

health club management

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

No 208

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Tapping into wellness tourism



As health clubs align themselves more closely with wellness, exciting new opportunities are emerging. Among these is the boom in wellness tourism, whose significant potential has been outlined in a new report, the *Global Wellness Tourism Economy*, unveiled at the first Global Wellness Tourism Congress in New Delhi in October.

The organisers of the event, which was held in conjunction with the 2013 Global Spa & Wellness Summit, commissioned SRI International to carry out the research to benchmark the global market. It revealed that the economic impact of wellness tourism is a huge US\$1.3trn a year.

Wellness tourism already accounts for 14 per cent of total global tourism revenues

The opportunities are there for clubs to harness wellness tourism to drive revenue, build communities and attract new markets

and it's forecast to grow on average 9.9 per cent annually over the next five years – nearly twice the rate of global tourism overall – reaching US\$678.5bn, or 16 per cent of total tourism revenues, by 2017.

The researchers tracked two groups of wellness tourists: primary being those travelling specifically to maintain or enhance personal wellbeing, by visiting a destination spa or retreat; and secondary being those who travel for other reasons, but who want to maintain a healthy lifestyle on the road.

This might seem one step removed from the business model of a typical health club,

but there are synergies that could strengthen relationships with existing members and forge links with new customers.

I've just returned from a Juice Master retreat – a week of juicing and exercise designed as a catalyst for lifestyle change – and see clear opportunities for collaboration.

Firstly, while retreats in general are a great kickstart, it's easy to slip back to old ways when the stresses of everyday life return. Health clubs could partner with retreats to support returning wellness tourists with fitness and nutrition programmes, delivered in-club, to help them maintain healthy habits.

Alternatively, clubs could run their own retreats: residential stress management courses, hiking or yoga weekends. SRI found 84 per cent of wellness trips are domestic, and wellness tourists are also high yield: they spend, on average, 130 per cent more than the average global tourist. These are people who are willing to invest in their health, and a market well worth getting involved with.

My own experience also suggests a good proportion of wellness tourists are not current gym-goers, and aren't likely to join a gym until they feel they're in better shape. A retreat or spa is often seen as an accessible first step to better health, and so appeals to different audiences. But by the time they've completed their retreat – perhaps having dipped their toe into physical activity for the first time in years, losing a bit of weight, feeling mentally and physically better – they might be ready for the gym, again provided a seamless transition can be put in place.

Health clubs can serve the secondary wellness tourist market too, by making facilities available to travellers; models like payasUgym.com can help exploit this sector.

The opportunities are there for clubs to harness wellness tourism to drive revenue, build communities and attract new markets.

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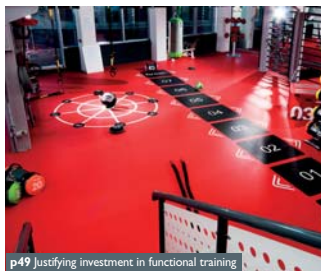
WELCOME TO HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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p72 Adam Parr and Sir Keith Mills of Sported (above left and right) on the foundation's efforts to fulfil the legacy promise of the 2012 Olympics



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Buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p93



WRITE TO REPLY



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



Loss of TV signal could be caused by a 4G mast being turned on in your area

TV reception set to be affected by 4G mobile data switch-on

I write to you on the subject of the 4G mobile data switch-on, and its likely impact on leisure facilities.

The launch of 4G in the UHF 800mhz bandwidth was delayed as the frequency range to be used was the top of the TV band. This means it's difficult for a TV tuner to distinguish between a TV signal and a strong mobile phone signal.

The information I have gleaned is that systems with communal aerials – including leisure centres, health clubs and hotels – will have problems with signal loss and channels being blocked if they are located near a 4G base station. Also, buildings with a lot of coax cable may pick up 4G signal through the single and double screened cable.

Filters are available, but in commercial situations these are chargeable, and additional filtering will also be required at the aerial and distribution points

within the building. In a gym, with the current trend for integrated TV screens in CV equipment, this could mean anything from five to 70 TV screens in a single room and in some cases up to 3 miles of coax cable in the building. These sites could have problems tuning TVs and with channels holding their signal – an issue that will only get worse as more people use 4G mobile phones and as the signal strengths increase.

O2, 3 and Vodafone have now launched 4G in a few cities – with problems already reported by some sites in those areas – with UK-wide roll-out in 2014–15. If you see problems, don't blame your fitness equipment or the TV screen until you've checked to see if the loss of signal is from a 4G mast being turned on in your area.

Alan Cuthbert
MD, Leisure Sound Solutions

Operators must invest in management training

I was interested to read Liz Terry's comments about there being too many 'dreadful' health club managers (see <http://lei.sr?a=5CSU8>)

As I look back over my time working for a number of global fitness operators, I find myself agreeing with these comments: opportunities came quickly, which was great, but often without a robust training plan, coaching or support. Although passionate and hard-working, in hindsight I can see I too was over-promoted and left to sink or swim.

At Xcite West Lothian Leisure we strive to do things differently, continuously developing employees. That includes management training, including CMI Leadership qualifications L3 & 5, ILM coaching, interview techniques, safety management and finance for non-financial managers. There is also extensive support – line management coaching, monthly business meetings and reports, for example – set alongside robust processes and management tools.

We've also enabled a number of managers to gain accountancy degrees or a BSc in business management, where we felt it would add value to individuals and jobs.

Ian Henry
Training and development manager,
West Lothian Leisure



Terry: Too many 'dreadful' health club managers

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Budget clubs might be better off recruiting a smaller team of motivated PTs

Budget clubs must focus on PT churn to address member churn

I was very interested to read the three-part retention series by Guy Griffiths this summer. I completely agree with his thoughts on review sessions, gym floor contact and absent member calls. However, something our sector doesn't seem to be addressing is how we deliver this within a budget club staffing model.

Many budget gyms have a huge team of PTs who are often expected to undertake all member liaison. But for them all to make enough money to stay motivated, upwards of 20 per cent of members would need to pay for PT, and that's just not realistic in most cases. This leads to high levels of churn among PTs.

I believe clubs would be far better off recruiting a smaller, higher quality, motivated PT team:

1. Work out how many gym floor hours you need, not want. Make sure your class timetable, inductions and gym floor walking are all accounted for.
2. Work out what your expected total number of PT clients is. Take an average of 4 per cent of your total membership.
3. Divide the total number of PT clients by about 18 (the number of

clients needed by each PT to keep them with you long term).

4. Point 3 should give you the number of PTs your club can hold. Point 1 will give you the number of hours you need to service your club. Divide the number of hours by the number of PTs and you have your offering to PTs – the hours they need to work for the club in exchange for operating as a PT there. This should be no more than 15 hours a week. If it is, go back to point 1 and think about members' expectations of the club. Do you need 50 group ex classes a week or would 30 suffice? Does everyone need a one-to-one induction or could small groups work and promote member engagement?

Most budget clubs already have intelligent IT systems in place, allowing any staff in the club to spend more time out of the back office. However, combining that with a highly motivated PT team that has time on the gym floor to effectively interact with members can help stem attrition rates in the budget sector.

Jack Malin
MD, Your Lifestyle

Wearable technology for staff will boost retention

Your recent feature on wearable technology (see *HCM* Sept 13, p68) highlighted the benefits in terms of DIY healthcare for consumers, but didn't mention the potential for staff to use the technology to improve customer service and retention.

At this year's Gladstone Summit, several popular workshops on portable technology showed the main desire for leisure operators is to remove the traditional barriers at reception and get staff interacting more personally with members. This is starting to evolve with tablets, but to take that a stage further in the future using something like Google Glass would have huge potential for the way leisure operators work.

Being able to move around the facility would lead to a higher number of interactions and improve customer service – and ultimately retention, as recently highlighted by Dr Melvyn Hillsdon, who said interacting once a month increases the likelihood of attendance by 70 per cent.

Wearable technology could flag up 'at risk' members in your facility, with accompanying images of them right in front of you. Imagine being able to then expertly interact with those members, with their membership details in your sight – letting them know how many spaces are available in their favourite class and booking them in there and then, for example – all through the power of wearable technology.

Leon Houseman
Marketing manager,
Gladstone Health & Leisure



Google Glass could help staff 'read' members as they interact

The New Calorie Killer & Membership Builder from StairMaster.® The TreadClimber® 5

An interview with Travis Vaughan,
director of product management
for StairMaster



**TreadClimber 5
offers a natural
walking motion**

The fitness equipment market is crowded. What's special about StairMaster's TreadClimber 5? Walking is the #1 fitness activity in the world. TreadClimber 5 takes walking and makes it a more effective way to burn calories.

Before the TreadClimber 5, a walker could burn more calories by adding speed or adding incline. Both are effective, but they are also hard on the body, and many exercisers are simply not able, or not willing, to do it.

Over the past few years, multiple independent research studies have shown that when compared to walking on a flat treadmill, walking at the same speed on the TreadClimber burns two times as many calories. Put another way, walking 3.5-4 MPH on the TreadClimber 5 – which almost anyone can do – provides the same calorie burn as running 7-8 MPH. That's amazing.

Why not buy an incline trainer – one with very steep incline?

Adding incline to walking does burn more calories, but the biomechanics of pushing off of a steeply-inclined surface create a lot of stress on ankles, knees and hips. In contrast, the TreadClimber 5 creates added calorie burn without this added stress. Each foot is supported by an independent treadle that rises and descends as you walk.

The "magic" is that you are effectively walking up an incline, but are pushing off of a flat surface. The result is a low-impact, natural walking feel – many people compare it to the feel of walking on sand – with additional calorie burn.

What about other alternative cardio equipment?

Unlike most other alternative cardio machines, TreadClimber 5 is a natural walking motion. It adapts to any stride pattern, it's easy to use, intuitive and accessible to all fitness levels.

Will TreadClimber 5 be dependable?

StairMaster has a long history of making durable, high quality products for commercial fitness facilities. The real breakthrough with this design is its simplicity. TreadClimber 5 is the "love child" of our StairMaster StairClimber and a treadmill drivetrain. We've

combined two proven technologies to deliver a very new exercise experience.

On the path to launch, we've designed – and re-designed – the TreadClimber 5 multiple times. There are literally years of lab and field testing behind this product, and the final design is the result of this rigorous process. We're very proud of what we've developed.

Why should club owners invest in a TreadClimber 5?

Payback period is fast. TreadClimber 5 can help sell memberships more effectively than any product we've ever developed. It's for deconditioned prospective members, active agers and 'new to fitness' exercisers. For regular exercisers looking to join a club that promotes results and embraces innovation, it's also a winner.

Clubs that want the best exercise options and the best brand see the value in the StairMaster TreadClimber 5.



The 2013 FLAME Awards were held in Telford

FLAME Awards 2014 categories revised

The FLAME Awards criteria have received a shake-up in a bid to better reflect how the leisure sector has evolved and to create opportunities for clubs, industry suppliers and stakeholders to celebrate how their work impacts health.

The FLAME Awards 2014 will also see the introduction of new awards and, for the first time, operators and suppliers will be up against each other in a number of new categories.

New categories include 'Workplace Wellbeing', 'Shaping the Future Generation', 'Go Green' and 'Go Outdoors'.

Another addition is the 'Supplier of the Year' Award. This category will give suppliers the opportunity to put themselves forward against the best in the sector.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U4xoi>

Everyone Active and Fit for Sport run Legacy Games

More than 700 children took part in a day of activities and healthy competition designed to deliver the sporting legacy of the London 2012 Olympics Games.

The Legacy Games event, which took place at the Harrow Leisure Centre in October and was run in partnership by Fit for Sport and Everyone Active, aimed to deliver a legacy of sport and community engagement to children aged 7–11 years.

Everyone Active and Fit for Sport have made a joint pledge to have 500,000 under-16s engaged and active, to be achieved through a host of Legacy Games days for primary school children across the UK; Harrow was the third so far.

The event started with a 'motivational mass warm-up' with GB Olympic swimmer Steve Parry before dividing the children into smaller groups for a variety of sports activities and team-building challenges, with the aim of inspiring them to lead a healthy lifestyle. In the afternoon there were competitive sprint races and inter-school relay races, with teams of up to 30 taking part. The day ended with a medals ceremony. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K4F3l>

£28m health centre for Leeds

The multi-million pound wellbeing centre Holt Park Active, located on Holidale Approach in Leeds, has opened to the public.

The centre offers a range of flexible spaces for activities and support services that suit people of all ages.

It features a 70-station Bodyline gym, 25m pool, hydrotherapy and learning pools, dance studio, café, garden, sports hall, multi-activity rooms, Changing Places facility and meeting / training areas.

The facility hosts a wide range of activities including cycling, kettlebell sessions, tai-chi and pilates. For children there's a bouncy castle.

Aiming to encourage residents of all ages to lead an active lifestyle, the centre will also host a range of activities for older people and those with physical or learning disabilities.

The project to build the new centre was overseen by Leeds City Council, with funding from the Department of Health through the Private Finance Initiative.

The facility replaces the Holt Park Leisure Centre on Holt Road, which closed last December after operating for 36 years.



Facilities at the new wellbeing centre include a 70-station Bodyline gym

Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Leeds City Council's executive member for leisure, says: "Having watched the building take shape over the past year, it's so exciting knowing that Holt Park Active is now open to the public. I'm sure this fantastic new facility will quickly become a hub for the whole community, as well as something that the city can be genuinely proud of."

"The centre is one of the biggest investments in leisure in Leeds for the last 30 years and will help a huge number of people to live healthy lifestyles." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=oi1q9>

50th Pure Gym site opens in Sunderland

Low-cost fitness operator Pure Gym opened its 50th site in September, located in Sunderland.

In keeping with its policy of making fitness affordable and convenient, the new site is located at a Tesco Extra store.

Angela Crawshaw, property director for Pure Gym, says: "The footfall that a Tesco supermarket receives is obviously a huge bonus for us, but as a busy gym operation we're also able to reciprocate that to a certain extent with hungry gym-goers."

"Having a gym and a supermarket under one roof also makes it easier for customers to fit exercise into their normal routine, and we hope that the collaboration will serve as yet further motivation for individuals to combine a healthy diet with regular exercise."



Pure Gym expects to be operating a total of 80 clubs by the end of April

Having opened 50 gyms in just under four years, Pure Gym is aiming to reach 100 sites by the end of 2014. Monthly memberships start at £10.99, with no fixed contract, and members have access 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=E557x>

Edited by Aoife Dowling. Email: aoifedowling@leisuremedia.com

LA Leisure launches LAX brand

A new premium health club concept – LAX – launched its first club in the City of London at the end of October.

LAX is a brand new health club brand developed by LA Leisure, which also owns LA Fitness. However, although LAX members have automatic access to all LA Fitness clubs, LAX is positioned as a distinct, upmarket brand.

Built over three floors, the club offers top of the range Technogym CV and resistance equipment. One floor down from the main gym is a 250sq m (2,690sq ft) dedicated functional floor offering space for group training sessions, personal training and independent workouts. Equipment on offer in this functional area includes an Octagon rig, Bulgarian bags, steel bags and Dynamax balls.

Also on this floor is a large group exercise studio offering the full range of Les Mills classes alongside pilates, yoga and Zumba; a 97sq m (1,044sq ft) cycle studio with capacity for 50–60 bike; and a Learning Pod for member education and assessments – body composition analysis, postural analysis and fitness testing are available.

LAX has been designed specifically with time-pressured City workers in mind and



LAX aims to help City workers maximise the impact of their workouts

offers small group training sessions in the functional area and on the gym floor in the shape of LAX20 and LAX30. These 20- and 30-minute sessions focus on maximising people's workouts in the limited time they may have available.

Membership has been set at a very competitive £79 a month, with early joiners being offered a £69 a month deal.

While further LAX sites may be rolled out within London, the club is also being used as a testbed to trial new concepts and services, with a view to potentially rolling some of these out across the LA Fitness estate. CEO Martin Long says there is also the possibility of smaller format LAX clubs in the future.

Exercise could be as beneficial as medication

Exercise could be as beneficial as pills for people who have suffered from a stroke or experience heart conditions, a study by the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) has found.

Scientists studied hundreds of trials involving nearly 340,000 patients to explore the benefits of both exercise and drugs in preventing death, with the work being conducted by researchers at the London School of Economics, the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute at Harvard Medical School, and the Stanford University School of Medicine.

Of the material analysed, the scientists were able to identify 305 medical trials that were of use, with each trial exploring the management of conditions such as existing heart disease, stroke rehabilitation, heart failure and pre-diabetes.

Findings showed that physical exertion and activity rivalled some heart-related drugs, while also outperforming medication for strokes. They found that exercise was the best form of help for strokes. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=RoayC>



PTF's managing director Chris Andrews

PTF takes charge of facilities for Le Creuset

Corporate fitness provider Personal Touch Fitness has been appointed by the UK subsidiary of Le Creuset to supervise wellbeing facilities for its employees.

PTF will manage facilities for more than 60 employees at the kitchenware manufacturer's headquarters in Andover, Hampshire, UK.

"Personal Touch Fitness provided us with the exact solution we required," says Martin McGregor, inventory and compliance manager for Le Creuset.

"They listened, advised and acted quickly to fulfil our requests, and nothing has been too much trouble for them." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K5x7l>

New 'Smart Fitness' gym to be revealed

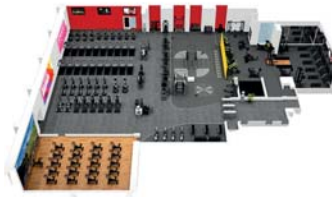
Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) is to launch a new Smart Fitness low-cost gym in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, in December.

Smart Fitness will be Dewsbury's first 'no frills' gym with a monthly fee of £14.95 for a gym-only membership. Situated in Dewsbury Sports Centre, Smart Fitness aims to appeal to gym customers who want to "train and go".

KAL funded the development in partnership with Kirklees Council.

The gym will be fitted with Technogym equipment, with more than 100 stations including cardio machines with cardio theatre, and a strength area including a lifting platform and Technogym plate-loaded Pure Strength equipment.

There will also be a large functional training area, including the brand new OMNIA



The gym will house more than 100 stations and cost £14.95 a month

functional training rig alongside free space for workouts.

Members also have the option to add bolts including swimming and group exercise – the development includes refurbished dance studios and a new group cycling studio which has been designed with virtual class technology. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=agkzh>

NICE releases health guidance to combat obesity

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has released guidance for helping overweight and obese people to achieve and maintain a healthier weight.

NICE found that, with the increasing risk of serious conditions attached to obesity – such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease – the long-term costs to the NHS are now an estimated £5.1bn a year.

NICE has called for providers to emphasise to adults the importance of physical activity in weight loss, with programmes that focus on long-term lifestyle change rather than temporary weight loss.

David Stalker, CEO of ukactive, says: "This is a great move by NICE to advocate for the advancement of programmes such as Let's Get Moving and to take seriously exercise and physical activity as a means of reducing serious disease.

"Being able to provide our local authorities and GPs with information on services to reduce physical inactivity in their local area is absolutely fundamental."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Qzq7r>



The network will target people living in the city

Online network tackles urban health issues

A online network has been launched to help people and families cope with the negative effects of living or working in a city.

The City Health Network has been designed to make different urban communities feel happier and healthier. Entrepreneur Chris Davis decided the differences between rural and urban living needed to be acknowledged head-on and thus created the network.

"I was at a meeting in London in which the conversation moved on to how social networking could be used to help improve the health of a London community. This got me thinking about the general health issues that arise from living in the city," says Davis.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G7P4b>

payasUgym teams up with HSBC

Online lead generation service payasUgym.com has teamed up with HSBC to encourage more young people to start using fitness facilities and become more active.

The partnership will see the service – which provides a number of flexible health club deals and other offers for fitness pursuits across the UK – being offered to 1.35 million HSBC account holders between the ages of 18 and 25 years.

The aim is to give HSBC young account holders better access to the 1,500 centres that participate in the payasUgym programme. payasUgym allows users to manage their own account online, where they can top it up with credit and then use the funds to buy vouchers for gym use at participating venues.

HSBC has allocated £1m to launch its campaign to young adults and has also partnered with Sony and a major mobile phone network to complement the scheme.

"Our goal is to help increase participation levels in health and fitness in the UK," says



The campaign will give young HSBC customers better access to gyms

Ed Luck, marketing director of payasUgym. "By targeting the young adult population of the UK alongside HSBC, we hope to encourage a new generation of gym goers to start using the clubs listed at payasUgym.com."

The partnership with HSBC will add to payasUgym's list of national marketing partnerships, with the business previously securing deals with Tesco Clubcard and O2.

The HSBC campaign launched in October.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c9toX>

Walking 'could save thousands of lives'

Walking regularly could help to prevent the deaths of tens of thousands of people every year, according to a new report.

The 'Walking Works' report by the Ramblers Association and Macmillan Cancer Support says walking could transform people's health, saving an estimated 37,000 lives a year. It says that, if everyone in England did the recommended 150 minutes of moderate physical exercise every week, it would prevent 6,700 cases of breast cancer, stop 4,700 people getting colorectal cancer and lead to nearly 300,000 fewer cases of type 2 diabetes a year.

These figures echo the findings of a recent study by the *British Medical Journal*, which found that exercise could be as beneficial as pills for some conditions including heart disease (see p11). Another recent study found walking an hour a day could significantly cut the risk of breast cancer.



The report suggests that regular walking could save 37,000 lives a year

"We're facing a serious crisis of inactivity, but there is a simple solution," says Benedict Southworth, chief executive officer of the Ramblers Association. "We need to see greater investment in initiatives which promote walking as the most accessible and affordable way for people to get active."

