

# health club management

JANUARY 2011



a leisure media  
company  
publication

INTERVIEW

## MARK MASTROV

on the launch of  
Madonna's Hard  
Candy gym chain

### FIT FOR THE PISTE

Get your members ready  
for the ski slopes

### consumer opinion

Findings from this year's  
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## Driven to change

If you look back four years, the consensus across the industry was that it was time for a change – things had got a little boring. Operators were set in their ways and analysts talked about the need to break the mould, create new business models and challenge the status quo, but nothing changed in spite of this recognition.

Fast-forward to 2011 and things couldn't be more different. It's taken the biggest financial shake-up of our lifetime, but there are signs the industry's starting to innovate. The pace of change is picking up too, with a slew of new announcements giving indications of how things are likely to shape up as the year unfolds.

The first trend seems to be towards diversification into new sectors, as operators in public and private sectors look for growth by attacking new markets. Leisure Connection, for example, has announced plans to move into private hotel gym management alongside its public leisure centre contracts; it will run the health and fitness facilities for Park Inn Hotels. Meanwhile, in the trust market, Kirklees Active Leisure has announced it will launch into the low-cost gym sector by opening two budget clubs in Yorkshire this year.

Local authorities are following GLL and Pendle's lead and launching spas – the latest being a Schletterer-designed, Décleor day spa at St Neots leisure centre in Cambridgeshire and a new spa at Hyndburn Leisure Trust's Mercer Hall Leisure Centre.

If you'd asked a local government leisure professional who Décleor was a couple of years ago, they wouldn't have had a clue, whereas now it seems spas are the new focus for both refurbished and new-build local authority and trust-managed facilities.

Other recently-announced initiatives

include DC Leisure's tie up with Magnus Scheving's *LazyTown* TV brand to launch FitKid's LazyTown Sports Clubs as part of DC's programme to boost children's fitness at its centres.

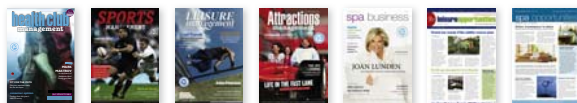
Franchising looks set to be big news this year, especially in the budget sector, where énergie will push forward following its acquisition of nuyuu. Other entrants include truGym, which has announced it plans to grow through the franchise model, and New Evolution Ventures' Crunch franchise, which is planning a global roll-out and looks likely to come to the UK at some point (see p34). In a related deal, Topnotch Health Clubs has just announced an agreement which will enable it to use the Fitness4Less name to roll out budget health clubs, with ambitious growth plans in 2011.

Medical fitness looks set to be big this year, with more links to physiotherapy and specialist health services being announced. This will be backed up by the FIA's new Joint Consultative Forum, which brings the FIA together with a number of royal medical colleges and faculties with the aim of increasing the number of exercise referrals and drawing up new standards (see p20).

Add to this the launch of easyGym, the massive growth of social media and the impact this will have on the industry, and the likelihood of the UK getting its first Madonna Hard Candy Fitness health club (see p32) and 2011 is already shaping up to be a pretty interesting year.

**Liz Terry, editorial director**

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# write to reply



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



énergie Fitness for Women has 16 clubs aimed exclusively at older women

## énergie fitness for women: targeting older females

I read your editor's letter concerning the senior market in HCM NovDec 10 (p3). This market certainly represents an opportunity for operators: the UK's 65+ age group is set to grow by 63 per cent over the next 25 years.

In fact, we already have 16 clubs catering exclusively for seniors in the UK, with a further eight in the pipeline. They're perhaps slightly under the radar in that they're part of the énergie Fitness for Women portfolio – we don't differentiate these senior clubs in branding terms. However, they are significantly different in their offering as this market has very different needs: mobility and fitness as a way to improve quality of life is key, even over weight loss; a sense of community at a club is vital; clubs are better when they do not look like gyms; the sales process

must be more subtle; and, crucially, the audience will not view itself as 'senior', so trying to identify the market by age alone will be ineffective.

Our seniors' clubs offer a motorised health and wellbeing circuit comprising 10 Motortone machines – an accessible, active yet gentle exercise solution specifically for the mature market. The kit is designed not only to aid CV fitness and weight loss but also to improve mobility, flexibility, energy levels, strength and posture. It's these types of improvement that can make the significant differences in the lives of seniors: the difference between being able to get up the stairs or to walk to the local shop without feeling pain or being out of breath.

**peter croney**  
ceo, énergie fitness for women

## fitness managers must increase focus on older users

I couldn't agree more with the editor's letter in HCM NovDec 10 (p3).

Our power-assisted products are specifically aimed at the 50+ and deconditioned markets and are used in a number of leisure facilities across the UK. This allows the centres to engage a host of new members who would never have dreamed of setting foot in a 'normal' gym.

The local authorities we work with are well aware of need for social inclusion in their centres and are also savvy enough to realise the commercial potential that can be gained from focusing on this. Yet sadly there are still many fitness managers who are more interested in which brand of treadmill is compatible with their iPod, rather than the fitness options they offer for older users. Many don't even know the difference between air hydraulic and power-assisted systems, and a lot of the schemes aimed at older users are token gestures that are often ill researched and, in many cases, patronising.

I feel we're moving in the right direction and initiatives such as IFI are doing wonders to drive things forward. But I believe this is something all fitness managers must turn their attention to, to ensure that these age groups are effectively catered for within the industry.

**rachel hobbs**  
business development director,  
shapemaster uk



Fitness managers must turn their attention to catering for older people

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## ASK YOURSELF

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*How about an event where you had a personal meetings schedule with the club operators you really want to meet...*

*...face to face?*



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# write to reply

## crossing the bridge between wellness and healthcare

I've been avidly following the articles regarding member 'top to toe' testing (*HCM* Sept 10 p32 and *HCM* Oct 10 p28).

I spent almost 30 years in the fitness sector and appreciate its entrepreneurial ethos. Clinical testing could not be more different: every aspect of design has to be evidence-based before it can be released to the mass population.

One of my roles has been overseeing the service delivery of NHS health checks into the community, co-ordinating district nurses and healthcare assistants to identify patients (through GP surgeries) and to perform health checks in diverse locations such as mobile buses, outreach events (football matches/street fairs) and pharmacies.

Our iPad-like technology – the Cardio Pod – measures blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI, lifestyle analysis and more, and can be configured to run other clinically-approved protocols relating to ECG, depression, anxiety and occupational health conditions.

The subsequent report shows results, goals and expectations, but fundamentally

produces a percentage risk of a cardiovascular incident within the next 10 years. A greater than 20 per cent score triggers an automatic email to the GP and relevant third parties such as the smoking cessation service. The data can also be automatically updated to the patient management system at the surgery.

In short, the ability to test a patient (or member) and directly post the data from the health club/spa to the GP surgery has arrived.

The Cardio Pod is also a mobile device, making it an ideal tool for a pre-sale environment, either at or away from the club – imagine the impact of performing a 15-minute health check on a prospect while at the same time adding them to the prospecting database.

An operator working in conjunction with its PCT, using technology that bridges the needs of both, will I believe open the door for greater volumes of patient testing and more new members who will be healthier.

**david cummin**

*sales director, telehealth solutions ltd*



**DC Leisure has created a new role based on same philosophy as TAG**

### outreach essential for nation's future wellbeing

I was interested to read your recent interview with Fred Turok, creator of the Transforming a Generation (TAG) charity (*HCM* Oct 10, p42).

Actively involved with TAG, we have recently created a new job role within the leisure industry for 18- to 24-year-olds: the Community Activity Leader (CAL). Built on the same philosophy as TAG – to expand the job market for today's NEETs – we felt it necessary to create a new position that focused more specifically on community outreach to aid the nation's health and wellbeing.

The CALs will work closely with school sports partnerships and community centres to access hard to reach communities and identify the diverse leisure needs of local residents. By March 2011, it's anticipated that 250 CALs will be in full operation to encourage maximum usage of the UK's leisure facilities.

The three-week intensive training programme, delivered by Lifetime, will comprise similar modules to that of TAG (exercise, fitness and physiology) while also including community outreach, health, safety and welfare, and an employee induction into 'The More Active Health Programme' powered by MEND. On completion, the youngsters will gain a REPs Level 2 qualification in readiness for their five-month phase of employment.

The CAL venture is a strong addition to the Future Jobs Fund portfolio.

**richard millard**

*sports development director, dc leisure*



**The Cardio Pod technology can help bridge the gap between health and fitness**

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## in brief...

**gym group secures funding**

Low-cost health club operator The Gym Group has revealed that it has secured a £20m funding package towards its plans for expansion. Primary investor Bridges Ventures and a 'revolving credit facility' from HSBC will help finance the group's move to grow its UK portfolio.

The Gym Group is looking to acquire up to 20 sites during 2011 and aims to expand its estate to 50 clubs over the next two years.

CEO John Treharne says: "Our ability to secure substantial financial backing – at a time when capital is so constrained – is testament to the robustness of our business model."

The Gym Group launched its first club in 2008 and now has 14 sites.

**construction begins on st albans wellness complex**

Preparatory work has now started on a multi-million pound scheme to revamp the Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre in St Albans, Herts.

A number of buildings will be demolished to make way for the new facility – which has been designed by S&P Architects – with the main construction phase due to get underway this month.

The new Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, which is due for completion in summer 2012, will feature a 200-station fitness suite with group cycling studio, a four-court sports hall, 647sq m (6,964sq ft) of water space and a 500sq m (5,382sq ft) spa area.

**nottingham leisure scheme gets under way**

Construction work is underway on Nottingham's new £9m Victoria Leisure Centre, designed by London-based architects Levitate.

Parts of the former facility, which shut on 1 April 2010, have already been demolished to allow for construction to commence. A six-lane, 25m family swimming pool with separate kids' pool and fun splash play area will feature at the heart of the development, along with fitness and health suites.

## vat hike to hit portuguese clubs

Pedro Ruiz, CEO of Portugal's largest health club chain Vivafit, has warned that up to a third of clubs in the country could be forced to close due to the government's decision to increase VAT on fitness from 6 to 23 per cent.

The raising of the levy comes just two years after the government cut VAT on fitness and all supervised physical activities from the standard rate of 19 per cent to just 5 per cent. VAT since rose to 21 per cent, and the fitness tariff to 6 per cent – but now fitness is being pushed back into the general VAT category, which rises to 23 per cent this month.

Speaking to *HCM*, Ruiz accused the government of 'persecuting' the fitness sector: "Since the government's announcement of the increase in tax, the number of membership cancellations at clubs has skyrocketed to levels never seen before. Hundreds of fitness clubs are already closing their doors and I expect at least 30 per cent of facilities to close during 2011."

Ruiz does, however, admit that the government's decision was taken mainly due to the reluctance of fitness operators to pass the 2008 cut in VAT directly on to members. Nick Coutts, former CEO of Holmes Place Iberia, agrees: "It's absolutely clear that the fitness sector is to some extent continuing to pay the price for not 'playing ball' three years ago," he says.

"The government's decision to clarify VAT at a significantly reduced rate back in 2008 was a positive one, but the communication process was flawed as the government also advised members to 'expect' a mandatory significant subscription rate discount from their clubs. Members were even encouraged to submit legal claims against operators who did not pass on the full value of the VAT reduction with immediate effect.

"Several operators did lower prices, but these reductions were implemented during a six- to 18-month period following the VAT reduction. Meanwhile, clubs ran the gauntlet of upset members and various



**It's feared that up to a third of clubs in Portugal could be forced to close**

government agencies, whose mood was bolstered by extremely subjective and quite aggressive media coverage.

"In hindsight it's clear that many operators did not communicate their pricing and VAT strategy well enough to their members, and consequently paid the price in terms of a loss of 'goodwill' from key stakeholders across the sector."

Coutts adds that clubs in Portugal now face three options: "The first is to increase prices, but this is sure to anger existing members and make recruiting new joiners even more of a challenge.

"Even if clubs decide to maintain current prices, they're unlikely to receive much gratitude from members as they're sure to see it as the club's obligation to their loyal members.

"Clubs could implement a 'hybrid' approach, maintaining prices for existing members and increasing prices for new joiners. However, in reality this will mean a massive fall in margin and profits from existing database revenues, as well as a far tougher task in terms of generating new sales. And all this during a time when the Portuguese economy is suffering its worst period in decades."





Each new gym will provide a minimum of 120 exercise stations

## trust to launch budget chain

Leisure trust Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL), which operates community leisure services in West Yorkshire, is planning to open two budget gyms in the Huddersfield and Dewsbury areas.

The non-profit KAL currently manages 11 sports centres and swimming pools on behalf of the local council and is looking to become the first budget gym operator in the region.

Plans are to be developed further over the coming months, with the aim of a late summer 2011 opening for the Huddersfield site.

Each new gym will provide a minimum of 120 exercise stations – a combination

of CV and resistance – with equipment to be provided by Technogym.

KAL chair David Heddon says: "Budget gyms are a way of expanding and reaching those who want to focus on using fitness equipment and attending classes at a reasonable price.

"We're looking to expand our portfolio and run this new membership option alongside our other quality products and services."

It's expected that KAL's budget gym memberships will be priced at around £15 a month. Membership will include access to a range of group exercise classes, as well as to the gym.

## half a million members to vote for clubs

Entries are flooding in for the inaugural Health Club Awards.

The competition is unique because, unlike other awards, the winners are voted for exclusively by members, who rate their club on the level of service and facilities. This makes the awards a true mark of each club's ability to meet the different needs and requirements of their clients.

Simon Brown, MD of Awards for Business – which owns the new awards – says: "By asking members, we'll find out who's giving the best membership value in regions around the UK. The awards are designed to help clubs promote themselves in their area.

"We're providing every club that takes part with a personalised media pack to help kickstart their marketing.

"The competition will also encourage staff to communicate with members, making them more aware of the facilities and creating a more friendly and relaxed atmosphere in clubs".

Over half a million health club members will currently have the chance to vote for their club during the voting period, which runs from January to March 2011. Clubs can sign up to the competition for free until the end of this month. To find out more, go to [www.healthclubawards.co.uk](http://www.healthclubawards.co.uk) or call +44 (0) 1892 610245.

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## in brief...

**'radical' approach to public health unveiled**

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has announced plans for a 'radical' new public health service to encourage people in England to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Public Health England will see the government hand over more power to local authorities, with ring-fenced funding from within the overall NHS budget to be made available.

The Department of Health estimates that around £4bn will be spent on the delivery of the new service, which will also incorporate industry, charities and other government departments. Plans include ensuring communities are designed for 'active ageing', as well as giving every child the opportunity to benefit from the 'best start in life'.

**gym4all to open new bradford site**

Budget health club operator Gym4all is to open a new 15,000sq ft (1,394sq m) facility at Bradford's Leisure Exchange development in West Yorkshire.

The Bradford club will become Gym4all's fourth club, having secured sites in Basildon in Essex, Croydon in South London, and Nottingham. The club will feature more than 170 CV stations, resistance equipment and free weights.

Property agent Christie + Co was appointed by Gala Coral Group to secure the letting of the unit to Gym4all, represented by Savills.



**The government will provide £1m**

**active at 60 to launch in spring**

The government has earmarked £1m for a scheme that aims to empower older people to keep physically active.

Community groups in 30 areas across the UK can now bid for money through the Active at 60 initiative, designed to help older people who are at risk of loneliness and social isolation to 'make the most of their later lives'.

The coalition government is providing £1m to fund the project, which will launch this month.

The Minister for Pensions, Steve Webb, says: "We hope Active at 60 will make a real difference to the quality of life of those approaching retirement or who have just retired, by improving their wellbeing and preventing the risk of social isolation as they grow older."

Each local community organisation within the selected areas will be expected to recruit at least one Active at 60 community agent, who will volunteer their time to help motivate and organise people to become more active – physically, socially and mentally.

The scheme is backed by the Department for Work and Pensions.

**derby launches £50m strategy**

Derby City Council (DCC) has launched a new £50m leisure strategy in a bid to support regeneration projects across the city.

It follows the unveiling of a £10m regeneration fund, which will support mixed-use schemes and help leverage £85m of private sector investment over a three-year period.

The strategy includes the provision of two new 'hub' facilities – a 50m Olympic swimming pool and a multi-use sports, leisure and entertainments venue.

DCC wants to ensure that it maximises the regeneration potential of the two schemes to help establish a network of smaller facilities across the city. Private developers and operators have been invited to meet with council officers in the coming weeks.

DCC leader Harvey Jennings says:

"This is a statement of the council's intent to play a major and leading role in stimulating the market for development and leisure in Derby."



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Products including Maximuscle and Maxitone will join the GSK portfolio

## gsk acquires maxinutrition

Pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has entered into an agreement to acquire Maxinutrition Group Holdings, the manufacturer of protein-enhanced nutrition products, from Darwin Private Equity.

The £162m deal will see GSK combine its existing portfolio of consumer healthcare and beverage products – including the Lucozade brand – with Maxinutrition's brands, which include the popular Maximuscle line, as well as the female-targeted Maxitone range.

Maxinutrition is currently Europe's largest sports nutrition company by market share. The company recorded

sales of £36m for the fiscal year ended April 2010.

According to John Clarke, president of GSK's consumer healthcare division, the deal will extend GSK's reach into wider categories, complementing its existing Nutritional Healthcare business.

"This deal will give GSK a strong presence in the fast developing protein-based sports nutrition market," he says.

"GSK will invest behind Maxinutrition's products to extend the growth of its UK and European footprint and expand to the global marketplace, where GSK has existing infrastructure and capabilities."

## star trac transfers assets

Star Trac, the fitness equipment supplier, has filed an assignment for the benefit of creditors, effective immediately.

All assets of Unisen, Star Trac's parent company, have been transferred to a new corporate entity, Core Industries. The firm says that the purpose of this process is to "develop a comprehensive strategic plan to properly monetise the assets for the benefit of creditors and to improve Star Trac's balance sheet to create a healthy company going forward."

## expresso goes tweeting

Children's fitness equipment supplier ZigZag has launched new software for its internet-linked Expresso bikes that allows riders to share their exercise milestones on Facebook and Twitter. Friends and followers can then click to accept the challenge and attempt to beat the score.

The software allows clubs to interact with members, linking the cardio floor with social media sites.

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## independent

## parkwood sells hitchin club

Hertfordshire-based independent operator Fitness Connection has acquired Parkwood Leisure's club in Hitchin for an undisclosed sum.

As a result of the sale, the two businesses will be amalgamated and Fitness Connection members will transfer to the Parkwood site. The business will operate under a new name – Xchange Fitness.

Contracts have been exchanged and the deal completed last month. The new business will start with nearly 2,000 members.

Fitness Connection director Mike Kershaw says: "Both of the old clubs have struggled to move forward in recent years. We wanted to take an ambitious step to offer members of both sites a new deal.

"Our offer will include a new fitness centre offering a fun,



**Parkwood's Hitchin site has been acquired by Fitness Connection**

motivating and exciting place to be, focusing on members' fitness".

Parkwood Leisure CEO Andrew Holt adds: "We have benefited from a local opportunity to dispose of our Hitchin club, but remain committed to our strategy of selectively growing our membership base in the private health and fitness market."

## budget gym looking at franchise model

The owners of the independent truGym budget health club in Maidstone, Kent, are looking to open new sites across the UK.

Parm Singh, director of truGym, told HCM that, as part of the expansion plans, he was looking at attracting potential franchisees from 'different business backgrounds'. He added that there are plans to open a further two sites in early 2011 – in Medway and south London.



**Independent truGym is now looking to expand through franchising**

## second london studio for faster

Independently-owned personal training provider FASTER has recently opened its second studio in London. The 186sq m (2,000sq ft) studio, located in Baker Street, is equipped with strength and cardiovascular equipment from Star Trac.

John Hardy, founder and CEO of FASTER, says the company's philosophy is based on personal training being "effective and enjoyable".

He adds: "We assess each FASTER client to monitor their movement and how they use their body, before devising a programme for them."

Founded in 2006, FASTER opened its first studio, on Hyde Park corner, in 2009.



