social media sites. Educational courses for members on TRX use may also be launched.

Additional sessions are also being introduced to bring in new markets to functional training. Rehab sessions, for example – devised by Burnley Leisure's in-house physios – are now being run as part of a GP referral programme, and there are also plans to introduce sports-specific programmes such as skiing, rugby and cycling training.

Westminster Lodge - Everyone Active

The GYMetrix study at Everyone Active's Westminster Lodge showed the functional training area is well used during peak hours, when usage almost hits 40 per cent on some of

the equipment. "We offer initial training, have small group introductions on the timetable each week, and have workout cards in the gym and online," says Michelle Bletso, fitness

development manager at Everyone Active.

Bletso believes that functional training areas are sound investments for clubs providing they have the staff to show members

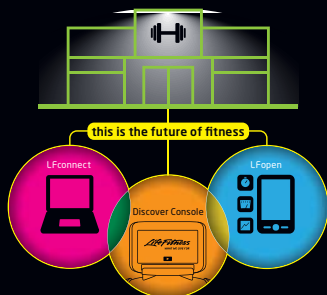
how to use them. She says: "They provide a fun way for members to train and are great for PT, but there's no point sticking them into the gym without offering training or resources."

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Free taster sessions are a good way to spark interest

GRANT POWLES

Technogym UK:
Senior master trainer

To run functional training successfully, clubs need to educate staff who must then educate and engage end-users. Dedicate time and resources to training staff for at least a day on any new functional training solution. It's surprising how often this is overlooked.

Training allows your team to fully understand the equipment's potential, to explore the tools, create programmes together, think about how to adapt them to different member groups, and explore how to sell functional training in to members.

Nominate a team member to champion a programme or group of programmes. This gives them an opportunity to lead sessions, train other trainers, lead outreach efforts to prospective clients and become the go-to expert within the facility.

Drive member engagement through interaction with trainers, talking them through the benefits of functional training and showing them how it will help them reach their goals. Functional training is understood best by being experienced personally, so free taster sessions or short classes are great ways to demonstrate its benefits and get members engaged.

Explore as many formats as possible, from one-to-one training to small or large groups, boot camp and more. In the first few weeks of your launch, explore all these options to encourage participation. Harness the power of creativity and collaboration by building a sharing environment with staff trying new ideas, programmes and engagement techniques. For example, the group-ex team could use the functional area as an add-on to their classes.

Advice from the suppliers

And this is what the suppliers say about driving usage...



You need to really sell the benefits to get people to change their routine

MARK LAWS

Jordan Fitness:
Training academy manager

The main barrier for functional training is simply getting people to change their way of thinking and their habits. However, with a skilled and well-educated trainer, it's possible to change even the most stubborn of clients, which in turn will change their results for the better.

But if you're going to change someone's 25-year routine of walking on a treadmill for 30 minutes followed by 500 crunches, you need to explain how it will benefit them. This only comes through education, so it's crucial for staff to attend as many workshops, seminars and certifications as possible.

In order to make functional fitness successful, you need to make it as easy as possible for people to take part, make it fun and get their attention. While you have their attention, use your skills to explain why and how it will work.

SUE WILKIE

Physical Company:
Education co-ordinator

Functional training is versatile, but it doesn't offer a 'one size fits all' approach. There's a vast range of equipment, and some of it works well for some people

but not at all for others. It's therefore important for clubs to offer an individual programme for each member based on an assessment of their needs and their goals. To do this effectively, staff education is key, ensuring the right tools are used and the right programme put together for each individual. Meanwhile, offering a beginners' class is a good way to introduce a select amount of kit and give individuals a foundation knowledge. ●



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David Lloyd Leisure

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CHALLENGE THE EXPECTED...

DELIVER THE UNEXPECTED

Matrix Fitness credits much of its success to the people behind the brand. Newly promoted National Sales Manager, Andy Loughray, discusses the merits of this customer-centric company



Andy Loughray, newly promoted National Sales Manager for Matrix

Growing up in an impoverished post-war Taiwan, Johnson Health Tech (JHT) founder, Peter Lo, knew that following his dreams would require hard work, ambition, and a true entrepreneurial spirit. Almost 40 years later – in a company that's developed from barbell manufacturing to one of the industry's leading equipment manufacturers in the world today – the relevance of these qualities endures. The latest talent acquired by the UK's commercial arm of the business – Matrix Fitness – is no exception.

The Matrix Fitness team appears to have had a bit of a shuffle. Is 'new blood' the way forward?

There has been some structural change; we're well aware of the fact that our people are a key part of our competitive

advantage, and so we have been fine-tuning the team, bringing in people where necessary. But while the 'blood' may be new, it's a prerequisite that anyone coming into the business must have proved themselves elsewhere, bringing with them a raft of previous experience to add to the mix.

Change happens within, too. We like to grow our own talent, encouraging staff to develop and take on new challenges within the business; it's good for us and motivating for them. We'd much prefer to feed someone's ambition than have them take it elsewhere.

Recent examples include Adam Rogers' progression from Area Sales Manager to Head of Sales South, Jo Rich's rise from Key Account Manager to Director of Commercial Key Accounts, and my own transition from Senior Sales to National Sales Manager.

Promotions aren't limited to the sales team. Our Director of Aftersales, Dave Garratt, previously held the role of Supply Chain Manager and Tom Johnson has progressed from Warehouse Operative to Marketing Assistant and is now our Marketing Executive. We're continually investing in staff, via training, NVQs, and development workshops.



"We like to grow our own talent, encouraging staff to develop and take on new challenges within the business; it's good for us and motivating for them"

◀ L-R: James Blower, Andy Loughray, Gemma Bonnett, Adam Rogers



Stringent quality control procedures at the Matrix factory in Taiwan ensure customer and industry standards are met

Why are people so important?

It's a lot easier to replicate something tangible, such as a product or service offering, than the person who delivers it. Innovation is obviously important – but it's the people who have the ideas, and develop the products. Plus from a sales point of view, the age-old adage 'People buy people' also stands firm. Basically it's people that make the difference.

How much impact does the global team have on business in the UK?

Quite simply, we wouldn't be here without them. Our vertically integrated brand portfolio means many key components in our products come from one of our own factories, giving us greater control over how they're designed and built.

Does keeping everything in-house mean you're in danger of being a 'Jack of all trades'?

We know where our strengths lie, so when someone else does it better, we forge strategic alliances that allow us to deliver the most innovative and highest

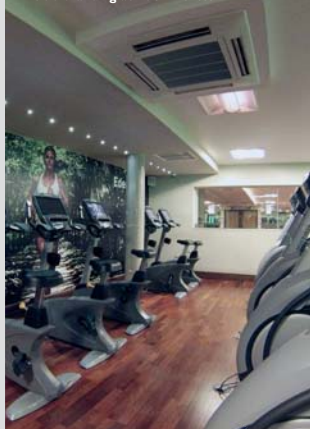
quality products and services, with the best total cost of ownership... while retaining control. Our partnership with the Indoor Cycling Group (ICG) is one example of this. The recently launched IC3 Indoor Cycle features our most advanced and strongest frame, along with increased flywheel inertia, superior adjustment, handlebar ergonomics, our industry-leading Poly-V Belt drive system, and an enhanced Q-factor.

In a similar vein, our acquisition of Magnum Fitness, the manufacturer and marketer of high quality performance strength equipment, based in South Milwaukee, USA, has enabled us to fill a specialist area in our strength portfolio.

What else is new product-wise?

Technology was central to product development in 2013, starting with the launch of the revolutionary 7xi App interface console. Built exclusively for the fitness arena, this true app interface offers a more refined, easy-to-use, and exercise-friendly experience for users, with quick access to social media and web content. The console also

In-club branding at Eden Fitness



mPower connects users to people and content they care about; engaging and motivating, while providing tools to help achieve goals

- incorporates Matrix Fitness Asset Management, with features including a customisable facility calendar, online service portal, and multiple facility management options.