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

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Finnish ladies club arrives in Essex

A new health club brand, Livia Exclusive Ladies Health Club, has launched in Essex, marking a first UK site for the Finnish operator.

Located in Colchester, the club features HUR resistance equipment that forms a circuit, combining strength and endurance training with the aim of providing safer, effective exercise for women of all ages and abilities – from mainstream exercisers to seniors. The HUR equipment works with SmartCard technology to keep track of members' progress, manage training programmes and provide feedback, with in-built automatic programme updates.

The Livia Exclusive Ladies Health Club brand was founded by Mats Manderbacka, MD of HUR in Finland and developer of the SmartCard technology, following the growth of



The ladies club houses HUR resistance equipment that forms a circuit

ladies-only health clubs and 30-minute activity concepts over recent years. Off the back of his research into the effectiveness of strength and aerobic training for weight loss, Manderbacka opened his first ladies-only club in Finland – called Actilife – followed by a further two Livia sites in Helsinki. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F5K9j>

Gym users powering facilities after refurb

theclub at DoubleTree by Hilton, at Cadbury House in Congresbury, has completed a £600,000 refurbishment of its facilities, in addition to becoming the first venue in the world to use Renew energy harvesting technology from Technogym's Artis line.

The new equipment harnesses the human energy used at the gym and feeds it directly into the facility's power grid, significantly reducing the running costs of the fitness centre.

The health club has installed 42 new pieces of equipment, including cardio, strength and functional pieces from the Artis range.

"Not only does the new kit look great, it is ergonomically designed to maximise the training experience and will provide our



The equipment harnesses the human energy expended at the gym

members with the optimum workout," says Jason Eaton, general manager at theclub. "Moreover, we are leveraging human movement to offset the level of energy needed to power the club, which is great for the environment." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=k2t6y>

The Pulse undergoes refurb with Jordan Fitness

Independent health club The Pulse in Ripley, Derbyshire, recently completed a refurbishment, re-opening on 1 October.

The club worked with Jordan Fitness to create a new functional fitness area with a range of functional equipment. It has also

adopted Jordan Fitness' new Results Based Training (RBT) system to deliver an intensive workshop programme for its members.

The Pulse, which has been operational since 1995, has more than 1,000 members. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u4e8W>

M3 INDOOR CYCLE M5 ELLIPTICAL AIR RESISTANCE RANGE



"Many of the participants in my classes are keen cyclists, so seeing workout data during the ride is hugely important to them. Until now it's been a bit of guess work and heart rate monitors. Seeing RPM, Watts and Gear numbers has been a great way to set a standard for the class workout."

Daniel Francis
Fitness Manager
GSK House Fitness Centre

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Ingleby (right) founded Energised Performance

Ingleby named 2013 Personal Trainer to Watch

Life Fitness has announced that Kim Ingleby has won its 2013 Personal Trainers to Watch competition.

Ingleby, from Bristol, UK, was selected from more than 1,500 nominations across 43 countries.

The top 10 finalists were flown in to demonstrate their training skills in front of a panel of five judges, where they were randomly paired with a volunteer for their demonstration.

Ingleby is the founder of Energised Performance in Bristol and her training philosophy combines the mind and body to enhance clients' physical and mental wellbeing. She recently returned to full health after battling Weil's disease and receiving pre-cancerous cervical cancer treatments earlier this year.

"Kim's story is an inspiration to all who took part in the competition," says Life Fitness president Chris Clawson. "The resilience, strength and humility she has shown in her journey are awe-inspiring. She is truly deserving of this award – for her achievements both inside and outside the gym." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z6S4p>

Andover centre first to run NCS

Andover Leisure Centre has become the first leisure centre to run the government's National Citizen Service (NCS) scheme.

The NCS is a government-funded scheme for 16- and 17-year olds across the country, which aims to give teenagers new skills and confidence at an important age.

Andover Leisure Centre, managed by Valley Leisure, took on the scheme to develop new partnerships in the community and strengthen relationships with local schools. It began with a week of outdoor activities, then in the second week the youngsters lived in university halls, looking after themselves and keeping to a budget. The third and final week saw students planning and delivering social action projects to benefit their community.

James Blyth, assistant manager of sports and activity development for Valley Leisure, says: "It's clear that the students gained far more from the process than they initially anticipated." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=J8r6S>



The NCS scheme aims to give teenagers new skills

Star Trac launches Spinpower in the UK

Star Trac has launched its first Spinpower Instructor Training course, to provide certified Spinning instructors, fitness professionals and enthusiasts with advanced education to understand the principles of power training.

The two-day course teaches participants how to train and coach with power, use the Personal Spinning Threshold (PST) test to create individualised training zones, and design profiles for power-based classes.

Instructors earn the official Spinpower Instructor certification after passing both online written and onsite practical assessments.

Abby McEvoy, wellness manager at Archive Lifestyle, which hosted the first course, says: "Participants' heart rate, RPM and power output is displayed to them throughout the class, and so far the members' feedback suggests they are working much harder than before, as they know when they are taking it easier." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R9j7A>



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Australia: New national outdoor training guidelines

Fitness Australia has launched new outdoor training guidelines, in a bid to help registered exercise professionals and businesses to manage risks, comply with local government regulations, and maintain professional and ethical practice.

Outdoor fitness services represent one of the most significant growth areas in the Australian fitness industry, and as the range of outdoor activities on offer continues to expand rapidly, Fitness Australia felt it necessary to launch these new guidelines to provide best practice standards and risk management for the outdoor setting.

Guidance is offered in fields such as risk management through pre-exercise screening; setting and space requirements; equipment selection and consideration for weather conditions; enhancing effectiveness through planning and delivery; and professional and ethical practice including noise level, lighting, disturbances, business signage and sustainability considerations.

Plus Fitness continues expansion in Australia

Australian 24/7 fitness franchise Plus Fitness is continuing its expansion with new club openings in New South Wales and Western Australia.

The company directors had originally planned to operate traditional 'big box' health clubs in Sydney, but recognised that consumer demands were changing, with people wanting more flexible, cost-effective memberships. As a result, the model was changed to 24-hour gyms, with the clubs' footprint also reduced to allow for lower operating costs and, in turn, lower membership fees and no contract terms.

Plus Fitness already has over 100 sites and, with its new expansion strategy launched in October, is aiming for 150 by the middle of next year.

South African launch for Les Mills programming

Group exercise specialist Les Mills International has entered South Africa in a deal with Planet Fitness, which launched the programming at 15 of its clubs in October.

Rory Sweetlove, MD of Planet Fitness, says: "South Africa has been waiting a long time for this type of world-class group fitness experience. We're very excited to be the first health club operation in Africa to bring this offering to our members."

Hard Candy continues roll-out

Following its recent opening of two new clubs in Rome, Italy (see *HCM* Oct 13, p16), international premium chain Hard Candy Fitness – a partnership between Madonna and NeV – has announced two further locations: in Berlin, Germany, and Toronto, Canada.



Nicole Winhoffer, Madonna's PT, runs a class in Berlin

The Berlin club was officially opened by Madonna on 17 October and is expected to be the first of several Hard Candy locations in the city, developed in partnership with fitness entrepreneurs Dr Jürgen Jopp and Ralf Jopp.

Alongside the gym, the 2,500sq m club offers dedicated spaces for PT, group cycling, yoga and pilates. There's also a large group fitness studio with floor-to-ceiling windows. Other facilities include a 25m pool, steamroom, sauna, café and three large terraces providing plenty of space to exercise and relax outdoors.

Meanwhile, the 3,900sq m Toronto club – located in the heart of downtown – is scheduled to open this autumn. The full-scale club will offer the brand's signature modern style and high-end amenities, including extensive cardio, functional strength and personal training spaces, as well as separate studios for everything from cycling and pilates to yoga and cardio-dance. Hard Candy Fitness' signature Addicted to Sweat workouts will also be offered, along with a complete selection of traditional group fitness programmes.

Vivafit signs master franchise for Oman

Women's fitness franchise Vivafit has signed an agreement for Oman with local business the Alkhonji Group. The group's main focus is in real estate, but it also operates in many other areas, including women's clothing stores.

Construction of the first two clubs in Muscat has already begun, with the opening scheduled for January, with five units planned within the first year and, in five years, 12 clubs in Muscat and two in the rest of the country. The clubs will be full-sized units including two studios, but will adopt the new Vivafit model where the machine-based circuit is simply one of the classes on the timetable.



Vivafit will work with Oman's Alkhonji Group

Millennium Resort wellness club for Oman

Millennium Resort Mussanah in Oman has expanded its offerings by opening its new Beach Club – a multi-purpose facility that will offer health-conscious guests and visitors the chance to have treatments from around the world.

The Zayna Spa at the Beach Club features a hammam, steamroom, spa pool, relaxation lounge and sauna.

The spa provides separate facilities for ladies, with a discreet entrance and dedicated rooms for complete privacy. Treatments focus on renewal of mind, body and spirit, and use local holistic remedies and organic ingredients to relieve anxiety, stress and

embedded tensions through the latest modern and traditional techniques.

The Beach Club has also been fitted with a gym using Technogym equipment, as well as a kids' club, restaurant and shisha lounge.

"The introduction of our new spa and health and fitness club will help elevate the senses and enhance people's overall physical and mental health," says Millennium Resort Mussanah's recreation manager Joe Geeganage. "We will continue to bring the best products and services, fused with Omani hospitality, to ensure our guests and visitors leave us with a sense of fulfilment and rejuvenation."

Caesar Spa & Fitness to open



The new club is located on the former site of the Mauritskadebad pool, which dates back to 1883

Caesar Fitness & Spa Resort is set to open in The Hague, Netherlands, in December.

The 4,400sq m, city centre club occupies the former site of the Mauritskadebad, the first covered swimming pool in the Netherlands, and the core of the building is a reconstruction of the 1883 baths. The original cast iron columns and some decorative details will be used, combining both new and old architecture.

Owned by Dutch fitness entrepreneur Hans van Os, who also funded the development, the club is designed to offer a full fitness and spa in the heart of the city. The holistic philosophy focuses on 'awareness training', encouraging members to listen to and understand their own mind and body. The offering combines physical training and relaxation in a bid to

leave members in-tune with themselves, both mentally and physically. Membership of the premium club costs €120 every four weeks.

The 1,500sq m Life Fitness-equipped fitness suite includes a gym, mind-body studio, aerobics studio, group cycling area, free weight zone and spacious changing rooms.

The 1,500sq m spa offers four different saunas – including a 35-person capacity Kelo sauna – plus a steamroom, hammam, rasul, whirlpool and cold plunge pool. There's also a 20m x 10m swimming pool, relaxation area, restaurant and lounge. Alongside this are 400sq m of beauty facilities.

The concept has been 15 years in the making, and van Os has not ruled out similar developments in the future.

EHFA publishes European operator report

EHFA (the European Health & Fitness Association) and Deloitte have partnered to release an update to the *European Health & Fitness Operators* report, published in October.

The report outlines the major players in the European health and fitness industry, with details of the top 20 players by number of members and number of clubs, including a comparison with their standing in previous issues of the report.

There's also an overview of developments that have taken place in the industry throughout 2013, including details of increased activity on the mergers and acquisitions front.

The report gives details of M&A activity in the first nine months of 2013, including a number of private equity firms investing in operators in the discount segment: NorthHolding bought a majority share in German low-cost provider Jumper Fitness, while Pure Gym and The Gym Group found new financial partners in the UK. Also in the UK, Exercise4Less received a cash injection, announced in September, to drive its expansion plans.

In the first nine months of 2013, fitness operators across Europe received a reported combined cash injection of more than €1.5bn to fuel further growth.

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Keiser UK makes changes to management team

After more than 10 years with Keiser UK, Tim Colston has stepped down as managing director to pursue other enterprises within the fitness industry.

Colston's duties included growing the Keiser brand in the UK and ensuring the company met the challenges of the changing UK market.

Customer relations manager Jackie Broome will take over the day-to-day operational running of Keiser UK, while Gary Oleinik will continue in his role as sales director, supported by sales manager Colin Averis.

Colston will continue to work with Keiser UK on special projects, in a consultancy capacity. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=t8w7P>



Jonathan Spaven will oversee expansion plans

The Gym appoints Spaven as property director

Jonathan Spaven has accepted a new position as property director with The Gym Group, the fast-growing 24-hour budget gym chain in the UK.

This announcement follows news in June that The Gym has secured £50m funding to grow the property portfolio, opening between 20 and 30 new gyms each year.

Spaven, who was previously Matalan's director of property, says: "The budget gym sector is growing, now occupying 18 per cent of the total gym market. Not bad for a concept which, before 2008, did not exist in the UK. In my previous role, I managed a portfolio of 217 stores, which has equipped me well for my new role at The Gym."

Spaven will sit on the board of The Gym and will head up a team of four acquisition managers and a property development manager. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R6f9G>

EHFA positions itself for growth

EHFA (European Health and Fitness Association) has announced the appointment of Nathalie Smeeman as executive director from 1 November.

The appointment follows the approval of the 'EHFA Plan for Growth' at a board meeting and general assembly in Cologne, Germany, in April.

Smeeman holds a MSc in marketing from Groningen University in the Netherlands. She has been head of marketing and communication for SportAccord in Lausanne, Switzerland, for the past four years. Before that, she worked for the Olympic Committee and National Sport Federation in the Netherlands for nine years, with her last position being the director of marketing, communications and events.

Harm Tegelaars, president of EHFA, says: "Nathalie's background, with more than 15 years of experience in Europe in the field of associations for physical activity and sport, will be extremely valuable in the next spurt of growth for EHFA."

"She has the right skillsets and experience to further develop the association for the benefit of our members and partners."

Herman Rutgers, EHFA board member and former executive director, adds: "Having spent



Smeeman has Olympic Committee experience

over five years as the first EHFA executive director, coupled with my previous 15 years in the sector, I know what it takes to be successful and am convinced Mrs Smeeman is the perfect choice for the next phase of EHFA's development.

"Together with Harm and the other board members and staff, I will be very happy to offer my assistance in the transition phase and introduce her to the many key partners of EHFA. I welcome Nathalie to EHFA and the industry and look forward to working with her." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=7q4A3>

New training manager for Jordan Fitness

Functional fitness specialist Jordan Fitness has appointed Mark Laws as the new training academy manager for its continued professional development (CPD) training courses through the Jordan Fitness Academy.

Laws has worked in health and fitness for eight years, providing functional fitness training to people with a wide range of

physical abilities – from elite athletes through to deconditioned beginners.

As a strength and conditioning coach, Laws trained Sheffield United Football Club, Castleford Tigers Rugby League and Yorkshire County Cricket Club. He also worked with the Chinese 2008 Olympic Squad, assisting with the training of medallists. In addition, Laws has lectured on athlete development for the International Ice Hockey Federation.

As the training academy manager at Jordan Fitness, Laws' role includes managing a team of trainers delivering workshops and seminars – as part of the newly launched Results Based Training system – through the REPs-accredited Jordan Fitness Academy. He will also be involved in developing new courses to support product launches and emerging fitness trends within the marketplace.

Laws says: "As the fitness industry continues to evolve, I'll be helping to ensure that Jordan Fitness evolves with it. The Jordan Fitness Academy provides relevant and specialist training using our highly skilled and dedicated team of trainers throughout the country, delivering comprehensive training programmes." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y4p9x>



Laws previously worked with Sheffield United FC



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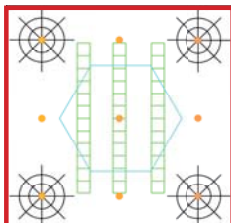
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A note from Finland

• Anna Rounaja • Owner and development director • Hukka Oy

The economic situation in our region has been challenging for the fitness sector, with massive layoffs. However, at Hukka Oy we've been able to grow our net memberships by 24 per cent in a year. I see three key drivers that explain this.

The first driver is our strong customer-driven management style. Customer surveys, crowd sourcing, active social media presence and planning for the future to positively surprise our members are all everyday tasks for us.

The second driver is a core value of ours, namely our focus on turning our clubs into communities. When unemployment hits, social circles change. If a member has a habit of training and meeting friends at your club, they do not want to lose that social engagement as well as losing their job. Thanks to active programming, our cancellations are currently at 20 per cent.

The third driver is that we've talked to the best consultants in the world. Their know-how and vision have given us that extra confidence we needed to make the right decisions and have definitely contributed to our success.

Our advice to health club operators is to design services for the people who want to be part of your club. Be clever in collecting and using the information you get from



Hukka Oy puts its success down to strong customer relations and building a sense of community in its clubs

your members to enhance your club, and you'll see it reflected in your bottom line.

Don't forget the big picture. For example, small decisions can significantly reduce energy consumption in your club, which can help you make your business

sustainable and more affordable. You don't want your club to be the gas-consuming Humvee nobody wants to buy in two years.

This piece was excerpted from The IHRSA European Health Club Report 2013.

Ask the experts: Rewarding member referrals

What's the best way to reward a health club member who refers one or more new members to our facility? Justin

Tamsett, owner of Active Management in Australia, offers his insight on this topic:



"Many years ago, I read about a health club promotion where a different promotional product was given away each month to those who referred new members. A referral was the only way to obtain the item.

"We decided to try this, and our club invested over A\$7,500 to have several items branded and for the supporting marketing material. All of this resulted in no change to the number of referrals.

"So I asked our members what they wanted (perhaps I should have done that first) and they told me 'free memberships'. We then made that our standard referral gift: one month free for each referral. We sent the voucher in the mail as a thank you gift and the member had to bring it in to redeem it and get their free month, thus allowing us to say a personal 'thank you'.

I've heard of clubs offering A\$5 off the referrer's monthly dues as long as the new member stays a member, which I like – but your CRM had better be able to deliver this, or it will turn into an administrative nightmare. My overall suggestion: give the members what they truly want when they refer others."

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



Ask members what they want if they refer a friend

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ROBOTO

Coutts wins IHRSA leadership award

IHRSA's European Club Leadership Award was presented to Nick Coutts in October, during the 13th Annual IHRSA European Congress in Madrid, Spain.

This award recognises the European health club leader who has done the most to advance his or her company, and the fitness industry as a whole, through strong leadership and performance.

Coutts has worked in the industry since 1991, first for Holmes Place – including as CEO of Holmes Place Iberia – and, since 2011, as CEO of Fitness Hut. Fitness Hut, which operates six clubs in Portugal, provides what Coutts calls 'premium low-cost' fitness "at a time when the local population is economically stretched and not able to pay traditionally priced health club fees".



Coutts has worked in the health and fitness industry since 1991, starting his career at Holmes Place

Coutts also received a career achievement award at the 2012 MANZ Portuguese national fitness convention and frequently presents at industry events.

"In contributing towards these conferences, my belief and motivation is to spread the word with regard to providing premium low-cost fitness – affordable yet high quality – rather than trying to protect my secret from the competition," he says.



Fitness Hut currently has six clubs in Portugal, which are classed as a 'premium low-cost' offering

Events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

7 November 2013

Powerful Connections: Key Strategies to Guarantee Success with Social Media (Webinar)

12-15 November 2013

ChinaFit / IHRSA China Management Forum – Nanjing, China

12 December 2013

Simple Truths of Service (Webinar)

12-15 March 2014

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

Healthy weight does not equal healthy BMI

A new study has discovered that adults with a healthy body weight may still have an unfavourable body mass index (BMI).

The study of more than 1,500 people showed that one in five men and one in three women have a higher than average BMI, in spite of the fact that their actual body weight falls within what is considered to be a normal range.

These findings are important, because high BMI can result in heart disease, heart attacks, diabetes and high blood pressure.

The study – conducted by researchers at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire, US and published in *The American Journal of Cardiology* – came off the back of previous research which showed that, despite being of healthy weight, individuals may still be carrying excess body fat.

Act now to benefit from IHRSA 2014 early bird offer

Registration is open for IHRSA 2014, the association's 33rd Annual International Convention & Trade Show, taking place on 12-15 March at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California, US.

The fitness industry's premier annual gathering consistently attracts thousands of industry professionals from all over the world for four days of inspiration, education and networking.

Registration rates will increase after 15 November, and again after 24 January. Visit www.ihrsa.org/convention to learn more and to register at the lowest available price.

300 take part in AGAP conference in Portugal

IHRSA partner AGAP held its annual conference just outside of Lisbon, Portugal, from 27-28 September.

More than 300 participants took part in presentations on various topics over the two days, beginning with Exercise is Medicine. Meanwhile Carla Carvalho Dias, founder of both Visão Integrada and Top Service Academy in Portugal – who also spoke at IHRSA's European Congress in October – received a standing ovation following her lecture on customer service.

Another highlight of the event was a sponsor showcase featuring 16 companies, including top suppliers such as Technogym, Precor, Nutrisport and Gerflor.



AGAP's conference took place in September

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 thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org
Locate a quality IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

New European report from IHRSA

Kristen Walsh outlines some of the key findings from The IHRSA European Health Club Report

IHRSA released the 2013 edition of *The IHRSA European Health Club Report: Size & Scope of the Fitness Industry at its European Congress* in October.

The report focuses on the health club industry in leading and emerging markets in Western and Eastern Europe, including Russia. "This report is the most comprehensive examination of the European health club industry available," says Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's executive vice president of global products. "With insights derived from more than 40 industry leader interviews, the report is the ultimate reference on the industry in Europe for club operators, developers, analysts, lenders and investors."

The report provides analysis of 32 health club markets, and includes 17 comprehensive country reports as well as profiles of 15 emerging markets.