**The equipment at the new studio has been supplied by Star Trac**



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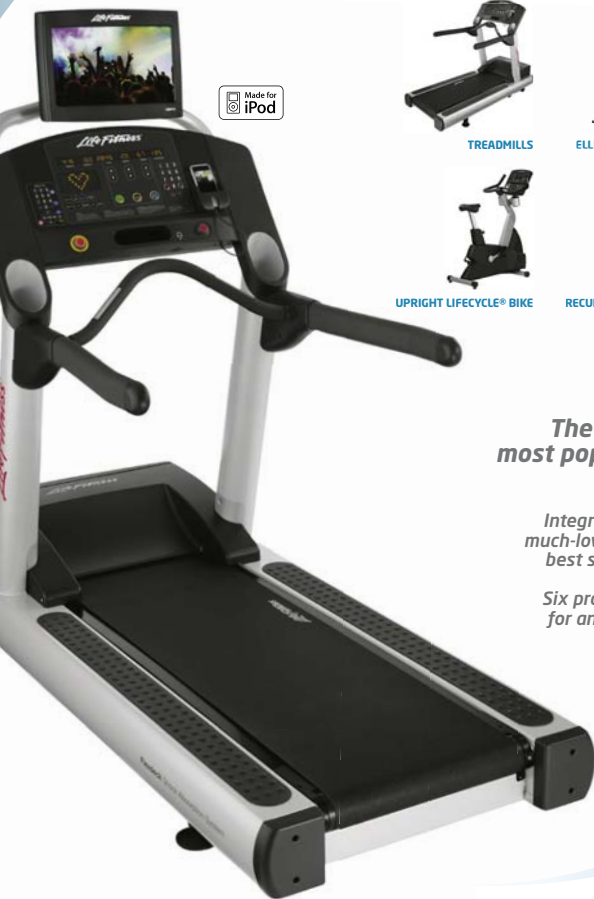
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## in brief...

**healthcity buys fitness first**

Fitness First has announced its intention to sell its Benelux business to HealthCity International.

The decision, announced in November, will see the 57 clubs trading under the Passage Fitness First, Fitness First and Just Fit brands pass to HealthCity, which already has 152 clubs in the region trading under the HealthCity and Basic Fit brands.

Colin Waggett, CEO of Fitness First, says: "This is an opportunity for us to redirect resources and management focus into higher growth markets, particularly Asia."

Rene Moos, CEO of HealthCity, adds: "We are very pleased to be able to add this portfolio of clubs to our estate, further strengthening our market leading position in both full-service and budget clubs."

*An interview with Rene Moos, CEO of HealthCity International, will appear in the next issue of HCM.*

**rebrand for jackie skelly**

The énergie Group has completed the rebranding of all nine former Jackie Skelly gyms in Leinster, Ireland. énergie acquired the Jackie Skelly estate in May 2010.

Following an investment of over €1.8m, the UK company has effectively changed the look and feel of each club, including a new colour scheme, new furnishings and flooring, as well as a suite of brand new Precor equipment for the Ballsbridge and Clarendon Street clubs and new equipment for core and functional fitness training throughout the estate.

It has also introduced a biometric cardless entry system.

**reebok partners fitness first**

Reebok and Fitness First Germany this month launch a new partnership designed to "cover fitness from every angle and turn it into a fresh and exciting experience again".

The collaboration extends across 102 Fitness First clubs in Germany and will focus primarily on marketing. The close involvement of retail partners is also planned.

**hercules fitness center for uae**

Hercules Fitness Center in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) held its official opening ceremony in October.

Located in the Al Quoz area of Dubai, the 1,200sq m club has been equipped by Technogym, complemented by Concept2 rowing machines.



**The 1,200sq m club has been kitted out by Technogym and Concept2**

A mixed gym and a ladies-only gym are on offer at the new centre. Facilities at the club comprise a cardio zone, strength zone, free weights area, stretching zone, mind-body studio, group exercise studio, circuit training studio, assessment room, sauna/steam/spa pool, massage rooms, a prayer room and a barber shop.

Individual memberships are available for three, six and 12 months at a cost of 1,400Dhs (£230), 2,500Dhs (£420) and 3,950Dhs (£665) respectively. Corporate and student deals are also available.

The Hercules Fitness Center brand is owned and operated by UAE-based Al Qudra Sports Management, which operates 41 clubs. Hercules Fitness Center is the company's latest premium fitness offering.

**new cv kit for boston university**

Boston University, US, has re-equipped its cardio floor, installing 120 new machines: ellipticals and treadmills from Precor, plus five Trixter Xdream bikes.

Facilities at the centre include a 1,670sq m weight training and CV area, group exercise studios, an aquatic centre with recreational and competition pools, an elevated jogging track suspended above a four-court multi-purpose sports hall, a second sports hall with three courts, a climbing wall, a 223-seat dance studio/theatre space, racquetball/squash courts and a sports medicine/rehab centre.

Membership is free to full-time students and the centre receives around 4,500 student visits a day.



**The newly-equipped gym features Trixter Xdream bikes**

**alexander group expands in china**

The Alexander Dalian Xi Zhi Gu Health Club opened in Dalian, China, in October last year.

Owned by the Alexander Group, it's the company's first club in Dalian and its 12th in China, joining an existing portfolio that comprises six clubs in Shanghai, three in Beijing, one in Ningbo and one in Suzhou.

Facilities at the 5,239sq m club include a team sports studio, strength and cardio areas, a group cycling studio, multi-functional stretching area, health

evaluation room, indoor swimming pool and a spa. The gym has been equipped exclusively by Precor.

Located in the city's most upmarket residential complex, the Xi Zhi Gu Residence, annual membership fees at the club cost RMB5,000 (£460) excluding swimming, or RMB10,000 (£920) including swimming.

The group now has plans to open a further seven sites in 2011: four in northern China, one in Chongqing, one in Chengdu and one in Fuzhou.



edited by kate cracknell email: [katecracknell@leisuremedia.com](mailto:katecracknell@leisuremedia.com)



**Fresh Fitness: The budget clubs offer large gyms as well as group exercise**

## fitness gets fresh in scandinavia

Fresh Fitness has opened its first two clubs in Denmark, located in Copenhagen.

The budget concept has been launched in Denmark as a joint venture between Just Fitness in Denmark – led by former CEO of fitnessdk, Rasmus Ingerslev – and Nordic market leader SATS.

The two clubs – measuring 1,300sq m and 1,500sq m – offer gyms with around 100 pieces of equipment: refurbished Life Fitness CV kit and strength kit from Ukrainian company Inter Atletica.

Each club also offers two studios: a 'cycle cinema' and a group exercise studio. The latter offers an extensive programme of 220 sessions a week, some led by instructors and others

running as virtual classes, with videos licensed from online health club Wexer.

The clubs are accessed using RFID-chip technology from Gantner, which is also used to charge for showers, classes and vending machine purchases.

"It was a deliberate policy to find an external partner for the new business," says Johan Nilsson, strategy & concept director at SATS. "When you develop a new model, it's vital that it does not get 'killed' by the existing organisation's culture and views of the market."

The first Fresh Fitness opened in September in Norway, with SATS in partnership with local Fresh CEO Paal Hanssen. A second is now open in Oslo.

## trac re-opens in australia

The Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre (TRAC) – a council-owned facility in Thomastown, Victoria, Australia – has re-opened following a A\$29.2m (£18m) reconstruction project.

The new centre, which is managed by Belgravia Leisure, offers a wide range of facilities for A\$60 a month. There are five swimming pools and two gyms – the main 450sq m health club gym and a special 100sq m 'programme' gym for use by groups such as teenagers, women only, seniors and personal training. There's also a 70sq m group cycling

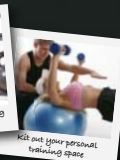
studio, a 200sq m group exercise studio, a basketball/multi-purpose sports court, a 20-person spa, deck sauna and steam room, crèche, café and function room.

TRAC has been equipped by Technogym, the Australian Barbell Company, AV Media Solutions, Gantner and Links Modular Solutions. Technology is a focal point: all 50 pieces of cardio in the facility are fitted with Technogym's new VISIO screens, while each member is given a personalised wristband for turnstile access, locker activation and cashless purchases in the club.

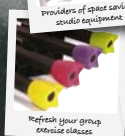
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**Andrew Fortune (above) replaces Lee Pearson at Total Fitness**

## fortune for total fitness

Health club operator Total Fitness has named Andrew Fortune as its new finance director – the group's second senior appointment in as many weeks.

Fortune has been tasked with guiding the company's financial strategy as it looks to invest £5m in upgrading its 24 UK sites across northern England, Wales and Ireland.

He replaces former finance director Lee Pearson.

The announcement of Fortune's appointment follows the recent return to Total Fitness of sales and marketing director Joanne Hallam. Hallam rejoined the health and fitness chain after it was acquired by its management team, backed by Barclays Ventures.

### in brief...

#### new director for expanding soko

Chinese operator SOKO Fitness & Spa Group has appointed Colin Sung to its board of directors.

Sung will take up the role of independent director and chair of SOKO's audit committee. He joins SOKO from telecoms and entertainment company Linktone, where he was chief financial officer and deputy chief executive.

Sung will replace Gideon Kory, who is resigning from SOKO's board to pursue other interests. The group is due to open its fourth site in Beijing.

## edinburgh appoints john comiskey

Edinburgh Leisure, the trust that manages sports and leisure facilities on behalf of The City of Edinburgh Council, has named John Comiskey as its new chief executive officer.

Comiskey, who was finance director for Edinburgh Leisure and interim chief executive, takes up the role on a permanent basis following the resignation last year of Keith Jackson after 12 years at the helm of the organisation.

The appointment also comes three months after the appointment of Dr Charles Winstanley, chair of NHS Lothian, to the position of chair of Edinburgh Leisure.

Comiskey says: "I am delighted to accept the role as new CEO for Edinburgh Leisure and look forward to leading the organisation to further success in delivering sport and leisure for the people of Edinburgh. Having



**Comiskey: Edinburgh Leisure CEO**

worked with the committed and hard-working staff of this organisation for the last two years, I'm really pleased to be asked to take on this role."

## interim boss for peak pilates

Mad Dogg Athletics – based in California, US – has announced that Vic Hart, founder and president of Hart Wood, will join Peak Pilates in the role of interim president.

Hart's appointment follows a long-standing manufacturing relationship between Hart Wood and Peak Pilates, and Mad Dogg Athletics' recent strategic investment in Hart Wood.

Hart replaces Julie Lobdell, founder and former president of Peak Pilates, who is leaving the company.

Peak Pilates was founded by Lobdell in 1996 and expanded from a local pilates equipment manufacturer into a worldwide supplier and provider of pilates education.

Hart says: "I am truly excited about working with Mad Dogg Athletics and Peak Pilates. The creative synergy is already apparent and I look forward to continuing to support the pilates community in any way possible."

Peak Pilates was acquired by Mad Dogg Athletics in 2009.

#### marketing trio joins siv

Sheffield International Venues (SIV) has made three new appointments to its marketing team.

Ponds Forge International Sports Centre's new marketing and promotions manager is Neil Ellis, while Mark Leeson has been appointed as Don Valley Stadium's new marketing executive, overseeing the development and implementation of promotional campaigns at the venue. Ged Lightfoot has taken the position of marketing and promotions assistant, responsible for the 'foodetc' brand across SIV's portfolio of 15 venues.

#### fia appoints three new directors to the board

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) has appointed three new directors to its board.

The new members are John Cleland, chief executive of Esporta; Innes Kerr, group operations director at énergie; and Debra Stuart, chief executive of Premier Training.

Dave Stalker, FIA executive director, says: "With increased credibility of the industry within the public health agenda, there has never been a more important time to have a wealth of experience sitting on the FIA board."

## PEOPLE PROFILE



### kris tynan

New Zealander Kris Tynan has worked in and around the UK health and fitness industry since the late 80s. She's just published a book entitled *The Interactive Instructor*

#### What changes have you seen in the UK industry over the years?

Since I started working in a converted squash court in the late 80s in Birmingham, facilities have proliferated – they're bigger and better and full of hi-tech equipment. That's all a huge positive, but generally the level of meaningful interaction with our members and customers has not improved a jot. In fact, in most cases it has gone backwards.

#### Why can't we seem to master member interaction as an industry?

There are many reasons I think.

A key reason is the fact that our customers have low expectations of us. When members stop going to the gym, they don't immediately think it's because the health club or leisure centre didn't engage with or motivate them – they'll blame work or family commitments or their own lack of discipline. We're not 'pushed' by the customer.

But of course, the short answer to why we haven't cracked member interaction is that we don't want to commit the necessary resources to training, coaching and rewarding instructors for doing so.

#### Where do you see the industry going in the next five years??

We're seeing the new budget clubs coming through now. They should do well as long as they're kept clean and

operational. Let's face it – consumers will be fine with paying less money to use a facility where they don't get any contact, because they weren't getting any attention at their old, higher priced club anyway. This may force the more conventional clubs to up their game on the customer service front and differentiate themselves.

We're not making much of an in-road into market penetration: it seems to hover around 10–15 per cent wherever you are in the world and hasn't moved much over the last decade. However, there are some really exciting possibilities for us to move into other areas of improving people's lives beyond just their physical capabilities. We're a bit fixated on our members wanting to lose weight and look good, but there's a lot of scope in the areas of helping people feel happier and more grounded, for example, as well as feeling content beyond being a size eight and having a six-pack.

Without wanting to sound too left-field, there's so much we can learn from Eastern religions to enhance the way we feel – meditation, visualisation techniques and so on – that we could teach our members. This would give them far more for their membership than they get right now.

#### Any further plans for *The Interactive Instructor* material?

I'm going to create a website that will become a community of like-minded people who can share ideas, best practice and resources. Being interactive with members is not for everyone, but I'd like to draw together those who do believe that being more interactive can make a difference and offer them support.

HCM has six copies of *The Interactive Instructor* to give away. Copies will go to the first six emails received: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)



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# Exercise: Medicine for Life



Dr John Searle, chief medical officer for the FIA, looks at the opportunities for the fitness sector presented by the new Joint Consultative Forum

Our industry has long known that there is huge potential to make a positive contribution to the health of nation, not only by preventing disease but also through the treatment of disease. And now we're joining forces with the medical profession to do something about it.

The evidence is well established that, for so many patients who visit the doctor every day, exercise represents a practical and effective treatment. However, exercise has not, to date, been used regularly in primary care.

Over a year ago, the FIA set out to solve this problem and find a place for exercise in the treatment of disease. The first step was to enlist my expertise as the organisation's first ever chief medical officer. It quickly occurred to me that the principal reason why exercise is not yet a routine part of healthcare is that the medical profession that prescribes treatment, and the fitness sector that delivers exercise, do not talk.

Doctors are in a unique position to encourage people to exercise and be active: 78 per cent of the population visit their general practitioner at least once a year, and the fact remains that people will listen to what their GP has to say. If the doctor gives a prescription, we tend to follow it.

Doctors also look after people with chronic illness and can prescribe exercise as part of their treatment. It is therefore essential in my opinion that fitness and wellness professionals work together to make exercise a normal part of healthcare.

## it's good to talk

So my objective was clear: to get the two professions talking. To achieve this at a national level, we spent a year in discussions with the relevant Medical Royal Colleges with a view to setting up a Joint Consultative Forum. The forum first met earlier this year, when



**Position of influence: 78 per cent of people visit their GP at least once a year**

representatives of the Royal College of General Practitioners shared a table with exercise professionals to go over the finer points of exercise in healthcare.

After three meetings, the forum is now officially established and we have agreed the following terms of reference: *the role of the forum is to facilitate the provision of advice – to the medical and health professions, the fitness sector, healthcare commissioners and other relevant institutions and agencies – on exercise in the promotion of health, exercise in the prevention of ill health and the use of exercise in the management of disease.*

This is the first time that the Royal Colleges of General Practitioners, Physicians, Psychiatrists, Paediatrics and Child Health, the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine, the Faculty of Public Health and the fitness sector have ever agreed a way of working together.

It brings many opportunities to the fitness sector – not only in terms of basing our practice on evidence,

but also in contributing to the wider public health strategy.

## exercise referral guidelines

Now that the forum has been established, with the support of the fitness sector and the Department of Health, it has been agreed that its first task will be to draw up new standards in exercise referral.

Exercise referral has a long history in the UK, with 800 schemes already operating across the country. However, it has been shown that these schemes do not share any consistent evaluation, exit strategies, initial assessments – the list goes on... This is not to say that there are not fantastic individual schemes in operation, but it does show the need for national standards created jointly by the fitness sector and the medical profession.

For the first time ever, the Joint Consultative Forum gives the fitness sector the chance to solve this problem. We look forward to the task ahead.



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# competitive edge

14 MAY 11

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The event offers three distances: 12, 21 or 29 miles

15 MAY 11

## etape caledonia

Take in the Scottish Highland scenery on Britain's only closed-road cycling event. From tough climbs to heart-racing descents, the 81-mile route will guarantee a challenge but is suitable for any rider with some training. To ensure the roads are re-opened on time, participants will need to maintain an average speed of 13–14mph. It costs £58 to enter the event. Macmillan Cancer Support partners this race. Details: [www.etapecaledonia.co.uk](http://www.etapecaledonia.co.uk)



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30 MAY 11

## bupa london 10,000

Now in its fourth year, this flat 10km race starts and finishes in St James's Park. Runners will pass by many of London's famous sights, including Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben, The London Eye, Cleopatra's Needle, the Millennium Bridge, St Paul's Cathedral and Nelson's Column. Last year more than 13,000 runners took part. The fee to enter this event is £25, or £23 for UK Athletics-affiliated running club members. There are many charities linked to this event for which runners can raise money. Details: [www.london10000.co.uk](http://www.london10000.co.uk)



The event is in its fourth year

11 JUNE 11

## nightrider

Nightrider events are an exciting way to raise funds for your favourite charity while exploring some of the world's best-known cities by night, on a bike. As well as London, the event takes place in New York and Paris. The route uses roads and is clearly signposted, and full support and back-up is provided. Nightrider events are organised by charity challenge events company Classic Tours. You can choose any charity you wish to support – the minimum sponsorship required is £175 and registration costs £25. Details: [www.nightrider.org.uk](http://www.nightrider.org.uk)



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## FEBRUARY

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**Summary**

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Tel +44 (0)1264 358558  
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### 17-20 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute™

**Venue** Alexandria, Virginia, US  
**Summary**

A conference for personal trainers with more than 80 educational sessions, 30 of the industry's top presenters, and three pre-conference sessions – in Applied Functional Science, Sport Conditioning and ACE's Integrated Fitness Training Model (IFT). Attendees can earn up to 20 Continuing Education Credits (plus more for pre-conference sessions). There is a limited attendance of 575 people.  
Web [www.idealift.com/prainer](http://www.idealift.com/prainer)

### 24-26 | FORUMCLUB

**Venue** Bologna, Italy  
**Summary**

International congress and expo for fitness, wellness and aquatic clubs. Includes ForumPiscine.  
Web [www.ncforum.com](http://www.ncforum.com)

### 27-28 | Professional Beauty London

**Venue** ExCeL, Docklands, London, UK  
**Summary**

The UK's largest beauty exhibition will this year include The Ultimate Spa Experience, Europe's only purpose-built exhibition spa with hamman, Rasul and both wet and dry treatment areas.  
Web [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/london)



The Professional Beauty Show will be held at ExCeL in London



The IDEA Personal Trainer Institute has a limited attendance of 575 people

## MARCH

### 10-13 | ECA World Fitness Conference/ OBOW Show

**Venue** New York City, US  
**Summary**

ECA World Fitness is an international organisation representing the wellness and fitness community. Its theatrical One Body One World New York show features a strong dance programme.  
Web [www.ecaworldfitness.com](http://www.ecaworldfitness.com)

### 16-19 | IHRSA Annual International Convention & Trade Show

**Venue** San Francisco, California, US  
**Summary**

The IHRSA Convention & Trade Show annually draws thousands of industry professionals for four days of education and networking opportunities. Keynote speakers this year are Phil Keoghan, host of The Amazing Race, and best-selling business authors Daniel Pink, Patrick Lencioni and Tony Hsieh.  
Web [www.ihrsa.org/convention](http://www.ihrsa.org/convention)

### 25-27 | International Fitness Showcase

**Venue** Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK  
**Summary**

Showcases the latest exercise classes, along with workshops and lectures, for fitness instructors and enthusiasts.  
Web [www.chrysalispromotions.com](http://www.chrysalispromotions.com)

### 30 March – 2 April | Russian Fitness Festival

**Venue** Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia  
**Summary**

This year's Russian Fitness Festival will include a business conference, fitness convention, aqua convention, trade show, kids' marathon and Russian open fitness aerobic championship.  
Web [www.fitness-convention.ru](http://www.fitness-convention.ru)

## APRIL

### 12-13 | BASES Student Conference

**Venue** University of Chester, UK  
**Summary**

This conference is the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences' forum for undergraduate and postgraduate students. This year's theme is 'Integrations and Innovations: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Sport and Exercise Science'.  
Web [www.bases.org.uk](http://www.bases.org.uk)

### 13-16 | ACSM's 15th Health & Fitness Summit

**Venue** Anaheim, California, US  
**Summary**

ACSM's Health and Fitness Summit and Exposition bridges the gap between the science of sports medicine and practice for the fitness professional, with educational sessions and workouts.  
Web [www.acsm.org/summit](http://www.acsm.org/summit)

**14-17 | FIBO 2011****Venue** Essen, Germany**Summary**

Over 560 companies from more than 35 countries showcase products, concepts and solutions for the fitness, wellness and health industries at this fitness convention. The show comprises a variety of distinct areas catering for training equipment, products and services, sports nutrition, wellness and beauty and medical fitness. The show attracts around 53,000 visitors from 60 countries.