We also introduced mPower Integrated Technology Solutions; an assortment of fitness equipment, hardware, software, and connectivity options that form the foundation of our new solution-centric approach to fitness.

Aside from the technological developments, we've introduced new cardio bike designs for the Upright, Recumbent, and Hybrid Series.

What about distribution and getting your products on-site in the UK? Any developments there?

As a multi-national group with sourcing across the UK, Asia, and the USA, we already manage a sophisticated supply chain infrastructure, but we're not a company to rest on our laurels. We've just completed a new assembly and logistics warehouse in Essex to support our planned future growth, and will begin building an additional assembly/finished goods warehouse hub in the North Midlands at the end of 2014.

What happens if something goes wrong, once the products have been delivered?

We've got the service infrastructure to deal with it, with a team dedicated to

providing the best after sales service and standard warranty in the industry. One of the key things to differentiate us from our competition is the fact that we own or have exclusivity on our service centres – we have seven service hubs nationally, and house over £1m of spare parts in the UK – so again we control the process. We've got big growth plans for 2014, so we're investing in even more recruits to ensure we maintain our excellent service track record.

How does your involvement with customers extend beyond the sale?

We'd like to think that all of our customers will be with us long-term, but this needs to be justifiable. Fortunately we have plenty of good reasons for them to keep coming back!



'Life' tests simulate the harshest conditions at the Matrix Fitness laboratory



“Built exclusively for the fitness arena, the revolutionary 7xi true app interface offers a refined user experience”

Our marketing support is just one example. The key thing is that every offer is bespoke - everyone wants their business to stand out from the competition, so why would they choose a generic marketing package? It may sound a cliché, but we work with our customers to really understand their business, enabling us to provide comprehensive marketing and PR support that will truly make a difference.

Our training and education style is unique in the industry too, as we 'upskill' rather than 'upload' information. This means equipping and exciting teams with knowledge, confidence, and an understanding of how to optimise use of equipment, to the benefit of members and operators long after installation. ●

To discover more about Matrix Fitness, contact us at:
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SPORTING STRENGTH

LAUREN APPEGARTH LOOKS AT HOW FIXED RESISTANCE EQUIPMENT IS BEING INTEGRATED INTO SPORT-SPECIFIC TRAINING PROGRAMMES

If you keep up to date with the latest fitness trends, you're probably of the opinion that traditional resistance equipment is fast losing its place on the gym floor to functional training areas and rigs – and in some instances, you would be right.

However, fixed strength equipment still plays a key role in many facilities – and it's powering some of the world's top professional sportsmen and women to success, from global stars of the tennis world to Premier League football teams. But incorporating fixed strength

equipment into sport-specific training programmes isn't something that should be perceived as exclusive to professional athletes; it's accessible to players of all ages and abilities.

As Cybex UK's commercial director Rob Thurston explains: "Fixed strength equipment is still central to many gym floor layouts and users shouldn't be intimidated by it. There are countless examples of sportspeople at all levels combining strength equipment into their training programmes, but it's all about using the right pieces of equipment to develop the physical attributes most applicable to you and your sport."

Such training will have the maximum effect providing best practice is followed, adds Chris Armstrong, strength and conditioning coach at Warwickshire County Cricket Club:

"The key is to make the exercise movements as sport-specific as possible, ensuring good technique and that the focus is on the player's range of movement as opposed to the weight they can lift."

We look at ways in which fixed resistance kit is being used by elite athletes, and how amateur sports enthusiasts can incorporate similar techniques into their training.

REHAB & PERFORMANCE

Sport: Cricket

Client: Warwickshire County Cricket Club, UK

Supplier: Technogym

The physical demands of cricketers are distinctly unique to each player's specialism: from tall, strong and powerful fast bowlers to shorter wicket keepers who place a large amount of pressure on their hamstrings during long days in the field. Building and maintaining peak physical fitness enables batsmen to score more runs, bowlers to maintain their desired pace and accuracy for longer, and fielders to sustain high levels of concentration and therefore faster reaction speeds.

While teams train year-round, the intended outcome of their strength and conditioning programmes will also change depending on where they are in a season, explains Armstrong: "Resistance training takes priority pre-season, throughout November and December, as the players focus towards building up their baseline strength; in January the programme switches to develop power and speed; and then, when the season starts in April, strength training is again incorporated to maintain high performance levels."

In 2013, Technogym installed resistance equipment in the on-site gym at Edgbaston Stadium, home to Warwickshire CCC. "The equipment we chose allows for a wide variety of exercises, uses and loads, and its flexibility meets the needs of the players' unique specialisms," adds Armstrong. The gym incorporates Technogym's Multipower, a lifting rack that allows for assisted lower and upper limb exercises. This was used as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for three of the club's bowlers who suffered back stress fractures last year.

Products from Technogym's Selection MED line were also installed, including the leg extension and leg press, which are designed specifically to support rehabilitation and users with various physical conditions during exercise.

The equipment also allows the team to quickly bring new players up to the required strength and fitness levels. "The adjustable head rest and handles of the leg press ensure players are seated in a safe and uncompromised position, allowing them to put significant loads through their legs without compromising their back," explains Armstrong. "The use of such equipment allows us to load someone who hasn't been training in the gym for as long, much earlier in their career."



Strength and conditioning coach Chris Armstrong on the kit



The physical requirements of F1 drivers include strong neck muscles to withstand cornering at speed and high G-forces

RESISTING THE FORCE

Sport: Formula 1

Client: Lotus Formula 1 Junior Team, UK

Supplier: Matrix

“**B**eing a racing driver isn't just about getting behind the steering wheel and driving around a track. It's extremely physically and mentally challenging; you need to be in the best condition possible to cope with the physical demands and be at the top of your game,” explains Marlon Stöckinger, Lotus F1 Junior Team driver.

Consequently, physical fitness is one of the eight key areas of development identified by the Lotus F1 Junior Team, which has been established by Gravity Sports Management and the Lotus F1 team to uncover the sport's stars of the future. Aside from a resilient cardiovascular system required to maintain an average

heart rate of 140–160bpm, strength training is essential to combat the physical demands of the sport.

Drivers must focus on building neck strength to withstand cornering at speed and high G-forces; core strength to manage tight movements at extremely high speeds; strong and reactive glutes and legs to apply correct pressure and speed to the brake; and accelerator and grip strength to maintain maximum control of the car at all times.

Based at the Lotus F1 Team factory in Enstone, Oxfordshire, the team's Human Performance Centre is equipped by Matrix Fitness. Products from its commercial strength series, Ultra and Aura, are incorporated into the bespoke training programmes of the drivers to focus on key muscle groups.

Specifically, drivers use the rotary torso, seated leg curl, leg press, leg extension and Matrix's functional trainer. “The equipment helps me train the specific muscle groups that are crucial for racing and competing at a high level, from cardio fitness to being functionally strong and well-conditioned,” concludes Stöckinger. ▶

ACEING IT

Sport: Tennis
Client: ATP World Tour Finals, UK
Supplier: Cybex International UK

Power, strength, agility, endurance, flexibility and speed are all vital abilities for tennis players at any level of the sport and, while time spent on-court is essential, time spent in the gym is often where a competitive edge is gained.

In November 2013, as the climax to the men's professional tennis season, the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals returned to London's O2 arena. Continuing a partnership that dates back to 2009, Cybex International UK was chosen to equip the tournament's on-site gym. "Having a gym on-site opens up a lot of opportunities," says ATP World Tour medical director Clay Sniteman. "Players can run their own functional warm-up sessions, cool down after matches or even rehabilitate injuries they pick up during the tournament."

Alongside CV equipment, the gym housed the Bravo Pull and Bravo Press, two pieces from Cybex's cable-based Bravo Functional Training system. "Cable-based training is perfect for tennis players, as it allows for the multi-directional movement required for the sport," explains Sniteman. "By using the



Cable training with Andy Murray's fitness trainer Jez Green

Cybex Bravo, players benefit hugely from the range of motion, angles and stability work, being able to isolate parts of the body during their workouts and target the weaker areas from abdominals to core, back to shoulders and even lower body."