European overview

Roughly 44 million members frequent 48,000 clubs in Europe, where revenues are an estimated €25bn. While the economic environment has challenged some markets in recent years, the industry has posted growth in key countries including Germany, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden.



Report provides analysis of 32 health club markets



The IHRSA report sheds light on trends such as indoor cycling, which is now especially strong in Scandinavia

Germany leads all markets covered in the report in terms of number of clubs, with more than 7,500 facilities. Meanwhile Norway claims the greatest membership penetration rate: nearly 16 per cent of the total population, and 25 per cent of Norwegians over the age of 15.

Challenges and opportunities remain in Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece, where high VAT rates and debt have affected growth in recent years. Nonetheless, experts believe opportunities remain for clubs to address obesity rates, facilitate regular physical activity and complement sports participation outside of the club.

Spain and Italy still rank among the top five European markets in market size, number of clubs and memberships, while Portugal and Greece maintain member penetration rates well below the average for EU markets (6 per cent), therefore signifying potential for future growth.

"Although the economy has clearly challenged Western Europe, several markets are stable, with some witnessing moderate growth," says Hans Muench, IHRSA director of Europe.

"Looking ahead, we anticipate consumer penetration rates will rise, particularly in Eastern Europe where less than 5 per cent of the population currently patronise clubs."

Emerging markets in Eastern Europe account for roughly €1.1bn in health club revenue, from 6,900 health clubs and 2.3 million members. Poland and Turkey lead emerging markets in terms of market size, club count and memberships.

Industry trends

The report also sheds light on industry trends. "Indoor cycling is incredibly popular, especially in Scandinavia," says Muench. "Group exercise in its various forms is still strong, and the new trend of virtual classes is making inroads as well."

The report also highlights another trend: the focus not just on the workout, but on pre- and post-workout activities. "Expansive wellness and relaxation areas are worth taking note of," Muench adds.

Report contents

The report comprises the following sections:

- European Health Club Industry Overview – the economy, VAT rate impact, leading / struggling markets, drivers for growth.
- Market Reports – in-depth analysis of European markets along with interviews with club operators, association leaders and other experts in each country.
- Emerging Markets – a special report on markets poised for growth.
- Company Profiles – a snapshot of 100 leading club companies in Europe.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The European Health Club Report: Size & Scope of the Fitness Industry is available at www.ihrsa.org/research-reports in PDF format for IHRSA members (£199.95 / US\$269.95) and non-members (£399.95 / US\$569.95). The report is also available in print format from www.ihrsa.org/store



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THE HEALTH 'MEGA-TREND'



David Stalker,
CEO of ukactive,
explains how the
nation's declining

health is attracting investors
back into the fitness sector

The last 20 years haven't quite lived up to expectations when it comes to investment into our sector.

Yet it seems this investment hiatus is coming to an end, with notable recent transactions including those of Fitness First, Pure Gym, The Gym Group and David Lloyd Leisure. With these transactions in mind, ukactive – along with the global financial advisory institution Rothschild – recently hosted a unique event that brought together members of the Vanguard Group with a number of private equity and venture capitalist organisations.

The event looked at why investors have recently been attracted back to our sector, and the potential the sector holds for growth. Oren Peleg, MD at Oaktree Capital Management, was just one of the experts who identified how a series of 'mega-trends' were creating unique opportunities for physical activity provision: the most notable mega-trend being the decline of the nation's health and the activity sector's opportunity to provide a solution for this issue.

An emerging role

As I said at this year's Leisure Industry Week, if our sector is to grow, we must move away from a solely fitness solution towards delivering health outcomes.

Through a mix of technological advancement, changes in behaviour and modern lifestyles, we've witnessed a drastic decline of more than 35 per cent in physical activity levels. Sedentary lifestyles go hand-in-hand with obesity, and we're now at a point where there are more deaths globally from obesity than from malnutrition.

I'm not being flippanant when I say this could bankrupt the NHS: it's impossible to continue paying out huge sums due to the health problems linked with inactive lifestyles. Reports say the NHS will be bankrupt by 2050 if trends continue.



Investors are now looking at the fitness sector as a valuable potential solution to the nation's health issues

And this is where our sector comes in, and why investors are looking at us: we have the potential to be a leading vehicle in helping get the nation active and healthy, with physical activity proven to reduce the risk of developing over 20 chronic diseases, improve quality of life and even aid rehabilitation from injury.

Investors are also looking at our sector because of the changes that have been made to the health system, with an emphasis on local commissioning of local delivery for local needs. A new executive agency now exists – Public Health England – with a remit ranging from protecting and improving the nation's health to building the public health system. It's also the first time public health funding has ever been ring-fenced in the UK, giving clinicians much more responsibility for spending the £80m budget in England.

Proving our worth

Our local communities need our services, as do the NHS and local authority public health. We now have a route in. However, we can't simply assume government and health will naturally come to our sector: we have to adapt and change towards a health delivery focus to be considered a worthy partner.

Regarding the public health agenda, we must start by establishing the true impact we're making, and can make, on the nation's health. We must provide evidence that competes with existing health service providers. The ukactive Research Institute at the Universities of Greenwich and Aberystwyth is a body to take on this challenge, and is leading the largest study of its kind into the impact of physical activity in prevention, management and treatment of chronic diseases.

We must also look at the skills of our professionals, at our facilities, and at the outcomes we collect on a daily basis. The investment community is now paying attention due to national trends like obesity. We also know our sector will only grow if we actively capitalise on such trends and opportunities. If we do this, investors will continue to stand up, pay attention, and investment will flow.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information on ukactive's public affairs and policy work, please contact Stephen Wilson, director of public affairs and policy: stephenwilson@ukactive.org.uk

BOOSTING EFFICIENCY IN LIFESTYLE REFERRAL

Life Fitness and Refer-all are helping leisure providers collect and act on vital data

In the current public health environment there is a drive and a need for providers of lifestyle programmes such as exercise referral, weight management, smoking cessation and health trainer services to provide robust and quality evidence. Providing a service for a public health commissioner can bring many rewards such as contributing to social objectives, increased revenue from memberships following an intervention, and a unique partnership that sees leisure and health working closely together. To fund services, commissioners are looking for distinct key performance indicators that drive service standards and contribute to an ever-growing evidence base.

What does this mean for providers?

There is a requirement for providers to focus on the job and not just within the job. A more strategic view is often needed with data and evidence being key, and this often causes a level of work that can take people away from doing the job they enjoy – working with people directly. But there is a need to balance the behind-the-scenes work with the front facing work of excellent customer service. Over the past 10 years this has often been an issue for providers and commissioners alike. There have been examples of funding being withdrawn from a service often due to a lack of evidence; it is not surprising that providers treat these contracts with a level of caution.

Together, Life Fitness and Refer-all can effectively manage exercise referral programmes and deliver extensive, detailed reporting for all health partners involved. This was achieved through Refer-all having access to the Life Fitness API (Application Programming Interface), called LFOpen™. This allows developers to have access to the product platform



The programme allows both referrers and clubs to view data

which enables third-parties, including fitness facilities, to create unique, new applications that work directly with Life Fitness equipment.

Building the evidence base

In a busy exercise referral scheme managed by Zest People on behalf of Brighton and Hove City Council, technology is being used to streamline administration, allowing them to focus on customer service and data collection.

With a combination of online referrals managed by dynamic guidance and inclusion criteria - all enabled through Refer-all, an online management system - Zest People have removed numerous steps that contributed to waiting times and poor data quality. This means leisure providers are able to view referral data, make and act upon appointments and collect key measurements, all helping to build the evidence base.

Rachel Stokes, director for Zest People, commented: "Since we have introduced Refer-all to our service we've been able to increase capacity by over 20% with far less overhead. This means that we are able to drive more people to activity options, which in turn increases revenue for our leisure

providers. Our inappropriate referral rate is no longer an issue thanks to the online inclusion criteria. When I mention to providers that we receive on average 1,400 referrals per year and the scheme is managed on less than a 0.6 FTE, most people are amazed."

Collecting activity data

In a fully integrated partnership with Life Fitness, the Refer-all system is able to pull data from LFOpen™ through the technologically advanced Discover™ Tablet Consoles - LFOpen is a cloud-based solution that allows facility owners and managers to customise available content to exercisers and enables free asset management.

Users working out on a piece of Life Fitness CV or strength equipment on the Refer-all programme will have their workout results sent and matched to the patient record within Refer-all. This data can then be viewed by all staff involved in the service including the initial referrer, all through one secure online system. Also, the free LFOpen mobile app on Apple iOS platform or Android allows people to gather their own data via GPS or manual entry, contributing to the overall activity record.

19-26 APRIL 2014

The Husky Trail

Drive your own team of spirited husky dogs across the Arctic in this six-day open charity event. The 250km route starts in Norway, taking in the rolling highlands and deep forests of Lapland and venturing into the unspoilt beauty of Sweden. This is a true wilderness challenge which sees participants camping in tents overnight. The adventure culminates at the famous Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi. The Northern Lights will be another spectacle to look out for on the way. Registration costs £550 and the minimum sponsorship is £3,800. Details: www.globaladventurechallenges.com



Participants travel through the wilderness and forests of Lapland

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Jumps are 3,000-10,000 ft

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THROUGHOUT 2014 Parachuting

Jump at the opportunity to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society – one of the UK's leading care and research charities for people with dementia and their families and carers – in a parachute challenge. No experience is required and there are four jumps to choose from: a 10,000ft tandem skydive, a 10,000ft accelerated freefall or a 3,000ft static line jump. Registration costs £70, while minimum sponsorship starts at £360. Details: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Walks will be six to eight hours a day



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28 MAY-1 JUNE 2014

3 Cities bike ride

Go a step further than London to Brighton with the five-day, 3 Cities charity bike ride challenge. Riders start off in London, taking in quintessential English villages, and make their way to the Dutch lowlands via Amsterdam. Along the way they'll take in canals, historical landmarks and rural villages before reaching the final destination: Brussels, in Belgium. Registration costs £99 and a minimum of £1,500 should be raised for a charity of your choice, including Help for Heroes, Alzheimer's Society, Make a Wish Foundation and numerous others focused on cancer care and research. Details: www.skylineoverseas.com



The Dutch lowlands are on the route

3-8 FEBRUARY 2014

Pyrenees snow-shoe challenge

Snow-shoeing has been described as the ideal way to explore the winter landscapes of the Pyrenees. Participants in this challenge will walk between six and eight hours a day in the mountain range that crosses from France to Spain, and in the Aiguestortes National Park. The open charity event, organised by Charity Challenge for a second year, requires a deposit of £195 and a minimum sponsorship of £1,995. Details: www.charitychallenge.com



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ukactive Summit: Advice for all those involved in getting the UK more active

NOVEMBER

7 | ukactive Summit 2013

Venue Congress Centre, London, UK
Summary

The ukactive Summit provides advice, guidance and support to all those who have a role to play in getting more people, more active, more often.

Confirmed speakers include Jane Ellison MP, parliamentary under-secretary of state for public health; Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE; and the minister of state for sport and tourism.

Web www.ukactive.com

12-13 | Spa Life UK 2013

Venue Wyboston Lakes, St Neots, UK
Summary

This two-day UK event offers spa professionals a combination of exposure to the latest product innovations in the market, shared industry insights, a range of networking opportunities, as well as management education.

Web www.spaconference.co.uk

13-16 | SIBEC Europe

Venue Don Carlos Leisure Resort & Spa, Marbella, Spain
Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum where Europe's leading operators from the health, fitness and leisure sectors meet face-to-face with suppliers. It will bring together more than 200 delegates in over 1,500 meetings, as well as offering plenty of opportunities for networking.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

FEBRUARY

2-4 | Spatex

Venue Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK
Summary

The 18th annual exhibition, and one of the UK's largest dedicated pool and spa trade events. It showcases commercial and domestic wet leisure products, from saunas to large swimming pools.

Web www.spatex.co.uk

20-22 | FORUMCLUB

Venue Bologna, Italy
Summary

An international congress and expo for owners and managers of fitness, aquatic and sports clubs.

Web www.forumclub.it

23-24 | Professional Beauty London

Venue ExCeL, London, UK
Summary

One of the UK's biggest beauty exhibitions, featuring leading health and beauty brands. Sectors include tanning, nails, skincare and aesthetics.

Web www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

27-29 March | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute

Venue Alexandria, Virginia, US
Summary

Bringing together a limited number of personal trainers with world-class presenters, and including pre-conference sessions, lectures and workshops.

Web www.ideafit.com/ptrainer

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WHAT WE LIVE FOR

Members' CHOICE

The third annual Health Club Awards took place alongside LIW in September. We report on the event and hear from some of the winners

A gala dinner on 24 September marked the high point of this year's Members' Choice Health Club Awards competition. This is the third year the competition has been run, and the ceremony – in partnership with *Health Club Management* – once again took place on the first night of LIW.

The competition is unique, as it is members' ratings alone that decide which sites are shortlisted and ultimately who wins. This year, a total of 400 entries came from a mixture of small independents, public leisure centres, hotel clubs and some of the best known brands in the industry – with 40,000 club members completing an online survey rating their clubs on the quality of facilities, customer service and value for money.

The National Motorcycle Museum played host to the black tie event, which was attended by over 300 guests and hosted by TV presenter Mark Durden-Smith. Durden-Smith addressed the audience saying: "These awards are regarded so highly because the judges, all 40,000 of them, are your harshest critics. They are the front line. They experience your facilities and services on a daily basis and so are in a unique position to assess your performance."

Battle of the budgets

Clubs did battle in 14 regions around the UK. Each region was split into three categories – Budget, Mid Market and Premium – to ensure facilities competed against their peers locally.

The regional budget categories saw notable successes for both the Fit4less and Fitness4Less groups, with the latter taking five regional golds as well as the Best Budget Chain award. Marketing director Emma Edwards comments: "To receive such a ringing endorsement from our members is the best possible reward for all the hard work and

enthusiasm that every member of our team puts into making Fitness4Less such a success. We're delighted that so many of our clubs achieved outstanding results when pitched against some of the industry's biggest players."

Fit4less, part of *énergie* Group, took silver in the Budget Chain category and collected six regional golds, including Best Budget Club in London for its Kilburn franchise. Peter Croney, head of franchise recruitment and marketing at *énergie*, says: "We're delighted to have achieved such great success across the *énergie* Group again this year. Well done to each and every franchisee. Awards across the health and fitness industry are increasingly important to help drive standards and recognise excellence where it's deserved."

Another big winner on the night in the Budget division was *Xercise4Less*, which won gold in the North West and Yorkshire & The Humber. CEO Jon Wright says: "We're delighted to have been winners at a time when we're investing in substantial expansion. It shows our model is working well and



Liz Terry with People Award winner Steve Macis, and the Livingwell team celebrates its awards with Mark Durden-Smith



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

health club
management



The awards event at the National Motorcycle Museum was hosted by TV presenter Mark Durden-Smith

achieving great results, with thousands of happy customers, and these are the only awards that get to the core of that.

"We really value them as a sanity check and benchmark for our team and, while we're delighted with the results, we look forward to winning even more next year as we open more clubs!"

Independents and chains

Sandwell Leisure Trust, entering for the second consecutive year, scooped up gold in the Best Small Chain category, as well as gold, silver and

bronze in the West Midlands Mid Market category. Paul Badhams, gym development officer, says: "We see the awards as valuable recognition to be used to motivate staff, provide evidence to external assessors, and as a tool to promote to customers, both existing and potential, that we're an excellent operator."

The biggest winner for the public sector was Everyone Active, winning four regions and taking gold for the Best National Chain for the second year running. "It's a great honour to be voted for by the people we're working so hard for – our members," says David Bibby, MD at Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) Ltd, which runs the Everyone Active brand. "We work hard with our 34 local authority partners to provide the best facilities and quality of service possible. This award means a great deal to us and we'd like to thank each and every member who voted."

Independent operators also held their own in this year's awards. Pulse 8 Health & Fitness Club and Nirvana Spa & Leisure were first-time winners in the Southern region, taking gold and silver in the Premium category. "We entered the awards to get a better understanding of how our customers value our brand and gain an up-to-

date insight into our position in the marketplace," says Barry Ashby, operations director at Pulse 8 and Nirvana Spa.

"These are the only awards that select winners based purely on member feedback, and therefore provide a true reflection of how well a club is performing and serving its members. It was truly an amazing achievement and, although only a small number of staff could attend the awards dinner, we recognise that our victory was achieved by a fantastic team effort."

Positive member experience

"It's great to see these clubs get the recognition they deserve," says Simon Brown, MD of Health Club Awards. "The fact is that clubs entering our awards are already committed to providing the best member experience they can, and that's reflected in the stats we receive: 74 per cent (29,600 members) think their club is providing good/excellent value for money and 72 per cent (28,800 members) would rate their club good/excellent when recommending them to a friend."

Entries for the 2014 competition open in November. To see a full list of all the regional and national winners for 2013, go to www.healthclubawards.co.uk ●



Everyone Active: Best National Chain

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Obesity as a disease

In June, the American Medical Association (AMA) voted to classify obesity as a disease

in its own right, rather than simply the precursor to other diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

This means nearly one in three Americans have a medical condition that requires treatment.

This new 'disease' classification means that people can seek help for obesity itself, and also means that medical professionals will be remunerated for their time spent treating obesity.

According to a recent study by Duke University, treatment of obesity-related diseases already costs US\$150bn a year in the States – a figure that's expected to rise to US\$550bn in the

One in three Americans are obese, meaning they're now classified as having a disease. Was the American Medical Association right with this decision – and where will it lead?

next 20 years. Although the financial impact of these lifestyle diseases has long been acknowledged, recognition of obesity as a disease could result in greater investment by government and the private sector to both develop and reimburse obesity treatments.

But could it also lead to a rush of drugs to market, over-prescribing, more surgical procedures and people handing over responsibility for their lifestyles to the medical profession?

Will this new classification mean a rise in status for the fitness industry, with healthcare providers seeking to work more closely with them to prescribe exercise? Or will it take it further away, confining treatment to the medical sector? Might

people increasingly expect the solution to come from a pill from the doctor rather than having to get active?

Obesity is certainly a complicated subject and significantly more research is needed to help with its treatment. A study by Memorial University in Newfoundland, for example, found that 5 per cent of the population could be addicted to food.

The UK's NICE declined to comment, but will other countries follow the AMA's lead? We ask our panel...

DO YOU AGREE WITH THE AMA, AND SHOULD THE UK FOLLOW SUIT? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

ARDIS D. HOVEN

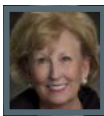
AMA • President

"Recognising obesity as a disease will help change the way the medical community tackles this issue. It also elevates the importance of developing new approaches to prevent and manage obesity.

Ultimately, the AMA's House of Delegates voted for this classification because we believe it will encourage parents and physicians to have candid conversations about their weight, and other key health indicators like blood pressure and blood sugar.

Physicians previously had conversations with patients about treating obesity's health complications, but this designation helps physicians to talk about obesity itself, as well as decide an appropriate course of action. While healthy eating and physical activity are important for preventing obesity, for some people this is not enough and medication or surgery is needed.

The excess body fat indicative of obesity doesn't just take up space in the body – it's metabolically active, producing hormones and other substances that may impair a number of normal body functions, including fertility and the regulation of appetite and metabolism. We're hopeful this policy will emphasise the seriousness of obesity and its health implications. This classification may also encourage more investment to study and limit this disease."



DR ARYA SHARMA

Chair in obesity research & management • University of Alberta

"Obesity needs to be medicalised in order to help the millions of people who live with excess weight and the illnesses and disabilities related to it.

Obesity is viewed by governments, healthcare professionals, media and individuals as being largely caused by laziness and over-consumption: a stigmatising over-simplification of a complex health problem. If obesity is viewed as a disease, we can perhaps create a world where health professionals are remunerated for providing treatment services, where people with obesity can seek medical assistance with confidence, and where public and private funders will prioritise the provision of obesity prevention, treatment resources and related research.

In terms of involving fitness professionals, however, in many countries they are still not licensed or members of self-regulated organisations that ensure service standards and competencies. Medical training and residency or medical internship programmes within the health system are generally not part of their training. So, while I support the importance of exercise in weight management, the current training, licensing, regulation and professional standards of fitness professionals is a long way off from that of other regulated health professionals."





Should obesity be treated as a medical disease or a lifestyle-related condition?

DR CHRIS BEEDIE

Aberystwyth University • Senior lecturer

“Classifying obesity as a disease could lead to more resources and push it further up the agenda for policy makers.

However, the cons far outweigh the pros. This decision arguably reflects a trend towards the medicalisation of life. It’s not a disease: many people diagnosed as obese are actually healthy.

Worryingly, this reclassification throws the weight of responsibility onto the medical sector, potentially taking it away from individuals, parents, educators – including physical educators – and social policy makers. It puts the emphasis on treatment, not prevention, inevitably leading to expensive medical interventions to tackle what is a societal problem.

Humans are programmed to eat as much as we can and to move as little as possible. With technology and highly calorific food, current lifestyles are the perfect storm for obesity. This is what needs addressing, not the results of it.

I doubt this reclassification will mean a boost for the health and fitness sector. It could mean the opposite, with treatment, not prevention, becoming the emphasis, and medicine taking de facto responsibility for that treatment. The sector has to better evidence its effectiveness in obesity prevention and management to compete with medicine in this context.”



TAM FRY

Child Growth Foundation • Honorary chair

“I believe obesity should be classified as a disease – a condition to be treated and not simply dismissed by the medical profession as a problem for parents, or individuals, to overcome.

Unrecognised obesity may quickly trigger more serious conditions which are more costly to treat.