Web [www.fibo.de](http://www.fibo.de)**15-17 | The Yoga Show****Venue:** Manchester Central, UK**Summary**

All things yoga under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, pilates reformer sessions, children's yoga, demonstrations and lectures. There is another show in London in October.

Web [www.theyogashow.co.uk](http://www.theyogashow.co.uk)**15-17 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo****Venue** Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia**Summary**

Seminars and training for the Australasian fitness industry, plus a trade exhibition. The 2010 event attracted more than 240 exhibitors and 15,000 visitors.

Web [www.fitnessexpo.com.au](http://www.fitnessexpo.com.au)**17 | Scottish Beauty****Venue** Edinburgh, Scotland**Summary**

Scotland's only professional beauty exhibition and training congress.

Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)**FIBO plays host to around 560 companies from 35 countries****MAY****4-7 | SPATEC Europe****Venue** Budapest, Hungary**Summary**

A two-day forum of face-to-face sessions for UK and European spa owners, directors and senior personnel to meet with over 70 leading international spa suppliers.

Web [www.spateceu.com](http://www.spateceu.com)**8-9 | BeautyUK****Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK**Summary**

The Midlands' largest beauty trade exhibition and training congress. Featuring the UK Nail Tech competition, it's held alongside the Holistic Health show and congress.

Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)**11-12 | Club Industry Summit****Venue** New York, US**Summary**

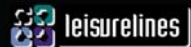
Reformatted this year, the summit will include seminars targeted at large, medium and small facilities, plus a programme for new industry buyers and a business development track with seminars on product launches, capturing demographic markets and using social media. Plus exhibition and social events.

Web <http://east.clubindustryshow.com>**21-22 | BodyPower****Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK**Summary**

Focused on sports including strongman, wrestling, boxing, MMA, gymnastics, cycling and athletics, this exhibition incorporates sports nutrition, equipment, clothing and associated products. There will also be seminars with sports personalities.

Web [www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk](http://www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk)**STRENGTH EQUIPMENT  
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Doddwells Ind Estate, Hinckley, Leicestershire UK LE10 3BS

**25-26 | SIBEC UK****Venue:** Birmingham, UK**Summary**

SIBEC UK brings together 120 of the most important and influential suppliers and buyers of the UK leisure, health and fitness sector from the local authority, trust and education markets.

**Web** [www.sibec.co.uk](http://www.sibec.co.uk)**JUNE****9-12 | Festival del Fitness****Venue** Rome, Italy**Summary**

23rd exhibition for the Italian fitness industry. Around 250,000 participants attend this outdoor event.

**Web** [www.fitfestival.com](http://www.fitfestival.com)**JUNE/JULY****date TBC | The FIA FLAME Conference****Summary**

This conference encompasses motivational discussions and seminars alongside the FLAME Awards. The date will be announced in 2011.

**Web** [www.fia.org.uk](http://www.fia.org.uk)**AUGUST****10-14 | IDEA World Fitness Convention****Venue** Los Angeles, California, US**Summary**

More than 5,000 fitness professionals from around the world attend this five-day event featuring hundreds of sessions taught by world-renowned fitness presenters and many guest speakers. More than 200 companies will attend the IDEA Fitness & Wellness Expo.

**Web** [www.ideafit.com/world](http://www.ideafit.com/world)**IHRSA has shows in the US, Brazil, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region****SEPTEMBER****1-3 | Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show****Venue** Sao Paulo, Brazil**Summary**

Fitness Brasil is the health and wellness industry's premier conference and trade show in Latin America, with sessions providing commentary on trends that are shaping the Latin American fitness and wellness industry.

**Web** [www.ihrsa.org/fitnessbrasil](http://www.ihrsa.org/fitnessbrasil)**6-8 | BASES Annual Conference****Venue** University of Essex, UK**Summary**

The title of this year's British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES)

conference is 'Fatigue: An interdisciplinary approach'. Perspectives, evidence and opinion will be heard from some of the world's leading fatigue researchers, with the aim of facilitating fresh discussion in this important field of sports science.

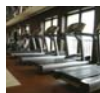
**Web** [www.bases.org.uk/BASES-Annual-Conference](http://www.bases.org.uk/BASES-Annual-Conference)**7-10 | SPATEC Fall, North America****Venue** Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, California, US**Summary**

SPATEC is a three-day forum of one-to-one meetings between corporate spa owners, directors and design/management companies and leading spa suppliers and vendors.

**Web** [www.mcleaneventsinternational.com](http://www.mcleaneventsinternational.com)**FINANCE FOR THE FITNESS AND LEISURE INDUSTRY**

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### 14-16 | Health+Fitness Business with Interbike

**Venue:** Sands Expo & Convention Center, Las Vegas, US

#### Summary

Co-locating the Health+Fitness Business Expo with the Interbike International Bicycle Expo in adjacent exhibition halls gives attendees an opportunity to interact with suppliers and manufacturers from both segments of the fitness industry.

**Web** [www.healthandfitnessbiz.com](http://www.healthandfitnessbiz.com)

### 20-22 | Leisure Industry Week

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

#### Summary

LIW is the UK's largest and most influential exhibition for the leisure industry, catering for all sectors of out-of-home leisure and attracting thousands of leisure professionals. Last year's show involved more than 350 exhibitors from across the sector.

**Web** [www.liw.co.uk](http://www.liw.co.uk)

### 22-25 | SIBEC North America

**Venue** TBC

#### Summary

SIBEC North America is a one-to-one meeting forum where America's leading club owners, operators, CEOs and COOs of health, recreation, sports and fitness organisations meet with suppliers.

**Web** [www.mcleaneventsinternational.com](http://www.mcleaneventsinternational.com)

## OCTOBER

### 5-7 | European Fitness Summit

**Venue** Barcelona, Spain

#### Summary

The European Fitness Summit offers the fitness, wellness and health industry a place to meet high-ranking decision-makers from leading fitness studios and wellness centres from selected European markets in face-to-face meetings.

**Web** [www.european-fitness-summit.com](http://www.european-fitness-summit.com)

LIW will once again take place at the NEC in Birmingham

### 28-30 | The Yoga Show

**Venue** Olympia, London, UK

#### Summary

All things yoga under one roof (see p25).

**Web** [www.theyogashow.co.uk](http://www.theyogashow.co.uk)

### TBC | IHRSA

#### European Congress

**Venue** TBC

#### Summary

This annual congress offers club owners, operators and industry suppliers the chance to gather to discuss the European market, its challenges and opportunities in an environment designed to encourage interaction, discussion and professional connections.

**Web** [www.ihrsa.org/congress](http://www.ihrsa.org/congress)

## NOVEMBER

### 2-5 | SIBEC Europe

**Venue** Malta

#### Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum between the major operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in health, fitness and leisure, and the leading suppliers.

**Web** [www.sibec.co.uk](http://www.sibec.co.uk)

### TBC | IHRSA

#### Asia-Pacific Forum

**Venue** To be confirmed

#### Summary

The annual IHRSA Asia-Pacific Forum provides club owners, operators and industry suppliers the chance to gather to discuss the vast Asia-Pacific market, its challenges and opportunities, and the impact the industry has – and can have – across the region, all in a setting that encourages interaction, discussion and professional connections.

**Web** [www.ihrsa.org/forum](http://www.ihrsa.org/forum)

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everyone's talking about . . .

# pay structures

Is it time to give our commission structure an overhaul so operational staff are rewarded for retaining members, rather than just rewarding the sales person who closed the initial sale?

**I**t's an area that's remained relatively unchallenged up to now, but is it time to think outside the box when it comes to commission structures?

Sales staff currently receive the same commission regardless of how long the new member keeps up their membership. Should this be changed so they only receive a percentage of their commission once the member has stayed for a pre-determined length of time?

Meanwhile it's left to the operational staff – generally on a set salary – to motivate members to stay. These employees are key to the club's success, so should we be rewarding

them with commission for good performance too? We know it's cheaper to keep an existing client than it is to find a new one, so it's vital that we keep clients happy. However, it seems we often forget this. Changing the commission structure might help to tip the balance, so the company culture becomes as focused on retention as it is on selling.

It's been proven that staff interacting with members improves the longevity of the membership, so how about paying staff for extending a membership beyond the average member lifespan? Each employee could be given a number of members to look

after and receive a small commission per member each month.

This should lead to members feeling more valued and therefore more motivated to come to the gym and keep up their membership. Receiving commission would also bump up instructors' wages, which might attract higher calibre candidates to the industry.

On the other hand, should staff be doing this anyway? Would such a system prove costly and complicated to implement? Would it mean some members getting better service than others? Would the service provided seem less genuine? We ask the experts.

SHOULD WE PAY COMMISSION ON MEMBER RETENTION? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

## dr paul bedford

customer retention consultant



**"I**'ve used commission for gym floor staff at two different clubs and found it to be very effective. The owners considered it a good investment and the staff received a sizeable uplift in their wages for just doing their job well. For the system to work, the club needs a good understanding of how long members stay on average, and then

reward staff for each month they stay beyond this.

At the first club I worked with, it was introduced collectively, where the whole operations team received commission if members stayed beyond the average length of their membership. We found that some tried really hard and others didn't, so the next time I worked with a club it was introduced on an individual basis. New members were allocated to instructors, who then received £1 for each month a member stayed after the first six months. Since they were handling between 250 and 400 members each, this could really stack up. We found that fitness instructors would introduce themselves while the sales staff were doing the initial tour, there was much more interaction with members, retention improved and the owners were happy: for every £1 spent, they received £36."

## darrell boxall

xn leisure systems • managing director



**"T**here's only so much innovation available through supplier and facility design, so customer service must play a key part in retaining a healthy membership base. Service is delivered across all teams, so the rewards should be received by all employees.

If the operational and service delivery teams were included in a rewards

scheme, customer service levels would inevitably rise. Plus, if a member of staff knew every membership cancellation would impact them financially, then they would buy into the importance of member interaction. Ultimately this would benefit the clubs, with higher member yields and job security.

With an abundance of data available through club systems, a monetary rewards scheme linked directly to a sliding scale of percentage attrition against monthly dues or income could be implemented to incentivise staff. If the sales staff receive a reward just for signing up a member, why should they care if that member leaves? Receiving rewards on joining, and then at six, 12 and 18 months' retention of a single member – weighted towards the latter end – surely must be a better way to incentivise member communication and build membership longevity."



PICTURE: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

**If employees were incentivised to retain members, customer service and interaction levels would inevitably rise**

## mike hills

the retention people • retention director



**"H**ealth clubs need to look at where they place their focus. By employing sales staff on commission, the message is that they value new sales more than retaining members. This is a flawed strategy for two main reasons.

First, the commission currently paid to sales people doesn't reflect the value of the sale. Whether a member stays

for four months or 14 months, the commission earned is typically the same. It's possible to predict at the point of sale which members will stay and pay for longer, and therefore clubs could pay incentives based on this.

Secondly, club staff intervening with members dramatically increases the longevity of a membership – potentially generating more revenue than the initial sale. But just offering a financial incentive is no guarantee of a better service. Instead, clubs should recruit and train people to deliver a fantastic service, creating a culture where the operational staff effectively become sales staff, with a clear focus to 'sell' every member their next visit. The focus does need to shift, and I think financial incentives can play a part, but only in a supporting role to effective recruitment, training and management."

## phillip mills

les mills • ceo



**"T**here's no doubt that incentivising operational staff is just as important as incentivising sales staff. And nowhere is this more evident than in group fitness – arguably a club's most important service experience in terms of ongoing member satisfaction.

Today, group fitness instructors generally earn no more than they did

in the early 80s, when they tended to be paid on a per head basis. Comparatively, gym floor staff have gone from being paid minimum wage to becoming well-paid personal trainers, which has attracted a whole new wave of talent to the industry.

However, in our New Zealand clubs, top group fitness instructors can earn over NZ\$100 (£48) per class. These are group fitness 'rockstars' who draw between 150 and 250 members to each session. One way of incentivising and rewarding this excellence is simply to increase top performing instructors' wages using a six- to 12-monthly review system. However, I believe the best option is to pay instructors on a per head basis (with an adjustment for peak and off-peak classes) – the choice between paying instructors NZ\$20 (£9.60) for a class of 10 people or NZ\$40 (£19) for 80 people just makes sense."

# MARK MASTROV



Mark Mastrov has pulled off an amazing deal with his latest venture – the creation of a chain of health clubs with Madonna. He talks to Liz Terry

**P**retty much everything in the Mastrov universe goes at a fast pace – emails are answered within minutes, regardless of the time of day (or night) – “I don’t sleep much,” he says. Questions are answered without hesitation and everything followed up super-fast. You’re left with the impression that he’s just really good at doing business.

Having spent 25 years building up global health club chain 24 Hour Fitness, Mastrov sold it in 2005 to Forstmann, Little & Co for US\$1.68bn – the most ever paid for a company in the industry. Part of the value was generated by the relentless drive for improvement – 24 Hour was known for its innovative approach to operations, pioneering a number of practices including round-the-clock access, electronic monthly billing and celebrity endorsements.

After two transitional years as chair Mastrov moved on and, with his business partner Jim Rowley, is now growing his latest business: New Evolution Ventures (NeV), a California-based global health club operator and investor, with interests stretching from the US and Canada to Australia and Russia.

## partnering madonna

NeV’s latest venture, announced in November, is Hard Candy Fitness, a chain of health clubs being developed with Madonna and her manager, Guy Oseary. Mastrov says 20 clubs will open in quick succession in major cities around the world, including the UK, with more planned on completion of this initial phase.

Madonna isn’t the first celeb to tie up with Mastrov: he has previously



Madonna at the opening of Hard Candy Fitness, Mexico City, in November 2010

partnered with Andre Agassi, Steffi Graf and Magic Johnson to open clubs. “We’ve worked with others,” he says, “but Madonna’s in a league of her own. She’s one of the most famous entertainers and performers of all time.

“I’ve been able to spend time with her over the last couple of years and get to know and understand her. She’s very focused on her health and wellness and very opinionated on the way things can be done better in the industry.”

Mastrov explored various options in bringing the Madonna-branded health and fitness offer to market, including discussions with a major hotel group for a joint venture, but in the end the decision was made to invest and operate a chain of clubs: “We’ve formulated a concept with Madonna that brings a very cool fashion and music environment into the health and fitness space, with a lot of innovation. We’re taking the health club concept and turning it on its head to create a funky fitness offering that enables people to have a motivating, inspiring experience.”

So how has Mastrov pitched the new business in terms of clientele? “The

clubs are aimed at the higher end of the market,” he says. “For example, in Mexico City, members will pay an enrolment fee of around US\$200 and monthly fees of around US\$150.”

The aim is to locate the clubs in upmarket residential areas: “We’re looking for strong demographics with high household income, in cities where people will be able to afford a slightly higher price point. We will look to convert some clubs and also build new.”

Locations may vary, as Mastrov explains: “In a dense, urban setting, we might be aiming for a catchment area of 10–15 blocks, but in a suburban area you might be looking at 10–15 minutes’ drive time. It will depend where the site is. Parking is important, as is having physical plans that fit the needs of the brand.

“The intention is to create a business with high-end locations in the best corners of the best cities of the world.

“Much will depend on the real estate available and who we partner with: in



## NeV PORTFOLIO

- Hard Candy Fitness: global roll-out
- Crunch Fitness and Crunch franchise: global
- UFC Gym (Ultimate Fighting Championship): global
- YogaWorks: US
- Steve Nash Fitness World: Canada
- Mrs.Sporty: Germany-based.
- Also in Austria, Switzerland and Italy
- Energy Fitness: Chile
- Planet Fitness: Russia and Sweden
- V Club: Australia
- Energy Fitness Alex Rodriguez: Mexico

some countries, we will have partners whose in-depth local knowledge could lead to a slightly different club. However, the intention is to get the model down nice and tight and then roll out globally."

### a unique offering

The first Hard Candy opened in the Bosques de las Lomas suburb of Mexico City in November. If it goes well, more may follow: "We'll probably look at two or three sites in Mexico City over the next 12-18 months," says Mastrov.

The new club is housed in a 2,787sq m (30,000sq ft), two-storey building: "It has a lot of glass and natural light, with group exercise rooms and a dedicated yoga studio with an Iyengar yoga wall. It also has a fantastic group cycling room."

There's also a CV studio with personal viewing screens, 60 pieces of strength kit, free weights and functional training accessories from brands including Precor, Hoist, Free Motion, Nautilus, Hammer Strength, Star Trac and AbCoaster, plus TRX suspension training.

Mastrov says the design of the clubs has been a big priority. "Madonna's been

heavily involved in this process," he says. "She has an amazing eye and style and has been alongside us the whole way in the design and development of the interiors and fit-out. We've arranged for top artists who've worked with her to come in and do the interior design and décor, and we're using a lot of colour to create a vibrant environment."

"As you would expect, the music and sound are phenomenal. We're leveraging her experience at the cutting edge of music to create the right atmosphere to motivate members to exercise and have a great time while they're at the gym."

Classes will be an important part of the Hard Candy offer according to Mastrov. "The way we run them is cutting-edge, taking a lot of the choreography and dance that Madonna's developed on stage into the group exercise environment," he says. "You'll see a lot of interesting things being done in classes that are taken from her most recent tour."

So what else will be different about Hard Candy? Mastrov says the staff will be the key: "Chris Dedicik, who's been working with us in Europe for some time,

is the managing director and he's been based down in Mexico for a while now, overseeing the project. Craig Pepin-Donat is executive VP marketing and development. Craig worked with me at 24 Hour Fitness and was my global chief of marketing and sales; he's a very talented guy and is doing great work with Madonna."

"We've got an excellent team on the ground in Mexico, building the culture and delivering the performance we're looking for. Fitness is powerful in Mexico and has been established for a long time, and I'm very excited about the amazing people we've drafted in to work on this flagship project."

Staff were trained for a full month before opening, using carefully thought-out training materials developed by Pepin-Donat. "We spend a tremendous amount of time working out how we're going to bring our programming to our members, how we want to work with them to give them high levels of service and touch points but at the same time letting them find their own way around the club and letting them have a great experience," says Mastrov. ▶



## CRUNCH FITNESS

The original chain of 20 Crunch health clubs was developed by Doug Levine in the 90s and known for its unusual classes: pole dancing, bicycle yoga, co-ed wrestling and 'Abs, Thighs and Gossip' sessions run by a drag queen.

Levine sold out to Bally Total Fitness for US\$90m in 2001 and, in 2005, the chain was sold on to Angelo Gordon & Co private equity for US\$45m. Crunch filed for bankruptcy in May 2009, when it was bought by Mastrov's New Evolution Ventures (NeV).

NeV has since launched a Crunch franchise and Crunch budget clubs. Mastrov says these are priced at between US\$10 and US\$20 a month. "We've built and opened three and have another three in construction," he says. "We've also begun selling franchises and have quite a few sold already. We've launched Crunch on a global basis, beginning in Australia, and we're looking at going into Europe over the next six to 12 months."