The Bravo Functional Training system is one of Cybex's key strength pieces, popular in many facilities, from independent gyms, universities and schools to elite training centres. "The Bravo system combines the features of selectorised and cable-based strength training equipment to deliver endless training possibilities," says Thurston.

FUNCTIONAL POWER

Sport: Football
Client: Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, UK
Supplier: Keiser

The physical wellbeing of professional footballers can be the difference between a trophy-winning season or one to forget; with 38 Premier League fixtures, FA Cup and League Cup competitions and spells in the UEFA Champions League and Europa League for the last four seasons, fitness levels of the players at Tottenham Hotspur FC are crucial to the club's success.

In September 2012, the Premier League side opened its new training centre in Bulls Cross, Enfield. A 77-acre facility, the training centre comprises 15 grass pitches, a covered artificial pitch, pool and hydrotherapy complex, altitude room, sports

rehabilitation suites and a large-scale gym equipped by Keiser. "We used Keiser equipment at our old training centre and our players were extremely satisfied with it," says Dr Wayne Diesel, head of medical services at Tottenham.

"As part of the club's commitment to research into football-specific strength and conditioning, we needed equipment that would allow functional power development, creating a greater spectrum to progress exercises. By this, I mean resistance, speed, angles and range of motion."

Strength equipment from Keiser's Air range is incorporated into the football-specific strength and conditioning programmes used by the players. Unlike most fixed resistance equipment with weight stacks, Keiser's range uses air pressure to provide resistance. The range targets upper body, lower body and core strength, as well as offering detailed information display. "Keiser's Air resistance equipment delivers ease of regulation of power output as a percentage of the player's maximum; the ability to spot asymmetries between opposite limbs; and, importantly, safety of use," explains Diesel. ●



Keiser's equipment at the Enfield site helps develop speed and range of motion

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RESEARCH ROUND UP

Cellular clean-up

US scientists have identified a new benefit of exercise – its ability to help remove cellular debris from the body

In a new discovery, scientists at the US University of Virginia School of Medicine have found that exercise aids a cellular cleaning process in the body known as autophagy. The research, which was based on mice, was published in the bioscience title *The FASEB Journal*¹ and showed that exercise increases the ability of skeletal muscle cells to remove damaged components and other cellular debris by this cleaning process. In turn, autophagy is vital for muscles to adapt to exercise – and for the body to receive the health benefits of working out.

The findings could prove important in the battle against the effect of ageing and in diseases like diabetes. They could also shed some light on why some people see little benefit from exercise. We explain the science behind this below.

A body janitor

It's well known that daily wear and tear on the body's cells leads to broken or misshaped components. Autophagy, or 'self-eating', is the process by which cells clear up this flotsam. Study researcher Dr Zhen Yan explains: "If I can use an analogy to describe this [cellular clean-up process], it's like daily cleaning by janitors. A team of janitors comes to clean up the working environment, to maintain the homeostasis of the cell."

Without this process, cells can become blocked, malfunction or die. Some scientists are even beginning to link faulty autophagy function to diseases such as diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer's. It's thought that the slowing of this mechanism as we become older also has a part to play in the ageing process.

Yan refers to his analogy to explain: "Exercise training seems to increase the number of janitors and make the process more efficient. So we have a more active cleaning process of the cell."



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/WAREEN GOLDSWAIN

Exercise seems to promote a more active cleaning process of the cell

The exercise effect

Autophagy was first discovered as a result of stress that comes from cell starvation. A cell recycles some components to help keep the rest of itself alive, but when it's starved or under physiological stress – like exercise – the autophagy process speeds up.

Yan tells HCM: "Muscles that are frequently used for locomotion or other activities and endurance (four-week) exercise-trained muscles have higher basal level autophagy and more proteins with function in autophagy than muscles that are rarely used."

The study complements 2012 research by the University of Texas Southwestern, US, which suggests that an acute (30 minute) bout of exercise activated accelerated autophagy.

Impact on muscle

What Yan and his colleagues also discovered, is that if there's a problem with the cellular cleaning process, the

muscle may not be able to adapt to exercise in order to improve performance. This could mean "losing the trainability", he explains. It could also, in turn, "impact the effect of exercise in dealing with metabolic diseases such as diabetes".

According to Yan's fellow researcher Vitro A Lira, it's also possible that limitations in autophagy could explain why some people reap the benefits of exercise while others don't. Although this has yet to be proven.

A new direction

The findings could lead to ways to simulate the benefits of exercise on the cellular cleansing process, such as with a drug. This could benefit people who do not respond to exercise or cannot exercise. It could also help with the slowing of the cellular cleansing process that comes with age – a slowing that causes loss of muscle mass and strength and impaired metabolism.

¹Lira V et al. Autophagy is required for exercise training-induced skeletal muscle adaptation and improvement of physical performance. *The FASEB Journal*, June 2013

A Journey into Strength

We discovered people weren't afraid of strength training, they were afraid of the machines. Meet the first serious strength line designed to be more inviting than intimidating...



The Discovery Strength Series is a complete range of selectorised and plate-loaded machines

Precor's commitment to resistance training was made clear with the 2010 opening of its 230,000 sq ft dedicated strength factory in North Carolina, USA, which houses an independent design, engineering and product management team focussed exclusively on strength.

And with more exercisers relying on conventional strength training to achieve their fitness goals than ever before* it's easy to see why strength is such a focus for Precor.

"We're extremely fortunate to have such a wealth of experience within the strength development team," said Chris Torggler, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Precor Strength. "The mechanical engineers and product managers have over 100 years of combined industry experience, which is highly evident in the level of detail applied to the design of our premium range, the Discovery Strength Series."

The Discovery Strength Series, a complete range of selectorised and plate-loaded machines, has been designed to cater for all exercisers, from just 5' to 6'7" tall, and from the newest member to the strongest alike. From the QR codes linking to 'how-to' videos to the low starting weights and gas-assisted seat positioning, the attractive, biomechanically-designed stations deliver performance, reliability and ease-of-use, whatever a members' favoured strength training method.

This month sees the launch of five new pieces. "From the fixed movement pieces, enabling new exercisers to work out with confidence, to the converging and diverging stations, which improve our offering for more experienced users, the new pieces complete the range, taking members on a three-stage journey into strength training," says Torggler.

Stage 1: Fixed movement selectorised:

Fixed movement machines encourage proper technique, which reduces injuries, and ease of use and educating the user is paramount. Precor took inspiration from consumer products, having observed people using their smart phones.

"We focussed on taking away the intimidation, and making the equipment inviting, and intuitive. We even incorporated easy to understand graphics and QR codes that enable members to view short instruction videos," continues Torggler. Translucent shrouds allow light to pass through, making the strength environment appear more open, and enabling the user to see the weight moving, while giving enough privacy to ensure others can't see what they are lifting. Uniform weight stack heights give clear, consistent lines of sight across the gym.

Stage 2: Selectorised converging and diverging:

The independent moving arms and converging/diverging movement patterns on Precor's new pieces are ideal for exercisers confident with fixed resistance stations.

The progressive Advanced Movement Design (AMD) platform challenges the body by engaging more muscles to functionally develop strength and stabilise movement patterns. Users will experience more freedom and better results as they work their muscles through a greater, more natural range of motion.

Step 3: Plate loaded stations:

Whilst the entire Discovery Series has been designed to provide an authentic experience for even the most serious strength exerciser, Precor's plate-loaded stations offer the most advanced workout capabilities. The contemporary line combines all the foundational performance elements demanded from a strength range, and is designed with independent arm resistance and converging and diverging movement paths that provide a greater range of motion and usage of muscle groups.