Should the UK follow the lead of the US and classify obesity as a disease, I would hope that more funds would be triggered for preventive measures, especially in primary care, which is currently woefully underfunded.

In my opinion, any further funding should not be directed into the health club industry, which is a sophisticated business and should look after itself. The industry suggests to people that it will provide a quick fix to lose weight. Actually, all people need in order to exercise is a good pair of shoes to go walking. Kids just need space to run around.

The first 1,000 days of a child’s life are crucial in preventing obesity later on. Ealing Council has recognised this by investing in the recruitment of more health visitors, providing one-on-one contact for families, coaching them in maintaining a healthy lifestyle through eating healthily and taking exercise, and also supporting mothers to breastfeed, which is essential.”



IAN KEARNEY

The UK general manager of low-cost operator Fit for Free talks to Kate Cracknell about personal attention in a budget framework, and about gym membership that's offered 'for free'



It was a spot of luck, combined with the selection of the right online search criteria, that brought Ian Kearney to his current job as UK general manager of low-cost operator Fit for Free.

Following a career in media sales, in 2003 he opened a children's activity centre – Cheeky Monkeys – in partnership with his wife. The success of that venture led to the opening of a second equally successful centre, with 50,000 people coming through the door every year. "But when the recession hit, we realised it couldn't sustain both of us. A business of that size needs continuous investment – almost every year, you have to reinvent yourself with the next offering, the next ride, the next feature," says Kearney. "So after seven or eight years of working for myself, I had to make the decision to go back into the corporate world.

"But I had no idea what to do, other than not wanting to go back into media. I knew I was interested in leisure and family entertainment, I liked the idea of launching new businesses – I also had a small consultancy business helping other people launch their own companies.

Sometimes it was just an advisory role; other times I was more hands-on, in one case even finding the building, launching the business and recruiting all the staff. "I was thinking maybe hotels, maybe health and fitness, maybe Centerparcs-type venues... On the first day I actually started to search the job market, I put my search criteria into a job listings website and it delivered me 10 jobs. The first one I opened, at half past eight that morning, was Fit for Free."

PROVING THE MODEL

The Dutch operator (see 'company history', p35) was aiming to enter the

UK market after enjoying good growth in its native market. "It wanted to prove it wasn't just a Dutch-specific business model," says Kearney. "Discussing growth plans with investors and banks, the Fit for Free team was told it needed to prove the model outside Holland, so other markets were investigated: the UK first, Belgium second, Poland, and then lastly Brazil."

That might seem a peculiar combination of markets, but as Fit for Free's head of marketing Tina Farifteh explains: "The market has to be right, with the right operating conditions, but the most important factor for us is the 'boots on the ground' – the person who will oversee the launch and roll-out."

By 2011, the lease had already been signed on the first UK site, in Liverpool, and Fit for Free was looking for the 'boots on the ground' for the UK business. Step forward Kearney, who joined the company in July of that year.

"I think they had expected to recruit someone with fitness sector experience, but in fact it suited them well to induct me in their mould," says Kearney. "Also, crucially, they didn't want to keep buying in resources to help with design, construction, project management, recruitment and launch, and I was able to do all that for them."

UK LAUNCH

So what does Fit for Free offer in the UK, and how does it compare to the Dutch model? "A typical club measures 15,000–20,000sq ft, and I'd expect capacity to be around 7,000 members; we're currently at about 4,000 in our first two clubs," says Kearney.

"We offer 220 pieces of equipment – mostly Precor, but with one Teca Switching circuit – and a full instructor-led studio offering. Membership costs



£15.95 a month for gym-only, or £9.95 off-peak, or you can opt for gym and classes at £19.95 a month. Sixty per cent of our members are on the £15.95 package, but even they have access to free classes in the morning and evening, five days a week: circuits, CrossFit, abs.

"The look and feel of our clubs is the same as in the Netherlands – the same lockers, carpet, content, wall coverings, staff uniforms – and overall the offering is about 85 per cent similar. However, I was given the autonomy to question things they did in the Netherlands that I didn't think would work in the UK.

"Bikes are part of daily life in the Netherlands, for example, but in the UK we need car parking facilities. We also have a different equipment mix in the



Fit for Free, which has 51 sites in the Netherlands (two photos above), was acquired in 2009 by SportCity, which operates 18 all-inclusive health clubs in the Netherlands (below and left)



COMPANY HISTORY

Fit for Free was founded in the Netherlands in August 2005 with a mission of making fitness accessible to all, removing financial, social and geographical barriers.

Head of marketing Tina Farifteh says: "Fit for Free's philosophy is to attract with incredibly low prices and effective marketing; impress and convert with a wow factor at first visit, created by big open spaces and modern equipment; and retain through promotions, member benefits and loyalty programmes."

Its large clubs are located in residential areas, and although offering budget prices – in the Netherlands, fees start at just €15.95 a month – group exercise is also available, instructors man the gym floor during peak hours, and "friendly, staffed reception areas" are highlighted as a key selling point.

But perhaps what sets the brand apart even more than this are its

member benefits – the basis on which it justifies its 'for free' name, as the idea is that members will enjoy deals from local and national partners that easily cover the cost of their membership each month.

"Fit for Free is more than just a gym," says Farifteh. "It's a world of discounts and benefits."

In 2009, Fit for Free was acquired by all-inclusive operator SportCity, with NIBS – the holding company for the two brands – founded in the same year. "The most important reasons for the acquisition were the high growth rate of Fit For Free and high potential of the budget segment in general," says Andy Brees, general manager of SportCity.

SportCity – which operates in the Netherlands only, with 18 clubs – remains a separate profit centre from Fit for Free, although acquiring the budget model did allow it to convert two poorly

performing centres into successful Fit for Free health clubs.

Having two distinct business models also gives the parent company more flexibility: "For every location and acquisition, we determine the brand that best fits location. In this way we optimise our portfolio," says Brees. "At the moment we're being more bullish with Fit for Free, as current market conditions suit that brand and set-up costs are lower."

There are now 51 Fit for Free sites in the Netherlands – making it the second largest chain in the country in terms of sites, and the largest in terms of members – as well as four clubs in the UK, two in Belgium, one in Poland and one in Brazil.

Farifteh says: "In the first few years, our communication was mainly focused on the revolutionary low price. This focus has slowly broadened and now also includes quality and fun."

INTERVIEW



There are currently four Fit for Free clubs in the UK, in Bury (pictured here), Liverpool, Birmingham and Worcester

"In the UK, we're still at the point of having to explain why it's called Fit for Free but has a price attached"

► gym, with fewer bike-related and cross-training activities and more treadmills.

"But the biggest difference is that we have a more expensive payroll in the UK: in the Netherlands they have a very lean staff set-up. We tried it initially, but within three months I had to increase staffing levels by about 20 per cent. I was adamant we couldn't rely on one member of staff to run the whole place on a daily basis."

PERSONAL TOUCH

Those higher staffing levels help maintain the sort of customer service levels Kearney believes are key to success. He explains: "We traded from 6.30am to 10.30pm and have fitness staff on every morning and evening; in the larger locations or multi-floor locations, they're there during the day as well. Factoring in admin staff and management, we have on average one and a half people on-site at all times, plus cleaners and studio instructors. "The fitness staff's sole responsibility is to be on the gym floor, interacting



with members. Interaction at reception is key too: above all else, the one thing we drive through in our interviews and inductions is the need to make eye contact with members as they arrive and leave. The very least every member should expect is a 'hi' and a 'bye'.

"We employ a lot of apprentices too. Their primary role is to clean the equipment, but we also task them to chat to members: they have a target to engage with 10 new members a week, asking about their goals and encouraging them to attend the free classes."

FIT 'FOR FREE'

Returning to the differences between the Netherlands and the UK, Kearney

continues: "We have to be more aggressive and more diverse in the way we market. In Holland, Fit for Free is a national brand with high awareness. In the UK, we're still at the point of having to explain why it's called Fit for Free and yet has a price attached."

"Which is a fair point, I observe. How does the 'for free' concept work?"

"We partner with local retailers who then advertise on our website and our member platforms for free, with a box ad promoting a special offer for our members. We regularly ask our members what sort of offers would be useful, and typically it's things like takeaways, hair products, beauty, dry cleaning, flower delivery, tyre repairs. ►

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Fit for Free clubs in the UK (pictured here: Birmingham) have a slightly different equipment mix from the Netherlands, with less focus on cycling



► When members turn up at the location, they just show their membership card to receive the discount.

"The ultimate goal is to save our members approximately £15 a month if they use the services of our partners, effectively covering the cost of their gym membership. At the moment, members are probably saving around £10 a month, but the scheme will grow. In the Netherlands, where they have national coverage, partners include holiday companies, airlines, national taxi or transport organisations, ticket discounts.

"Indeed, in Holland, there's evidence of some people joining the gym just to get the card. That's not the idea of course – we want people to come and train – but it does show the value people see in it."

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

So how has the UK business progressed since its launch in 2011, and what are the plans moving forward?

"We have four clubs at the moment – in Liverpool, Bury, Worcester and Birmingham. We had an offer on up to 11 Fitness First clubs about a year ago, but the deal fell over at the 12th hour. At the time I was frustrated by that, as I wanted to grow the estate, but in hindsight I'm glad we gave ourselves more time to really finish getting our product right.

"In the meantime, with a fixed amount of money to invest each quarter, after the first quarter of 2013 the company's focus shifted from the UK to Belgium, as well as continuing to expand in Holland. Opening in Belgium took longer than we expected, but the first club was a flying success and the second is going the same way.

"And then there's Brazil, a rapidly emerging market, where the 'boots on the ground' is a Dutch guy who lives out there and who knows the Dutch operators personally. That club signed up 2,000 members in three weeks, so we'll probably look to increase the number of locations in Brazil in a very short space of time.

"But now we're into another period of funding and investment, I think the UK will move back onto the radar too. One challenge we face in the UK is that we've only been trading for two years and lots of the larger landlords are still wary about getting security from a Dutch entity. But we have four big name landlords in place – Sainsbury's, Urban Splash, Richardson Carillion and Thornfield Properties – and I'm confident this won't be an issue for growth."

He continues: "I have a list of six sites in various stages of development and I

hope to open our next club in the first quarter of 2014. Within the next two years, I expect to have reached 20 clubs.

"We're also trialling microclubs: our Birmingham site measures 11,000sq ft, on-site at a Sainsbury's supermarket, and it's performing above expectation so we may do more of that format. It's proving to be win-win situation too – Sainsbury's has seen an increase in footfall to its store since the club opened in January 2013."

FUTURE POTENTIAL

Kearney concludes: "I also see the youth market as offering great potential. In one of our clubs, we partner with a local college and now have 400 members under the age of 16 – they come straight from school and are supervised by over-16s who attend with them. It's challenging – a high maintenance market – but I believe there's financial benefit in the long term.

"I think 'tweenagers' are a market the industry has to focus on, because if these kids are fit in mind and body, with a fit work ethic, they will survive in the real world when they leave school. It's about showing them that being active isn't a luxury any more – it can be an affordable part of everyday life. The budget sector has created that." ●

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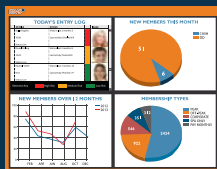
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Members expect interaction at reception; interaction as they work out is valued more highly

Perceived VALUE

In the second part of his retention series based on a large-scale qualitative survey, Dr Paul Bedford reports on how UK facilities currently rate in terms of perceived value for money

When it comes to health clubs and leisure centres, perceived value for money relates to three particular areas: firstly, the amount paid relative to the quality and amount of service delivered; secondly, the products such as classes, gym inductions, follow-ups and PT; and thirdly the environment – the activity areas, changing areas, and social areas if a club has them – both inside and outside of the facility.

However, depending on the member or prospect, the relative importance of those three points will vary.

Varying priorities

Members we spoke to described that, with their first membership, perceived value for money was often not based on services and products, but more likely on size and presentation of the facility – at this stage in their fitness lifecycle, they generally considered more to be better.

However, when joining for a second, third or more time, members become much more specific about the products and services they want, with the environment less highly ranked and less likely to deliver a 'wow' factor. These members are far more aware of

what they will actually use and are less impressed by the straight aesthetics of the environment. Only when there are no differences between the products and services will members then choose a club with good aesthetics and design.

Cost versus usage

First experiences of clubs typically include a price presentation as part of the sales process. First-time members we spoke to described having the overall price broken down to a daily rate, which appears low when compared to the full sum and, particularly when joining a club ▶



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RETENTION

► for the first time, when they remain full of optimism that they will use the facilities frequently. The perceived value pre-joining is therefore high.

The reality is that the majority of members only manage one to two visits a week; when changing clubs, they understand this. While the sales presentation may still be delivered at a 'per day' cost, the member is able to calculate a more realistic 'per workout' cost which they will then use to weigh up their options - what they are currently paying for a workout and what they would be paying at the new club.

In particular members who train frequently - four or more times a week - calculate the cost of membership per workout rather than per day. A club charging £60 a month may present the membership cost as just £2 a day, but frequent users recalculate that figure, dividing the £60 not by 30 days but by 20 workouts. While this only increases the amount by £1, they will then decide if the additional amount is worth paying for services they may or may not use.

But the thought process for perceived value is not linear (see Figure 1, right): members' thoughts jump around as they begin to make decisions as to whether the offering justifies the fee. They are constantly adjusting the information they have, going back over the same area again and again as they have new thoughts and new information. Frequently what they say to themselves is not reflected in what they say out loud, with judgements being made that are emotional as well as rational, and don't only relate to the price.

Paying for specificity

It also appears that with experience comes a desire for specificity: second- and third-time members choose clubs that offer specifically the products and services they want. With each club, the member becomes more and more targeted: they want a particular type of yoga, group cycling class or equipment. Before making the decision to join, they will check out the availability of particular classes, or the range of machines or free weights on offer.

This has prompted some to join activity-specific facilities: PT, group cycling



or yoga studios, for example, or clubs offering training approaches like Crossfit. These boutique facilities are gaining in popularity with experienced exercisers who are prepared to pay more for less. They will lower their expectations of changing rooms, reception and communal areas if the class or training is of exceptional quality. That equates to less of what they're not interested in and more of exactly what it is they're going to participate in - which all equals great perceived value for money. Paying

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2 That's about what I thought it would be

3 I'm able to afford that

4 That's fewer than I expected – what if they don't have classes I like, or the classes I do like are on at times when I can't get here?

5 How many pilates classes do you have?

6 What do they mean by other mind-body classes – do they mean yoga, would I like them, are they on at times when I can go?

MEMBER

7 What coffee does your bar sell?

8 We have Costa Coffee

9 That's good – I can do my class, get a coffee and go to work

10 So realistically I could do two mornings and the weekend, but at the weekend I like to lay in bed – would I want to get up and do a class?

11 So I could do two to three classes a week, and it's £60 a month

12 That's £5 per class and I could get my coffee two mornings a week

£7.50 a class for group cycling may seem expensive, but in their eyes it's the same as paying £60 a month for membership of a club they use just twice a week.

These members also report a greater sense of connectedness with the club, owners and staff, where the vibe is "less corporate and more passion".

Bottom line cost

Meanwhile, with the growth in low-cost facilities, experienced members are revising their views of what constitutes

value for money. Among members for whom relaxing post-workout and socialising are of less importance, the fitness products themselves are being compared like-for-like. In this equation, the low-cost operators do well, as many are seen to be offering the same products as the middle and premium markets. In fact, respondents felt some low-cost facilities offered a greater variety of products for a much lower price.

Nevertheless, there were some challenges for low-cost facilities, with

Seasoned members will calculate the cost per workout rather than cost per day of membership

- some respondents explaining how they weighed up the attractive lower costs against other factors such as equipment availability; price alone was not enough to guarantee member retention. Comments included: "There was a lot of equipment, but there were also a lot of people there and it took me 20 minutes longer than usual to do my workout. I can't afford that additional time."

Member-staff interaction

The value of interactions is now well documented and can lead to a significant boost in retention in all areas of a club.

However, where it's most prized – and therefore where it contributes most to perceived value for money of the club as a whole – is when the interaction is personal and provides opportunities to move the member closer to their goals or outcomes.

It appears that members value positive comments about exercise performance highly. This occurs in class and gym settings when individual encouragement is given to a member about performance or effort. Although still accepted, generalised praise – 'good job, well done' – appears to have less value.

Members also create hierarchies of importance relative to what they want and why they come to the club. If they join to do pilates, for example, they place a higher value on interactions delivered by the pilates instructor than in other areas of the club: interaction with the pilates teacher is seen to be of more value than an interaction at reception.

Indeed, while members generally place a high importance on interaction at reception, interaction while they are physically active has an even higher perceived value – perhaps because it's less expected. "You expect reception to say hello – isn't that's why it's called reception?" observed one respondent.

New members generally report feeling let down after the first few weeks. They

describe the initial experiences in the same way they describe starting a new relationship: after the initial courting process, they realise the relationship is more of a fling than anything substantial.

"It would be nice if the person who did my induction would just say hello. They swan around being all cool with the next new member and you realise they're just not bothered about you," said one respondent.

Experienced members, meanwhile, are fully aware of this honeymoon period and are less affected by the lack of support they are often promised when joining. However, even among this group it appears that, where good service is delivered, it's highly valued by members. The opportunity to converse and feel part of a club is a key reason

members quote for staying at their club and recommending it to others.

Conclusion

People who join clubs with no previous gym experience are easier to sell to and have higher expectations about their club usage. They are also much more likely to be influenced by the look of the club than seasoned exercisers.

Seasoned club members are more precise about what they want and less influenced by the elements that 'wow' the less experienced. They want more of what's important to them, at times that are convenient to them, and at a price they can justify paying. ●

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.

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Linkedin Paul Bedford



“It would be nice if the person who did my induction would say hello. They swan around with new members and aren't bothered about you.”



LIFE ACHIEVERS

Achieve Lifestyle's partnership with Gladstone is enabling the trust to run a more efficient service for its customers



The trust has adopted the Gladstone Management Console, which is helping it to streamline its computer operations

In April 2012, Achieve Lifestyle took over the operation of two established leisure centres from Runnymede Borough Council: Addlestone Leisure Centre and Egham Leisure Centre.

Addlestone opened more than 20 years ago and Egham almost 40 years ago, and when we came on board, both sites had been working with Gladstone Health and Leisure for several years: Addlestone for five and Egham for about 15.

As a leisure trust, part of our remit is to deliver value for money, so at the time of the transfer we undertook a review of all the major software providers on the market. However, despite prices going up at Gladstone, we found that it was more cost-effective to stay with them and upgrade than to go with another provider, as their products were well suited to our business model. Plus, we were aware they were pursuing a number of innovations that we

felt had potential to benefit our business in the longer term.

Since the transfer, business at Addlestone and Egham has gone from strength to strength – so much so that we've recently been able to invest in an upgraded software package. By introducing a number of new Gladstone products, such as Learn2, Join@Home and Contact Manager, we can now keep up with our customers' expectations in

terms of both our online services and social media interactions.

The trust has also adopted the Gladstone Management Console (GMC): a browser-based tool that allows certain administrative tasks, such as direct debit, to be run outside of the core Plus2 product. Running direct debit in this way is far faster than through Plus2. The GMC also allows us to create a streamlined customer database by

archiving old data: unwanted member, configuration and transaction data is removed from the live system and onto a separate database, where it's retained for reporting or retention analysis.

The GMC is much easier to navigate than the old system, with more specific reporting options, helping our managers to better understand business trends and take advantage of market segmentation.

Hazel Aitken,
chief executive
of Achieve Lifestyle



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Ruthin Centre: About to reach 500 members

VIABILITY ASSESSMENT & FULL FEASIBILITY

How do you assess whether your desired leisure scheme is viable, and where do you go from there?

Alliance Leisure's Sarah Watts explains why this early part of the process is key to future success.

How do you begin to assess the viability of a leisure scheme?

We meet the client at the stage they're at – some may have started to develop a plan and want to know if their scheme could be viable, while others are starting with an under-used space – often something like a number of ageing sports courts – and want to explore potential opportunities to increase revenue.

What is the approach used by Alliance Leisure?

In these times of reduced subsidy, it's really all about the money and the space. How much additional revenue can be generated from the square footage that needs to be transformed?

For example, in one scheme we completed there was great controversy among the local senior population, because the council wanted to do away with the indoor bowls rinks (used mostly for just five months of the year) and create a 10-pin bowling facility.

Obviously you do have to think what else you can provide for the older age group, but the reality was that the same amount of space went from generating £38k a year to £300k a year.

That large boost in revenue may in turn allow a leisure site to broaden its social offering to different groups, making it more inclusive – ultimately protecting the service.

What are the most 'viable' leisure options these days?

That's not something you can really state or quantify – it depends on the individual site, and local demand and needs. A 10-pin bowling facility may be a huge success for one leisure site but not for another. That's where thorough viability and feasibility studies will pay dividends.

For example, we're currently talking to a client who wants to put a 50m pool in a new mixed leisure development. But all our research shows that an aquatics leisure pool would be by far the better choice to satisfy demand and give the best return on investment.

► CASE STUDY – Feasibility at Ruthin Leisure Centre

After a £1.4m revamp managed by Alliance Leisure, Ruthin Leisure Centre in Denbighshire opened its new facilities in September 2013. Additions to the centre, which is attached to a local school, include a new all-weather pitch, and an extension with a new reception area, changing rooms and gym.

The feasibility report indicated a latent demand of 675 new users. After affordability was assessed, the decision was made to work to a business plan of

475 members. Julia Goddard, business development manager for Alliance Leisure, says: "There was a target of 350 new members prior to opening, and our team actually sold 400. One month later the centre is about to reach 500 members."