Of the full-service Crunch clubs, Mastrov says: "We have 24 of the originals and have opened quite a few new clubs in the last six months; we have four or five in construction and are still opening in all the major cities: Miami, New York, LA and San Francisco."



Crunch is known for its unusual classes, such as AntiGravity Yoga (above)



- ▶ How team members look is also important, he adds: "We've created some very interesting uniforms that emit the cool, funky brand we're developing."

## tuning into the fans

Although the first club doesn't have a spa, Mastrov says two of the Russian clubs will, as will others where space allows. "I really enjoy the spa business," he says. "I think it has great synergies with our industry."

Hard Candy spas will be run under the M brand. "We're still firming up what this will mean," says Mastrov, "but it will be unique and different. Madonna has definite views on spas and has more experience of being in and out of them than anyone I've ever met."

"We're looking for a fairly significant chunk of real estate for the spas –

around 500sq m to 700sq m. They'll be multi-room and multi-faceted, with a very high-end fit out," he adds.

When it comes to marketing, Mastrov says the team intends to harness the power of social media: "We plan to let Madonna's fans experience what we're building, to get their feedback and get them integrated into the brand," he says.

"The fans in Mexico have a different way of looking at things from the fans in Russia and London, so the social media approach will be fine-tuned to this."

"We plan to take the tens of millions of fans she has on a global basis and talk to and integrate them into our strategy, understanding from them what they expect, what they want and what we can do better."

"The beauty of social media is that it's a way for people to voice their opinions and, at the same time, others can counter those opinions and say whether they agree or don't agree. We've already had great feedback from people who've seen the fact that we're launching – saying 'it should be this', 'it should be that', 'we'd like to see this' and so on. It's fabulous to so quickly have your finger on the pulse of the community of people she speaks to."

I ask Mastrov how he plans to handle Madonna's legion of fans. "If fans want to see and tour the facility, we're happy to host them," he says. "We have pro shops selling branded merchandise from her tours, as well as different and interesting things that come from the Madonna world."

"In Mexico City we also have a phenomenal juice bar with healthy food choices that Madonna has approved. It's open to non-members and has a great

outdoor deck so people can come and grab some food and healthy refreshments. So we've done a lot of interesting things to keep everybody in great shape and engaged, whether they're interested in membership or just want to be in touch with a little bit of Madonna."

How much time will Madonna spend on the venture? "She's an extremely busy lady," says Mastrov, "so it will be based on the time she has available, but she's been very engaged. If her brand's on it, she spends the time needed. She doesn't delegate – she does it herself, which I really respect and appreciate. She's given us great feedback to date and we've made adjustments to everything she's commented on. She has a very sharp eye."

"I think people are going to find Hard Candy very Madonna-esque – high touch, high feel, a cool environment with a hip, fun culture among the team delivering the experience. I think it will bring a fresh flavour to health and fitness."

Looking more widely, I ask Mastrov where he sees the industry heading. "We're looking at a period of time where you have to be smart about how you manage your cost lines and work on your member acquisition areas," he says, "but overall I think the business is holding its own. Most of the operators I talk to around the world are pretty pleased – comparing ourselves to other industries – that people are still valuing their health. It's very important and an integral part of their life, and the fitness industry has weathered the storm fairly well so far compared to most."

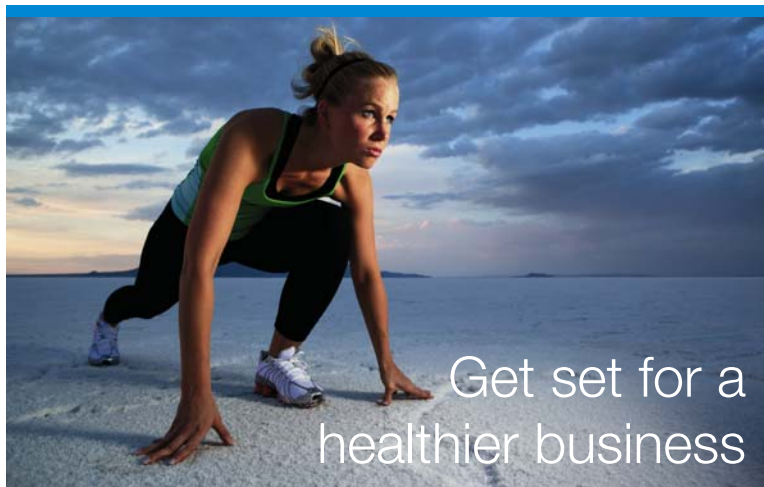


Mastrov is involved in the women-only Mrs.Sporty franchise with Steffi Graf



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# rebirth of ravenscraig

Amanda Ellison provides an overview of the redevelopment project at Ravenscraig – including the new £32m sporting facilities

Once the largest hot strip steel mill in Western Europe, Ravenscraig steelworks closed in 1992. It's now the site of the biggest regeneration project ever seen in Europe: the 1,125 acres of derelict land – an area equivalent to 700 football pitches or twice the size of Monaco – is currently being transformed into a new town.

Situated in North Lanarkshire, at the heart of Scotland's central belt, Ravenscraig is one of the most accessible parts of the country, with over two-thirds of Scotland's population within 90 minutes' drive time. Once completed, Ravenscraig will be home to over 10,000 people. It's also expected to create 12,000 jobs and to attract in excess of £1.4bn of private sector investment over the next 15 to 20 years.

## the project

The development of Ravenscraig has been divided into two phases. The first phase comprises a £70m new campus for Motherwell College, a £32m regional sports facility and 850 homes. Work on the £200m first phase began in 2006; with the opening of the state-of-the-art Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility on 30 September 2010, this phase is now nearing completion.

The £600m second phase of the project will create a new town centre for Ravenscraig, featuring around a million square feet (92,900sq m) of retail, leisure, restaurant and community facilities in a modern, attractive centre. Around 1,500 housing units and 46,450sq m (500,000sq ft) of commercial space will also be created.

Part of the development will be to create new habitats for the wildlife already living in the area, such as deer, foxes, otters, badgers and many species of birds. An ecological clerk of works has been appointed to ensure compliance with Ravenscraig Ltd's aims and objectives by all developers and contractors. Ravenscraig will ensure an integrated, consistent approach to developing the environment.

The £1.2bn redevelopment has been predominantly funded by Ravenscraig Ltd, which consists of three equal stakeholders: Wilson Bowden Developments Ltd, Scottish Enterprise and Corus. Additional backing has been provided for the regional sports facilities by North Lanarkshire Council and the Scottish government, through the national sports agency SportsScotland.

## sporting facilities

The £32m Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility has been designed to the highest standards throughout and is operated by charitable leisure trust North Lanarkshire Leisure. It can cater for all needs, with a multi-functional sports hall, full-size indoor football pitch, fully equipped athletics track with a throw and jump area and two dance studios. There's also a strength and conditioning area with five Olympic weight lifting platforms and a 100-station fitness suite supplied by Technogym. (See information box, p38, for a full list of facilities).

The large fitness suite offers top of the range equipment, including 19 RunNow treadmills and seven Bike700 from Technogym with brand new VISIOweb, which allows users to browse the internet while they work



The strength and conditioning area offers five Olympic weight lifting platforms



## Facilities are a key element in improving the stream of young talent into national teams

out via a 19" touch-screen. Technogym has been awarded a three-year tender to supply all gym equipment.

Jim McCable, council leader, has praised Ravenscraig for "providing the people of North Lanarkshire with some of the best facilities in the country".

Meanwhile SportsScotland's chief executive, Stewart Harris, believes the centre is able to accommodate athletes of all levels, from community participation through to elite level. "The facility will give people across the region increased opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity, and it will become home to a number of local community clubs and groups," he says.

Since the facility opened, its 'Sports for All' approach has proven a great success, with development classes in gymnastics, badminton, football, tennis, volleyball, athletics and martial arts operating at almost full capacity and giving the positive problem of needing extra classes to meet demand.

An all-inclusive membership to all sport centres managed by North Lanarkshire Leisure, including Ravenscraig, costs £34 a month, while 'pay as you go' sessions cost £4.95 for the gym and £4.30 for fitness classes.

Around 65 per cent of programmed use at Ravenscraig is by local people and local sports clubs, meeting the centre's brief to address community needs. However, it also offers an ideal venue to host national and international events, with three international airports within 40 minutes' drive time and excellent road and rail links.

Harris explains: "Ravenscraig will be hugely valuable to the network of national and regional facilities, providing world-class training and competition venues to Scotland's high performance athletes. It will contribute to the development of our young athletes."

Football in Scotland will particularly benefit, with indoor and outdoor full-size third generation synthetic football pitches on offer, as well as six five-a-side pitches.



**The facility has been equipped by Technogym, with VISIOweb screens on equipment so members can surf the internet while they work out**

Craig Levein, Scotland's men's national coach, says: "Facilities are a key element in improving the stream of young talent into the Scotland national teams. As we've seen with similar centres in Glasgow and Aberdeen, a facility like the one here at Ravenscraig has the potential to have a massive impact on football at all levels, and the local community in general."

### architecture

The sports facilities at Ravenscraig were designed by Populous architects, who also designed the new Wembley



**The Ravenscraig Facility includes a full-size indoor FIFA two-star 3G synthetic sports pitch**

Stadium and the Olympic Stadium for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Central to the design of Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility was the concept of creating a link to the steel industry that's had such a strong cultural presence on both the site and the wider local community. This influenced the choice of materials and the building itself. Its cladding has been designed as metal bands that rise out of the ground to wrap around the structure – a visual reminder reminiscent of rolled metal sheets (see photo, right). "We made a determined effort to make reference to the history of the site through the architectural language of the new facility," explains John Barrow, senior principal of Populous.

The complex is notionally divided into three main building blocks: the football and sports hall to the east, the athletics hall to the west, and the changing rooms and reception area located in the centre of the facility. The layout, with its common areas and centralised gathering zones between the halls, allows for a high level of interaction between the athletes and the public. The idea is also that this will encourage athletes can learn from each other's disciplines.

Sustainability credentials were also key to the design. The building incorporates a striking serrated roof – unusual for buildings with such large enclosed areas – which diffuses natural light into the facility all year round. This in turn minimises the dependence on artificial lighting, helping reduce annual energy costs and the facility's carbon footprint. The structure's green credentials also extend to using biomass fuel and harvesting rainwater, with significant levels of insulation aimed at

### Plans for Ravenscraig town

- Around 3,500 new homes
- New town centre with 84,000sq m of retail and leisure space
- Up to 216,000sq m of business and industrial space
- Major parkland areas
- New transport network
- New sports facility
- New college campus
- Two new schools

### Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility

- Full-size indoor FIFA two-star 3G synthetic sports pitch, suitable for football and rugby training, football matches and also non-sporting events such as concerts for up to 5,000 people
- Full-size FIFA two-star outdoor floodlit 3G synthetic pitch
- Six outdoor five-a-side courts
- Indoor athletics track, 135m straight with six lanes, throws and jumps area, strength and conditioning suite
- Multi-sports hall with nine badminton courts and five show badminton courts
- Fitness suite with 100 stations of Technogym equipment
- Two dance studios
- Lecture and meeting rooms
- Sports injury clinic
- Press and media facilities
- Café
- VIP facilities including fine dining



keeping the heat in as well as reducing acoustic break-out.

"It's been a real pleasure watching this magnificent building gradually transform the once derelict landscape of Ravenscraig," concludes McCable.

### the opening

The stunning new Ravenscraig Regional Sport Facility was officially opened on 30 September 2010 with a weekend of sporting fun, which kicked off with a 24-hour charity football tournament. This was a huge success, attracting more than 100 local football teams and raising over £4,000 for the local St Andrews Hospice. Even the slots between midnight and six in the morning were fully subscribed.

The opening weekend came to an end on 3 October with an attempt to hold the biggest ever Zumba class: 836 people successfully danced their way to the record books, beating the previous record of 575. The four-day event was complete with sporting celebrities, taster fitness classes and great community support.

The Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility now looks towards a bright future. The state-of-the-art facilities

are being strongly considered as a training site for both the London 2012 Olympics and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Furthermore, Ravenscraig has been elected to be the main facility for the 2011 International Children's Games, scheduled to take place in Lanarkshire: it will host the badminton and athletics events.

Development of the Ravenscraig site itself will also continue. As Jim Fitzsimons, project director at Ravenscraig Ltd, explains: "It's always been our ambition to create a vibrant destination with a distinct identity and sense of place and community where people will want to live and work."

With the completion of phase one just around the corner, plans for phase two are currently being finalised. Over the next few years, we will see the expansion of Ravenscraig town centre, with the addition of attractive shopping services, restaurant and community facilities, modern transport amenities and more housing – all of which will provide a user base on the very doorstep of the sports facilities.



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# research round-up

Recent research has suggested that regular exercise could help to prevent people catching a cold

## cold calling

Adults suffer from an average of two to four colds a year and school children can get up to eight or more. And with the winter months well underway, the chances of catching a cold are more likely. Now, however, researchers from Appalachian State University in North Carolina, US, have found that regular exercise could help to prevent people getting a cold in the first place.

### the study

The study, which was published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*<sup>\*</sup> followed 1,002 adults aged between 18 and 85 – with one in four participants aged 60 or over. It took place over two 12-week stretches in 2008: half of the participants were observed in the autumn and half in the winter.

The participants reported their own perceived fitness levels. Leisure-time exercise frequency habits and other factors affecting the immune system – such as lifestyle, dietary patterns and exposure to stressful events – were also assessed. In addition, the number

of upper tract respiratory infection incidences were recorded.

### the results

As expected, more colds were experienced during the winter, but those who exercised five days a week or more had a 46 per cent lower risk of getting a cold compared to those who only exercised once a week.

In addition, those who exercised more and did catch a cold had that cold for far fewer days than those who didn't work out. In fact, people who were only active for one day a week spent twice as much time with a cold compared to those who exercised five times a week or more.

Also, it was found that the strength of cold symptoms were worse for people in the sedentary group. The most active people experienced 41 per cent less severe colds than those who exercised the least. The benefits of exercise on the upper respiratory system held true regardless of age or gender.

It's believed that exercise is effective because it increases the



**Regular exercise can reduce the number of colds a person gets, as well as the cold's severity if they do get ill**

number of immune system cells in the bloodstream. Lead author Dr David Nieman explains that, although the levels of immune system cells decline within a few hours, each bout of exercise is likely to enhance the body's protection against harmful viruses and bacteria and reduce the number and severity of upper tract respiratory infections, such as the common cold.

What's more, exercise was also found to be more effective than any other lifestyle factor in boosting a person's immune system. Nieman explains: "We have analysed all lifestyle factors and this is the best evidence we have thus far that regular aerobic exercise, five or more days a week for more than 20 minutes a day, rises above all other lifestyle factors in lowering sick days during the winter and fall seasons."

### cold facts

While exercise may help to prevent a cold, those who are already sick should approach workouts cautiously, says Nieman, who is also a member of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). He's written the following guidelines for the ACSM:

DO exercise moderately if your cold symptoms are confined to your head. If you have a runny nose or sore throat, moderate exercise is permissible. More intense exercise

can then be resumed a few days after symptoms subside.

DON'T 'sweat out' your illness. This is potentially dangerous.

DO stay in bed if your illness has spread beyond your head. Respiratory infections, fever, swollen glands and extreme aches and pains all indicate that you should rest up, not work out.

DON'T jump back too soon. Allow at least two weeks of rest after a serious bout of cold or flu and ease yourself back in gently.

<sup>\*</sup> Nieman C, et al. Upper respiratory tract infection is reduced in physically fit and active adults. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* (2010). doi:10.1136/bjsm.2010.077875.

# GETTING CROSSFIT

Pete Hayman investigates the emergence of CrossFit in the UK

**T**he needs of our grandparents and Olympic athletes differ by degree, not kind" – this is a defining mantra of CrossFit, a concept founded 15 years ago by Greg Glassman in the US. And if you aren't yet familiar with what CrossFit entails, there's a strong chance you soon will be, as the trend starts to resonate further across the UK health and fitness sector.

"I've been amazed at the rapid growth of the CrossFit population over the past two years," says Tony Buchanan of Absolute Performance. "When we first started working alongside the CrossFit community, I think there were only 10–15 affiliates." There are now around 40 clubs in operation across the UK.

Buchanan identifies the last 12 to 18 months as a particular period of growth in demand – a claim backed up by equipment manufacturers and affiliates alike. Matthew Evans of CrossFit Velocity in Swansea explains: "In the

UK, CrossFit affiliate numbers have nearly doubled within a year."

It is, at present, a concept still in its infancy, as CrossFit Leeds' Mike Rawlinson admits: "Affiliates tend to be small compared with the more well-known corporate gyms. CrossFit as a training programme remains fairly underground in the UK."

But the signs suggest that CrossFit won't remain underground in the UK much longer. CrossFit London (UK) is one site that embodies how the concept is starting to take hold: "We've expanded very quickly in our first year of running a dedicated gym, to the point that we're nearly out of space and are actively looking for a much larger venue," explains co-owner Steven Shrago.

## THE MAKE-UP OF CROSSFIT

So what is CrossFit? A highly flexible training programme that aspires to the best physical standards, it encompasses movements and compound exercises to

reduce body fat and increase muscle mass. There's a strong emphasis on the use of free weights, although there is also a cardiovascular element.

BJ Rule of Optimal Life Fitness believes that CrossFit is part of a wider trend: "CrossFit utilises weightlifting and bodyweight, but also gymnastics, rowing and running. I believe the greater population is disaffected with mainstream health club and leisure facilities that rely on machines. CrossFit is real world, functional training."

Although it may initially appear to target ultra-fit participants, a key selling point is that everything is adaptable to the needs of an individual – albeit an individual willing to challenge themselves.

Gareth Millings of Alternative Fitness in Andover explains: "A typical CrossFit affiliate will have space and equipment that will enable its members to really push their fitness boundaries





**CrossFit gyms provide a real sense of community, with everyone doing the same workout – the Workout of the Day – and encouraging each other to meet the physical challenge**



and try things such as Olympic lifting, which is usually reserved for specialist clubs and elite athletes."

Meanwhile Shrago reveals that CrossFit London (UK) has a wide variety of members: "When was the last time you saw a 50-year-old woman do overhead squats?" he asks. "However, he admits it isn't for everyone. "It is genuinely hard work. It requires a certain degree of mental strength."

The physiological benefits are certainly evident, however. Not only are workouts tailored to ensure that participants can reduce body fat and increase muscle mass but, says Evans: "Properly structured anaerobic activity can be used to develop a very high level of aerobic fitness."

He adds: "CrossFit aims to best prepare participants for any physical contingency."

## KITTING IT OUT

A prerequisite of setting up a club is to become affiliated, which requires the completion of the CrossFit Level 1 coaching course. Once this is done and the affiliate fee paid, you're free to set up your gym.

Tom Haynes of York Barbell UK explains: "A lot depends on the size of the unit and how many members you intend to cater for. A small gym can be set up for around £6,000-9,000 with good quality kit. For a bigger,

more inclusive facility, you'll need up to £15,000-20,000, which in terms of setting a gym up is actually still minimal."

In Andover, Alternative Fitness could now exist as a traditional fitness facility had it not been for a rethink by Millings. "I originally planned to start a traditional gym," he says. "However, cost was a major stumbling point. With a CrossFit gym, on the other hand, your starting point is simply a pull-up bar and an Olympic lifting set."

Meanwhile, Shrago explains the set-up at CrossFit London (UK): "We have hard floors – ideally concrete – with rubber mats to absorb the dropped weights. We also have high ceilings so that pull-up rigs, rope climbs and gymnastics rings can be erected."



Evans continues: "You need good gear as it takes a great deal of punishment. You need stuff that lasts. Rubber bumpers and a good quality Olympic bar, kettlebells and somewhere to do pull-ups are a must."

Werksan, strengthpowerspeed.co.uk and Eleiko are among the suppliers used at CrossFit Velocity. CrossFit Leeds uses Wollerson Fitness and Jordan Fitness, while Beaverfit has supplied Alternative Fitness and CrossFit London (UK), which also uses Absolute Performance.