For further information on the Discovery Series Strength Line visit www.precor.co.uk or call 01276 404900



*A recent study by IHRSA states over 2.5 million exercisers are regularly using strength training

RECYCLED FOR REHAB

In the third part of our Gymtopia series, Ray Algar reports on a Gymkit initiative to send refurbished equipment to rehabilitation centres in Laos

Laos is a landlocked country in Southeast Asia, bordering Vietnam and Thailand, with an estimated population of 6.5 million. During the Vietnam War of 1955–1975, millions of cluster bombs were dropped on the country, many of which failed to detonate. Tens of thousands of people have been injured or killed as a result of unexploded bombs; most victims are children and men. (Source: COPE charity)

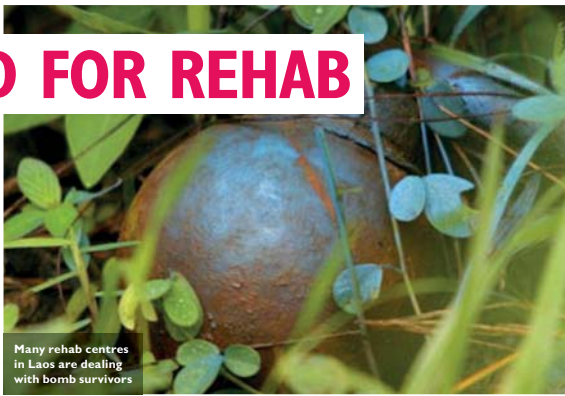
Bomb survivors often lose limbs and must undergo many months of intensive rehabilitation – a vital part of the recovery process, supporting the great work undertaken by the surgical teams. However, rehabilitation centres in Laos often cannot afford treadmills or cycles, which are critical in helping people adjust to life with a prosthetic limb.

Gymkit UK – which for 13 years has been in the business of refurbishing and re-selling pre-owned fitness equipment and giving it a second lease of life – collaborated with Medical Aid International (MAI) and the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), donating desperately needed treadmills and exercise bikes.

How did the project start?

Howard Braband, MD of Gymkit UK, took a call from Tim Beacon, who operates UK-based social enterprise Medical Aid International. Beacon urgently needed fitness equipment to re-equip five treatment and rehabilitation centres in Laos, working closely with COPE – a Laos-based non-profit organisation that provides comprehensive rehabilitation services for cluster bomb survivors.

Braband was only too happy to say yes. He explains: “We’re in the privileged position to be able to give something back, and when we saw the



Many rehab centres in Laos are dealing with bomb survivors

Gymtopia – a place where clubs do social good

Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar (right), who believes the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to do good in the world, beyond its immediate customers. The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need. It was created with the generous support of various UK and overseas individuals and organisations.

Read more stories and submit your own: www.Gymtopia.org



great job Tim was doing to support the rehabilitation programme in Laos, with virtually no money, we felt it was only right to do what we could to help him.”

Project logistics

Gymkit UK donated three Life Fitness 9500 treadmills and four Star Trac 4300 bikes, including spare parts, to Medical Aid International, which flew the equipment to Laos. COPE then organised delivery and installation into rehabilitation centres.

Results

The donation meant that five rehabilitation centres were able to replace their broken exercise machines. Beacon is full of admiration for Gymkit UK's act of generosity: “The quality is superb and the effort Gymkit made to ensure the machines were just right for the environment was amazing. We're all so grateful for their support. It's so encouraging and inspirational to know that there are companies out there willing to help like this. They are very special people.”

Where does your ‘end of life’ equipment go?

Imagine the impact your old machines could have at a rehab centre somewhere in the world. The next time you upgrade to new equipment, insist one of those old machines is donated to a charity like MAI. Its value may be low to you, but it could be priceless to others. ●

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: Gymkit UK
– www.gymkituk.com
Location: Laos, Southeast Asia
Start date: December 2011
Project status: Ended
Impact: National
Donation: Life Fitness treadmills and Star Trac cycles
Gymtopia keywords: Disaster response, Health & Wellbeing, Helping Children
Charities supported: Medical Aid International, Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise

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OVERSEEING THE BUILDING WORK

Managing the construction or refurbishment of a new leisure building is an involved process, and it's Alliance Leisure's task to ensure that projects run smoothly, and are delivered on time and on budget. Project manager Graham Bryant of Savernake Property Consultants (retained by Alliance) explains

What is your role in Alliance Leisure's development process?

We're retained by Alliance to work on all their projects. Sometimes we come in at the very early stages of site investigations in our role as CDM (Construction, Design and Management Regulations) Coordinators to ensure any necessary risk assessments and method statements for the works are prepared and implemented. We also then manage the CDM process through the design and construction stages, which covers all aspects of Health and Safety.

But essentially our core work starts with preparing the building contracts for all parties, and then managing the whole building process through to completion.

Where does the process begin?

A key element at the front end is to make sure the JCT building contract is properly drafted, signed by all parties and in place before work starts on site.

This contract will contain the contractors proposals for the works as well as the contract sum analysis. It's highly important that the client not only understands what they are going to get, but how much its going to cost.

We also deal with any collateral warranties which ensure that Alliance's clients have a legal route back to the main contractor, designers and in some cases, subcontractors. Alliance signs a direct contract with the main contractor, but their clients also need to have a route to these suppliers in the unlikely event that Alliance was no longer there.

How is the process managed?

We're the Employer's Agent, and we're there to administer the contract.

Prior to works commencing on site we hold a pre-start meeting with all parties concerned, so we can agree processes, start and completion dates, and any practical issues. We'll minute those meetings and distribute these to relevant parties.

Through construction we hold monthly progress meetings, and usually attend site fortnightly for a more informal inspection, to discuss any practical issues and ensure the contractor is abiding by the requirements of the specification, assessing whether works are on programme and checking on the quality of works undertaken.

How do you handle requested changes to the project?

It's our job to manage such changes as well as to ensure effective cost control. If the client wants extra work done we'll look at the building quotes to make sure the prices are appropriate and then

Follow the series

1. Scoping / Investigation
2. Conceptualisation
3. Viability assessment & full feasibility
4. Site investigation
5. Fixed price contracts
- 6. Overseeing the building work**
7. Ordering phase
8. Client support (part 1)
9. Client support (part 2)

liaise with the client as to the effect on the overall project cost should they wish to continue. At any one time in the project we'll know what the exact costs are through the use of a formulated spreadsheet used to record all costs associated with the project, so there's never a chance that costs will suddenly or unexpectedly overrun.

What are your other duties?

We're responsible for managing the appropriate payments to builders, which typically happens on a monthly basis, as well as agreeing the final account.

Towards completion, we increase our site presence to once a week, and at completion we manage all the snagging, which is a vital part of the quality control process. This involves looking in minute detail for any defects. People will walk into a newly refurbished centre and say 'wow' because they see the general change that's been made, while we're looking at those unnoticed things such as scuffed suspended ceiling tiles, less than perfect mastic work, for instance. We adopt the same attitude to snagging as if we were paying for the work personally at our own home.

Is that the end of the process?

No, after completion Alliance normally operates a defects liability period of 12 months through the building contract. If any problems arise they are reported to us by Alliance's client and we then liaise with the contractor to rectify them, which they're contractually bound to do free of charge. ●



The Preston School refurbishment caused minimum disruption to the school timetable



“People will walk into a newly refurbished centre and say ‘wow’ because they see the change that’s been made, while we’re looking at those unnoticed things like scuffed ceiling tiles. We have the same attitude to snagging as if we were paying for the work in our own home”

Building work at Preston School in Somerset included a revamped sports hall (above), and a new fitness suite and dance hall (below) for use by pupils and the public

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► CASE STUDY - Managing the building process at Preston School, Yeovil

Alliance Leisure completed a refurbishment of Preston School in Yeovil, run by 1610 Leisure Trust, in September 2012. The project included an extension to an existing sports hall to create a fitness suite and dance studio, new disabled changing rooms, new reception area, and refurbished changing rooms to cater for schoolchildren during the day and leisure users outside of school hours. The main hall adjacent to the sports hall was also revamped.

As a dual use facility for the community, the building process posed a number of potential problems that consultant Graham Bryant says had to be carefully managed given the sensitivity of the site.