"This puts a really good revenue stream in place right from the outset, plus our schemes almost always exceed the latent demand predictions within six to nine months."



Ruthin Leisure Centre: Exceeding targets



What are the key steps in the feasibility process?

To begin with, it's very important to use an independent party. We commission this process out to leading leisure consultants such as FMG, Max Associates, Robin Thompson, and the Sports and Leisure Group. It's important that the feasibility is totally impartial in order that all decision makers, as well as Alliance's funders, can be confident in its robustness.

It's a complex analysis made up of different parts. It starts with going to the site and physically looking at the local area. If you're planning to build a play centre, it's no good just looking on paper, seeing there's a big play centre just down the road and deciding there's too much competition. That existing play centre may be scruffy, overpriced and not really serving its customers.

That's why it's so important to pay a mystery shopper visit. We believe, where there's competition, there can often be opportunity.

How long does feasibility take and what are the challenges?

An average feasibility report takes around five weeks. On the cost savings side, some benefits are easy to show because we can relate back to existing data – so for example, the savings to be made in the areas of utilities, staff, cleaning services, etc – as these are evidence-based.

It's hard to predict future competition, so Alliance develops complementary facilities to avoid reliance on one revenue stream

The future potential benefits are harder to quantify because there are so many variables, and it will depend on how that facility is run in future. We can't predict, for example, if a budget gym might open down the road from a newly developed fitness facility. That's why we generally develop a range of new complementary facilities which protect our clients, so they become less dependent on any one revenue stream.

However, as Alliance Leisure has now completed over 100 projects, we have the experience of many successful models to draw upon, providing a type of evidence base that may be referred to for future projects.

What else does Alliance offer at the viability/feasibility stage?

As well as commissioning external reports, such as latent demand reports, we also proactively commission independent market reports so we can better advise our clients at this stage.

For example, while the market for local authority spas is growing rapidly, there is very little data available on these developments. So we've just commissioned our own report from Leisure-net Solutions to look at the

public sector spa market. This data will prove invaluable for our clients considering this type of development.

Do clients need to pay out a lot of money at this stage?

No, not really. The process can be funded by either party or a shared process – sometimes it's shared 50:50, depending on the scheme and situation. The initial headline figures are provided by Alliance for free, which help shape the early thoughts and inform the decision to proceed to full feasibility.

It's important to note that this is the stage where the financial success of a new facility or an add-on facility is really secured. It could save clients a huge amount in the long term.

For example, do you keep a squash court that generates £8–12k a year, or do you turn the space into a toning table facility? Toning tables may be for a niche, older market, but they're relatively cheap to install, and even with a small membership of 250 people paying £25–£30 a month, that same space could potentially generate £70–80k a year.

As we said before, it's all about the money for the space, and being realistic about revenues. We'd never lead a client to believe they could make £1m when we know quite clearly from the feasibility that it will be closer to £300k.

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DOES IT PAY TO BE FUNCTIONAL?

Functional training zones are growing in popularity, but how are operators justifying the investment and reaping the rewards? David Thompson reports

According to Rick Crawford, national fitness and wellbeing lead at Nuffield Health: "There's no denying that there's a growing trend in our industry, with more and more members with all types of goals incorporating functional training into their programmes."

As a result, gyms are increasingly converting gym floor space into functional zones. For Physical Company, August is normally the quietest month of the year; this year it was the third best month in its history, says sales and marketing manager John

Halls: "And it's all functional kit we're selling. It's only a matter of time before everyone converts more space to functional zones."

Nuffield Health already has designated functional areas in all 65 sites, with the number of clubs offering functional frames now up to 29. Everyone Active also offers functional equipment at all 90 of its leisure centres, with training rigs at selected larger sites. And it's not only the upper- and mid-market clubs that are tapping into this trend: budget operator Xercise4Less has functional zones of varied sizes in every site.

Freedom Leisure is another operator investing in functional training areas. Richard Merrick, group fitness and wellbeing manager, says:

"We expect all our gyms to eventually have such areas, to be rolled out gradually as we continue to invest in our facilities. Functional equipment zones mark the first real step change in the evolution of gym design."

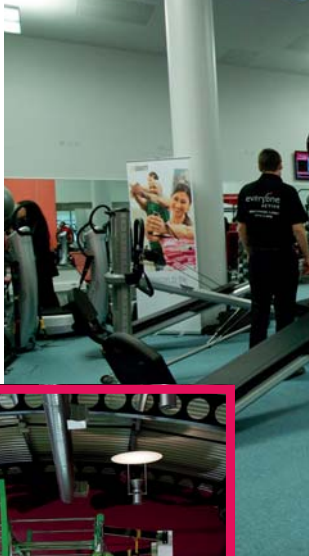
Return on investment

But for such widespread investment, there must be significant rewards for the operator. Fusion Lifestyle is one

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING



Clubs should ensure members are ready to embrace functional training before installing a zone



► operator currently going through the decision-making process, deciding where and how to invest in functional zones across its estate.

"The primary value for us is in customer retention," says Darren Anderson, group fitness manager. "A functional zone offers a new way to train and adds variety to members' fitness regimes – something customers tell us is really important in keeping them motivated. It also helps drive interaction between instructor and customer, which can generate a more vibrant atmosphere on the gym floor."

Michelle Bletso, group fitness development manager at Everyone Active, believes such zones offer "variety of training, introduction of small group training and PT, and 'wow' factor for increased sales – but functional zones are also great fun for adolescents and our GP referral market". She adds: "Return on investment is also something we would expect from these areas."

Everyone Active is not alone in seeking a financial return from chargeable sessions in its functional zones, offering both group and one-to-one sessions. Functional zones at Nuffield Health are used "extensively by personal trainers with paying clients, and physiotherapists with patients," says Crawford. "We also offer some paid-for small group training sessions, as well as larger group training sessions that are included on the standard class timetable at no additional cost."

But across the sector there's a range of approaches in evidence when it comes to group classes in functional zones – specifically the question of inclusive versus chargeable use. Use of all functional areas at Fitness First is included in the membership, for example, with "no extra cost classes or instruction (outside of PT) in any of our facilities," says David Perrin, Fitness First UK's fitness product manager.

Matthew Januszek of Escape Fitness says: "As long as you nail your colours

to the mast and make it clear what your proposition is, then either could be a success depending on your model."

Boosting PT

Suppliers are also keen to underline the potential for increased sales of PT and group classes off the back of a functional zone. Januszek believes "most trainers know a great functional area is a golden ticket to make more money, leading to a surge in members turning to PT".

And Halls adds that "simple gym access isn't really enough any more, so operators are looking for new models to give members the opportunity to pay for better training".

Freedom Leisure has had great success with a functional zone installed at K2 Crawley in September 2012. "To encourage usage, we offered a month of free 20-minute express workouts. Over 100 people participated in these sessions and our retention software shows that, in the 28 days after the



session, they visited the gym more frequently. PT revenue increased by 39 per cent in the six months following the installation," says Merrick.

And Escape recently installed a functional training space for One Leisure St Ives, with an immediate impact on PT sales. "In the first four months since the new functional training area was installed, we've achieved 80 per cent of our entire PT business from last year," says Ollie Ritch, Impressions fitness consultant and personal trainer.

Push or pull?

It's clear that operators in different sectors of the industry are investing – but is this being driven by the consumer or the operator? GYMetrix's Rory McGown cites "extremely low usage figures for functional equipment... almost zero in many cases. It's a push trend, not a pull trend, driven by fitness club operators and suppliers rather than by members".

Putting a more positive spin on a similar 'push not pull' observation, Absolute Performance MD Tony Buchanan adds: "The change is being led by individuals who work for operators and believe in the benefits of the training, not purely by business people looking for opportunities."

So how can functional training be promoted to turn it into a 'pull' trend, with members fully embracing the new training opportunities it offers?

Everyone Active offers functional training at all 90 of its centres (above, Westminster Lodge)

Many operators and suppliers stress the importance of a very proactive approach to instructor and member education. Perrin sees that the "success of a functional zone is not determined by size, but by the education held within the zone".

Januszek agrees, saying: "Although members now ask for, and even expect, functional training areas, the truth is the vast majority still don't know how to train properly in them. This is a huge opportunity for operators, as this lack of understanding presents an opportunity for PTs to offer a more valuable service to members."

"We must make sure that staff are continually being educated with the latest research available, and are aware of the potential risks associated with the use of this type of equipment," adds Fusion Lifestyle's Anderson. "Staff supervision is very important, as is a thorough induction process for customers, which focuses on technique."

Indeed, systematic member inductions and introductions to new functional equipment are already widely identified as the key to a successful installation. "As well as inductions and group classes, we've created a member journey with the Everyone Active Online platform ▶

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► and programme cards for functional training,” says Bletso.

Fitness First has also taken a technological approach to engaging members. “To allow more independent use, we installed interactive walls in our recently refurbished clubs,” says Perrin. “These have touchscreen technology that allows members to call up exercises based on their goals. A short video will display the exercise, giving the member complete control over their learning.”

Design and layout

Location in the club is also key to success. “Zones are often placed in the most visible open part of the gym, so they can be very intimidating even to regular gym users,” says McGown.

“You have to be careful not to isolate members who don’t want to be in a functional zone,” adds Halls. “The more hardcore CrossFit-type club is very attractive to some people, but many gym-goers find that kind of training, and the atmosphere created by the club design and equipment that goes with it, quite intimidating – even scary.”

“There are plenty of products and design options available to give the benefits of functional training in a more ‘friendly’ environment. Total Gym, for example, offers a more inclusive journey for the functional beginner without compromising on results for all levels.”

Design is clearly a huge factor in any functional zone, Januszek explains: “It’s very important that the area is an ‘experience’. Delivering the correct look and feel, through lighting and sound as well as colour, all contributes to the design of a space.”

Functional training zones at Nuffield Health are used extensively by PTs and physiotherapists

Space requirements

Even with a modest functional zone, floor space is always at a premium and there’s opportunity cost to any area that doesn’t pull its weight.

While a functional area can be built within nearly any space that’s available – in terms of training rigs, Buchanan says “a 5m x 2m rig needs 7m x 4m space, for around 10–12 people training at a time” – opinions vary on what really constitutes a fully-fledged functional zone.

“I think, as long as you have enough room to run a group of six in a small group training environment, it can be successful,” says Bletso. “Any smaller and it really becomes more of a PT area than a programmed zone.”

“As a rule of thumb, 10–15 per cent of your gym floor works well,” says Crawford. Physical Company, meanwhile, reports seeing large operators looking to expand dedicated functional training space from 15–20 per cent to around 30 per cent of their gym floor. Interestingly, Exercise4Less takes the view that a club “needs to be at least 30,000sq ft to warrant taking the space out to put a functional zone in with the relevant equipment”.

So is it worth allocating this sort of space? Anderson believes so: “The demand for cardiovascular equipment and fixed resistance machines is becoming less of a focus, so it makes sense that we would prioritise space for functional training.”

Crawford agrees with this reapportioning of space. “Taking a fresh look and potentially reducing the volume of fixed resistance equipment, or switching for multi-purpose equipment like cables or dual functional fixed resistance such as combined leg curl and leg extension fixed resistance machines, can be a very effective way to create the space needed.”

The right demographics

But this decision is clearly site-specific, and influenced by the degree to which the trend is ‘pull’ versus ‘push’. Although clearly a key development in the changing face of health and fitness facilities around the UK, it’s important to note that not every club or centre is jumping on the bandwagon.

Freedom Leisure’s Merrick explains: “We need to be conscious of what the member has had access to up until that point in time. If there has been very little functional equipment in place, then it would be unrealistic to suddenly impose a whole new way of training on our members.”

“Summerfields Leisure Centre in Hastings recently benefited from £160k of refurbishment work to the gym and studios, for example, but we took the decision that functional training equipment wasn’t the right investment for this facility.”

“The membership is approximately 70 per cent female, with members choosing classes as the primary way of exercising. The majority of gym users at this site are new exercisers, so we designed the gym to be as unthreatening and easy to use as possible.” ●

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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Healthy obesity?

New research among 16 sets of identical twins sheds light on why some obese people remain healthy despite their weight

Around one-third of people who are severely overweight show no sign of typical metabolic problems. They're known as the 'healthy obese' and, in spite of their extra pounds, they don't have high cholesterol, their blood pressure isn't elevated and they don't show any signs of diabetes. So why is this?

A new study* published in the October edition of *Diabetologia* suggests that impaired mitochondria may be the key to maintaining their metabolic form, with an un-fatty liver a key biomarker.

Twin tests

Researchers at the University of Helsinki in Finland based their study on 16 sets of identical (monozygotic) twins as it enabled them to take the impact of genetics, as well as other environmental factors, into account.

The twins, aged between 23 and 36 years, were picked because in each case one twin was obese and the other lean. In half of the pairs, the obese twin was as metabolically healthy as their lean twin – meaning they fell into the healthy obese bracket. In the other eight pairs, the obese twin had all the hallmarks of an unhealthy obese person – high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and increased blood sugar and insulin.

In both halves, the average weight difference between the twins was the same (40lbs). However, extensive tests showed vast differences in their fat tissue.

The researchers found the unhealthy obese twins had malfunctioning mitochondria – the parts of cells that harvest energy from food. They also had a lower level of new fat cells (it's believed having impaired mitochondria restricts the growth of new fat cells) which puts pressure on the cells that do exist, so they eventually die. Before they die, however, they become inflamed and fat is shuttled into parts of the body



© SHUTTERSTOCK/ARTIST'S WEDDER NAME

Some 'healthy obese' twins stored fat under their skin and not in their organs

where it doesn't belong, such as the heart and other organs.

In comparison, the healthy obese twins with fully functioning mitochondria had more new fat cells. In addition, their fat settled under the skin rather than around organs, and also accumulated around the thighs as opposed to the abdomen.

Liver biomarker

Another finding was that the unhealthy obese twins had significantly higher liver fat (around seven times higher). Study lead Dr Jussi Naukkarienen told the *New York Times*: "The group who don't gain fat in the liver as they get obese seem to avoid inflammation and maintain their metabolic health. There is a complete difference in how they react to obesity."

Naukkarienen's findings back up the work of colleague Hannele Yki-Järvinen, who has demonstrated that non-alcoholic fatty liver disease determines

whether an overweight person develops metabolic disorders. Yki-Järvinen points to insulin resistance: when the liver gets fatty, insulin can't regulate the amount of sugar and fat that the liver secretes into the blood.

Growing risk

The new report warns, however, that healthy obese people – already a minority – may not stay that way. Other studies have shown that the 'healthy obesity' stage is more common in younger adults, and the condition could worsen with age or advanced obesity.

Yki-Järvinen is keen to conduct further studies on how diet can induce fatty liver disease, while Naukkarienen says future studies could focus on potential drugs "with the most effective intervention point perhaps being improving mitochondrial function and prevention of inflammation in adipose tissue".

*Naukkarienen, J et al. Characterising metabolically healthy obesity in weight discordant monozygotic twins. *Diabetologia*. October 2013



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from D2F Fitness

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“ The gym landscape has changed. XCUBE. Any space. Anywhere. ”

can be used for general exercise as well as conditioning elite performers; it's exciting, creates a buzz and helps to drive new membership.

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XCUBE is future-proofed, as you may add or subtract elements according to need

to CV and resistance equipment means you get much more from your space.

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The Wellness Opportunity

Tomi Isaacs gives an overview of the health and wellbeing landscape as captured by The Futures Company's latest Global MONITOR studies

Responsibility for healthcare is increasingly being pushed onto the public. With public spending under pressure and greater concern over the social and economic costs of both dealing with and not dealing with health, governments progressively nudge us to take better care of ourselves – creating challenges and opportunities to shape the global health and wellbeing landscape.

Increased longevity has always been seen as the ideal, but many are now beginning to question whether life expectancy should be the main focus of our assessment of the quality of life, which inevitably declines as the ageing process takes place. In addition,

with the cost of an extra year of life estimated to increase from US\$100,000 to US\$300,000 in the US by 2050, we will see growing debates over who has the right to decide whether treatment is viable. This issue is highly polarising, and we could see decisions about who receives healthcare shift from the healthcare providers to those patients who can afford to pay for it.

In the meantime, WHO estimates that 388 million people will die worldwide from chronic disease over the next 10 years, at an unsustainable cost of approximately 3 per cent of global GDP. However, it also estimates that 36 million of these deaths could be averted through better lifestyle choices, with data

showing the two most common causes of death in the world to be lifestyle diseases – namely heart disease and stroke.

The positive financial implications of lowering the incidence of lifestyle disease by encouraging people to take responsibility for their health would be significant: if there were a modest 10 per cent reduction in mortality from heart disease and cancer, it could save US\$10.4trn in the US alone on an annual basis – which, among other benefits, could potentially mean funding being directed to more cost-effective healthcare interventions for non-lifestyle related diseases.

Unlocking new markets

The imperative to take care of ourselves is heightened when we consider that,

"COMPANIES THAT SUPPORT CONSUMERS IN NAVIGATING THE WELLBEING LANDSCAPE WILL UNLOCK NEW AREAS OF GROWTH FOR DECADES"

for the first time ever, diseases associated with obesity are a greater global health burden than those associated with lack of nutrition.

Globally, over 40 million preschool children were overweight or obese in 2008, and excess weight among the adult population is also significant: global sales of weight management-positioned food and beverages amounted to a staggering US\$163bn in 2012, and we expect this to grow.

However, this represents a big opportunity for the health and fitness industry, with a huge proportion of the global population wanting to lose or manage their weight. Rather than allowing people to simply turn to diet for the solution, better education is required regarding the calories

Traditionally holistic Asian markets are adopting defensive health strategies



About Global MONITOR

Global MONITOR is a comprehensive set of resources for global foresights and trends that provides insight into the global and local forces shaping the business environment, consumers and brands. The resource includes data and analysis from a consumer survey that covers 28,000 respondents across 21 countries.

in:calories out equation, whereby physical activity also plays a role.

Indeed, helping consumers across all age groups to make choices that lead to living healthier lifestyles is a challenge the fitness industry needs to accept, focusing on driving innovation, creating incentives and inspiring motivation. Companies and brands that support consumers in navigating the wellbeing landscape will unlock new sources of growth for decades and inspire consumer loyalty.

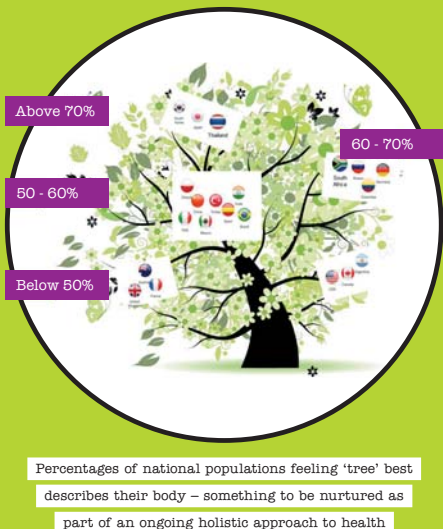
The consumer response

Part of consumers' increased responsibility over their individual health is the recognition that emotional and spiritual health are as important as physical health in achieving overall wellness. This holistic approach to wellness has led consumers to adopt a wide range of measures with the aim of making themselves feel happy, healthy and strong.

Global MONITOR (see above) data reveals that just over half (52 per cent) of people take steps to improve their health, regardless of whether they feel ill or not: a self-managing approach to wellbeing that echoes the preventative mindset we're now seeing on the rise across the majority of global markets. However, despite this, fewer than half of consumers worldwide say they are satisfied with their emotional and physical wellbeing.

Understanding consumers' approaches to health can be complicated, as they are often very personal and heavily influenced by cultural nuances. Global MONITOR uses a metaphor to explore this complexity and visualise the potential strategies people may use. We ask consumers: 'How do you think of your body?' and offer them three options.

Figure 1 - The appeal of holistic health



The Car is the metaphor for those people who see their body as a machine in which the component parts can be fixed. Among this group, strategies tend to be short-term and reactive.

Those who identify with the Fortress see their body as something they have to strengthen and defend against external attack. This is also short-term, but predominantly a proactive approach.

Finally, the Tree is for those who see their body as something they nurture, taking an ongoing holistic approach to managing health. This is a much more long-term, proactive strategy.

It is this final option, with its holistic approach to managing health, that's here to stay: the percentage of Global MONITOR respondents identifying with the tree rose from 50 per cent in 2006 to 56 per cent in 2013 (car fell from 20 to 15 per cent, while fortress went up just 1 per cent, from 28 to 29 per cent).

This growing interest in a holistic approach is evident across all markets,

although there remain big differences: in Thailand, Japan and South Korea, over 70 per cent of people picked tree; in South Africa, Colombia and Germany, tree came in at 60–70 per cent. (See Figure 1, above)

Meanwhile in Spain, Italy, Brazil and India, tree registered between 50 and 60 per cent, but with fortress also important; in China, tree was also 50–60 per cent but car came out above average; and markets including the UK, US, Canada and Australia remained below 50 per cent for tree, with car above average. Interestingly, tree logged above average responses in Russia. (See Figure 2, p58)

One of the big shifts registered in the above findings has occurred in some Asian markets, where a holistic approach was traditionally more of a culturally embedded behaviour. We're beginning to see movement towards a more defensive strategy, however: a 10 per cent shift from tree to fortress in India, for example, indicating a

- more mixed approach to self-health management. We suspect this could be a response to recent risks of contracting foreign-derived viruses such as bird flu.