Meanwhile, York Barbell UK has worked with a number of CrossFit clubs. It's a relationship valued by Haynes. "We're starting out on the design of new functional kit such as Farmers



**The quote on the right originally came from Greg Glassman, who founded CrossFit in the US**

## The workout of the day will test even the world's fittest people, but can be scaled for all levels

► Walks," he comments. "Now that we have a good base of contacts to bounce ideas off and receive feedback, we intend to develop a lot of new products that can be carried over to the sport performance arm of York."

On the CV side, the only specific equipment at CrossFit London (UK) are Concept2 rowers. Kettlebells and a jump rope are also used for CV, as well as going out running – a 400m run was included in a recent workout programme, for example.

The set-up is similar at CrossFit Leeds, as Rawlinson explains: "We have rowing machines, but other than that no CV machines. Running and sometimes cycling are done outdoors. If it were practical, we'd row outdoors on the water too."

### INCLUSIVE, NOT EXCLUSIVE

Because the workouts are stripped back and focused on movements and compound exercises, CrossFit is an accessible method of training: individuals can take control of their own training schedule with the benefit of the CrossFit.com internet portal. According to Evans, "there are thousands of CrossFitters worldwide who are training on their own out of their garages". Rawlinson says it as an "open-source programme" that allows CrossFitters to determine their own workouts.

Nevertheless, there is a strong group focus mainly based around the clubs.

Millings explains: "CrossFit in a group setting allows people to forge new friendships and train in a friendly and proactive environment."

While membership options for prospective CrossFitters differ according to each affiliate, in many cases payment is not required until fundamentals have been completed and it's been proven that participants are ready to enter a group environment. From there, options vary between 'pay as you go' and monthly membership.

Millings continues: "We coach each and every member either one-to-one or in small groups in whatever exercises the workout of the day (WOD) involves. This incorporates working through any issues our members may have, such as flexibility issues or injuries."

The WOD is what it says on the tin: a daily routine configured by affiliates' coaches to complement workouts that have preceded it. For example, the WOD for 20 November at CrossFit London (UK) comprised three rounds of 30 sumo deadlift high pulls, 30 thrusters and 30 press-ups – a total of 90 reps each. The suggested weights were 30kg/20kg, although scaled weight options were available.

Evans explains: "The WOD is a workout guaranteed to test the capacities of the world's fittest human beings. However, in CrossFit, every workout is scalable to suit the needs of each



**Every member is coached one-to-one or in small groups, to work through any issues that individuals may have**

individual based on age, current fitness level, skill level and injury history, ensuring all athletes receive the same stimulus based on their unique requirements."

According to Shrago, the WOD is the "main focus of activity" for a client: "After they fully warm up and have completed any strength or skills work, they will direct their attention to this."

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## The CrossFit Games



**T**he CrossFit Games is an annual event that takes place in California, US. And last October saw the first event for UK affiliates: the York Divided We Fall Games. Held at CrossFit Velocity in Swansea, it attracted 54 teams comprising four athletes, at least one of whom had to be female.

Owner of CrossFit Velocity Matthew Evans explains: "The event consisted of team games, and teams had to represent the make-up of their affiliate. We have many women CrossFitters in the UK, hence their involvement."

The composition of the 2010 Games included five WODs on one day, each featuring a number of lifts, ground-to-overhead activities and a team row. While Evans admits there was a competitive element to the Games, CrossFit's accessibility ensured that

anyone could take part. "We allow scaling so that everyone can get a sense of what it's like to compete," he says. For example, if a participant were unable to do pull-ups, there would also be the chance to do jumps or band-assisted jumps.

York Barbell UK sponsored the event, with the winning team receiving York equipment as a prize.

Both Evans and Tom Haynes of York Barbell UK agree that UK affiliates could get a lot more mileage out of the Games concept: the international version in the US attracts major sponsors, and the Swansea event received a good level of commercial interest.

One of the next events on the calendar for UK CrossFitters is the UK Sectionals – qualifiers for the 2011 CrossFit Games in the US – which are scheduled for around March 2011.

## TACKLING THE FUTURE

So what does the future hold? The rate of growth shows no immediate sign of slowing. York Barbell UK continues to work with new openings, while Allan Collins of Jordan Fitness believes the latest trends are more than capable of establishing themselves as mainstream.

"The success of our business is to understand the industry – not just to be able to say what's popular now, but also to predict what will be popular in the next five to 10 years," he says.

"Although some products may be described as niche today, we know they may be the most popular things in the fitness industry in the next few years.

"As a general trend, people are using free weights more and more as an integral part of their training programme. CrossFit slots into this trend perfectly as clients seek simple exercises and equipment to train for metabolic acceleration. The emergence of kettlebell training over the last five years has coincided with CrossFit's growing popularity."

Disaffection with larger gym chains may further drive the growth of UK

CrossFit. Shrago believes that some gym operators "softened the idea of fitness by trying to remove the unpleasant idea of hard work from the equation", referring to health clubs with facilities such as steam rooms and assisted machines.

Above all, however, it's the sociable and flexible nature of CrossFit that provides a major selling point.

"CrossFit is something that's done in an atmosphere where everyone's doing the same thing," says Millings. "There's no arrogance and everyone helps each other. It's more like a social club."

"CrossFit makes also working out into a sport. It's also recordable and your progress can be tracked easily. The constant variety in workouts means the typical argument that people get bored in a traditional gym no longer rings true."

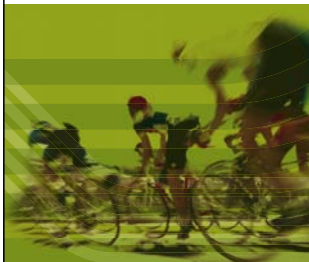
And for affiliates? Evans sums up: "There's no better feeling than seeing people overcome challenges and ultimately improve their health so they live better lives."



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Winter sports holidays are more fun when you're fit, says Kath Hudson – so help your members ensure they can hack the pace on the piste

# HIT THE SLOPES



The Concept2 SkiErg was launched in September 2009 to help prepare people for the piste

Anyone who has suffered the agony of being out of condition on the slopes, limping back to the apartment at the end of the day with muscles screaming, is likely to jump at the opportunity to take part in a ski fit training programme. Getting fit for skiing means less risk of injury, more stamina, fewer aches and pains in the evening and a lot more fun – all of which represents a great opportunity for fitness operators and equipment manufacturers alike.

## targeted workouts

Suppliers have already recognised this market and there are several pieces of kit now available which are perfect for building ski/snowboard fitness.

Based on the same mechanics and electronic monitoring systems as the Concept2 indoor rower, the Concept2 SkiErg was launched in September 2009. It helps to build strength and endurance by working the entire body in an efficient, rhythmic motion, using the poling motion integral to Nordic skiing techniques and generating a range of resistance similar to that found on the snow. Able to build strength in the upper body, core and legs, as

well as delivering a challenging aerobic workout, the SkiErg is therefore ideal for use in ski fit programmes.

Gordon Seaton trains the British Biathlon Team – a sport combining cross-country skiing and rifle shooting, and which demands high levels of fitness and immense upper body strength from its participants. The SkiErg has become a key part of the team's training regime.

"The SkiErg has filled a gap and definitely has its own niche. It's given us a whole spectrum of controllable exercise regimes for double poling," explains Seaton. "It can cover the whole range of exercise: gentle, a long mid-effort session or short, sharp, hard intervals. It's very effective in building upper body strength, which is really important for cross-country skiing but also for downhill skiing. And it's excellent for rehabilitation needs."

Meanwhile, Precor's Adaptive Motion Trainer (AMT) provides a full body workout and, as it adapts to the natural movement of the body, can be used to focus on specific muscle groups. Deep lunges can be made to tone and build the glutes, with short strides for calves – areas that skiers need to concentrate on.

Technogym's Crossover and Cardio Wave are also great pieces of kit for ski/ ▶

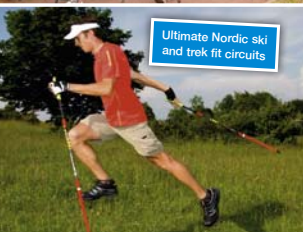




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### sports conditioning

► snowboard preparation: they provide lateral movement as well as being excellent for strengthening the whole of the leg, bum and hip area, including inner and outer thigh. Crossover gives a total body workout and is ideal for any user at any performance level. For a more challenging workout, the floating motion of Cardio Wave engages all gluteal, core and lower limb muscle groups.

#### ski fit programmes

The Wellington College Sports Club in Crowthorne has used Cardio Wave for its Ski Fit programme for the past four years: five one-on-one, 30-minute specialist ski fit sessions for £50. The Cardio Wave is used in various positions, complemented with light free weights and medicine ball exercises.

"Various exercises are performed over four sessions, with the fifth session used to go over any exercises the customer needs to repeat," says gym manager Paula Pocock. "Every winter we promote Ski Fit to encourage customers to build up their strength and stamina, and to work the major muscle groups."

Nordic Walking, which uses poles to engage the upper body while walking, is also fantastic preparation for skiing, according to director Gill Stewart: "Nordic Walking automatically includes the upper body action required in most forms of skiing, as it uses 90 per cent of the major muscles. It's fantastic for building stamina and endurance."



Technogym's Crossover and Cardio Wave (above) are often used in 'ski fit' training sessions

In preparation for this winter season, Nordic Walking UK (NWUK) has launched a ski fit programme: a six-week, outdoor circuit-based course that includes the skills needed for all types of skiing, from downhill to cross-country. Designed by cross-country ski coach and qualified doctor Nicky Parsons, the NWUK Ski Fit programme includes drills to help clients improve their technique and stamina and prevent falls. All bases needed for skiing and snowboarding are covered: cardiovascular fitness, balance and weight transfer, strength, flexibility, stamina and endurance.

The Lifestyle Leisure Centre in Surrey introduced the programme this month. "We're based in a country park, so this type of outdoor activity is ideal," says manager Sarah



Nordic Walking "automatically includes the upper body action required in most forms of skiing"



## Better performance on the slopes thanks to pre-training will highlight the value of gym membership

Plant. "The Ski Fit programme is being offered to members and non-members, but members get a discount."

Lincolnshire-based personal trainer Pete Woollard, who last season helped to train the RAF snowboarding team, is also offering Nordic Walking Ski Fit to his clients. "It adds another dimension to Nordic Walking to keep people interested and will hopefully attract a wider client base," he says. The course can be run as a class – ideal for those wanting to train together before their holiday. "It's perfect for groups, as then you have the group dynamic and there are fun games to play," adds Woollard.

Meanwhile, Virgin Active has put together a winter sports workout in conjunction with the international Roxy Snow Team. Taking training elements used by the team, the Roxy Sno Fit Workout focuses on building strength, power, balance and flexibility, with an emphasis on the lower body and core. There are three elements to the workout: warm-up, circuits and yoga. To put members in the mood, adrenaline-pumping music chosen by pro-boarders is played. Each session is different, with a variety of exercises, equipment, drills and conditioning. Yoga is used at the end to unwind and increase flexibility.

And French fitness chain Club Med Gym has also brought back its Snow Fit programme for this season. The 45-minute circuit consists of eight stations which recreate the different skills needed for skiing, including building up muscles, increasing cardiovascular fitness and working on reflexes to help balance. The rhythm and difficulty of the exercises vary, and participants can choose a circuit according to their ability on the slopes: green, blue, red or black. The exercises work mainly on the abdominals, back, shoulder girdle, thighs and calves.

### Social scene

Since everyone taking part in a ski fit programme is united in a common goal of getting fit for the slopes, this type of programme could also be very effective in building the social aspect of a facility's offering, generating new friendships and inspiring people to come back to the club after their holiday. An improved performance on the slopes thanks to the training put in beforehand will also help prove their gym membership is a worthwhile investment.



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# THE RISE OF THE

**I**n its heyday, The Pyramids – an iconic 1980s building on Portsmouth's Southsea seafront – was seen as the south coast's 'complete indoor resort', offering a leisure pool with wave machine and flume, various bars and cafés and two large function rooms.

However, the rest of the centre's large footprint was excess to requirements and generally unused, with the business ultimately threatened as a result. Due to lack of investment, escalating running and maintenance costs and a strategic review of leisure facilities in the Portsmouth area, the site was therefore put up for disposal by the local authority in 2008. Unless a suitable business proposition – other than residential units – was forthcoming, the site would be pulled down, leaving Portsmouth without a fun pool.

Gary Milne, director of Southsea Community Leisure (SCL) – which

now leases The Pyramids building from the local council – comments: "The location and demographics of the site were ideal and presented a phenomenal opportunity for redevelopment. We therefore formed SCL and proposed a vision for the site to the council.

"The thrust of the plan was to turn wasted space into income-generating areas, putting life back into the building and transforming the space into commercially viable leisure facilities

that could be used by both day visitors and local customers."

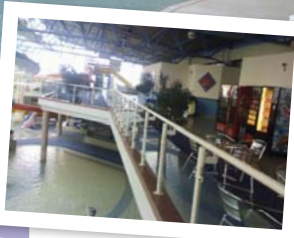
Whereas most redevelopment opportunities rely on extensions and gaining space from small, under-used areas, the proposition for The Pyramids was the exact opposite, with vast amounts of under-used space in need of a new lease of life: existing spectator viewing galleries, balconies, huge café seating areas, large reception areas and wide corridors. This provided a



The Pyramids is open to both day visitors and local members



**Left:** An 80-station gym has been created in the space formerly occupied by the spectator area  
**Above and right:** As the nearest fun pool is 40 minutes away, the public rallied to keep a pool at The Pyramids



# PYRAMIDS

Julie Fisher takes a look at the recent £2.2m transformation of The Pyramids in Portsmouth

great opportunity for remodelling the centre. Six months on, the site has been redesigned and excess space successfully converted into a fitness suite, health spa, soft play area and new café.

## local support

Having put together a redevelopment tender, taking into consideration local requirements, SCL approached Portsmouth City Council. It acquired preferred bidder status and – in partnership with Alliance Leisure, which funded and project-managed the work, and leisure development firm Createability – compiled a £2.2m refurbishment package.

The council had 10 bids to consider, including one from the occupier at the time, but awarded the project to SCL. Work started in May 2010.

The Pyramids clearly means a lot to the local community and, prior

to the redevelopment, a 'Friends of the Pyramids' group was created to campaign to retain the facilities as a fun swimming pool and entertainment venue – the nearest fun pool is a 40-minute car journey away. Resulting in a 20,000-name petition, the community played an integral part in saving what they consider to be Portsmouth's 'jewel in the crown'.

The site was closed throughout the refurbishment, but the pool opened during key holiday periods. Ian Cotgrave, managing director of Createability, comments: "The pool was the first area we concentrated on so it could be opened in the holidays – even during the refurbishment – to generate income."

Milne adds: "When the pool opened for a few weeks in the summer and during October half-term, we had 1,000 visitors a day with absolutely no marketing other than the website

and a voucher offer. This sort of local support will continue to be crucial to the success of the venue."

## maximising space

The Pyramids has now been renovated and modernised. The pool has been redecorated and the flumes refurbished, but the main difference is that the redundant spaces have now been utilised to their full potential.

Cotgrave explains: "The flow and feel of The Pyramids has changed beyond recognition. The new facilities have been designed to capitalise on the vast amount of under-used space that was available. And to achieve maximum impact, the design was not constrained by the old structure. We analysed the requirements and designed the space accordingly, even transforming the old spectator terrace that overlooked the pool into a stunning fitness suite."

Located on the upper mezzanine floor, the 448sq m (4,822sq ft), 80-station fitness suite therefore overlooks the pool area. Fully air-conditioned, the self-contained area features a circuit of 20 Hoist Roc-It resistance machines, ►

The location and demographics of the site were ideal and presented a phenomenal opportunity for redevelopment



- four interactive Espresso bikes and 50 CV units, including remanufactured Life Fitness kit – all supplied by Physique, part of the PTE group.

A second balcony, also overlooking the pool and located at the front of the building – which previously housed a small, infrequently used play area – has been turned into a 109sq m (1,173sq ft) Soft Play World, designed and installed by House of Play, with capacity for 70 children. The area has been built within a ventilated structure to provide continuous fun, even on hot days.

### spa heaven

The original Splashdown Café, with a vast seating overspill area that opened onto the poolside, has been totally demolished and converted into an elegant health spa, with its own changing facilities and reception. A fundamental element of the whole redesign, the spa area features an ice fountain, footbaths, a Helo sauna, monsoon shower, 15.6sq m (168sq ft) steam room and three treatment rooms.

The old café area (right) was demolished to make way for the new health spa (above)



The steam room is designed with a pyramid-shaped theme, with a central pyramid from which steam gently wafts into the room. Three hexagonal-shaped booths provide seating.

The addition of a salt grotto ties in nicely with the centre's seaside location, offering a cleansing experience as the body relaxes, absorbs and inhales the gentle crystals of salt, which as Milne points out, "is just like walking along the beach and inhaling the fresh salty air".

### the future

The upmarket health club and spa now have an offering unlike anything else in the city – a place for people to come in and relax and unwind for the day, or to pop in for a beauty treatment.

Meanwhile the restructure of the building has created very distinct offerings: pools and soft play, health club

and spa, and the function rooms – The Plaza and The Glass House (see information box below). All elements are self-contained and yet entirely symbiotic.

Sarah Watts, MD of Alliance Leisure, says: "The leisure sector is a very competitive market and commercial viability was a prerequisite to this redevelopment. Our aim was to create a multi-area facility, at the same time establishing a profitable business model which will be the key to its success. The new leisure facilities and the entertainment side of the business will generate income and bring new aspects to the building in line with local community needs."

Milne adds: "The Pyramids commands a central location on the Southsea seafont, which plays host to major pier attractions as well as the hovercraft link to the Isle of Wight. We're working in partnership with our attractions colleagues to target the day visitor as well as local residents.

"For us, the key to success is getting the product mix right for the location and giving visitors reasons to stay longer or to revisit the seafont.

"Thanks to local support and the efforts of 'The Friends of The Pyramids', the new facilities now provide the area with a family destination they can be proud of."

### STILL FUNCTIONING

**T**he function rooms play a vital role in the success of The Pyramids project. Already income-generating, they remained largely untouched during the redevelopment project other than being redecorated.

The Orangery Glass House – formerly Portsmouth's foremost nightclub, with its views over the Solent and the Isle of Wight – is now a sought-after wedding reception location and is once again hosting an increasing number of club nights.

The Plaza hosts exhibitions and events too, but is also home to the city's only mid-sized music venue; it has previously hosted top artists such as Radiohead, The Arctic Monkeys, Coldplay and Lily Allen. Eliza Doolittle, Pete Tong and Feeder have all confirmed for 2011.



Julie Fisher

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Leasing acts as life support for many clubs, says Kay Glover. Have you considered your options?

# BALANCING THE BUDGET

**T**imes are tough and banks are more reluctant than ever to lend to the leisure industry. To survive, our businesses have had to become fitter and leaner than ever before. Many of us have already trimmed away the fat, focused on our core objectives and identified what we need to do to be profitable – so how do we go about obtaining the financial support we need to put our plans into practice?

Obtaining funding generally depends on two things: firstly, the nature of your organisation – are you an established business, a start-up or a public sector operator? And secondly, the purpose of the funding required – is it for 'hard' equipment or for so-called 'soft costs' such as training?

## financing equipment

Installing new equipment can be an excellent way of refreshing a site, attracting and retaining clients and staying ahead of the competition. However, we've been through a tough few years where obtaining funding even for equipment became extremely difficult, with funding sources leaving the market. But the landscape has evolved and new resources have emerged: equipment financing is once again open to most organisations that can demonstrate that they are, or have the potential to be, profitable and viable.

Phil Morris of LDF (formerly Lease Direct) outlines the options available to operators. "Outright purchasing is great if you have cash available, but

operators should think twice before investing their precious cash resources into equipment that might be better financed over its useful life. Expending your cash resources on equipment that will only ever depreciate can leave an organisation vulnerable to cashflow problems later, especially in an uncertain economic climate. There's also little point in investing your cash into equipment if you will then struggle with cashflow or financing soft costs later.

"Many see bank loans as a good option for funding a new or expanding leisure business, but they're not necessarily the best solution for funding equipment. Banks may vary their interest rates during the loan period and may require security over your assets.