“The challenges of working on a school site are numerous. Firstly, getting building lorries and vans in and out of the site had to be properly managed from a Health and Safety point of view, and needed to be limited to certain times of the day without causing undue delay to the works.

“Secondly we had to ensure the safety of the children at all times and educate them about the dangers of a building site. The main potential problem was children accessing the area either out of curiosity or simply to retrieve footballs.

“We are always happy to get involved and conduct educational sessions with the school, although on this project the head teacher was very proactive about this.”

Bryant adds that there were also frequent scheduling issues to be taken into account so that building work, which took place between February and September, did not impact too much on the school programme. He says: “We tried to schedule major works around half terms and school holidays, and had to be sensitive around exam times. That could mean suspending work for a few hours so there was no noise for pupils, or planning for exams to be relocated to another place.

“It meant the project took a little longer than normal to complete, but everybody was delighted with the end results.”



BUILDING for HEALTH

US real estate developer Delos has created the first set of building standards based on health and wellbeing and Leonardo DiCaprio has reportedly bought one of its new homes. Katie Barnes talks to founder Paul Scialla about pioneering a whole new way of building



Scialla: Wellness standards are 'evidence-based'

In late November, actor Leonardo DiCaprio invested in Delos, the US real estate company, which has created the first building rating system focused not just on the environment but also on human health and wellness. He also became an advisor to the board. It's an obvious fit for the actor who's a staunch supporter of sustainability. He says: "Delos' wellness designs will change the way living spaces are built and will have a profound impact on the green building movement. Together, we

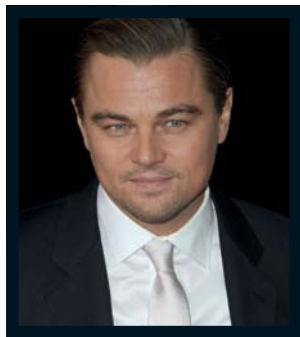
are creating a better, more sustainable future for our planet."

This news follows DiCaprio's reported purchase – Delos will neither deny nor confirm speculations – of one of Delos' first homes in New York City. The five new 66 East 11th Street residences offer over 50 amenities dedicated to aiding the owner's wellbeing – from water purification systems and showers infused with vitamin C that neutralises chlorine, to floors that promote better posture.

The actor's involvement has brought even more attention to the company

that's already connected to a string of well-known names from Donna Karan and will.i.am to Bill Clinton. But founder Paul Scialla is adamant that Delos' developments aren't only for celebrities and the high-end luxury market. "Everyone cares about their own health," he says. "Whether it's because they've been brought up differently or are more exposed to wellness: it's not just water anymore is it? These days, it has to be vitamin water."

He's excited about the possibilities 'wellness building' presents, saying: "Real estate is the largest asset class in the



Film star Leonardo DiCaprio (left) has invested in Delos



Delos' standards have gained the advocacy of medics, celebrities and politicians such as Bill Clinton and will.i.am

world – it's worth US\$150trn – and we're looking to combine that with one of the fastest growing and, arguably, one of the most important industries in the world: health and wellness. More than US\$2trn a year is spent on preventative medical intervention, so obviously – for Delos – there's a massive economic play."

Biological sustainability

There was no major trigger point for setting up Delos says 40-year-old Scialla, whose career had previously centred around banking – first in bond trading on Wall Street, then as a partner at Goldman Sachs. "Around five years ago, as a kind of an aside, I started getting interested in this notion of sustainability and real estate. Lots of great things had gone on in green building and I simply wondered if we could push the envelope so the focus wasn't only on environmental sustainability, but also on human or biological sustainability when we build things.

"The fact is we spend 92 per cent of our time indoors, so if we can introduce preventative medical intentions into the very spaces that we're spending our time in, it's a huge win." His interest was shared by co-founder Morad Fareed, a former Starwood Hotels & Resorts executive who helped to initiate and develop one of the industry's first green hotel brands: Element by Westin.

Early on, the pair knew they needed some of the best academic, political

"Real estate is the largest asset class in the world, and we're looking to combine that with one of the fastest growing industries in the world – health and wellness"

and medical minds involved in Delos – along with a dash of celebrity influence – to tackle something so formidable. Luckily "the story sells itself," says Scialla. "Everyone we speak to wants to get involved. This is an obvious way to finally deliver preventative medicine in a passive way to people on a daily basis."

Over the course of four years, architects, designers and engineers collaborated with doctors and scientists from leading institutions such as the Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic and Columbia Medical School – as well as wellness guru Deepak Chopra – to review more than 4,500 studies to work out how a building could deliver optimal health. "First and foremost we wanted to offer an evidence-based approach," says Scialla. "With half of these things you can touch or feel them and know that something's happening, but the other half are working on your body without you necessarily realising it."

The result is the Well Building Standard™, a framework based on seven elements such as fitness, good quality air, water and light. These impact on 12 domains of health identified by

Delos, which range from cardiovascular, immune and sleep health to emotional and cognitive function (see Diagram 1, p82). The standards – which are designed to sit in line with existing green building certifications such as LEED – can be applied to homes, offices, public buildings and hotels, with one of the key ambitions being to create built environments that promote movement.

The framework is currently still in pilot, but Delos has completed four projects over the past three years and has another 15 in the pipeline. In addition, Scialla and his twin brother, who's also a partner in Delos, converted their own home to trial the Well Building Standard three years ago and have seen the benefits first-hand. "Since completing the renovation, my energy levels are through the roof, I've rarely been sick and my sleeping patterns have never been better," says Scialla. "I'm a healthier person."

Setting standards

In total, there are around 50 possible amenities in the Well Building Standard, with some of the less obvious including shielding from harmful electromagnetic

► fields and photo-catalytic coating for surfaces to break down bacteria, viruses and volatile organic compounds. Even the lighting system mimics our circadian rhythms. The lights provide a softer, yellow hue in the evenings to stimulate production of the sleep hormone melatonin, while brighter blue hues during the day boost cortisol production and energy levels and reduce or even eliminate jet lag.

Interestingly, the new standards pay just as much attention to emotional and psychological wellbeing as physical health, with complementary elements such as aromatherapy, acupuncture and sound-wave therapy incorporated because they've been proven to work. Nevertheless, physical health and fitness is an important part of the concept, with a number of elements being trialled at the 66 East 11th Street development in New York City – albeit at a luxury end of the scale that may not be specified in the final published version of the standards.

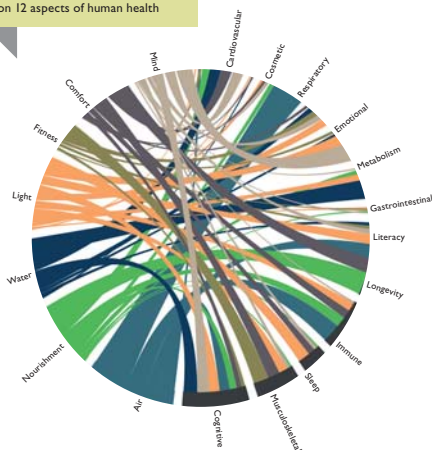
For example, Donna Karan's wellbeing foundation Urban Zen offers a wellness concierge service at 66 East 11th Street, which will make customised arrangements with leading personal trainers, physical therapists and yoga, pilates and martial arts instructors for sessions both within the home and elsewhere in the city, as well as co-ordinating fitness class appointments for residents.

Adequate space for various forms of exercise will also be incorporated and designed to minimise sound, reduce microbial growth and odours. Staircases will be enhanced through lighting, design and biophilic elements, making them more inviting and pleasant to use. Space will be allocated for bike storage. And flooring will be comfortable underfoot yet still strong enough to improve lumbar support.

Healthy hotels

Meanwhile, in Delos' Stay Well® hotel rooms – which launched at the MGM

Diagram 1: The Delos Well Building Standard™ is based on seven design categories that impact on 12 aspects of human health



Grand Las Vegas in 2012 – guests have free access to the Cleveland Clinic's sleep, stress, nutrition and fitness programmes, which are delivered online over six months and usually cost upwards of US\$140. They also have access to the 'Let's Move It' app, which offers aerobic challenges and exclusive Cleveland Clinic exercise videos and information.