The market response

Whether consumers view their bodies as cars, fortresses or trees, opportunities abound to support those working to optimise their overall wellbeing. There has been significant innovation in this space, with some of the emerging hotspots including innovations that help people to manage their mental acuity, boost the body's renewal processes and protect themselves against disease.

Current innovations in the market include Kinohimistu, a lutein drink from Japan that claims to preserve optical health; from the US, drinks that (once ingested) help to keep skin looking young while asleep; and Vigo, a chewing gum from Sweden that's said to increase mental performance – to mention a few.

Meanwhile, in the space of self-monitoring, devices such as Fitband and Fuelband can help consumers to track and potentially optimise their health and fitness levels. However, the full impact of such devices will only be realised if consumers are motivated by improving their records rather than passively reading the data fed back to them.

At the Israel Institute of Technology, professor Hossam Haick is developing an artificial nose that can detect molecules in human breath that are symptomatic of head, neck and lung cancers. If this product gets to market, it could give consumers even more insight and control over their healthcare.

Figure 2 - Health strategies around the world



Which of the following best describes how you think of your body – car, fortress, tree? (Indices highlighting above average market differences)

Also, 3D printing of bespoke transplant organs is on the horizon in the UK – a capability that could support those who take more of a 'car' approach to their personal maintenance.

Future opportunities

The business landscape is changing, with an opportunity to reframe wellbeing and move brands into the lifestyle choice space, where there are more points to connect, serve and support consumers in their quest for better health.

We will see an increase in corporate wellness schemes as employers take an

active interest in employees' wellbeing as part of a commercial agenda – as well as their duty of care.

Meanwhile, our ability to collect and analyse big data about individual health indicators will deliver solutions at mass and personalised levels. With the cost of decoding an individual genome likely to fall from between US\$10,000 and US\$25,000 to just US\$1,000 within the next two years, we can expect to see the personalised health market explode.

Our message to companies and brands is simple: seize the opportunity. There has never been a better time for brands to shape the future of wellness and assist consumers in their quest to live better and healthier lives.

The global momentum behind wellness is poised to impact everything about the way we live our lives, from the products we buy to the places we work and play. ●



The future will see an increase in corporate wellness offers

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LIW 2013



New products, new trends, new ideas.

Lorraine Francisco takes a look back at Leisure Industry Week 2013

Three-days of jam packed activity – including live Q&As, celebrity appearances and live demonstrations – welcomed visitors at this year's LIW 2013, which took place at the Birmingham NEC on 24–26 September.

LIW covers the entire leisure industry, with the show split into six zones: Health & Fitness, Play & Attractions, Leisure Facilities, Sport, Pool & Spa, and Eat & Drink.

A popular re-introduction this year was the live working swimming pool feature, the STA Swim Zone, which returned to LIW after a few years' absence. The STA organised interactive demonstrations within the dedicated Swim Zone across the three days.

Another returning feature was LIW Live, a live stage offering visitors demonstrations of fitness trends, plus interviews with sporting legends.

A major feature of LIW is the free-to-attend education programme, which this year featured keynotes from David Stalker, CEO at ukactive; Stuart Turner, head of standards and qualifications



at SkillsActive; and Zoe Cooper, business development manager at the STA.

Stalker spoke about the opportunities for the sector to grow in today's environment, and outlined the work ukactive is doing with its Let's Get Moving campaign to place community exercise professionals within GP practices. A pilot of the programme saw 504 people engaged, notching up a total of 48,000 active hours. David Cameron has commented on the programme, saying: "I'm delighted to support ukactive as it launches its plans to help embed physical activity into the DNA

of our communities by getting more people, more active, more often."

NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES

LIW 2013 saw a wide range of new product launches, including...

Beaverfit's The Gym Box – a collapsible, portable functional training rig with the option of adding a range of training equipment: two kettlebells, two sandbags, two TRX Force kits, one TRX Riptrainer and also one Ankorr resistance harness. ▶



Escape's new functional training range is designed to be less intimidating

► **BILT** by Agassi and Reyes

– precision-engineered resistance equipment to help users safely and effectively reach their training goals. The brainchild of tennis legend Andre Agassi and his coach Gil Reyes, the machines are designed to allow for high-intensity muscle isolation, helping build strength safely and without injury.

BodyFire announced the launch of two nutritional supplements, Hades and Hella – pre-trainer, fat burning supplements named after mythological gods and targeting men (Hades) and women (Hella).

Body Plus Nutrition – a fresh ready-meal service tailored to gym goers and focused on offering healthy,

The brainchild of tennis legend Andre Agassi and his coach Gil Reyes, BILT machines allow high-intensity muscle isolation, building strength without injury

pre-packaged, portion-controlled ready meals – also launched at the show.

CYBEX launched the 790T treadmill, a new 'performance plus' commercial treadmill with speed levels programmed to reach 15.6mph (25kph) and a maximum incline of 20 per cent. It also launched the Big Iron glute ham/reverse hyper-extension bench to the UK, part of the Big Iron series of racks and benches.

Escape Fitness launched its new functional fitness equipment range, designed and manufactured to be less intimidating, more fun and more appealing to all. Items include TiyR – a soft but heavy oversized tyre – and GripR steel sandbags.

FitQuest was launched by MIE Medical Research – a new three-minute fitness testing concept that involves

standing on the FitQuest platform, which measures human performance over seven different parameters and allows progress to be tracked over time.

FreeMotion introduced its brand new LIVEAXIS cable-based strength training system, with progressive resistance to ensure muscles stay at optimum activation throughout every movement. Its 'live-sliding' pulley technology allows you to activate multiple muscles on one machine, and instantly change the point of activation, just by moving position.

GANTNER launched its fingerprint ID stations to the UK market, which can be easily retrofitted into clubs and which help eliminate member fraud caused by card sharing and swapping.

Gladstone Health and Leisure debuted Communicate at LIW – a new software programme designed to improve and drive digital interaction with new and potential clients – as well as new mobile app Mobile Pro, which enables customers to book and pay on



Life Fitness Discover consoles offer swipe technology touchscreens



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Hammer

Strength

introduced HD Elite, the brand's most durable rack line, built for ultimate customisation and extreme training conditions. The modular line of racks can be customised into more than a thousand combo rack configurations or used as standalone units.

HeatPumps4Pools showcased COVERFree, a new liquid swimming pool cover that forms an invisible layer on the water surface, reducing evaporation by up to 85 per cent and heat loss by up to 70 per cent. Safe, non-flammable, non-hazardous, biodegradable and PH neutral.

Jordan Fitness launched a new 6kg pink neoprene-covered kettlebell, as well as new Curl Barbells, to complement its wide range of functional training equipment.

Leisure-net Solutions introduced Tribe, an online orientation product to allow new staff to familiarise themselves with the aims, ethos and vision of the company they've joined.

Les Mills International launched Les Mills Virtual, a video-based workout allowing health and fitness clubs to run virtual BodyBalance, BodyCombat, BodyPump, CXWorx and Sh'bam classes.

HD Elite: A new customisable, highly durable rack line

CELEBRITY SPOTTING



Olympian **James Cracknell** and England rugby player **Ben Morgan** on the Matrix stand (above).

Daly Thompson and **Kevin Keegan** charming visitors.

Ricky Hatton sparring at the Hatton Academy stand.

Andre Agassi signing miniature tennis balls.

Jordan Fitness hosting an array of sporting legends, including England rugby stars **Jason Robinson** and **James Haskell** and professional boxer **Jordan Gill**.

Kelly Sotherton on the Live Stage, and **Lee Latchford-Evans**, formerly of pop band Steps and now a PT, demo-ing UniKurve.

Life Fitness introduced the new Life Fitness Discover tablet consoles, with swipe technology touchscreens. The console, available on the Elevation Series, works with LFconnect technology, giving exercisers personalisation options, workout recommendations and the ability to track workouts. The latest development includes wifi and Bluetooth.

Matrix Fitness launched the 7xi, mPower and the Magnum strength range into the UK market. Magnum consists of multi-station towers, free weight units, plate-loaded machines, racks, platforms and accessories focused on performance, durability and function. Patented Breaker Bench technology is available on select Olympic bench products, allowing the user to move the bar into an optimal position before take-off.

MYZONE unveiled version 2.0 of its heart rate monitoring software system, which replaces the old touchscreen

system with a new desktop system that allows club staff to run the software from their smartphones and tablets. Functionality includes Zone Match, a group exercise programme for the gym floor, and Weekly 300 Point Target, so users know they are exercising at the right intensity to meet recommended activity guidelines.

payasUgym.com introduced its new real-time class booking and marketing service, set to launch to the public in early 2014, which will help club operators fill classes by promoting studio timetables through the payasUgym.com website.

Physical Company launched two new products: Resistance Band Systems from Stroops Performance, for sports-specific power, strength and agility training; and X-Lab, the customisable, modular functional training rig from Torque Fitness.



Jordan Fitness launched its new Curl Barbells at the show

Keynotes included 'The biggest market for the fitness industry in the next 20 years – independent older adults', by Life Fitness master trainer Keith Smith

SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

There were lively demos and fitness classes in the swim zone



STA Swim Zone

The programme in the Swim Zone demonstrated all aspects of pool use, from swimming lessons to fitness classes and fun-packed activities such as Aqua Zumba, Aqua Yoga, Aqua Running and Aqua Sensory from Little Splashers, a new style of baby swimming classes.

The exclusive STA programme also included snorkelling and sea scooters, as well as vital health and safety information and updates including pool water testing, and a live demo of 3m bio trace real-time microbiological testing.

LIW Live

Returning for a second year, this popular feature showcased a live stage with demonstrations and personal appearances from sporting legends including tennis star Andre Agassi, boxer Ricky Hatton and England rugby player James Haskell.

Live demonstrations included Tabata, London Jumping Fitness, UniKurve, Power Hoop, Lauretta Johnnie's Boot Camp, Fuller Figured Fitness and Fit2Fite's Fighting Moves to Funky Grooves.

Power Hour

LIW 2013 challenged fitness professionals to compete with one another across the three days with the launch of a brand new show feature: Power Hour.

Participants were ranked against one another in unique 15-minute challenges taking place

on exhibitor stands across the Health & Fitness section, with performance data measured by Power Hour partner MYZONE and a leader board to keep track of the front-runners.

"Visitors to LIW have always been encouraged to discover the equipment by having a go, and this Power Hour challenge is a natural progression from that," says LIW event director James Samuel.

Innovation Trail

Exhibitors that had products new to the market were given the opportunity to feature in the Innovation Trail. More than 100 exhibitors submitted products and were signposted with the Innovation Trail logo and highlighted on the floor plan, so visitors could easily find them.

REPs National Convention

LIW also hosted the REPs National Convention, a paid-for programme for all fitness professionals wanting to stay on-trend and gain vital CPD points.

The 2013 programme included 30 practical workshops, plus top keynote sessions and educational content. Keynotes included 'Weight loss – what works, what doesn't, and why?' with Dr Ian Campbell, obesity expert as seen on TV shows like *The Biggest Loser*, and 'The biggest market for the fitness industry over the next 20 years – the independent older adult', with Keith Smith, master trainer at Life Fitness.

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LIW REVIEW



► **Precor** launched RFID 'Preva Tokens' at LIW – the latest technology allowing Precor Personal Account users to log into their fitness account using convenient swipe technology.

Quest launched its new Excellence Ambassadors scheme, whereby the manager of any centre or sports development team that has achieved Excellent in Quest Plus, or Outstanding in Quest Stretch, will be invited to become an ambassador to share best practice with other centres.

Retention Management launched RM360, an automated customer scoring feedback system based on NPS and a follow-up question. Online dashboards show the results, so clubs can take action and compare their scores to industry benchmarks. Text analysis also means recurring themes can be identified in the feedback.

Rugged Interactive, the developer of motivational fitness technology, debuted its FitMakr Pro data capture software, enabling users to track user data over time. This can include score, date, time, side bias, colour bias and reaction time.

Schwinn launched its new AC Performance Plus Carbon Blue bike – the same look as its AC Performance Plus model, but featuring the new Carbon Blue belt, which combines the benefits of a belt bike (maintenance-free, no lubrication, quieter ride) with the authentic ride feel of a chain.

StairMaster launched its new TreadClimber, Black Beauty, which

offers a high-burn, low-impact workout that is said to burn around twice as many calories as walking at the same speed on a flat treadmill.

Star Trac showcased products that are now available in the UK: the Spinner Blade ION, the newly redesigned TreadClimber, the StairMill, and the Boxmaster total body conditioning system.

Technogym introduced OMNIA, the modular functional training rig that forms part of its premium ARTIS range. It also launched UNITY to the UK market – a connected, swipe-screen cardio console based on an open Android 4 technology platform – which allows users to customise information and entertainment, and track their exercise progress.

Total Gym launched the Total Gym Core Trainer, which targets the core musculature as a whole to enhance abdominal muscle definition and improve stability. It's built on an incline, so difficulty can be tailored to the user's ability level, with progression achieved via changes in body position or added movement for increased instability.

Wexer Virtual, the virtual class software system – which is installed by Zoom Media in the UK – had its LIW debut. The company announced a deal with Les Mills whereby Wexer will be one of the platforms for Les Mills Virtual (see p64). ●

Technogym
showcased its
ARTIS
range of
equipment

StairMaster launched its new TreadClimber, Black Beauty, which is said to burn twice as many calories as walking at the same speed on a flat treadmill

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UP & RUNNING

As a gym user, it's annoying to see an 'out of action' notice on the same piece of equipment for days, even weeks; as a health club operator, keeping on top of repairs and maintenance can be a headache.

Without surveying your members, it's hard to put a price on how much revenue broken equipment costs your club, but suffice to say, to neglect it is false economy. Personally I know many people who've left clubs because they're fed up with equipment taking too long to be fixed. This morning, I myself felt disgruntled when I was planning a cycle and there were no bikes working at my gym. The staff are irritatingly vague about when they'll be working again, and I've advised my cycling-mad husband to hold off his membership until the equipment's repaired.

In a world where customers are ever-more savvy and want value for money, keeping on top of repairs is vital. If members have flagging commitment and find they can't do their workout because of kit problems, they're halfway to becoming a lapsed member. Equally, given that many people go to the gym to relieve frustration, the last thing the club should be doing is adding to them.

However, thanks to the proliferation of new web- and cloud-based technologies, it's become much simpler to report problems, chart progress in the repairs – handy for members who complain – and plan maintenance to avoid breakdowns in the first place. And all this from a quick glance at an iPad, computer or phone, meaning you don't even need to be on-site to be on top of repairs. No excuses.



How much is broken equipment costing your club?
Kath Hudson reports on cloud-based technology that can be used to reduce downtime and keep members happy

CLUB VITALS

Club Vitals offers a cloud-based system for maintaining equipment. Very simply, it involves a sticker being placed on equipment which has a number and a QR code. If there's an issue with the equipment, staff can log into the cloud-based account to report the number and a brief statement, or scan the QR code. Once the fault has been reported, an engineer is swiftly informed so it reduces the downtime. A preventative maintenance module has also been added recently, to plan maintenance or cleaning.

According to Skye Kaiss, president of Club Vitals, the advantages are that it saves time: equipment is mended quicker, keeping members

happy. As all the records of each piece of equipment are kept in one place, including warranty and history, there's also never a problem with lost communication, records are quick and easy to pull up, and it's easy to spot if one piece of equipment has a history of problems. As it's cloud-based, fire, theft or server crashes aren't a threat.

"Some of our clients have reported over 1,000 maintenance issues a year. Without Club Vitals, this would certainly not happen and, since these problems would not have been communicated, they would not have been fixed," says Kaiss. "Equipment downtime, along with facility cleanliness, is one key reasons why members stay or leave."

"If members have flagging commitment and can't do their workout because of kit problems, they're halfway to becoming a lapsed member"

PRECOR

Precor's cloud-based Preva Business Suite provides real-time status updates on CV equipment, telling the operator if the machines are in use or idle, if a service is required, or if an inspection is needed because the machine has not been used for more than 30 minutes in any 72-hour period – suggesting something might be wrong with it.

Operators can run reports showing daily use of equipment, cumulative use, and trends by time. The system also provides essential information about the products, such as serial numbers and lifetime usage data.

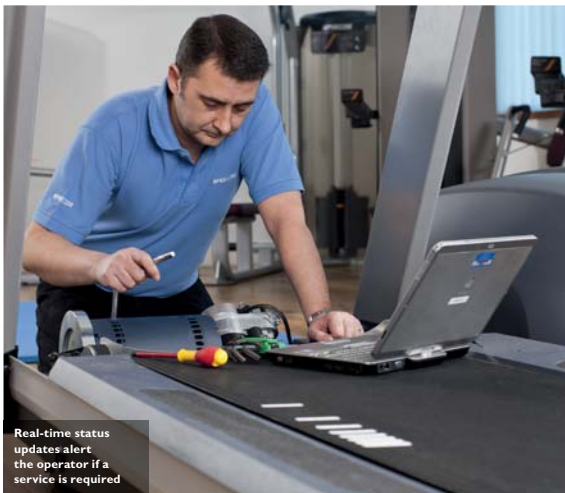
The cumulative use report, showing total lifetime use of any machine in the gym, can help operators prolong the life of their kit by swapping stations that are continually used for those in less popular positions: for example, one US gym found end treadmills were used far more than those in the middle of the row.

The daily report offers operational and marketing benefits too, says Brent Brooks, VP of networked fitness at Precor: "Operators can establish a picture of their quiet periods and create targeted campaigns to attract more members during those times, such as corporate members or retired groups."

"It can also help inform purchasing decisions. For example, if 100 per cent of the treadmills are being used during peak times, they could increase the number of units available. Alternatively, they could offer training sessions or challenges on some of the less busy equipment, to encourage usage and variety in their members' workouts."



Precor's Preva allows operators to monitor equipment usage by time of day



Real-time status updates alert the operator if a service is required

FITNESSEMS

"Those using FitnessEMS have found the repair process is speeded up by 40 per cent, as operators can immediately see when issues are occurring, as well as what's being done to the correct the problem," says Rusty Hosea, managing director of marketing and project management at FitnessEMS. "Also, technicians can learn from previous repair history through complaint/resolution searches."

The cloud-based nature of the system allows FitnessEMS to add

updates and functionality behind the scenes, with no interruption to the operator. A comprehensive maintenance schedule module has recently been added, which includes a real-time checklist for technicians and auto-emailed PDF reporting for managers. An entry-level product with less functionality is available for smaller clubs, personal training studios and apartment complex gyms.

"Depending on the health club operation, FitnessEMS can decrease

equipment downtime by 50 per cent. A typical repair lifecycle for a treadmill belt and deck is seven days, but FitnessEMS reduces this to four days or fewer," says Hosea. "This means fewer members are exposed to broken-down equipment, which is important when around 3 per cent of total attrition is equipment-related."

"We also offer materials and advice to help clubs. Managers may find themselves spending less than five minutes a day on maintenance issues."

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SERVICE & MAINTENANCE



LFconnect monitors everything from number of workouts to belt hours

LIFE FITNESS

Discover cardio products from Life Fitness now integrate with its LFconnect technology, a cloud-based solution that gives clubs access to free asset management, and vital data on the usage of the equipment.

By logging on to LFconnect.com, managers can accurately monitor usage of their equipment and generate reports anywhere, anytime, about a variety of measures such as how many hours the equipment has been used, total distance, number of workouts, belt hours, belt distance and life

hours. This real-time information can be accessed remotely by Life Fitness technicians and head office.

"The diagnostics, together with our dedicated service call systems and performance reports, ensure our technicians can get to the bottom of any underlying issues," says Margaret Vane, UK service manager at Life Fitness. "This wealth of data is used to create bespoke maintenance programmes or service interventions for customers, which help prevent future issues."

SERVICESPORT


Servicesport operates an online estate management system which allows customers to see a 'live time' database of their fitness equipment across multiple sites, along with service history, redeployment history, condition, usage, age, location, warranty status, market value and cost to refurbish.

The system allows operators to run summary reports, dashboards, league tables and charts so the data can be filtered into meaningful information. Equipment breakdowns can be reported, and videos or photographs of faults uploaded, to improve the speed and accuracy of diagnosis. Progress on repairs and

services can be tracked live, so clubs know when an engineer is coming.

"The main benefit is knowledge," says Susie Marriott, commercial director at Servicesport. "Knowing what you have, where it is, what it's worth, whether it's in good or bad condition and how much investment is required to bring it up to a uniform standard allows our customers to plan the largest of estates very simply."

Servicesport is now working with GYMMatrix to identify, across an operator's estate, which gyms are short of kit and which have an excess. This helps operators optimise their assets by moving equipment between gyms. ●



YOU CAN'T PUT A PRICE ON PEACE OF MIND

Research shows that 'out of action' kit is a big turn off for gym members. But with belts being universally tightened, shelling out upfront for a service package at the end of your equipment warranty period is a big ask.

Hence why last year the majority of Precor service customers opted for Pay As You Go (PAYG) contracts, even though it generally costs more in the long run. Finding out why customers choose PAYG was paramount to influencing and improving the service offering, so Precor commissioned independent research across more than 100 customers who had all experienced some level of Precor service, to get genuine customer insight into changes that could be made.

Almost 60 per cent of PAYG customers said their choice was due to budget restrictions – though interestingly 10 per cent said it was because Precor

WHAT PRECOR CUSTOMERS ARE SAYING...

I've never experienced service that rivals Precor. The engineers are outstanding and the quick response and communication we get from the team is exceptional.

When the warranty ended we initially went with PAYG. After a year we were desperate to get back with a Precor Gold package.

equipment is so reliable it doesn't break down. As a result Precor developed a monthly payment option, but with no extra cost for doing so.