"Also, using the bank to fund all your equipment acquisitions can leave you with huge exposure to one organisation – it handles your day-to-day cashflow and you may need to secure additional working capital facilities from time to time. In addition, should there be a change in the bank's attitude to your type of business or if your relationship manager changes, having all your eggs in one basket can cause major problems."

## the value of leasing

Morris continues: "Lease or hire purchase have always been popular solutions and are becoming increasingly so for many leisure businesses for several reasons. The basic principle is that the operator chooses the equipment, and the finance company buys it and charges you monthly

payments over its prime useful life, with the equipment itself acting as the main security against the finance. Agreements are designed as far as possible to suit your cashflow, with monthly or quarterly payments fixed for the life of the agreement – excepting VAT rate changes of course – and there can be significant tax benefits for private sector customers.

"Any value of equipment, from £1,000 upwards, can be leased over periods between three and five years for the private sector and up to seven years for the public sector. At the end of most lease agreements and all hire purchase agreements, ownership of the equipment can be transferred to you.

"Many think leasing is expensive when compared with other funding options, but this is just not true. Leasing rates can be very competitive and, combined with the tax benefits, the true cost may be less than traditional bank facilities.

"Another myth is that leasing is only for companies that can't afford the cash. Actually, the reality is the exact opposite. Companies that lease often do so because they know there are better uses for their cash that allow them to maximise profits or to avoid cashflow pressures during uncertain business times."

Jeff Davis, senior VP of commercial sales for Power Plate UK, agrees that leasing is an excellent way for clubs to fund equipment. "You get to spread the cost," he says. "Leasing has no impact on your existing bank or credit lines and rentals are fixed, so you're not subject to inflation or interest rate hikes."





Life Fitness offers finance on Certified Pre-Owned and brand new kit. It has leased equipment to Hawthorn Leisure Centre, opened by Darren Campbell (above)

### tailored leasing deals

Of course, no two businesses are the same, and leasing deals should ideally acknowledge individual circumstances.

Graham Partridge, director of Alliance and General Leasing, explains: "Leasing is a great option for many businesses, particularly in today's economic climate, but there are still pitfalls to watch out for. One of the main problems that we find with many leasing deals is that they specify minimum term rather than fixed term. A fixed term gives you a fixed end date, as the name would suggest – you know the date when the agreement will start and when the final payment will be made. A minimum term means that there is no fixed end date and, unless you're on top of your agreement, payments will still be taken from your bank account until you stop it."

"We have over 25 years' experience in arranging leasing deals for the leisure industry and are well aware that every case needs to be treated on its own merits. We pride ourselves on offering bespoke deals for our customers. Leasing is no different from any other financial package in that respect – you wouldn't expect everyone to be offered exactly the same mortgage, irrespective of their circumstances or size of loan, and leasing has to be treated in the same way. We work with our customers to provide them with the very best deal to suit their business needs."

Meanwhile, most of the reputable equipment manufacturers offer leasing packages. Technogym and Precor

both offer a personalised service with flexible leasing options, for example. Gideon Stanley, Precor's international customer financing director, comments: "Precor works closely with customers and financing partners to tailor leasing packages that meet the requirements for both parties. It's about managing expectations and achieving the right balance. Most companies take a standard fixed-term deal over three to five years with monthly payments. If a customer is willing to put up a good level of deposit, then we can often get a better package for them."

"That said, we can be flexible and variations are possible – customers sometimes look to lower monthly payments or build in payment holidays, for example. Our job is to work with the customer, help broker the arrangements

with the finance partner and try and get the best deal in the circumstances."

### turn to the experts

Meanwhile Life Fitness offers finance not only on its brand new equipment but also on its Certified Pre-Owned range.

"Like most equipment providers, we work with a finance partner to provide the actual leasing agreements," explains Alan Loudon, business development manager for Life Fitness. "We're fitness experts, not finance experts, so we choose to partner with top specialists in this field so we can offer our clients the best possible finance solutions."

"Having the right finance partner adds value to our customer relationships. A complete package can be created for the customer that takes into account finance of the new equipment and also

“Leasing is a great option for many businesses, particularly in today's economic climate”

- removal and trade-out of their existing equipment. Net sales proceeds from disposal of equipment can also be factored into the deal, often substantially reducing the leasing payments."

Both Life Fitness and Power Plate UK work closely with LDF to provide leasing solutions for their customers. Morris explains that partnerships with the right industry experts are vital. "We're extremely careful in choosing the supplier partners we work with, as we have to be certain that their products and services will stand the test of time – we have to live with the finance agreements for several years and don't want customers having issues with the equipment. We generally have years of experience of their service standards over the life of the equipment, so working with us and one of our approved suppliers should give clients added peace of mind."

As both a leasing funder and broker, companies like LDF can create tailored finance packages for customers that not only provide the funding they need but that also constitute a scalable solution that can be extended and added to as necessary, as an organisation develops. "We're in it for the long term," explains Morris. "I have many clients that I've dealt with from a single-site start-up situation, where we're now on their second or third round of new equipment at multiple sites."

#### options available

Times might be tough, but it would seem the options are still there to keep refreshing your offering. "Given the current economic climate, companies are looking to leasing in order to fund equipment purchases and manage their cashflow," says Stanley. "If a reasonable deposit is put down and they can

demonstrate that they're financially stable, better deals will be open to them.

"New lenders and increased risk appetite will only emerge when there is general economic growth and recovery and the banks have rebuilt their balance sheets. Until such times, leasing remains the favoured option."

"There are financial solutions – it's about finding the right one for you, with the right partners and making sound business judgements based

realistic aims and objectives," adds Dan Wille, VP and general manager of Life Fitness UK. "Operators and their partners have a shared responsibility to uphold and promote the reputation and professionalism of our business, which will eventually result in further cash injections and investment into our exciting industry."

 **kay glover**  
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# show preview

The big names are back for the UK's largest beauty show

## Professional Beauty 2011



**P**rofessional Beauty is the UK's largest event for the health and beauty professional and, in 2011, is already set to be twice the size of previous events. Taking place on 27–28 February 2011 at ExCel in London, Professional Beauty 2011 promises more exhibitors, more products and more educational tools than ever before, as well as unmissable competitions and unparalleled networking opportunities.

### what's new?

The most exciting new feature for 2011 is The Ultimate Spa Experience, Europe's only purpose-built exhibition spa with hamman, Rasul and both wet and dry treatment areas.

German manufacturer Haslauer is investing £100,000 in this new area, and qualified professionals can experience these spa treatments at the show by booking online.

### offers and launches

Professional Beauty 2011 has the backing of some of the biggest names in skincare, spa, nails, equipment, medical beauty and tanning, making it the industry showcase of the

year. From Elemis to Dermalogica, Guinot to Aromatherapy Associates, Dalesauna to CACI, and Jessica to OPI, everybody who's anybody will be at Professional Beauty 2011.

New products will include launches from Sweet Squared, CND and Minx, as well as from skincare brand SkinCeuticals. Most exhibitors will run exclusive show offers and substantial discounts at the show.

### competition time

See industry professionals battling it out to be the best in the country in our nail and make-up competitions – or perhaps even compete yourself?

Competitors will show off their skills at the ever-popular International Nail Competition or participate in the first ever National Make-Up Awards. These competitions are designed for professionals and students to showcase their talent and take their career to the next level.

### conventions, conferences and seminars

Professional Beauty 2011 comes with an impressive educational programme. The European Spa Convention is back, with

### Attendants can compete in the International Nail Competition or the first ever National Make-Up Awards

world-class speakers including Francis Hayter, Don Camilleri and Pete Cohen among many others: the two days will be packed with relevant topics for the spa and salon owner. Two medical aesthetics conferences are also on offer, as well as business seminars and the BABTAC and ITEC seminars.

With plenty of opportunities on offer, everyone can learn something new at the show. Visit the Professional Beauty website – [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk) – for agendas and speaker information.

No matter what your interests, Professional Beauty 2011 is the place to be to discover everything you need for business success.

### ABOUT PROFESSIONAL BEAUTY 2011

**Dates:** 27–28 February 2011

**Venue:** ExCel London

#### Opening times:

27 February: 10.00am – 5.30pm

28 February: 10.00am – 5.00pm

For further information and to register online for your free ticket, visit: [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk)  
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# A WOMAN'S TOUCH

HOW CAN GYMS BRING WOMEN INTO THE NUTRITIONAL PRODUCTS CATEGORY? JO POCKETT ASKS THE EXPERTS FOR THEIR THOUGHTS

**P**rotein supplements have traditionally been targeted at the male audience, but there are now ranges specifically designed for women – and health clubs are looking to maximise this opportunity. We ask a panel of industry experts for their thoughts on how gyms can bring women in to the nutritional products category.

**INKSPOR, Germany**

**Rainer Pinell** – international sales director



**W**omen who engage in sports such as athletics, swimming and tennis – who are often also members

of a club – tend to have more fun with their exercise, with little or no attention paid to slimming.

However, women who only use gyms and fitness clubs are more than likely trying to change their shape and lose weight within a safe environment, surrounded by like-minded people. They will probably have tried one or several diets with negligible results and will have turned to exercise to help them reach their target – but they will still be in the diet mindset and will eat as little as possible.

Meanwhile, their male counterparts in the gym will be glugging on protein drinks, aware of the fact that their intake will aid the generation of

muscle fibre. Women viewing this as calorie intake are mistaken, as protein supplements are very different from general food and drink consumption. Could it be true that male gym-goers know more about the fundamental rules of metabolism? Or are they simply less blinded than women by the pressures of modern body culture clichés?

After a workout, with hunger pangs raging, it's a natural reaction to want to fill your calorie deficit with something satisfying as a reward for your hard work. However, the best thing you can put into your body at this time is protein. To raise awareness of this among women, health club managers need to promote the benefits of sports supplements, particularly protein. Protein intake will help to build up the calorie-burning factories within exercisers' bodies – which is, after all, typically their main goal.

Women often worry that supplements will lead to them getting 'big muscles', but that is not necessarily the case





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## SOHO GYMS, London, UK

Michael Crockett – managing director



To enhance our female members' experience and help them get the most out of their workouts, we've established a

partnership with Maxitone, a complete nutrition range designed exclusively for active women from the manufacturer of Maximuscle. The range includes shakes and handy snack bars and caters for busy women, whatever stage of fitness they're at.

We understand the benefits of bringing protein into your routine and want to communicate this to the women in our gyms, many of whom have previously been put off using these products, viewing them as 'only for men'.

We're now sampling products in certain classes, helping female members

realise the impact they can have on their workout, and supporting this with offers on our website and in member newsletters.

Maxitone nutritionists provide training on the products, and the science behind them, to all employees in our main sites, and we host monthly educational workshops for our members. We realise how deflating it

can be if you've worked out for hours in the gym but aren't seeing any changes in your body. We want our members to see results and these products can help facilitate this.

An agreement announced last month will see GlaxoSmithKline acquire Maxinutrition and all its brands – including Maximuscle, Maxifuel and Maxitone – from Darwin Private Equity. See news (p13) for more detail on the £162m deal.



**Soho Gyms has struck up a partnership with Maxitone**

## REFLEX NUTRITION, UK

Julian Wright – marketing director



If you could deliver a toned and slender figure to every woman walking into your gym, the likelihood is that you'd have the UK's

most popular gym. Ironically, the supplement category that's currently inextricably linked to the young male market can be fundamental in delivering results for women too.

We undertake product sampling in gyms on a regular basis and constantly hear the misconceptions relating to protein and supplements, typified by the favourite: "But I don't want to get big muscles."

The truth is that sports supplements can help maximise both the workout itself and recovery from the exercise, and support a toned physique. The only way in which anyone will get 'big muscles' is by undertaking strenuous weight training.

Perhaps the most appropriate way to counter these misconceptions within the gym is to find athletic female members who use supplements (including protein) and use them as case studies. This could be through simple endorsements of products in literature and the media, or through presentations, discussions and competitions within the gym itself. Personal trainers are of course instrumental in delivering and supporting this activity.

Gyms may also want to find a supplement brand to work with which can present, sample and discuss its supplement range in an appropriate manner. Even better if it has a range of health products that your female members can relate to.

It's not rocket science, so just think about the expenditure of your male members – in theory, the female market could be just as great in providing secondary revenue.

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## QNT, UK

Sharon Wilson – brand manager



**N**utrition is as important as exercise to achieving physical goals. So in terms of financial gain

for the club, not only is there the immediate revenue from sales, but using nutritional products increases members' chances of success, which makes them feel good about their experience and, most importantly, keeps them coming back.

The first step to bringing women into the category is helping them to understand that the products aren't just for men. Realistically this will, at least in part, be down to the look and feel of the brand. That's why we developed our Easy Body range: the

nutritional values are similar to our male range (QNT), but the look and feel are very feminine.

Once you have the right product, it's about engaging and communicating with the female members in the club. Staff conducting one-to-one sessions should know to up-sell these items, incorporating them in relevant programmes and giving the club an instant hit on the revenue stream.

Choosing a provider that offers good support is also paramount. Your supplier should know your club and its membership demographic.

In short, it's about incorporating the product into the user experience so that, just like swiping in at the start of a session, nutritional products become an integral part of the member experience.



The Easy Body brand was developed to appeal specifically to women



The Maxitone range includes shakes and snack bars for women of all fitness levels

## ULTRABODY

Michael Clark – head of sales



**T**he female supplement market is potentially far larger than the male market, as more gym-goers are female and their range of exercise goals often far broader than among males.

The key to tapping into the female market and encouraging spend among this member group is to dispel the myths around supplementation, using education and smart marketing to make supplements non-threatening.

Over 60 per cent of our Ultrabody products sales are to the female market. We've found the most successful in-club strategies to be:

- Don't call them supplements, as there's too much scepticism associated with the word. Instead use terms like 'nutritional solutions'.
- Run nutritional seminars for members where questions can be asked and products sampled.

- Use group exercise instructors as product advocates, especially in female-dominated classes like aquaerobics and pilates.
- Package products appropriately – for example, our protein shakes and bars have been re-packaged as Inch Loss shakes and Inch Loss bars to appeal to women.
- Give away free product in return for testimonials, and share success stories to make the results from the products more tangible and 'real'.
- Organise nutritional or diet groups with a 'try before you buy' taster element.



Ultrabody: 60 per cent of its sales are to women

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# QUESTION TIME

Katie Start reports on discussions from SIBEC Europe, on the challenges that lie ahead for the industry



**S**et against the beautiful backdrop of the Portuguese coastline, 170 buyers and suppliers gathered for SIBEC Europe in November to explore collaborative opportunities. This year, the event launched with a *Question Time*-style forum, chaired by Mike Hill, MD of Leisure-net Solutions. A panel of influential industry figures answered questions from the floor, exploring the opportunities and threats the industry faces in these times of spending cuts and economic recession.

**What do the emergence of budget gyms and the cuts imposed by the Comprehensive Spending Review mean for the future of the industry?** *Jeremy Jenkins, head of sales, Matrix Fitness Systems*

**Craig McAteer:** "Difficult times lie ahead, certainly for those working in public sector cultural and leisure services. Local authorities have been instructed by central government to make 25 per cent cuts and these are to be front-loaded, adding to short-term pressure. While some facility closures will be inevitable, partnership working and outsourcing will become more attractive, which will create opportunities for the private and third sectors."

**Niki Keene:** "The industry needs to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach and embrace opportunities to service niche markets. Ladies-only gyms and budget clubs will attract certain demographic groups not currently tempted to engage with more traditional offerings. As long as 'budget' does not compromise safety and service standards, more consumer choice can only be a good thing."

**Dave Stalker:** "Whatever the product, whichever populations we're catering for, we must put the level of service at the heart of our offering. 'Low cost' and 'spending cuts' must not be allowed to equate to poor service. Customer satisfaction drives retention and referral; without these our industry will struggle to survive, never mind grow."

**Sarah Watts:** "The current government spending cuts can present an opportunity for the leisure industry, in that leisure is the only service run by local government that has the potential to generate revenue. This can be achieved by well-planned investments and the development of under-utilised space. For example, the conversion of a four-court

## THE PANEL

- **Dave Stalker**, executive director, FIA
- **Sarah Watts**, MD, Alliance Leisure Services
- **Craig McAteer**, chair, sporta
- **Theo Hendriks**, CEO, Sports and Leisure Group (The Netherlands)
- **Niki Keene**, international healthcare and wellness director, Curves International

sports hall into a mezzanine fitness and Ten Pin bowling facility can result in a rise in annual income levels from around £70,000 to £600,000-plus."

**How can trade associations work better together to get more people physically active?** *Dave Wright, CEO, Creative Fitness Marketing*

**Dave Stalker:** "It's vital that organisations stop focusing on individual gain and start joining together to achieve common goals. Through initiatives like Cameron's Responsibility Deal, the government is finally recognising the important contribution our industry can make to the future health of the nation. However, for progress to continue, we need to work collectively. The FIA is working hard to break down barriers, liaising closely with IHRSA and EHFA, while two members of sporta sit on the FIA board. Sharing information and working together will achieve more than working in isolation."

**What can UK operators learn from their European counterparts?** *Hans Muench, director of Europe, IHRSA*

**Theo Hendriks:** "The UK could definitely benefit from taking more of an interest in emerging European trends and examples of best practice. Spinning™ was introduced to Holland in 2003, but it was several years before the UK saw its potential and really embraced it. Currently, the milon brand is growing in popularity – particularly in Germany, Belgium and Holland – and operators in the UK would be wise to investigate its potential. Obviously not all products are right for all markets, but it's difficult to make choices if there isn't a general awareness of the opportunities."

"Even if there are no obvious opportunities to work together, UK operators and suppliers should make more of the opportunity to talk with European delegates at events like



Offerings should be developed to meet whatever the market demands, from women-only gyms such as Curves (above left) to budget clubs such as The Gym (above) and Pure Gym (left)

SIBEC Europe. There is a lot that could be learnt from a more proactive sharing of information and experiences."

**What is the industry currently doing to engage with GPs, and how can this be improved?** *Jonny Sullens, portfolio director, UBM*

**Craig McAteer:** "The NHS is currently going through some significant structural changes. Some of these changes – the introduction of GP Clusters, for example – have met with resistance from those involved, and it's likely that there will be a period of bedding in before any benefits start to emerge. That said, 90 per cent of the NHS budget now goes through the Strategic Health Authorities, GP Clusters and Primary Care Trusts. As a sector, these are the groups we need to be targeting and forming relationships with if we're to bring the fitness and health agendas closer together."

**Where is the evidence of the industry engaging with the health sector?** *Innes Kerr, group operations director, The énergie Group*

**Craig McAteer:** "In order to engage with the health sector, we need to be able to provide more data on the programmes we're running and the results we're achieving. Benchmarking is absolutely vital. Suppliers need to be proactively developing tools that enable operators to do this more effectively."

**Staff often don't even smile at members when they come into our gyms. Are we getting ahead of ourselves to think we can deliver on more complex agendas such as medical wellbeing?** *Kate Cracknell, editor, HCM*

**Sarah Watts:** "We need to define 'medical wellbeing'. Delivering complex medical expertise may well be a step too far at this stage, but we most certainly can deliver on the softer,

less complex wellbeing issues. We're all aware that simply participating in regular physical activity has numerous health and wellbeing benefits. Delivering good quality instruction, motivating people to keep going and making sure they have an enjoyable experience in our facilities will all contribute to a beneficial mental and physical experience."

**We've seen the emergence of women-only clubs in the UK. Will male-only clubs follow?** *Phil Storey, CEO, Pendle Leisure Trust*

**Niki Keene:** "Why not? As I mentioned earlier, the industry must cater for niche markets if we're to gain more market penetration. That said, we need to understand why the concept has worked so well for ladies and question whether men would be encouraged by the same sort of offering."

"People are more likely to work out, and continue to do so, in an environment where they feel comfortable. If that means creating spaces, groups and services for specific niche populations, then the industry should aim to cater for this."

**If you could change one thing in the industry, what would it be?** *Lorraine Young, head of health, fitness and sales, Edinburgh Leisure*

**Craig McAteer:** "Make leisure and culture a statutory public sector service."

**Sarah Watts:** "Pay our professionals a wage they deserve."

**Dave Stalker:** "Put outstanding customer service standards at the heart of our offering."

**Theo Hendriks:** "Work on improving customer satisfaction to positively influence retention."

**Niki Keene:** "Improve the relationship between the fitness and health sector. Provide doctors with more training on the benefits of physical activity."



# CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Mike Hill reports on the findings and analysis from the ninth annual HAFOS survey into consumer attitudes towards health and fitness

**N**inety-five per cent of people now believe exercise is important to their health, up 1 per cent on last year – this according to the latest national Health and Fitness Omnibus Survey (HAFOS).

The only regular industry barometer of UK consumers' attitudes towards, health, fitness and physical activity, HAFOS is now in its ninth consecutive year. A street-based consumer survey, it uses a national sample of over 2,400 people interviewed in 10 locations throughout England and Scotland. The findings are benchmarked against a rolling average of results from the previous five surveys.

The 'activity is important to my health' figure has in fact remained consistently high over the last five years. Similarly stable, though, is the number of people who nevertheless fail to put this awareness into action: every HAFOS survey has shown that about half of the adult population would like to be more active than they currently are. The 2010 survey is no different – only 42 per cent of respondents felt they exercised as much as they would like. As a sector, we

have to ask ourselves how we can turn this awareness into desire and then action.

## older and wiser?

Worryingly, older age groups still tend to think that exercise "is not for them", with the percentage of over-65s wanting to be more active significantly lower than among younger age groups (see Figure 1, below right). As people grow older, they feel they don't need to exercise as much, when in reality it often becomes more important for them to keep active. In order to change this perception and attract the grey market, the industry must adapt its educational and marketing messages to target this growing percentage of the population.

## getting active

When asked how much physical activity they had actually done, it's interesting to note that percentages are the same as in last year's report. A concerning 20 per cent of the population stated that they hadn't managed any 30-minute sessions of moderate exercise recently, while 61 per cent said they had done three or

more sessions a week. Of these, 20 per cent claimed to have done five or more.

Although the number of people claiming to have achieved the three times a week and five times a week 30-minute targets appears to have plateaued this year, HAFOS has seen a steady increase in both measures – up around 15 per cent over five years.

However, recent research – carried out as part of the Department of Health's Health Survey – raises a





## The real amount of activity undertaken is significantly less than is reported by individuals

worrying consideration. When they tested actual activity levels (using accelerometers) against self-reported levels, the real amount of activity undertaken was significantly less than had been reported by the individuals. This suggests that the scale of the inactivity problem is much greater than we currently believe.

### attitudes towards physical activity

For the first time, HAFOS asked some standardised questions relating to attitudes towards physical activity, and specifically around the current recommendations of '5 x 30 minutes' of moderate activity. Among respondents, 60 per cent strongly agreed that moderate activity is good for you, while

61 per cent strongly agreed that you should keep it up for 30 minutes. However only 42 per cent strongly agreed that it needs to "get you out of breath" and only 16 per cent strongly agreed that you can achieve these levels of physical activity without doing sport or exercise (see Figure 2, p66).

The responses to these questions show that there is still some education to be done in terms of getting people to understand clearly what they need to be doing, how often and for how long, in order to gain maximum health benefit.

### motivation for change

When asked why they wanted to be more active, respondents' views have changed very little since last year: most people (63 per cent) said they wanted

### 32 per cent of female respondents said they wanted to increase their activity in order to lose weight

to "improve their general health", while 26 per cent said it was more about either improving their body shape and tone and/or maintaining or losing weight. Improving self-esteem, socialising and exercising for specific health issues were among the other reasons quoted.

However, it's important that operators realise not just why people want to be more active, but also how motivating factors differ between different sub-groups of the population – age and gender, for example, have a significant influence on these figures. This understanding should inform not just marketing and sales, but also retention strategies.

Older people tend to take a more holistic approach to physical activity – 81 per cent of 65- to 74-year-olds said they wanted to be more active to improve or maintain their health, compared with only 61 per cent of 35- to 44-year-olds.

Meanwhile the research found that women focused more on body shape and appearance as a factor – 32 per cent of female respondents said they wanted to increase their activity levels to lose weight and shape up, compared with only 21 per cent of male respondents. ▶

Figure 1 Would you like to do more physical activity/exercise? ■ YES ■ NO

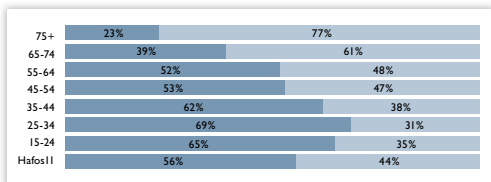
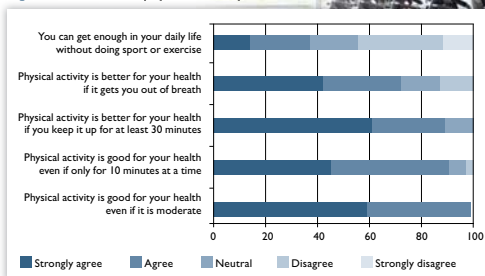


Figure 2 Attitudes to physical activity



► In addition, other research by Leisure-net Solutions – based on focus groups among club members – suggests that weight loss and improvement of body shape is actually an even bigger motivator than figures indicate. There's a tendency for people to say that their motivation is holistic and about "being more healthy", when in reality the key motivator is how they look rather than how they feel.

### a timely problem

Lack of time is still a very real barrier to exercise in many people's minds. Just under half of respondents (45 per cent) said it's what prevents them from being more active – down 9 per cent on last year. Lack of confidence (13 per cent) and "not sure what to do" (12 per cent) were the next two most important factors – both significantly up on last year's findings (see Figure 3, below).

The perception of time as a barrier is one that must be addressed by operators, regardless of whether it is in reality a true barrier or just an

excuse. As long as people feel they're 'time deficient', physical activity providers will have to find innovative ways to address this in the way they programme, market and deliver their services. Coming up with alternatives that can be slotted in before, during or after a working day – such as providing express workout programmes and 30-minute group exercise classes – must be a priority.

It's also time we addressed consumers' false, but nonetheless common, perception that a workout must last hours in order to be valuable, both physically and in terms of getting their money's worth. If consumers can be convinced that short, intense workouts can be just as – if not more – effective than long gym sessions, their perception of receiving value for their monthly membership fee will also increase.

### the price of fitness

The number of people who would consider using their local leisure centre or health club was up significantly on

**The number of people saying they would consider using their local club has gone up to 58 per cent**

last year, with over half (58 per cent) of the sample saying they were open to the idea (compared to 41 per cent in 2009) – perhaps thanks to ongoing messages from the media and government.

As with barriers to exercise, once again pricing is an important consideration – reducing fees would strongly encourage just over a third (34 per cent) of respondents to use their local leisure centre or health club, followed by improved facilities and a better range of facilities/equipment.

However, while lower prices is always the most quoted 'encouragement factor' for people to use their local centres/clubs more, detailed analysis and qualitative research continuously shows that lowering price will not, in itself, make a difference to more than a small percentage of the population. Price is closely related to value for money and a gym membership only becomes 'expensive' if it's not being used regularly.

However, some consumers still don't fully understand the proposition that leisure centres and health clubs are now offering. Many people haven't visited their local leisure centre since they were a child, or been in a health club at all. Is it therefore surprising that so many people see a price quoted for using these facilities in isolation, and conclude that it's 'expensive'?

As a sector, we need to better explain the benefits associated with the charge and with using the facilities on a regular basis.

**mike hill is md of**  
**leisure-net solutions**  
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

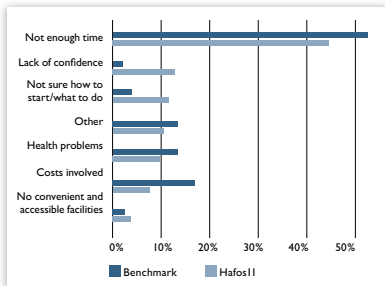


Figure 3  
**What's stopping you doing more?**  
(those who would like to be more active)

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# What, more cleaning?

Whatever type of club you run, with however many members, one thing you will have in common is cleaning. It's an endless task but if you let it slip, so will your membership – so how do you keep on top of it? Here's how four very different clubs have met the challenges they face in keeping clean

Danielle Greenhalgh, club manager, GLI4



**G**LI4 is a boutique operator with two clubs – a city centre venue in Manchester and a converted historic building in

Bedfordshire. The group is proud of its standards of cleanliness, but Bedfordshire club manager Danielle Greenhalgh says it doesn't come without its challenges.

"The main challenge of cleaning our club is the building itself. The gym ceiling is 60ft at its highest point and full of wooden struts that are so rough they rip up any cloths – we have to Hoover them! To clean it we have to shut the club down and do a night clean," she says.

"The next challenge is timetabling. It's a logistical nightmare organising the cleaning and every day is a challenge, but we are a destination club so it's vital that we remain pristine.

"We tried having evening cleaners but it didn't work. There was no-



The 60ft ceiling at GLI4's historic Bedfordshire site proves challenging for staff

one to supervise them, we couldn't communicate effectively and if there was something that needed doing in the daytime there were limited team members to carry it out. Also, they were not visible to the members and I strongly believe that the clean team adds to the customer experience.

"But then you have to get the balance right. Customers like to see the club being cleaned, but they don't necessarily like the steam room being jet-washed when they're trying to relax in it, or by the candlelit swimming pool and spa. We change the timings every day so that it doesn't affect the same people.

"The solution was getting the clean team to love the club and take pride in their job. We've achieved this by treating them like every other member of staff. They're involved in all staff meetings and every part of our decision-making. This communication process is very important as the clean team need to be able to answer members' questions and tell them about any operational issues.

"All our departments are responsible for cleaning. Our fitness instructors spend one hour a day cleaning and maintaining the gym equipment, the membership consultants carry out a sweep of the club before a tour with a prospective member, and everyone on duty is responsible for checking the changing rooms. If I notice people haven't been checking, then I follow it up. It's the responsibility of the management to track that everything gets done to the highest standard."



Fitness instructors are responsible for cleaning and maintaining kit

## THE CLEANING SHOW

The Cleaning Show is being held at the NEC in Birmingham on 1–3 March 2011. This year's show features a new 'green zone', showing only products that are developed to promote environmentally sensitive cleaning practices.

[www.cleaningshow.co.uk](http://www.cleaningshow.co.uk)



A year ago, LA Fitness found itself low in the ranks of an independent survey of health club cleanliness. As a result, it has

introduced a new cleaning strategy across its 80 clubs, as Arthur McColl, business and brand manager, explains:

"As a chain of 80 clubs, it can be a challenge to maintain standards at all our sites. However, 'pride in club' is a pillar of our business strategy – I can create the most fantastic gyms but if the changing rooms are dirty, none of that matters."

"To track standards, we have a self-assessment

programme that each club undertakes monthly. Each club and its contract cleaners are also audited monthly by head office. We have monthly member 'Pride' surveys, along with feedback cards in clubs. This is all reported monthly, with league tables produced. It's very effective at highlighting any clubs that are falling behind and enables us to tackle any problems.

"In the clubs, the challenge is creating the culture that everyone is responsible for cleaning. We introduced a

programme called Essentials to drive ownership of cleanliness among staff. This includes 'pride sessions' before each peak period, where staff go through the whole club cleaning everything. This happens at all 80 clubs at the same times – 8.30am, 11.30am



**Last year, LA Fitness found itself low in the ranks of a club cleanliness survey and has since raised its game**

and 4.30pm. In addition, we have hourly checks of toilets, showers and locker rooms, with lists of what needs checking.

"To help staff, we've installed hygiene stations – wipes for cleaning equipment – throughout the clubs. We also ask our members to play their part with polite notices on equipment and in the toilets."

"We also think long-term in terms of our property department – using washable paints, for example, and introducing new wall and ceiling materials in showers that are easier to clean."

Jelte de Kiewit, **managing director, One Fitness, Holland**



Dutch operator One Fitness is green in every aspect of running the gym. From generating its own electricity to

buying Fair Trade coffee, it makes every effort to minimise its carbon footprint.

Its cleaning is green too; the group – which has two clubs, in Amsterdam and the nearby town of Hilversum – uses exclusively green cleaning products.

The only challenge owner Jelte de Kiewit now sees is encouraging other operators to go green. "It was very easy for us to be green with our cleaning," he explains. "We hired a cleaning company

and told them what we wanted and they did it – simple as that. It didn't change the cost of the contract at all and the products are just as effective."

"People may think that it costs more, but it really isn't expensive. The things we buy ourselves, such as dishwasher tablets and laundry powder, are slightly more expensive, but not a great deal. We have no need to pass on any additional costs to our clients and they appreciate our ethics."

"Being environmentally friendly in your business is getting more common these days and, really, it should be normal. Clubs think it's difficult and expensive, but it isn't. Let's give them a wake-up call. I also hope that customers will demand it more and more."



**One Fitness runs a totally green operation, including its cleaning products and techniques**

Stephen Petherick, **commercial manager, leisure@cheltenham**



The council-run leisure@cheltenham centre was famously flooded in 2007 (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 08, p60), but as a result underwent huge

redevelopment. Commercial manager Stephen Petherick explains how they now keep the club looking new.

"Our main challenge is keeping on top of the cleaning throughout such a large

leisure centre – the building measures 6,100sq m (65,660sq ft) and has a footfall of 11,500 people a week. We have three pools, a sports hall, five squash courts, a four-pitch indoor cricket centre, a fitness suite, three studios, a sauna, steam and spa area, a hairdresser, beautician, osteopathy clinic, a café, three meeting rooms and an athletics stadium.

"We run a seven-day schedule of cleaning. Our cleaners focus on a different core area every day, so we know these are well serviced every

week. They also target the high footfall areas each day, such as changing rooms and toilets. In addition, all our staff – including the leisure attendants and fitness team – are responsible for keeping their section clean while on duty."

"This time of the year also provides a challenge, as it's wetter and colder and you have more cleaning to do."

"And an ongoing challenge is that customers' expectations seem to rise every year. We try to keep pace with it or get ahead of it to minimise complaints."

Growth opportunities are there for the fitness industry, says Michael Oliver – but only if it taps into real consumer needs

# survival of THE FITTEST

**W**hile 2010 has been a tough year for many sectors, it seems that the health and fitness industry has come out relatively unscathed. Indeed the latest research from Mintel reveals that, of all leisure activities, consumers identify private health and fitness clubs as the thing they plan to use more in the coming year – and the figure has increased from 8 per cent in 2009 to 12 per cent in 2010 (see table below). Compare this with just 1 per cent of consumers planning to increase visits

**A lot of people prefer to exercise either at home or outdoors rather than go to a health club**

to pubs and bars, and 3 and 4 per cent for nightclubs and cinemas respectively, and things certainly look positive for the health and fitness sector.

## driving participation

Participation is also moving in the right direction, although there's still scope for improvement. Mintel's research on *10-year Sporting Trends* reveals that more than 30 million UK adults now take part in sport or exercise at least monthly – a 15 per cent increase on 10 years ago – reflecting an increasing awareness among the population of the need to keep in shape by eating properly and doing exercise. Yet with fewer than a third of these active people exercising at the recommended level of three times a week or more, there remains a significant exercise gap to be bridged.

Mintel's research shows 'being healthier in general' as the prime motivator for taking up a new sport (cited by 42 per cent of respondents), with 'specific medical reasons' (31 per cent) and 'losing weight/toning up' (30 per cent) not far behind. These are the reasons why people know they should exercise – but they don't necessarily provide adequate motivation for people to actually get off the sofa and do so.

However, 31 per cent of adults say they have taken up a new sport, or would consider doing so, because a friend or family member already does it – a motivating factor that's perhaps more carrot than stick, and something the fitness industry could tap into. With a trend towards a more fragmented society, exemplified by the long-term rise of one-person households in the

## SPENDING INTENTIONS FOR LEISURE ACTIVITIES IN COMING YEAR (AS AT MARCH 2010)

Activity	Base: internet users aged 16+ who do the activity	Have cut back on already %	Plan to cut back on %	Will not change %	Will do more %
Drinking in pubs/bars	1,583	43	9	47	1
Eat out at a restaurant or pub	1,803	38	12	48	2
Go to a nightclub	603	35	20	42	3
Go to the cinema	1,312	28	10	58	4
Go to a bingo hall	193	27	26	45	2
Go to a betting shop	362	26	23	50	2
<b>Use a public leisure centre</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>
Attend live sports events	653	22	16	57	6
Go tenpin bowling	597	22	17	59	2
Go to a theme park	505	22	15	58	5
Go to the theatre	701	21	14	60	5
Visit a zoo/wildlife park in the UK	607	21	14	61	4
<b>Use a private health and fitness club</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>12</b>
Go to music concerts/festivals	741	19	14	61	6
Visit a cultural venue	889	18	8	66	7
Play the Lotto	1,308	18	12	68	2
Play video games	1,150	15	10	71	4

SOURCE: GEMINTEL





“ It’s not just the economy that needs to be restored, but consumer confidence ”

UK, many people don't have family and friends nearby to do sport with, and this is where operators can step in – setting up low-key, informal participation groups in local outdoor spaces, for example, or perhaps creating 'player pools' for games of squash or tennis at leisure centres. Subscription-based, interest-led offers could also generate groups of people with mutual interests.

In this way – by shifting the emphasis and portraying sport as a fun, social activity – motivational problems and the intimidation factor of trying something new can be overcome more easily than by merely focusing on the end results in terms of health and fitness.

### building revenue

The leisure centre and swimming pool market has proved buoyant, according to Mintel's *Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools* – UK report. Revenues are up 14 per cent in the past five years and admissions 10 per cent. However, this is in large part down to the free swimming initiative, which provided a boost to both admissions and secondary spend; with the abolition of the scheme, centres will have to look elsewhere for growth.

Swimming remains the most popular activity undertaken at a leisure centre, with more than half of users going with friends or family and a third on their own. Meanwhile just over half of users visit the gym or health club. The next most popular dry-side activity among women is fitness classes. For men it's indoor sports like racquet sports or football.

Similarly, when asked what facilities they would use if they were to visit a leisure centre, the largest proportion of non-users chose swimming – again underlining its universal appeal – followed by fitness classes and indoor sport. However, the report shows that nearly six in 10 adults did not use a leisure centre last year, suggesting that

sites could do better in terms of reaching out to the communities they serve.

While lack of interest in exercise – the main reason why people don't go – is probably a wider issue that leisure centres cannot tackle alone, there's a sizeable proportion (more than a third of non-users) who choose to exercise outdoors or at home rather than at a leisure centre, suggesting that opportunities might exist for drawing them in as regular users.

Operators could instigate outreach programmes with supervised outdoor exercise by type – running sessions, fitness classes or mountain biking – held in other local authority sites such as parks. Participants could tap into a network of experts for advice on training or even rehab in the case of injury, while for female exercisers there would also be the added security of exercising in a group.

Making a connection with established exercisers in this way might provide a platform that operators could then build on, such as offering short-term indoor memberships during the winter when it's more difficult to exercise outdoors.

### future opportunities

However, challenges remain in the sector, with the Comprehensive Spending Review of October 2010 set to make an impact. With local authorities' funding by central government set to decrease by a massive 26 per cent during the next four years, and total capital expenditure by local authorities slated to fall 30 per cent by 2014–15, it seems certain that there will be less money available for the maintenance and development of council leisure facilities, many of which are in need of renewal.

Nevertheless, looking ahead to 2011, it seems the opportunities are there for the industry – but only if it can meet consumer demand. The momentum

**Swimming remains the most popular activity at leisure centres, but how will the loss of the free swimming initiative affect that?**

behind the budget health clubs looks set to continue in response to the needs of cash-strapped customers. There are also 12 per cent of UK consumers planning to go to health and fitness clubs more often, but it's up to the sector to provide the motivation and seal the deal. Initiatives such as loyalty and reward schemes linked to the number of visits, for example, could be just the incentive needed to get customers moving.

And as the country continues to feel the after-shock of the economic crisis and government cuts, there will be other areas for fitness facilities to consider. Further public sector job cuts – which seem set to hit women the hardest – may lead to a change in how and when people exercise, and savvy brands will ensure they match their offer to changing consumer needs.

It's not just the economy that needs to be restored, but consumer confidence. With exercise clearly linked to feeling better about yourself, alongside positive economic indicators, 2011 could be a promising year for the health and fitness sector.