In total, the 42 original rooms incorporate 17 health and wellness elements, including Vitamin C-infused shower water, an LED dawn simulator alarm clock to awaken the body gradually, a 24-hour room service menu based on natural/organic food, and exposure to short periods of blue-shaded lighting to increase energy and

decrease the effects of jet lag. This enables MGM to add 30 per cent onto standard room rates and, while Scialla doesn't disclose how much MGM invested, he does reveal that it broke even within six weeks.

"The guest feedback has been outstanding," he says revealing that even though the rooms have only been open for just over a year, MGM has already quadrupled the offering: the extra 129 Stay Well rooms, which opened in January this year, have taken over the entire 14th floor of the hotel's main tower.

Enhanced features include a smartphone app to guide guests around the room's amenities, as well as allowing them to input details of their flight so the Cleveland



A wellness suite at MGM with a 'vitamin' shower



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Delos wellness properties in New York can cost up to US\$50m, but the company may expand into mid-level rentals

- Clinic can come back with a more accurate prescription for light therapy to help reduce jet lag. "We're really trying to make it an entire experience, as opposed to just enhancing a special component of the room," says Scialla.

Broad appeal

Individually some of the amenities included in the Well Building Standard aren't necessarily groundbreaking. However, it's the way Delos has packaged them that's captured the attention of US media – which has responded with everything from articles in the *LA Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, to coverage on CNN, Bloomberg and CNBC.

Even Bill Clinton is an advocate. "These healthy building standards will literally change the way we live and work in a very positive way," said the former US president at the 2012 annual conference for the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), which brings together global leaders to create and implement innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Interestingly, Delos is also a member of the CGI.

Delos faces two significant challenges. Firstly, the price of its 'well buildings' could be a barrier for growth, given that the 66 East 11th Street residences range from US\$16m–US\$50m. Secondly, wellness real estate hasn't taken off as well as anticipated in the past: a number of residential spa communities, including Canyon Ranch Living in Washington DC and Chicago and Pritikin Living in Houston, have struggled (see *Spa Business* 2011, issue 1, p30).

However, Scialla is confident that neither issue gives cause for concern. He believes Delos' developments are significantly different, saying: "A lot of these residential developments anchored the real estate with a great spa, but they didn't introduce those elements into the homes or rooms."

He also feels the market has changed, with it no longer just being baby boomers who are interested in longevity and quality of life in later years. "We carried out extensive demographic studies early on to assess our target categories, demand and potential premiums," he says. "We found that what we were offering appealed, and had significant value, to every single person regardless of gender, age or income level. It was very clear to us that more people today are focused on health and wellness."

Of the cost, he says that US\$4,000 per square foot "is not expensive based on current New York City real estate prices. Plus, when you think about having a home that's working on your body 24 hours a day just by living in it, we think it's worth the price."

Scialla also remains adamant that Delos isn't just focused on luxury residential projects. The company has just certified its first wellness offices at the 4,274sq m (46,000sq ft) CBRE global corporate headquarters in Los Angeles and is also working with the healthy restaurant chain Lyfe Kitchen to certify 250 of its facilities over the course of the next five years.

In addition, Scialla cites mid-level rentals and school projects as possibilities in the future, and points out that Delos is working with the US Green Building Council on an orphanage in Haiti and with will.i.am on an affordable housing project in Boyle Heights – a low-income neighbourhood in Los Angeles. In collaboration with the singer's philanthropic organisation i.am.angel, Delos is also implementing its Well Access programme, a subset of the Well Building Standard that will see core components such as quality air, water and antimicrobial coatings added to 1,200 homes.

Working with health clubs

So which segment does Scialla think has the potential to grow the quickest:

residential, office or hospitality? "It's so interesting, because I'd like to pick one, but I actually see a massive opportunity with every single one of them," he says. He even hints that other verticals such as assisted living and senior housing could be on the cards for development.

Scialla is also open to the idea of working with health club operators. "Wellness is the fastest growing consumer industry in the world, and we've received tremendously positive feedback from individuals who are looking for healthier, wellness-orientated experiences at home, in the office or travelling," he says.

"Currently, Delos' wellness designs are being implemented in homes, offices and hotels through the brand's Stay Well offerings, but health clubs are a natural area of expansion. We've received great interest from health club operators who are enthusiastic about the potential to infuse our wellness elements and technology into their fitness centres to provide members with a healthier gym experience."

For now, with the Well Building Standard still in its pilot phase, any company looking for certification would need to partner with Delos. However, the idea is that eventually an independent, but for-profit, corporation – the International Well Building Institute – will govern the standards as they open up to the market.

Scialla concludes: "We hope to achieve similar penetration to the LEED certification and Green Building movement. The Well Building Standard is already applicable to any type of real estate that will help us achieve this ultimate goal." ●



A version of this feature first appeared in *Spa Business* issue 1, 2014

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SHOW PREVIEW

FIBO 2014

We take a look ahead to FIBO 2014 – the world's largest fitness trade fair for fitness, wellness and health – which takes place in Cologne, Germany, next month

Last year's move to a new location in Cologne saw the birth of an even grander scale FIBO: an exhibitor increase of 10 per cent, a floor space expansion of 20 per cent and a visitor boost of over 30 per cent delivered an event far beyond what anyone had projected or

planned for. Instead of the expected 80,000 visitors, more than 100,000 attended FIBO 2013.

This year's FIBO, taking place on 3–6 April in Cologne, will be ready for similar visitor numbers. FIBO director Ralph Scholz says: "We'll offer our trade visitors a much clearer structure at the

trade fair, and this year we'll address gym owners in an even more targeted way through 'FIBO Expert' in Halls 6–9."

Exercise is medicine

When physicians and physical therapists used to run into traditional gym operators, both sides were worlds apart. But times have changed, and mutual reservations have declined significantly. This coming together of the two worlds – medical and fitness – is a development that will be given even more weight at this year's FIBO.

The theme of 'Fitness creates health' will be evident both across the congress and the conference programme – which are dominated by exercise medicine and therapy – and the trade fair, which this year will adopt a more issue-orientated, specialised, technical structure. "We've worked hard to present the fitness and health segments more strongly as an internally connected unit," says Scholz.

The second FIBOmed Congress, taking place on 4–5 April, is a prime example, with its theme of 'Exercise is the medicine of the 21st century'. This year's Congress follows on from the success of the inaugural event last



One of the FIBO halls will showcase the latest in functional training kit

INAUGURAL FIBO-EHFA CONGRESS

On Wednesday 2 April – the day before the trade fair opens its doors – FIBO and the European Health & Fitness Association (EHFA) will jointly host a brand new summit for the European fitness industry.

The inaugural European Health & Fitness Forum – entitled Europe Active 2025 – will look at how fit and healthy Europe will be in the year 2025. How can exercise be encouraged? What will be the role of new technologies within the fitness sector, and what can the health system and policymakers bring to the table?

One of the items on the agenda will be the presentation of the 'Plan for Growth / Europe Active 2025' study, which describes the demographic, health-related and economic trends across Europe and looks at the role of fitness for the

population. The goal is to raise the number of gym members from around 44 million currently to 80 million by 2025.

Key findings of the new EHFA / Deloitte study – the *European Fitness Market 2014* report – will also be presented, as will the results of a practical study conducted among 2,600 participants in the UK, entitled 'The scientific proof that exercise works in practice'.

Other topics of discussion will include the positive economic effects of regular physical activity, with special attention given to the issues of fitness training for the 50-plus age group, as well as for overweight and adipose children and adolescents.

Participation at the Congress requires a separate registration – see www.fibo.de/ehff



The show floor, spread over numerous halls, will showcase new product launches and demos to over 100,000 visitors

year – an interdisciplinary convention organised by the Springer Medizin internet portal and the publisher Ärzte Zeitung Verlags-GmbH, and sponsored by the German Sport University Cologne and the German Society for Sports Medicine and Prevention (DGSP).