"As times got harder a lot of our customers moved on to PAYG so they didn't have to find a lump sum upfront for their service package," says Jonathan Griffiths, Precor's UK Marketing Manager. "However, many very quickly realised they wanted to go back onto a set package for the peace of mind and service coverage it offers.

"Having listened to the research we found that while people understood the value of service packages, they simply wanted an easier way to pay. So we implemented their ideas, refreshing and relaunching our service packages to include a monthly payment plan, and

early results show more people are taking up service contracts when their equipment comes out of warranty."

The research also included the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a powerful customer loyalty metric that gauges customer perception based on just one question – how likely are you to recommend us? Precor attributes its positive NPS score to the customer feedback, which highly rated the rapid call out response, relationship with engineers, peace of mind the packages offer and call centre availability.

"Service is an essential touch point in the customer experience, and the project has been so successful that we intend to make it an annual event so we can continue to learn from what our customers want," says Griffiths.



Precor's research showed that their customers needed easier payment plans

“Precor now offers monthly payment packages at no extra cost”



SIR KEITH MILLS & ADAM PARR

Former London 2012 deputy chair Sir Keith Mills (above) and former Williams Formula 1 boss Adam Parr (below) are now heading up the Sported Foundation, set up to deliver the London 2012 legacy promise. Magali Robathan finds out how they're using sport to inspire a generation





Building a sporting legacy: Sir Keith Mills with youngsters outside the Olympic Stadium in East London

When the London 2012 bid team, led by Lord Sebastian Coe and Sir Keith Mills, went to Singapore in 2005 to bid for the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games in London, they took 35 young people from East London with them. "Why are they here?" said Lord Coe, as he spoke passionately to the International Olympic Committee delegates in the room. "It's because we're serious about inspiring young people. Choose London today and you send a clear message to the youth of the world: the Olympic Games is for you."

Fast-forward eight years and I'm meeting Sir Keith Mills in London to talk about how that promise is being kept. With him is Adam Parr, former Williams F1 CEO and now chief executive of Sported, a charity set up to ensure a lasting legacy for the UK's youth. Specifically, Sported uses sport to change young people's lives in disadvantaged areas of the UK, supporting grassroots clubs and organisations that use sport to create social change in their communities.

Both Mills and Parr are absolutely convinced of the power of sport to change the lives of young people, and they've been backed up by recent research from the Sported Foundation. This research has found that, by using

sport as an intervention to tackle social problems, £4,000 can be saved per young person per year. With 2.5 million young people living in areas of deprivation in the UK, this could add up to billions of pounds.

"Sport helps young people in several ways," says Parr. "Firstly, the young people we're dealing with don't necessarily have a great structure around them, and sport can provide a framework for their lives. Secondly, it provides a physical place where they can go and be safe and have people around them who want to be there. Thirdly, the people who run these organisations are inspirational. They're not just referees or coaches; they play a huge part in these young people's lives."

GETTING STARTED

"It all started when we were developing the bid," explains Mills, who became CEO of the London 2012 bid committee in September 2003 having been approached for his strong business credentials – he had 20 years' marketing experience and is the creator of Air Miles and Nectar.

"We needed to get closer to the communities in East London, because

"The people who run these organisations are inspirational. They're not just referees or coaches"

that's where the Olympic Park was being built. Together with the local authority, we hired coaches, booked halls and playing fields and started to run sporting activities for the local kids. The borough and the local police reported a huge impact, because it gave the kids something to do in the evenings. It got them off the streets and engaged in something positive."

But there was still much to be done if the London 2012 bid team's promise of 'inspiring a generation' was to be delivered. After realising there was nothing of significance in the sport for development sector taking place in the UK, Mills decided to establish Sported as a personal initiative, using £10m of his own money. He recruited Jo Stocks to lead it, and asked her to spend six months looking at the UK sports sector and working out where the gaps were.

Stocks found there was a whole sector that was using sport not just for participation, but as a means to help young people. "There were

Young Bristol

Young Bristol is a charity that works to raise the aspirations of young people and help them reach their potential by improving their confidence and employability, using a wide range of positive activities, sports and volunteering.

The Sported Foundation has supported Young Bristol in its Instructor Training Scheme (ITS) for disadvantaged young people aged 16–23 years. This scheme engages young people in positive activities and gives them the chance to become qualified outdoor activity instructors.

Training sessions focus on a range of outdoor activities including canoeing, mountain biking, climbing, orienteering and caving. The initial focus is giving participants the necessary confidence, knowledge and skills; as and when they're ready, Young Bristol arranges for them to undertake nationally recognised qualifications so they can go on to work in this sector.

Skills are put into practice with a day trip once a month out of Bristol,



The ITS builds confidence among disadvantaged youths

culminating in a quarterly five-day residential stay in one of the UK national parks. ITS participants are also encouraged to volunteer with Young Bristol's existing programme, helping them gain experience in delivering outdoor sessions.

In addition to funding, the Sported Foundation also provided Young Bristol with a volunteer mentor who helped the charity develop detailed budget plans for the ITS, as well as putting measures in place to monitor outcomes and produce evidence to help secure additional investment in the future.



Using sport to tackle social problems could save millions of pounds a year

► several thousand sports clubs out there, many of them very small, which were struggling to survive," explains Mills. "The people who run them are local heroes, but nationally there has been very little exposure for these clubs. Individually they're scrabbling around for funding and resources, and there was no overarching organisation to help them.

"Jo said she thought there was an opportunity to set up an umbrella organisation to represent these clubs and help them grow. If we could do that, she said, it would really deliver on our promise of inspiring a generation."

The next year was spent trying to find these clubs and work out what they needed.

"They needed information, because they're pretty much on their own," says Mills. "Also, people to help them with their business plans, and they wanted to raise money."

Sported – which is free to join – now has 2,500 member clubs, which must meet the criteria of using sport for some sort of social purpose. It also has around 250 active, trained volunteer mentors who help the clubs with anything from business plans to negotiating lower rents for premises.

If the clubs need funding for significant projects, Sported will help them raise money and will also put its own funding in. So far, it has awarded grants of more than £2.4m and has helped its members find a further £4m from other sources.

PARR FOR THE COURSE

Jo Stocks has led Sported for the past five years in her role as director, but this year it was decided that the organisation needed a chief executive. Adam Parr joined as CEO in April, with Stocks continuing as the Foundation's director.

For Parr, joining Sported represented a huge change from the glamorous, highly competitive and at times fraught world of Formula 1, where he spent five years as CEO and then chair of the Williams team. "Sported is the inverse of elite sport," says Parr. "It's about every single person. In fact, we specifically work with people who don't get many opportunities, so that's very exciting."

So did he take any lessons from his time with Williams? "There's one overwhelming lesson from Formula 1," he says. "If you measure stuff and you hold yourself accountable – or, in the case of Formula 1, 90 million people

"Sported is the inverse of elite sport. It's about every single person. That's very exciting"

hold you accountable – it's amazing what progress you can make.

"In 2010, when we stopped refuelling the cars in pit stops, it took 3.9 seconds to do a pit stop and change the wheels on a car. This year it takes 2.2 seconds. That shows what you can do if you measure something, you're held to account for it and you have to deliver.

"If we can do the equivalent at Sported, we'll have an enormous impact. It's so important that we make ambitious goals, measure the results we achieve and hold ourselves accountable, publicly, for what we set out to do."

In line with this thinking, the Sportworks app was launched in May 2013 – a shared measurement tool that allows sport for development organisations to measure the impact and ►



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Elm Tree Project X

Established in February 2012, Elm Tree Project X is a community project that runs urban sports sessions such as skateboarding, BMXing and scootering at a dedicated facility in Stockton-on-Tees. Prior to its development, young people would take to the streets to practise their skills and tricks, resulting in complaints from local residents who were concerned about anti-social behaviour, inappropriate use of facilities and general safety.

As a result, a group of forward-thinking young Stockton residents launched a campaign lobbying the police and local authority to help them develop a dedicated outdoor skate facility – and the result was Project X.

“Police have reported anti-social behaviour connected to urban sports has been totally eradicated”

Project X received vital support from Elm Tree community centre, which enabled the group to offer indoor sessions as an interim measure until the outdoor park was built. In addition, it allows Project X to offer activities during winter months when the outdoor facilities are less accessible.

With funding from the Sported Foundation, Project X has built portable ramps for its indoor skate park, rather than loan them from the council. Not only does this mean that Project X can continue to enjoy the safety of an indoor, staffed facility in winter, but it also helped the group be independent, relying only on the space provided by the community centre.

Elm Tree community centre manager Marilyn Surtees says: “The project has had a fantastic impact. As well as changing the image of young people in the area, police have reported anti-social behaviour connected to the sport has been completely eradicated.”



Clubs already do a great job, but together they can be hugely powerful, says Mills

► societal cost savings of planned or actual initiatives. “It’s quite an incredible tool, because it predicts and measures impact, and it’s very simple to use,” says Parr. “One thing this sector hasn’t done very well is prove that it works,” adds Mills. “It was really important to provide the sector with a tool that could demonstrate the economic and social value of sport.”

A BUSY YEAR

2013 has been a big year for Sported. The start of the year saw the charity launch its first national fundraising campaign – Choose Sport – and announce a media partnership with *The Sun* newspaper, followed by a multi-million pound sponsorship deal with Deutsche Bank a few months later. The latter sees the two parties working together to develop Sportseducate, a supplementary education programme that will be rolled out across grassroots sports clubs in London. As part of the Sportseducate programme, Deutsche Bank will provide 33 community sports clubs with funding to develop education programmes for 11- to 18-year-olds at risk of exclusion from school. If the three-year pilot is successful, the scheme will be expanded across the UK.

“This is experimental – it’s very new – but we’re confident it will have a real impact,” says Parr. “Most of these kids do have ambitions, but when they’re at school or home and want to do their homework, there are lots of distractions and difficulties put in their way. If you go to a club where resources and help are available, where you have a coach who you admire telling you to sit down, and mates there who want to sit down and study, that makes a huge difference.”

“I opened the Crown and Manor in Hackney with London mayor Boris Johnson a couple of months ago,” says Mills. “It’s a great multi-sports club with a separate room with desks and chairs

and a white board. During the evening, the kids come in and do their homework with a volunteer tutor helping. They’ve extended it beyond just a place to do homework and now run lessons there a hour. It’s a great example.”

Also in June, Sported announced that it had chosen uKactive as its charity partner for 2013–2014, in a bid to raise both funds and awareness of its work.

This is important, because as well as supporting individual clubs, championing the sport for development sector as a whole is a key aim for the charity.

“Our sector gets a tiny amount of government funding,” says Parr. “I believe that’s because, while it’s beneficial for the departments of health, justice, education, sports and the Home Office, it doesn’t fit neatly into anyone’s area, so nobody particularly feels a responsibility for it.”

“We have to make sure that, when people think ‘I’d like to put something back into society’, they think of our sector. At the moment we’re not even on the radar.”

“Hosting a successful Games required the co-operation of the entire country,” adds Mills. “That’s something I’ve taken on into Sported. Each individual club is doing a great job, but together they can be hugely powerful. We’re basically saying to the country: last year we were all getting behind the Games – wouldn’t it be great if the whole country now got behind an Olympic legacy project?”

“I like a saying of Einstein’s, which says that life has no meaning except in the service of others,” concludes Parr. “As I get older, I think that’s very true, and I think Sported is an opportunity to turn that into reality.”

This feature first appeared in *Leisure Management* issue 4 2013.





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REMOVING ❖ BARRIERS

Continuing our series showcasing projects being run by sporta members across the country, Abigail Harris takes a look at three life-changing programmes designed to remove barriers to exercise in the London boroughs

RESIDENTS GIVE FITNESS A GO

ORGANISATIONS

Jubilee Hall Trust, GLL and Central YMCA

PROJECT

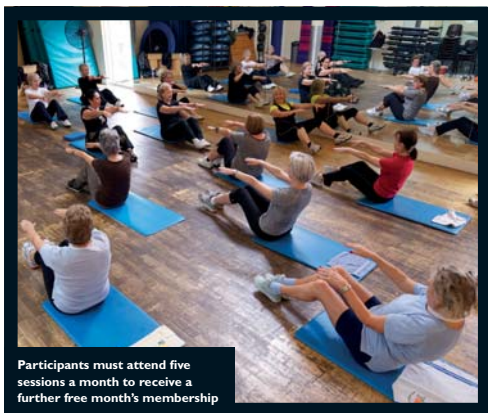
Give it a Go

Jubilee Hall Trust, GLL and Central YMCA partnered with the London Borough of Camden, NHS North Central London and NHS London to launch 'Give it a Go' (GIAG) in 2009/2010, funding four months' free access to local leisure centres for Camden residents in receipt of benefits.

The London Borough of Camden is the 13th most deprived borough within London; eight of Camden's 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOAs) are in the 10 per cent most deprived in England. GIAG was introduced to tackle inequalities and remove cost as a barrier to physical activity participation, after the Camden Sport and Physical Activity Needs Assessment Report 2009 demonstrated an unequivocal need to increase physical activity levels in the area: 44 per cent of respondents had not participated for 30 minutes in the previous three months.

Give It A Go's third phase, which finished in May this year, saw 725 local people attend an induction at their specified leisure centre. Twenty per cent of those registering had a disability of some kind, and while the largest ethnic group was 'white British' (32 per cent), a further 16 ethnic groups were represented. In addition, 65 per cent of those initially registered for the scheme were female – 14 per cent higher than the Census figures for the area.

Activities on offer were not limited to the leisure centres themselves, with



Participants must attend five sessions a month to receive a further free month's membership

a green gym, cardiac rehabilitation, a community physical activity programme and cycling schemes also included.

The programme, which focused on behaviour change, incentivised participants to exercise a minimum of five times a month in order to receive a further free month's membership. Fitness instructors hosting the inductions and subsequent training sessions were given training in motivational interviewing, while texts, email alerts and monthly incentives were also used to encourage exercise adherence among participants.

Around a third of those attending a first induction exercised for four consecutive months to complete the scheme, and of those, 44 per cent said they had joined their leisure centre.

Across all participants who completed the four months, there was a combined increase of 101 hours' more vigorous activity, 171 hours' more moderate activity and 283 hours' walking.

"Give it a Go has really helped me at all levels – not just physical, but also mental and emotional," says one participant. "Using the gym has made me physically stronger, which is helpful when carrying heavy shopping bags or running up the escalators in the tube. I'm also more flexible and healthy."

"I'm sure it's increased my confidence too. My stress levels have lowered thanks to both the gym and the yoga classes. I didn't know Give it a Go would have such an impact on my wellbeing. Being strong in your body also makes you strong in your mind."

WALKING 'THE BEAUTIFUL GAME'



The Walking Football sessions target those over-55s who are less fit

ORGANISATION

Fusion Lifestyle

PROJECT

Walking football

Fusion Lifestyle is running walking football sessions for people who would still like to engage in competitive football, but who can no longer run around the pitch.

The walking football sessions – which were launched this summer – are a joint initiative between Fusion Lifestyle and the Surrey FA, and are aimed at the over-55s as well as younger people with injuries that have left them less able-bodied.

Having spent years away from the game, participants John McNiff, 54, Martin Goff, 67, and Andy Cox, 62, get to pull their boots on every Friday morning at Thornton Heath Leisure Centre. After only a few sessions, they are already singing its praises.

Cox says: "I'm fitter now than I was 30 years ago when I last played football. It's benefited all aspects of my life:

now, when I go on holiday, I can go on longer scenic walks."

Goff adds: "I haven't played football since primary school, but look at me now. I find the gym can be a boring way to keep fit, whereas this is good fun. The competitive element adds something extra too."

The slower-paced version of the 'beautiful game' is played with a size 4 Futsal, and those who run, jog or sprint will be penalised, with a free kick awarded against them. Each hour-long session starts with a series of stretches and dribbling exercises, moving on to drills designed to improve a player's ability to shield the ball, before ending with a game.

McNiff isn't content with just turning up and playing – he's looking to actively improve one key area of his game. "You have to think about your passing more, as your natural instinct is to deliver the ball for someone to run to. Glenn Hoddle was great at getting a ball to stop dead, and that's something I'm trying to work into my game," he says.

Crystal Palace Foundation has started promoting the sessions to its older and less fit supporters and, with sessions currently taking place in the morning,

Fusion Lifestyle is looking to add an additional session in the evening or at the weekend to engage younger people.

Kevin West, Surrey FA development officer, was instrumental in setting up the session alongside Fusion Lifestyle. He says: "For anyone to engage and ultimately continue to participate in physical activity, it must be something they really enjoy. The walking football initiative provides exactly this opportunity for individuals who previously loved to play football, but who felt they had to hang up their boots due to lack of fitness.

"I've been able to watch as the participants' ability and confidence has grown week by week. To see them then go on to play as a team in a local competition, with the same commitment and will to compete as you'd expect from those in mainstream football, justified the efforts of those who helped establish the sessions."

Jemel Stuart, a coach at Thornton Heath, adds: "Walking football is a great idea. When I first heard about it I was a bit apprehensive, but it's been good fun. I look forward to introducing it in other sessions, as it's a good tool to teach patterns of play and other skills."

SOUNDBALL TENNIS AIDS VISUALLY IMPAIRED

ORGANISATION

Aquaterra Leisure

PROJECT

Soundball Tennis

Tennis players with visual impairments are benefiting from a unique association between Metro Blind Sport, a London-based sports and social club for blind and partially sighted people, and the Islington Tennis Centre, where sessions use specially adapted soundballs that allow players to hear the ball coming.

The two-hour soundball tennis sessions are held on Fridays for advanced players who can rally, and Sundays for beginners and people who are totally blind, where volunteers, as well as the tennis coach, are on-hand to support the players. The standard rules of tennis apply with just a few modifications: if you're totally blind, you're allowed three bounces; and if partially sighted you're allowed two.

The sessions are funded by Sport Islington, which distributes Islington Council and SportsAid funding each year to support local sports clubs and help young sports people develop within their chosen sports. Islington Tennis Centre, which is managed by leisure operator and registered charity Aquaterra, first ran soundball tennis in 2011, but its



“ I was left in no doubt that this is a game to be enjoyed across all abilities and levels. Being visually impaired doesn't have to be a barrier to a healthier lifestyle ”

popularity led to the programming of regular weekly sessions.

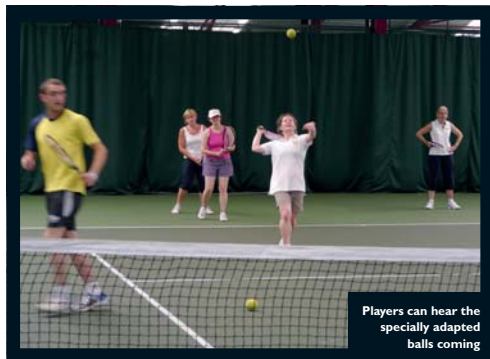
“I'd been keen to try out adapted tennis to fully appreciate how the game and its equipment feel. The answer

is: brilliant!” says Ian Francis, sports development officer at Metro Blind Sport. “After two hours of competitive matches, a few drills, coaching tips and plenty of friendly banter, I was left in no doubt that this is a game to be enjoyed across all abilities and levels.

“Being visually impaired doesn't have to be a barrier to a healthier lifestyle. Regular coaching encourages players to develop their game, and the facilities allow all ages and abilities to take part.”

Raising the profile of the activity is bringing results. Islington Tennis Centre hosted a regional LTA one-day visually impaired tennis camp in September, supported by Metro Blind, and is also hosting a junior taster session for soundball tennis in November.

Metro Blind Sport was recently named Sport Islington organisation of the year at the Sport Islington and Islington School Sport Partnership awards. Sport Islington chair Michael MacNeill says: “It was heartwarming to see Metro Blind Sport win, particularly as it's their 40th year and one year on from the success of the Paralympics.” ●





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Lockers



Safe Space design for Notts YMCA members

Safe Space Lockers has created new changing rooms for the YMCA gym in Nottinghamshire, UK, as part of a £300,000 makeover. The refurbishment programme included a personal one-to-one design service. Choosing classic furniture to create a stylish changing room, the supplier fitted roomy new lockers, stylish vanities, benches, showers and changing cubicles.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Safe Space



Electronic locks made to give operator control

Gantner's electronic locker systems are designed to give operators control over their changing rooms and to be easy for members to use. The lock system is available either as a centrally-controlled wired unit, controlled from the reception PC where it shows which lockers are free, or a battery-powered version. Both can be retrofitted. Lockers are opened via a card chip or wristband that uses contactless RFID technology.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Gantner

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Striking red scheme for Hard Candy lockers

International locker design company FitInteriors has been chosen to supply the locker rooms and lounge area furniture at pop icon Madonna's international health club chain Hard Candy Fitness. Italian-based FitInteriors, distributed by GymKit in the UK, is using striking red locker room furniture and strong images printed onto walls and open spaces, along with bespoke vanity areas, to reinforce the high-energy brand. Hard Candy is continuing its global roll-out, with new sites opening this autumn (see p18).



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Gymkit

Nayland club gets a taste of CQL luxury

Craftsman Quality Lockers (CQL) has installed female changing facilities at the Stoke by Nayland Hotel, Golf and Spa. The locker manufacturer designed the installation to create a luxurious feel in the changing rooms. It includes locker designs with space for robes, slippers and towels as well as integrated product display. Matt Manning, the hotel's operations director, says: "Competition is constantly growing, and to provide a real point of difference we focused on providing a great changing experience in partnership with Craftsman, offering luxurious, well-designed facilities and great showers."