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Kate Cracknell asks delegates from the recent IHRSA European Congress for their thoughts on the event's highlights



# food for thought



**Miles Rimell**

Head of marketing, Precor EMEA & APAC

An underlying theme, which permeated the extensive range of topics covered at this year's congress, was benchmarking – something we don't currently excel at as an industry. Whether it was the need to create KPIs in order to more actively benchmark ourselves, the success that looking to other industries for expertise can bring, or the need to be selective in who we benchmark ourselves against, it was a notable undercurrent in a series of different presentations.

Nick Burrows, then MD at Nuffield Health, talked about the need to further benchmark member activity in order to measure their achievements and subsequently reward them. Accurate member activity data is also a necessity when in dialogue with third parties such as health insurers and governments.

Burrows also discussed the need, when attempting to build a brand identity, to benchmark against companies such as Coke and Nike that – in spite of their size and broad portfolio – have successfully delivered a simple, compelling brand proposition.

Christian Majgaard, former head of global & business development at Lego, revealed that the company's success was in part down to the realisation that, although they had a successful team, they needed to bring in people with specialist outside skills to really drive the business forward into new areas.

And Ray Algar, speaking about the growth of the low-cost gym sector, referenced extremely lucrative low-cost models that already operate in other sectors, including easyjet and Aldi. Budget gyms may be in their infancy in our industry, but the low-cost proposition has been operating successfully for decades. Algar argued that we can learn valuable lessons by looking to the business models of these trusted and profitable low-cost brands.

Benchmarking aside, the theme of Algar's session – the rise of the low-cost sector; how it's transforming the European market and what other operators can learn from the model – was the overriding topic of the Congress, often under discussion during break-outs. Based on his 2010 UK Low-cost Gym

The 10th annual IHRSA European Congress took place in Barcelona, Spain in October, with a record attendance – over 500 delegates from 26 countries, of which more than 260 were first-time attendees.

"There was excellent feedback following this year's Congress, as well as the highest ever attendance. It's clear that European industry leaders value this event and the opportunity it gives them to come together and learn from one another," says IHRSA's European director Hans Muench.

"Our sponsor showcase brought 20 companies together with club personnel, networking extended to include an outing to the Champions League game on the final evening, and the educational programme provided valuable, thought-provoking insights from a varied range of speakers."

We ask a selection of delegates for their thoughts on the congress.



**We must benchmark member activity to motivate and reward them**

**Sector Report,** Algar illustrated how the shift to low-cost has gained momentum in the recessionary environment of the past year, which has encouraged consumers to test low-cost brands.

The move away from conspicuous consumption is not to be underestimated and, as customers are likely to remain interested in genuine value once they've experienced the quality of low-cost products, Algar argued that it's a concept that's here to stay.

Budget gyms have helped create a new consumer proposition that disrupts the rules upon which the fitness industry was first built. And the compact, tightly-run and efficient operation of low-cost offerings is a business model that other operators will be challenged by and need to ensure they learn, or differentiate themselves, from.



### David Minton

Director, The Leisure Database Company (UK)

**Consumers are open to innovation that provides them with targeted fitness sessions**

**T**he sports legacy of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona has left this beautiful city in great shape. The almost religious zeal in which football in particular, but sports and fitness generally, are held provided the perfect background to the 10th Annual IHRSA European Congress.

With over 500 attendees from 26 countries, this was not only the largest congress to date but also the first where fiscal cutbacks were universal. Most innovation happens when it's necessary, and everyone agreed it was necessary now for the industry to grow.

Given the paucity of real-time data and a lack of universal definitions for the industry, it's impossible to say if the industry is growing or if the middle ground is just being squeezed. Nevertheless, talk of four common 'growth' areas – low-cost units, women-

only, studios that offer only classes, and indoor and outdoor functional training – demonstrates that consumers are open to innovation that provides them with targeted fitness sessions.

The link between fitness and health has also seen some strong alliances. However, it was agreed that a pedigree or a strong partner seems a prerequisite, since there have been a number of false starts around Europe. Nick Burrows of Nuffield Health explained how, in the Nuffield Group, the largest provider of private hospitals in the UK, the largest provider of corporate fitness facilities and the fifth largest fitness brand have all come together in a unique relationship – an offer of balanced health and fitness that's appealing and that has improved member retention and profit.

Challenges, or opportunities, may come from the home consumer

market via the games consoles now being promoted by the likes of Dame Helen Mirren and David Beckham. And demand-based pricing models, which work for many leisure industries where margins are narrow and a need to maintain volumes is essential, could widen the appeal of our sector. We also need to strive for greater customer understanding and engagement, which can flow from schemes such as loyalty cards and vouchers.

Digital communication offers so many opportunities: Facebook and Twitter let us find and be found – keeping tabs on what's important, noteworthy and shareable. And now an extra dimension has been added: the check-in, connecting the physical to the virtual on Foursquare and Gowalla. All these now inter-connect with sites like DailyMile and Splashpath, where the customer drives the engagement.

In Barcelona we learn that Camp Nou is more than just a club: it's Catalonia, Universality, Solidarity and Democracy. Perhaps our industry should learn to be more than just a club.

“It's impossible to say if the industry is growing or if the middle ground is just being squeezed”

Low-cost operations, such as Pure Gym (right), were the talk of the Congress



### Anastasia Yusina

President, Strata Partners (Russia)

I always enjoy attending the IHRSA European Congress, with its networking opportunities that are invaluable to me as the owner of a health club business.

However, this year's Congress was particularly interesting for me as the keynote by Dr Mario Alonso Puig, from Harvard University, picked up on a theme we've been trying to implement in our product positioning and marketing communication for more than a year: 'exercise as medicine'. You don't have to love exercising. You don't even have to particularly enjoy it. You just have to do it. Of course, if the club makes such a good job of it that you start loving it, all the better – but this shouldn't be the key factor to you joining.

So hearing this keynote, with its medical slant on the benefits of the exercise, was a highlight of the event for me. We were reminded of the very basic, physiology-based arguments that every industry employee should know and use when talking to members and prospects. For example, we all know

that stress is dangerous for our health. Indeed, we often repeat it to our customers as an axiom – but axioms never motivate us to change our life. We need to provide an explanation: why is it dangerous, what can exercise do to help, what effects will it have? We all suffer from stress, but some people are less affected by it than others – namely, those who exercise. Why? Because exercise causes our hormonal system to work differently, preparing our bodies to cope with stress. Only when we educate members in this way will it cease to be an axiom and encourage people to actively use 'exercise as medicine'.

The other very important notion that was discussed in Barcelona was the fact that, up until now, our industry has done a great job of attracting people who like to exercise. However, the world is changing and we have to change with it. If we want to attract new members, we have to change our arguments, our wording, our attitude and the skill-set of our personnel. And this is a new challenge for everyone.



Women-only clubs were one of the key growth areas identified



### Paul Eigenmann

CEO/owner, QualiCert – Qualitop International (Switzerland)

As always, Barcelona is a great venue for a congress, and this time was no exception. It was interesting to see so many participants from Spain (which was to be expected), but also from Russia (which was surprising). And as usual, there were good networking opportunities, but at least in my case, actually not enough time to make use of them all.

The presentation topics were interesting. It's understandable that

they still tend to focus on immediate sales returns, but nevertheless I missed the strategic and conceptual emphasis on the industry.

There was quite a lot of emphasis on IT, with very useful information; however, I also sensed some unrealistic expectations. Disseminating information does not yet equal disseminating knowledge, and even transferring information into knowledge is not a guarantee for behaviour change. The

bottleneck is, and remains, human nature. Our species has an inborn drive for saving caloric energy, and this part of human nature is the bottleneck for retention. This will not change, no matter what IT tools are used, as a lot of research on IT-supported behaviour change interventions have shown. I would have liked to have seen references to this more critical research.

I enjoyed meeting old friends and making new ones in the European context.



# EUROPE SNAPSHOT

Kristen A Walsh summarises the key findings of the IHRSA 2010 European Health Club Report



**P**ublished in October and launched at the European Congress was IHRSA's 2010 European Health Club Report: The Size and Scope of Leading Markets.

The report, sponsored by Technogym, provides detailed information on the European fitness market. It includes market data for Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and the emerging markets of Croatia, Hungary and Poland.

## key findings

Serving 42.5 million health club members, the fitness industry is a significant contributor to the European economy. Spain has the most members (7.9 million), followed by the UK (7.4

million), Germany (7.1 million), Italy (5.2 million) and France (4 million).

Italy has the most clubs (7,500), followed by Germany (5,930), the UK (5,885), Spain (5,800) and Russia (3,300). The UK leads in terms of market value (€4.2bn) followed by Spain (€3.8bn), Germany (€3.43bn), Italy (€2.8bn) and France (€2.4bn).

Other interesting findings include:

- Italy's 5.2 million members paid average monthly fees of €45, a price that's fallen with increased competition
- 30 per cent of Norwegians over the age of 15 are health club members
- Portugal has 150+ women-only clubs
- More than 100 clubs opened in the UK between April 08 and March 09
- Only 10 of Croatia's 575 clubs are larger than 1,500sq m (16,150sq ft)

## varying views

The two-year period from 2008 to 2010 was noteworthy for the European industry. "Some markets were relatively unaffected by the economic downturn, while others are still dealing with the harsh economic aftershocks," says Hans Muench, IHRSA director for Europe.

In the 2010 European Health Club Report, industry leaders from across Europe were asked about the economy and the lessons learned from recent events. One of the questions was: "How was your company affected by the recent financial crisis and how have you emerged from it?"

Stale Angel, CEO of Elixia Nordic, said: "For us, it's actually been positive. Sales have stayed at the same level as 2008, but member attrition numbers have improved. More people want to get and stay in shape, and they have more time to use their memberships. We've seen more traffic at our clubs than ever before."

Roberto Rodriguez, director general of Curves Europe, had a different view: "Everybody, including Curves, has been affected. Perhaps the biggest negative has been the restrictions on credit for new ventures. But the situation presents a unique opportunity: we have literally dozens of lease spaces from which to choose. Never before has it been so easy and so inexpensive to get started." Log on to [www.ihrsa.org/store](http://www.ihrsa.org/store) to purchase the 2010 European Health Club Report: The Size and Scope of Leading Markets

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## Market growth (2008–2009) across the major operators

Operator	Memberships		Facilities		Growth	
	Dec-09	Dec-08	Dec-09	Dec-08	Memberships	Facilities
Fitness First Group	1,407,100	1,437,639	548	535	-2.1%	2.4%
Virgin Active	919,000	883,000	187	179	4.1%	4.5%
McFit	900,000	700,000	125	101	28.6%	23.8%
David Lloyd Leisure	460,000	450,000	88	88	2.2%	0.0%
SATS Group	259,000	240,000	154	115	7.9%	33.9%
Injoy Quality Corporation	250,000	223,950	233	213	11.6%	9.4%
Health City International	243,220	NA	114	103	NA	10.7%
Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing Centres	230,000	170,000	157	NA	35.3%	NA
LA Fitness	215,000	220,000	81	86	-2.3%	-5.8%
Bannatyne Fitness	180,000	NA	60	61	NA	-1.6%
Holmes Place	169,000	150,000	76	41	12.7%	85.4%
Mrs Sporty	103,000	63,350	338	222	62.6%	52.3%
Russian Fitness Group	94,256	109,000	45	44	-13.5%	2.3%
Esporta Group	NA	NA	55	55	NA	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,429,576</b>	<b>4,646,939</b>	<b>2,261</b>	<b>1,308</b>		

# embracing the public

Kate Cracknell reports  
from the recent EHFA  
EU Associations Forum

**B**uilding credibility and expanding the remit of the fitness industry to truly include health: these were some of the key topics being discussed at the third annual EHFA EU Associations Forum, which took place in London in November.

An interesting keynote presentation by Professor Dr Harold W (Bill) Kohl III, president of the International Society of Physical Activity and Health, asked what the fitness sector could do to move closer to the health sector.

He spoke of the separate evolutionary paths of physical activity and public health – exercise science and public health science developing as distinct fields until 1953, when a study of London transport workers showed that sedentary bus drivers were more likely to die of heart disease than the more active bus conductors. Since then, he explained, we've developed an appreciation and understanding of the health benefits of exercise, with even a small amount of activity (equivalent to the familiar guidelines of '5 x 30'

moderate activity) now recognised to deliver substantial health benefits. The paradigm is therefore shifting: training for performance is now giving way to physical activity for health. Both models need to be acknowledged, stressed Kohl.

## integrating with health

And the European health and fitness sector is already moving forward and becoming "a leader rather than a token presence in the health agenda", he said. However, as yet there are key areas such as health behaviour and 'environment and policy' – creating the conditions in which people can be active – which, according to Kohl, our sector doesn't yet grasp as well as other industries, or as well as it ought.

He outlined a number of best practice projects going on in the area of public health around the world. In Curitiba, Brazil, the sheer size of the city leads to high levels of sedentary

commuting. The city has therefore introduced outdoor gyms in parks, mass group exercise events and so on. Meanwhile, Heartmoves in Australia is a programme designed to get those living with a chronic disease into activity – but is currently not run in association with health clubs. Almost 50 per cent of the US population would fall into this 'living with chronic disease' group, said Kohl. "So how can we get involved in these sorts of initiatives? We need to look at what's going on in the public health sector and make it our own."

There are already bodies out there that can help us: HEPA Europe, for example, which produces practical tools, guidelines and case studies to drive a better understanding of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA), and which promotes partnerships with other relevant sectors such as transportation. The fitness sector now needs to take

The credibility of the whole sector can be grown if we embrace public health and encompass all types of activity







a leap forward and get involved in this bigger picture of physical activity.

And the time is right now, Kohl stressed. We must take advantage of doors currently – and perhaps temporarily – left ajar for us to prove our worth in this field. To do that, we must engage the physical inactivity industry – not just fast food, but any companies whose products encourage sedentary behaviour – and try to make them part of the solution, making physical activity a priority. We must partner to develop training and certification programmes in physical activity for public health (PAPH) – a population-based approach, equipping professionals to work with the entire population rather than in small groups or one-on-one in a club. We must nurture the global growth in science and the practice of PAPH, partnering with universities to research this area. And we must advocate physical activity for health using the Toronto Charter as a framework – a global call to action for a population-based approach to activity that was launched last year, whereby the active choice becomes the easy choice.

Ultimately our focus must shift beyond gym-based exercise to embrace public health and encompass all types of activity. “The credibility of the whole sector can be grown if we do this. We need to be leaders in this field, genuinely getting more people – a whole population – more active, more often,” concluded Kohl.

### an inclusive approach

David Stalker, executive director of the FIA, echoed the need to embrace all channels that can help get more people more active. Many of the trade associations represented at the Summit – 18 of the 27 EU member states now have a national fitness body affiliated to EHFA – currently work exclusively with

the private sector, but Stalker was clear in his message: “You create a rod for your own back if you only represent the private sector. Our vision is ‘more people, more active, more often’, so anyone who’s doing something to safely and properly get people fitter and more active can join the FIA – outdoor, private, public operators. If we want to become a true government delivery partner, we have to represent 100 per cent of the sector.”

Professor Alfonso Jimenez, chair of the EHFA Standards Council, also agreed with Kohl’s recommendation to expand our offering and used the analogy of a market stall selling fruit. “We can’t expect to attract new people and grow penetration levels with our existing offering,” he stressed. “At the moment, we’re just selling apples, but to bring in new people we need to sell melons, pears, oranges. And the opportunity is right now, not in 10 years’ time. People are expecting something very special from us, and we need to combine our traditional skills with creativity and innovation to deliver it.”

### gathering data

Jimenez continued: “We also need data to prove the exact impact of what we’re delivering, including the combined impact of our exercise programming in conjunction with other physical activity.”

This need for data was reinforced by Jacob Kornbeck, director general of the EAC Sports Unit at the EU Commission. The Lisbon Treaty gave the EU the power to legislate in the area of sport, but these new powers arrived at the same time as the recession – a climate in which, as Kornbeck explained, “it’s hard to get funding for new initiatives”.

He continued: “There should be funding for HEPA in the future, but we will need

**The fitness sector must embrace opportunities beyond the gym walls to get more people active**

good evidence – health economic data – to justify it. We must defend the need for a robust EU Sport Programme.”

Projects such as EHFA’s ‘Becoming the Hub’ initiative may also help. An ongoing project analysing physical activity promotion across Europe – particularly government policies and national and local campaigns – it aims to identify best practice and recommend ways to improve the messaging and better utilise the fitness sector.

The full report will be presented to the European Commission next month, but findings already suggest a need for more targeted campaigns – many are too vague, with broad brushstroke messages missing their target altogether – that offer individuals opportunities to become more active at a community level. Other findings echo the observations of the Summit keynotes, but suggest we still have some way to go in delivering on their recommendations: physical activity promotions are currently not cross-sectoral, lacking integration with other policies or interventions; few have measurements built in to evaluate their success; and many still focus on public health only, without involving the private sector.

We may already be making positive strides towards delivering on the ‘health’ part of our sector’s ‘health and fitness industry’ label, but it would seem there’s a lot more work to be done – and it needs to be done right now.



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# lightweights

## SPLASH OUT WITH NEW YEAR CHALLENGE

Underwater hockey. It might sound a bit unbelievable, but it does exist and it could be just the thing for operators who want to introduce something new to entice the influx of members after the new year and – more importantly – keep them coming thereafter.

Underwater hockey, also known as Octopush, is a non-contact sport where two teams of six players – with up to four substitutes – aim to move a puck across the bottom of a swimming pool and into goals. The game consists of two halves which last from 10–15 minutes.

Players wear a diving mask, swimming fins and snorkel as well as safety gear. The stick is relatively short (no more than 35cm long) and the puck is around the same size as an ice hockey puck, but is made from lead.

There are currently 95 underwater hockey clubs in the UK. Details: [www.gbuwh.co.uk](http://www.gbuwh.co.uk)

PHOTO: WWW.GBUWH.CO.UK - JACQUES MONIA

## THE RIGHT KEY: MUSIC AND EXERCISE

Exercising to music, rather than without it, could be more beneficial to older adults – especially when it comes to a reduction of falls.

A Swiss study focused on 134 adults over the age of 65 who took part in either a music-based multi-task exercise programme or a control group (those doing the same programme but without music) for one hour a week over six months.

Overall balance and function tests improved in the music to exercise group compared to the control group. There were also fewer falls in that group (24) compared to the control group (54).



PHOTO: WWW.SPORTSRESEARCH.CO.UK

## food tastes better after a workout

Working out before you eat really does make food taste better, if a study based on animal behaviour is to be believed.

It's also suggested that the more effort you put into exercising, the better the food tastes – and that exercise could even enhance your appreciation for foods you might not usually fancy, such as low-fat and/or low-calorie snacks.

Lead researcher Alexander Johnson from John Hopkins University in the

US says: "Basically what we've shown is that, if you have to expend more effort to get a certain food, not only will you value that food more, but it might even taste better to you."

Mice were trained to respond to two levers – one which they had to press once to get food and the other 15 times. When given free access to the levers, the rodents "clearly preferred the food they worked harder for".



## WHEELY DIFFERENT OUTDOOR WORKOUT

Is it a bike? Is it a cross trainer? No. The Freecross from Germany is actually a mix of both – a cross trainer on wheels – and it's intended to add a unique edge to outdoor fitness sessions.

Freecross launched in Germany in early 2010. Just like a static cross trainer, it works all major muscle groups with minimum impact on joints, but it has three wheels so it can be used outdoors: on city streets, bike trails or even the open road.

Tests conducted at the German Sport University in Cologne show the Freecross calorie burn rate to be up to 643Kcal an hour when travelling at a speed of 18km/h – roughly 25 per cent more than cycling.

Freecross sessions are already offered in the UK at Soho Gyms. Details: [www.freecross.de](http://www.freecross.de)





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\* MusicWorks survey of 2000 people, conducted March 2009

<sup>†</sup> If you play recorded music in public it is a legal requirement to obtain the correct PPL licence, failure to do so may result in legal action. PPL is different from PRS for Music. PPL collects and distributes money on behalf of record companies and performers whilst PRS for Music collects and distributes money on behalf of songwriters, composers and publishers. Both licences must be obtained to ensure all copyright holders are fairly paid.



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