Similar 'exercise is medicine' themes will be picked up on Physio Day on 5 April, and at the workshop on Health Management at the Workplace on 3 April. The focus of Physio Day – jointly organised by Thieme Medical Publications and advanced training provider FiHH Das Fortbildungsinstitut – will be on health-orientated sports physical therapy. The workshop on Health Management at the Workplace will be organised by the German Association for Health Management at the Workplace (BGM).

Integrated health & fitness
FIBO's reinforced orientation toward health topics continues at the trade fair, with Hall 7 set to focus on health topics. Along with FIBOmed, this Hall will be positioned right at the intersection of fitness and health. Here, visitors will see targeted, certified products designed specifically for the healthcare market. These will be complemented by special exhibition areas – the 'Active Office' and a 'Measuring Devices and Diagnostics' zone – as well as a 200sq m

show entitled 'The physical therapy office of the future'.

Functional training

Interest in functional training and group fitness continues unabated at gyms – reason enough for FIBO to further expand this area of the show for 2014. In Hall 9a, exhibitors will showcase new products for this free-moving, three-dimensional style of training, including brands such as Transatlantic Fitness, Les Mills and Escape Fitness.

The FIBO Functional Forum, featuring IFAA and Perform Better – also located in Hall 9a – is a new addition presenting the functional training trend through expert lectures and both theoretical and practical training sessions.

This new forum is already generating high levels of interest among gym operators, as Partrick Arntzen of City Fitness says: "We still consider functional training and boxing to be major trends. We're excited to find out what kinds of innovations we'll see in this area at FIBO this year."

Stephan Schulan of Jumpers Fitness echoes this sentiment: "FIBO gives me a concentrated overview of the most important innovations in fitness equipment, including functional training." And Timo Becker from the body + soul Group adds: "I'd like to find out more about trends like cyber fitness, and

functional and athletic training, and even fee-based small-group activities."

FIBO Innovation Award

As every year, a key focus across all areas of FIBO will be to draw attention to the latest, most innovative product developments on show from around 700 international exhibitors. Some of these products will be in the limelight on the Friday of FIBO, as the winners of the FIBO Innovation Award. For the first time, awards will cover five categories: Training Equipment for Fitness, Rehabilitation and Prevention; Health Promotion; Interior & Design; Training Concepts; and Wellness & Beauty. ●

FIBO – facts & figures

Dates:

3–6 April 2014

Venue:

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Opening times:

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Members may need a fresh induction after new facilities are introduced

MAXIMISING return

Refurbishments require a huge amount of capital investment, so what needs to be put in place to make the most of the opportunity they present? Kath Hudson reports

There's little point in creating a wonderful, shiny new facility if nobody knows about it, if the programmes are wrong, or if the staff don't know how the new offering works. So at the same time as project managing the building work and keeping the centre running while the builders are in, operators need to work out how they're going to maximise the opportunity the refurbishment will offer once work has been completed.

We speak to some operators about their approach after a refurbishment.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

A joint effort between Alliance Leisure and Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin Leisure Centre's refit was completed at the end of September 2013.

The refurbishment is the last piece of the puzzle to be put into place, as the

council has already worked hard over the last four years to change the culture, ensuring staff, programmes and services were performing well. Now the facility has been brought up to scratch too.

The redevelopment, completed by Alliance Leisure, includes an extension with a brand new fitness suite, new changing rooms, a new entrance and open reception. Now phase two will start: refurbishing the corridors and adding a new studio.

Alliance Leisure provided a team of impact sales staff to drive membership sales, with staff also seconded from the other council facilities to support the launch and sales process. Marketing collateral, e-marketing and sales training were also made available.

The council also improved retention by closely monitoring its members. "We don't accept sleepers. If someone

hasn't visited for a while, we follow them up. If they're not coming, we re-tailor packages to suit them," says Jamie Groves, head of communications, marketing and leisure at Denbighshire County Council. "We give them a proper induction and a warm welcome on every visit. Statistics are monitored on an hourly basis and changed if not working. We track all our classes, so we know if any are not performing."

Again, this initiative was put into place before the refurbishment, putting strong operational standards in place to help maximise the impact of the new facilities.

The class programme is changed every three months, but since the refurbishment there has been an instructor on the gym floor at all times to invite people to try out new workouts: those whose membership doesn't include classes are offered a



At Stratton St Margaret's LC, a 40-station gym replaced two unpopular squash courts

► free guest pass, which is then tracked with a view to selling them up. Express Workouts also take place at peak hours in the gym – ViPR, kettlebells and so on – to drive engagement.

The business plan targeted 400–475 members, but the club had reached 580 within five months and was still growing. “We structured packages to be competitive,” says Groves. “For a membership fee of just under £1 a day, people are able to use all seven facilities across Denbighshire.”

He adds: “Building a centre only works if you have the right approach, commercial mentality and right cultures within the service. We’re now a very lean and commercially driven provision.”

UPSKILLING STAFF

One Leisure St Ives, run by Huntingdonshire District Council,

relaunched its gym in May 2013 as part of a phased £4.3m redevelopment, doubling the size of the fitness suite and adding a brand new Escape Fitness functional training area. New reception and changing areas were also added, while the aerobics studio, café and crèche were improved and relocated.

After public consultation showed there was local demand, two new facilities were also added: a five-lane tenpin bowling area and a Pure Day Spa with heat experience and treatment rooms – and indeed footfall has increased as a result.

To cope with the increased capacity, a number of new staff were taken on: one full-time and six part-time gym instructors, plus four full-time spa therapists. New staff have been tasked with inducting members and providing a more personal service.

To maximise the impact of the new spa, free trials and introductory offers were launched for current members and membership packages were created that included access to the spa.

Meanwhile, in the gym, all staff undertook Ushomi training to be able to deliver functional training classes and personal training on the functional equipment, as well as Technogym training for the fitness equipment. Functional training is now included in all inductions and programme reviews, and functional training classes have been introduced to teach users how to make the most of the equipment.

Since the functional training area was installed, there has been a 65 per cent increase in the uptake of personal training, providing a valuable new revenue stream.

With enhanced studio facilities available following the refurb, the class programme was also improved with the addition of 30 more classes, including twice as many of the popular group cycling classes.

Prior to the relaunch, staff at the centre worked hard to promote the club and the refurbishment. Due to a number of new housing developments locally, the club knew there was untapped market potential. “We held open weekends, and had pre-opening sales offers, plus the first 100 members to sign up received additional benefits,” says Hudson. “We also did PR to gain coverage in the local press, placed adverts and used Facebook targeted campaigns.”

From the last quarter of 2012, to the last quarter of 2013, there has been a



Staff at One Leisure St Ives were trained to deliver functional training in the new area



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"We don't accept sleepers. If someone hasn't visited for a while we follow them up. If they're not coming, we re-tailor packages to suit them"

74.5 per cent increase in gym usage and membership income has increased by 37.5 per cent.

BLOCK BOOKINGS

Createability's recent refurbishment of the parish council-run club Stratton St Margaret's Leisure Centre in Swindon saw the conversion of two unpopular squash courts into a 40-station gym, while the reception area and old gym were made into a new reception, coffee bar and a new parish council office. Further to this, the sports hall floor was refurbished, a new semi-sprung floor was laid and a 3G floodlit outdoor artificial grass pitch (AGP) was created.

The centre has been rebranded Grange Leisure and continues to be marketed strongly as a community centre. Since the refurbishment, with the centre able to offer greater capacity and more facilities, manager Ian Green is focusing on building relationships with local groups, schools and clubs to get them to use the centre on a routine basis; block bookings are an important focus of the business model, driving guaranteed income and helping ensure targets are hit post-refurb.