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Craftsman

Gain control with GANTNER's electronic locker system

Lockers can be opened using cards or wristbands that use contactless RFID technology

Eliminating the problems of jammed locks, lost keys or gym kit left locked up for days, GANTNER's electronic locker systems offer complete control for operators and ease of use for customers

The system is available either as a centrally-controlled wired unit (online) or a battery-powered version (offline), enabling lockers to be opened via a card or wristband that uses contactless RFID technology. The versatile design means that it can be easily retro-fitted into almost any kind of locker design.

The wired system, controlled centrally from the reception PC, is able to identify in real time which lockers are free and ensure that each visitor can only use one locker at a time if space is at a premium. It comes with alarm-monitored burglary protection; a time-adjustable, automatic opening function for cleaning or overnight security purposes; and other central admin options such as occupancy analysis.

The system can also be easily integrated with Technogym's Wellness Key as well as Precor's Preva Token.

The battery-operated system has an internal device that works with a site's card access system to actively manage or restrict the use of the lockers. It is also able to record bookings, which helps the operator monitor usage. For both online or offline systems, if a master card is lost, the data can simply be deleted and a new master card issued.

RFID technology

For leisure members, GANTNER's RFID locker technology means they don't have to carry additional keys or coins around the club. If they forget their locker number, they simply swipe the card or wristband at an information terminal to display the locker's location.

GANTNER's locker system also opens up the opportunity of new revenue streams for operators, as larger sites may wish to designate and manage some of their lockers in different

ways. Premium club memberships, for example, could include access to a personal locker, or some lockers could be made available for long-term rental.

In the case of larger resorts or theme parks, where visitors may only want to pay for a few hours' use, or to move their belongings from one locker location to another, GANTNER's system allows lockers to be timed and accessed via a 'pay-per-use' mode.

GANTNER's locker technology can be found in leading fitness chains around the globe, including Hardy Candy clubs in Mexico City and Toronto, Pure JATOMI clubs across Europe and Asia, the McFit chain in Germany and Spain, and Fresh Fitness in Denmark. In the UK, leading chains like Fitness First and truGym have been loyal customers for many years.

Oxfordshire-based SOLL Leisure has a GANTNER wired locker system in the three clubs it acquired from Fitness First. Group fitness manager Neil Morris says the company is impressed with the performance so far and is looking to add more software options to the entire GANTNER access system. He adds: "The lockers are opened with a simple swipe card, and we're planning to offer members the choice of a convenient wristband at a small extra cost."

Gantner
technologies

For more details, visit the GANTNER Technologies website at www.gantner.com or call +44 (0)7841 794580.

Founded in Austria in 1982, GANTNER is recognised as a pioneer in contactless access control, electronic locking systems and administration solutions for the global leisure industries. It has clients and support networks in over 50 countries, and subsidiary companies in the UK, Germany, Dubai and Australia.

A Land of OPPORTUNITY

New research provides valuable insights into the fitness industry in Australia and New Zealand. Trent Brown offers an analysis of the two markets based on the key findings of the report

The Australian economy has been the envy of much of the world in recent years. However, while it's true most sectors of the fitness industry have fared comparatively well in globally tough times, that's not to say that business owners are resting on their laurels. The fitness landscape in Australia and New Zealand has changed considerably in recent years, most notably with the growth of small footprint and 24-hour clubs challenging the big players. This, coupled with reduced discretionary consumer spending caused by economic uncertainty, has resulted in a highly competitive environment.

But in spite of the challenges, it's encouraging for the industry that more than 50 per cent of Australian and New Zealand clubs saw a growth in membership in 2013: 33 per cent saw growth of 1–10 per cent, while 26 per cent saw more than 10 per cent growth.

These are some of the topline findings of this year's Australia and New Zealand Fitness Industry Survey (ANZFIS), conducted by Ezypay and involving almost 20,000 responses: 1,150 clubs and 18,940 members and non-members.

We take a look at some of the key findings and trends highlighted by this year's report.

Smaller facilities

Although big chain clubs can be found in major cities and towns in Australia and New Zealand, privately owned single clubs enjoy a considerable slice of the market. Franchise clubs are also prominent, and PT studios and CrossFit facilities (or 'boxes' or 'box clubs' as they are also known) are also making an impact. Indeed, more than half of the facilities that responded to this year's survey had fewer than 500 members, reflecting the market share enjoyed by small to medium-sized fitness businesses.

Facilities and services

Free weights have overtaken fixed resistance machines in popularity over recent years: in 2011, 79 per cent of clubs offered fixed resistance machines, and 64 per cent offered free weights; in 2013, those numbers had changed to 73 per cent and 82 per cent respectively. This is an interesting turnaround, and ties in with the growth in popularity of

functional and bodyweight training. In leaner financial times, it may also be an indication that some clubs have embraced training formats that use smaller, cheaper free weight equipment.

In terms of group exercise, 57 per cent of responding clubs had at least one studio – an increase from the 2011 ANZFIS, when the figure was 43 per cent. The higher prominence of CrossFit facilities also reflects the recent growth in popularity of group training formats.

Over one-third of clubs say they intend to invest in gym equipment in the coming financial year: 41 per cent plan to invest in cardio equipment and 35 per cent in weight training equipment.

Changing formats

Among members who have, at one time or another, lapsed their membership, lack of time was cited as the most common reason for the decision. The industry seems to be responding, however, with the introduction of short, tough, results-focused exercise workouts – high-intensity interval training (HIIT) formats such as Tabata, CrossFit, Les Mill's GRIT series – and even whole club concepts, such as Fitness First's The Zone in Sydney.

Indeed, the most significant growth areas for the fitness industry – as identified by clubs responding to this year's survey – include new workout concepts such as CrossFit, express workouts, small group training and small group fitness studios, and obstacle course events and classes. Clubs could potentially benefit from focusing on the provision of these training opportunities in their marketing and promotions.

Clubs offering budget memberships (under \$10 a week in either Australian or New Zealand currency) and 24-hour facilities were also identified as potential future growth areas, as was personal training and catering for new niches – specifically adult and childhood obesity, and the growing seniors market.

Current issues faced by clubs

On average, and in order of importance, the most significant issues identified by clubs in Australia and New Zealand this year are:

- Government legislation
- Obtaining finance
- Staff retention
- Finding an effective software system
- Better understanding of how to use social media
- Motivating staff
- Managing staff
- Finding good staff
- Competition from other operators
- Marketing
- Member retention
- Membership sales



“Clubs offering budget memberships and 24-hour facilities were identified as potential growth areas”

▲ Results-focused workouts (pictured: Les Mills RPM) are growing in popularity
▼ Tabata training (below) and CrossFit are making an impact

Personal training

In the 2011 ANZFI, 56 per cent of Australian clubs reported employing all of their personal trainers, while 25 per cent of clubs opted to contract their PTs. In 2013, however, this situation has been reversed, with more clubs contracting PTs than employing them.

In the 2011 survey, it was noted that the NZ experience of higher PT contracting levels correlated with fewer problems. The report observed: “It could suggest that contracted staff are of a higher quality than employed staff, perhaps taking greater ownership of their role, equating to higher education, conduct and overall professionalism.”

Most often, clubs source remuneration from PTs via a percentage of income (42





Fitness First now has a range of formats including Black Label clubs and The Zone

► per cent), via rent (35 per cent) or a mixture of both (23 per cent). The ways in which clubs derive income from PTs has remained consistent in both Australia and New Zealand.

From a member perspective, more than half of members surveyed (55 per cent) have never tried personal training. Of the 45 per cent who currently do use a PT, many have only done so for three months or less (33 per cent). Encouragingly though, 22 per cent have used a PT for 12 months or longer.

Member acquisition and retention

The main reason members said they joined a club was location (33 per cent). Additional reasons for joining included value for money (13 per cent), or because they offered a different type of exercise (9 per cent). A mere 7 per cent joined their current club because it was cheaper, which confirms that price is no longer a sole deciding factor. It will be interesting to see how this changes in the coming year, however, as more budget operators enter the Australian and New Zealand marketplace.

When it comes to remaining a member, location was the biggest factor (54 per cent), followed by value for money (46 per cent) and having professional staff – defined as polite, approachable and on-hand (39 per cent). Indeed, when asked about interaction with staff, 60.2 per cent of members

said they felt it was important on every visit to the club, with 29 per cent of members even reporting that engaging staff who made conversation, rather than just delivering an initial greeting, were an important reason why they remained a member. While clubs don't have to be cheapest, value is key and is seen to lie in the member experience.

When asked about their overall satisfaction with their current club, 34 per cent of members say they are very satisfied and 26 per cent are somewhat satisfied; 14 per cent believe their club is OK; and 26 per cent feel somewhat unsatisfied (9 per cent) or very unsatisfied (17 per cent).

Social media

In the 2010 ANZFIS, social media didn't feature in the top 10 most successful marketing and communication methods. In the 2011 report, it came in 10th. In 2013, however, the club's own website was ranked first (37 per cent) with social media sites ranked second (15 per cent) – in particular Facebook.

With so many people using social media to communicate with friends and recommend or discuss their experiences – including fitness achievements, classes attended and club check-ins – these online platforms should be given a high priority by clubs looking to drive word of mouth referrals.

Certainly the majority of clubs say they plan to invest in their website and/

or social media strategy in the next financial year.

However, while a high proportion of club members use Facebook (80 per cent of this year's respondents), and are happy to see information and content in their club's social media feed, most prefer not to be communicated with via this medium.

The future of fitness

Although operators reportedly do not perceive there to be high levels of competition, the Australian and New Zealand marketplace is increasingly busy. This has arguably been to the benefit of the fitness industry, however, forcing clubs to up their game and improve the service they deliver.

Combined with ongoing membership growth and reported plans for investment in the coming year, this all paints a picture of a buoyant industry with its eye on further growth in the years ahead. ●

Trent Brown is CEO of Ezypay, a company based in Sydney, Australia, which supports businesses via an outsourced direct debit and credit card management system. He has led some of the fastest growing businesses in Australia and uses this success to share his knowledge and enthusiasm for sustainable business growth.

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The pool at The Spa at Trump has a view over the Chicago River

SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

WE TAKE A LOOK AT PROJECTS FROM WTS INTERNATIONAL,
GRAVITY/TOTAL GYM AND PRECOR

OPULENT WELLNESS

CLIENT: TRUMP HOTEL COLLECTION, US
SUPPLIER: WTS INTERNATIONAL

Located in the heart of Chicago, US, alongside the Chicago River, Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago welcomes guests into the lap of luxury. Within this 92-story residential tower, developed by Trump Organization, lies Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago, with floors 14–27 encompassing the hotel.

The 2,140sq m (23,000sq ft) The Spa at Trump is on the 14th floor and offers active travellers and residents a well-balanced environment in which to enhance their wellbeing. Within the Spa at Trump, the health club offers cutting-edge CV equipment with individual TV monitors and iPod docking stations, and weight training equipment, all by Technogym.

The club's layout provides users with breathtaking views of the city known as 'The Heart of America'. In addition to the gym facilities, hotel guests and members can take advantage of experienced personal trainers, two spacious studios offering an extensive range of group and individual fitness classes, and a 23 x 7m heated swimming and lap lane pool overlooking the Chicago River. Men's and women's changing areas provide members and guests with complete personal amenities, deluxe showers, and both steam and sauna facilities.

The Spa at Trump provides an exclusive membership through its signature Spa Attaché, which includes access to the Trump

Health Club Chicago. Membership gives access to the gym, pool and group exercise classes, as well as 20 per cent off spa services (Monday–Thursday).

It also includes a new member PT session and Polar Body Age health assessment. Also on offer are some complimentary member services: a one-hour suit press and shoe shine, overnight workout laundry services, personal locker, towels and toiletries, and use of hairdryers, straighteners and curling irons. Complimentary workout attire is also available (shorts and T-shirt), as well as the loan of iPods and headphones.

As an invisible support structure, WTS International works with the Trump Hotel Collection to uphold the essence of its brand standards and vision for its guests/members in Chicago. In partnership with Trump Hotel Collection, WTS developed the conceptual vision for the health club by capturing and amplifying the hotel's distinctive characteristics, thereby differentiating the facility from its competitors and forming a platform on which the promotional efforts could be built. In addition to the conceptual development, WTS provided design review services including assisting in the layout, location and characteristics of the health club.

Once the club had been designed to optimise the guest and member experience, WTS provided pre-opening services, defining the proper operational format for launch. Following the completion of all concept development, design review and pre-opening services, WTS now provides complete day-to-day operational services – including fitness programming and membership services and sales – for the Chicago club.

For more information: www.wtsinternational.com

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SECONDARY REVENUE STREAM

CLIENT: DAVID LLOYD LEISURE

SUPPLIER: GRAVITY/TOTAL GYM



David Lloyd Leisure introduced Total Gym GTS machines to enhance its functional resistance training offer for members

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has recently launched GRAVITY Group Training at its club in Kensington, London, having installed four Total Gym GTS machines at the facility. Total Gym offers members an effective, functional, instructor-led workout that can be charged as either small group or one-to-one personal training.

This is the fourth DLL club to introduce Total Gym equipment, coinciding with launches at DLL locations in Luton and Worcester – each of these clubs also installing four Total Gym units – and following on from a pilot at DLL's Chigwell club, where the equipment was installed in April 2012. With a comprehensive functional equipment offering on the gym floor already in place, DLL wanted to trial GRAVITY as a way of adding functional resistance training to the studio timetable.

The Chigwell club has already seen good returns on its investment, as well as high member satisfaction levels in response to the studio-based classes, which are charged as six-week courses. It has 77 members signed up to a GRAVITY programme, with 20 sessions timetabled each week.

GRAVITY's functional programming can train sports-specific movements for better performance and is also extremely effective as a fat-burning and strengthening class – a blend that fits very well with the DLL member profile. By harnessing the user's own bodyweight as resistance, a huge number of exercises can be performed, and difficulty can be adjusted to suit anyone from athletes to people with limited mobility. In many cases, these diverse groups can even join in the same class, simply varying the angle of the equipment's glideboard to match their ability.

"Total Gym is a deceptive looking piece of equipment. I thought

it would be quite tame compared to the intense full-body sessions I normally do, but within the 30-minute taster session I was starting to feel like I needed to sub out!" says Jason Sheard, sports manager at DLL Kensington. "The ease with which the Total Gym can be adjusted meant I didn't even catch my breath between exercises. It's an excellent piece of equipment that has to be tried to understand how good it is."

The Kensington, Luton and Worcester clubs will use the same model as has proved successful at Chigwell. On top of monthly membership, members can choose from two packages: either six weeks of one hour a week, or six weeks of two 45-minute sessions each week.

"We're always looking for ways to enhance our members' experience, and GRAVITY Training at David Lloyd Chigwell has already proved very popular among our members," says Rob Beale, head of sports, health and fitness at David Lloyd Leisure. "We've just had four more instructors trained up to deliver more GRAVITY sessions and offer more courses for members to sign up to. Rolling out the concept to our clubs in Kensington, Luton and Worcester was an easy decision."

With GRAVITY programming available for sports-specific workouts, post-rehabilitation, high intensity interval training

(HIT), pilates and strength training, there's huge scope for expanding the group class offering, as well as launching one-to-one PT sessions on the Total Gym equipment.

With Total Gym's foldable design, four machines can be stored at the back of a studio with a footprint of just 0.5sq m and rolled out to transform the space into a GRAVITY Studio when needed.

For more information:
www.gravityuk.net



The glideboard angle is easily changed

BUDGET AT ITS BEST

CLIENT: EASYGYM
SUPPLIER: PRECOR



PHOTO: STUART HOLT

Watch the
Oxford
Street site
taking shape



Precor has partnered with easyGym since its 2012 launch into the UK market, including the new Oxford Circus club (above)

In just two years, low-cost health club operator easyGym has opened eight gyms in the UK, including a flagship site in London's Oxford Street. A ninth site, in Tottenham, north London, is due to open in December.

With gyms already open in Slough, Wood Green, Birmingham, Southampton, Cardiff, West Croydon and Ilford – and another set to launch in autumn 2014 – easyGym has set out to bring new meaning to the term 'budget gym'. Each site has been reconfigured to align with the brand's premium low-cost model, as easyGym CEO Paul Lorimer-Wing explains: "Our philosophy has always been to provide a quality but affordable experience. Low-cost doesn't mean basic. We strip out the frills to give great value, but still have Precor's top of the range equipment, tasteful décor and quality fittings.

"Our strap line – and philosophy – is to give people the 'freedom to do more' and, although we can't be everything to everyone, we can be a lot of things to a lot of people."

The 2,414sq m (26,000sq ft) gym in London's Oxford Street – which opened in June 2013 – is the operator's largest, where the fitness area alone houses 25 per cent more equipment than the average easyGym.

As well as 42 treadmills, 30 cross-trainers, 27 bikes and 14 Adaptive Motion Trainers (AMTs) – all from Precor's Networked 880 Line with P80 consoles and Preva Networked Fitness – there are 10 Concept2 rowers, two StairMaster stepers and an 8.5m TRX frame.

Alongside this, a number of strength zones include a fixed resistance area with Precor Discovery Selectorised

equipment, a more advanced section with 15 cable machines and Precor Discovery plate-loaded equipment, and a third large area for free weights.

Opened in August, Southampton offers another expansive gym floor – 1,950sq m (21,000sq ft) – with a range of Precor equipment. Meanwhile, existing clubs at Ilford and Slough are now benefiting from refurbishments, and a mixed martial arts area has been introduced in Croydon. Wood Green is also undergoing a refurb to include additional Precor Discovery plate-loaded stations, FTS Glides and Icarian Superbenches.

The majority of easyGym locations offer Precor's Preva Media Package, which features on all cardio equipment and is free for the first month and then charged at £1.99 a month. Delivered via the P80 console in a format designed for the in-motion exerciser, the media package allows members to watch TV, browse the web, check emails and plug in their iPod. Only customers paying for the Preva Media Package have access.

Jez Whitting, sales director for Precor UK, says: "We've partnered with easyGym from the beginning, installing equipment with the Preva Media Package into its facilities. This functionality has enabled easyGym to buy top of the range Precor equipment and offer an unrivalled entertainment option, but still charge a low membership fee. Members can decide to pay a little extra, and this helps pay for the equipment investment."

easyGym plans to grow its portfolio to 50 clubs in the next few years, and take the brand into Europe.

For more information:
www.precor.com



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LIGHTWEIGHTS

CHAIN REACTION FOR SHOE COMPANY

Chain mail has been used to create a form of shoe which is designed to improve posture while helping wearers feel "closer to nature".

The PaleoBarefoots are based on the same principle as other barefoot shoes, whereby minimising heel striking is said to aid with posture, injury prevention and improved running technique (see *HCM* July 13, p38).

Unlike other trainer-like models, however, they enable the wearer to experience more natural sensations – soil, gravel, moss, grass, leaves and even water – although they're not recommended for road use. The fine mesh is also said to protect against glass shards and other sharp objects.

Manufactured by German-based company GoSt Barefoots, there are three different types of PaleoBarefoots: one model is suitable for strolling and light hiking, one for extreme terrain, and one is an all-rounder. A pair costs €165-€192. Details: <http://portal.gost-barefoots.com/en/>



SMELLING OUT THE TRUTH OF GYM KITS



More than half of gym goers admit to not washing their kit until after their third workout – and women are the worst offenders, according to a survey by Sweatband.com

Considering this, it's ironic that 44 per cent of the 1,456 survey respondents said they'd been put off their exercise because of smelly people next to them at the gym.

The top excuses for not washing kit more frequently included saving it for a bigger wash, not having a replacement kit and pure laziness.

It was found that people were least likely to wash their bottoms and socks compared to their tops.

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GETTING SPOOKED ON NIGHT-TIME HIKES

Spooky sites recently provided the backdrop for two 30km night-time treks, organised in celebration of Halloween. The Fright Hike charity walks took place in the UK's Epping Forest and Sherwood Forest.

Epping Forest, a reputed haunt of the ghost of the murderous highwayman Dick Turpin, is also home to the legendary Hangman's Hill that's said to have been used to hang criminals. Meanwhile Robin Hood's famous hideaway, Sherwood Forest, has a medieval-era atmosphere and is home to Rufford Abbey, one of the most haunted places in England.

Teams or individuals were challenged to complete the treks in six hours – tough courses which the organisers promised would be "murder on your muscles". Details: www.fright-hike.com

Jump at the chance to lose weight

Skipping could be the key to keeping hunger at bay, based on a small study published in the journal *Appetite*.

A team at Waseda University in Japan recruited 15 men in their mid-20s who carried out three separate tests – based on short bursts of skipping, biking or remaining completely sedentary – following 12 hours of fasting.

During the tests, the men were frequently asked how hungry they felt

and blood samples were also analysed for the presence of a hunger hormone.

While both activities made the men feel less hungry than doing nothing, skipping was the most effective.

The researchers believe that the up and down movement and load-bearing characteristic of skipping disturbed the stomach, which possibly had an impact on hormones that are linked to controlling the appetite.

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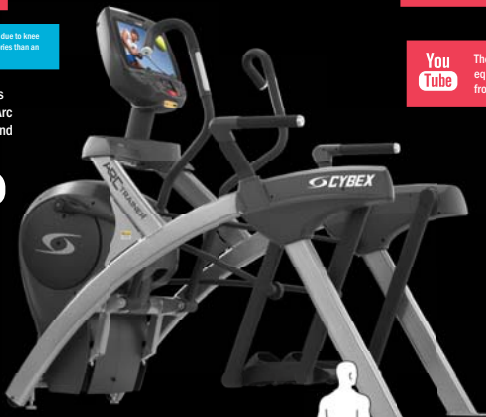
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