Green says: "We're talking to the school next door about how it can use the facility regularly, while Swindon

Town FC is going to use the centre for its community programmes. Now that a sprung floor has been added, a Cero dance club has returned to use the hall. The new AGP gives us more flexibility for football usage, which means the hall can be marked out for other sports like badminton, netball, basketball."

"We're constantly reviewing our programmes anyway, but one thing we'll continue to focus on is developing our junior activities," adds Green. "We've also targeted corporate memberships since the refurb, and attracted the local fire service to join the gym."

A refreshed class programme and a new member journey PT programme are also set to be introduced, and the customer journey inside the gym has also been redefined.

To ensure staff were on-board with the new approach, partner Alliance Leisure delivered training on customer service, sales and retention to the whole team, and ran a workshop on defining Grange Leisure's new brand values, with the key focus on providing welcoming, friendly and motivating service.

Alliance is also helping the parish council promote the changes, with advertising, local media, and social media. Membership numbers are up by 20 per cent in the first month. ●

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MiTonic shakes it up

MiTonic's recovery shake-dispensing machine system is to be rolled out across RFL Management clubs, thanks to a successful trial at its Marlow club in Buckinghamshire. Since the club switched to MiTonics, its daily sales of protein shakes have increased from five to 20. MiTonics, which is also available in Nuffield Health gyms, mixes a tailored protein shake according to the training goal and lean body mass of the individual gym member. Options include Lean Performance designed for tone and definition, Muscle Gain, designed for size and strength, and Diet Meal Replacement which is designed to help members with their weight loss.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **MiTonic**



Maximuscle gets a rebrand

Sports nutrition brand Maximuscle, part of GSK, has been renamed Maxinutrition as part of a long term strategy to broaden the relevance and appeal of protein. The traditional Maximuscle products will be rebranded and divided into four ranges: Recover and Rebuild; Mass and Size; Strength and Power; and Lean Definition. The rebrand is supported by a consumer campaign, feedyourmuscles, which uses real people to demonstrate the difference protein makes to them when they exercise.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **GSK**

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Body Plus meals sign new deals

Body Plus Nutrition has announced a new deal with Nuffield Health and Soho Gyms to supply its range of nutritionally balanced, pre-packed ready meals into the chains. The brand has also added new products to its weight loss range and is introducing a new menu change for customers every eight weeks. It offers four ranges: Body Plus + designed to support diets that target muscle gain, Body Plus =, designed to support diets that target maintenance; Body Plus -, designed to support diets that target fat loss and Body Plus V, designed to support high protein vegetarian diets. Body Plus Nutrition meals retail at £4.99.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Body Plus Nutrition**

Multipower Sportsfood's light protein drink



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Multipower**

European Sports Nutrition Company Atlantic Multipower has developed Fit Protein Lite, with 80 per cent fewer carbs and sugars than Multipower's original Fit Protein drink. Containing 40g of milk protein, Fit Protein Lite is a low carb, low fat protein shake formulated to support muscle building, recovery and losing weight. Fat content is 1g per bottle and the drink supplies muscle building proteins and nutrients for after workouts or as a meal replacement. The drink retails at £3.85 for a 500ml bottle and comes in chocolate, vanilla and strawberry flavours. ▶

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Flapjacks for taste

Whey and Oat Crisp Flapjacks are the latest product from The Protein Works. Made from 100 per cent whey isolate, the flapjacks are formulated to provide protein content as well as being tasty. Co-founder Nick Smith said: "We purposely set out to make a bar that was unrivalled in terms of protein content, texture and taste." The Whey and Oat Crisp Flapjacks are available in Dark Choc Chunk and Cherry Almond varieties.

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD**

Protein Works



Have your seconds First

Protein First has developed a range of protein ice creams with help from food industry experts and Teesside University. The ice creams are fortified with vitamins and minerals and are available in three flavours, French Vanilla, Wild Strawberry and Chocolate Hazelnut. Graham Woods, managing director of Protein First said: "The whey protein isolate in our ice cream is an excellent source of all the essential amino acids and the richest source of branched chain amino acids, which are particularly important for muscle protein synthesis and ensure it is rapidly digested and absorbed by the body, making our ice cream the ideal protein supplement post exercise."

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD** **Protein First**



Bare Naked nutrition

Bare Naked Foods has introduced protein noodles to extend its range of low carb, gluten-free products for weight management and fitness training. Available for gyms to retail and serve in their cafes, the Bare Naked Protein Noodles contain 16 calories per 100g, and are made using the Asian-grown Konjac plant. "Protein Noodles from Bare Naked Foods are for fitness enthusiasts and athletes to increase their protein intake whilst keeping an eye on the carb content", said Ross Mendham, managing director of Bare Naked Foods. "However, protein is also crucial for those people looking to lose weight. The fewer calories a person consumes, the more calories should come from protein to prevent the body from consuming muscle mass for energy."

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD** **Bare Naked**



Hyperice launches Ice Compression Technology

Hyperice USA has created a two-part system for treatment of sports injuries. Available for gyms to retail, the Hyperice device is composed of an 'Ice Cell' and a 'Compression Wrap', that work together to combine compression and cold therapy. Ice is loaded into the cell and as it melts, pockets of air build up, creating a barrier between the ice and the

compression wrap. The compression wrap maintains pressure on the ice and forms a cast around the injured areas. There are five Hyperice products in the range: Utility, Shoulder, Extended Shoulder, Knee and Back. Hyperice is represented in the UK by Solutions for Sport.

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD** **Hyperice**

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PEDAL POWER DESK FOR OFFICE WORKOUT

A cycle desk could be used to boost the fitness of office-based employees and simultaneously power electrical gadgets.

The Big Rig is a hand-built cycle-based machine with a seat and a work surface. The seat can be adjusted and there are a range of gears. When users pedal, the machine converts the energy into an electrical current. On average, adults are said to generate around 100 watts a minute – enough to charge a laptop, smartphone or other gadgets.

The machine has been created by US-based company Pedal Power, which was set up by friends Steve Blood and Andy Wenkin five years ago. Prices for the Big Rig start at US\$2,000 (£1,200).

"Using your own power rather than plugging into the grid is not only fun, but also helps you understand your energy use and reduce your ecological footprint," the pair say. Details: www.pedal-power.com



HANDSTAND YOGA ADDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE



Perfecting your handstand technique to help build up your core strength is the focus of a 90-minute class by the Indabay Yoga Studio in Marylebone, London.

The class starts with 30 minutes of vinyasa yoga before people turn upside-down. Instructors first work on opening the shoulder girdle, move on to strengthening the wrists, and finally focus on the waking up the core to build the strength that's needed for the pose.

The classes are held on Wednesdays and Sundays and handstand novices are welcome! Details: www.indabayoga.com



NIGHT-TIME TRAIL RUNNING IN CUMBRIA

Running along trails at night is said to add a whole new dimension to typical off-road challenges. Relying only on a head torch, sensations are heightened and adventure abounds as you try to avoid hanging branches and pick your way over logs, puddles and other natural obstacles in your path.

With this in mind, sports event organiser Open Adventure has set up a series of night-time 10k races across the UK. The last one is due to be held around Lake Coniston in Cumbria on 5 April. The route has been put together with the help of local adventure racer Ant Cooper and costs only £10 to enter. Details: www.openadventure.com

PHOTO © OPENADVENTURE / JAMES KIRBY

Pooch pampering at new spa

A luxury spa with a difference has opened at a country estate in Yorkshire – the difference being that it's been designed for dogs.

At the new Dog Spa at the Raithwaite Estate in Whitby, pooches can enjoy a whole range of services including Dead Sea mud or thalassotherapy baths, or a specialist wedding ceremony pruning session, through to more conventional grooming and trimming treatments.

Services can be performed by professional groomer Hazel Gill, who has won the Coton de Tulear best of breed category at dogs show Crufts since 1997, prides herself on paying extra attention to the dog's happiness and wellbeing.

There are also six luxury centrally-heated dog lodges available, while a 73-bedroom hotel on-site has dog-friendly rooms too. Details: www.raithwaiteestate.com



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