

health club management

OCTOBER 2010



INTERVIEW

RAMON CANELA

The founder of DiR on
defining fitness in Barcelona

KIDS' FASHION

What's hot in the
kids' fitness market?

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TAG TEAM

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get paid to stay fit

The only real long-term challenge facing the health and fitness industry is motivating people to exercise regularly.

Other factors which have held the industry back – lack of proof of the value of keeping fit, lack of awareness of the value of exercise and a shortage of facilities and trained staff, for example – have been dealt with over the years by the industry.

We can now show without doubt that regular exercise prolongs life, improves quality of life and relieves the financial burden on the healthcare system. In fact, this can be proven so clearly it's possible to attach an actuarial value to regular exercise and calculate how much an individual saves the state by keeping fit and delaying the onset of age-related illness.

Now this thinking is emerging, it will only be a matter of time before we start to debate the ethics of offering people financial incentives to exercise regularly. It's been suggested that some nations may eventually adopt two-tier National Insurance schemes, which tax people at a lower rate if they exercise more, on the grounds that they'll be significantly less of a drain on the system during their lifetime.

It will only be a matter of time before we start to debate the ethics of offering people financial incentives to exercise regularly – perhaps via a two-tier National Insurance scheme

Using financial rewards is the most effective way to motivate people and this thinking is already emerging in the weight loss sector, where a pilot project called Weight Wins launched this year in partnership with various NHS trusts.

The scheme offers structured weight loss incentives that reward people for losing weight and keeping it off. They pay a fee to join, just as they do a health club, and earn the money by hitting targets. Over 1,000 people have been involved with the pilot.

If the wider wellness industry follows this lead and financial incentives are introduced

for exercise, this will open up a whole new set of challenges for the industry – most especially in the area of personal data gathering, sharing and analysis, because if governments do eventually decide to incentivise people to exercise, they will need clear proof that they are doing so.

It's been said many times that the UK's National Health Service is really a national sickness service and this is especially true when it comes to logging health data – there are no proper records in existence of people's fitness indicators, meaning medical records are likely to be little more than a record of any ill health you've experienced, with test results and details of appointments and treatment.

Some health indicators are being tracked by health clubs, but these records are not being kept in any systematic way, so would be largely useless if needed by a national scheme.

Experts are now predicting that eventually we'll see the introduction of a system which links National Health records with databases of personal fitness and exercise data. Added to this would be the option for people to opt-in to having their personal data gathered via their mobile phone.

Smart phones can log location and motion, pick up radio tags like RFID, measure heart rate, blood pressure and temperature and even do things like glucose readings for diabetics. People are already using them to track workouts, while those with chronic illnesses can use them to monitor vital signs and record drug dosages and responses. With over 3 billion smart phones now in use worldwide, we may see a time when this data is fed to a central system to trigger payments or tax breaks.

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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



Where to go now for the Change4Life campaign? p22



DiR founder Ramón Canela p24

contents

06 letters

Fitness must be more social to succeed, says the founder of Budapest Outdoor Fitness

08 news round-up

easyGroup set to launch budget gym chain, and GLL and Nexus complete their merger

14 international news

Anytime Fitness moves into Poland and énergie expands into the Middle East and North Africa

16 people news

Keith Burnet joins easyGym from Hilton, plus an interview with David Cross of independent EVO Fitness

19 supplier & training news

Life Fitness drops LeMond brand in favour of Keiser's M3 Indoor Cycle

20 diary dates

Upcoming events include SIBEC UK & Europe, taking place in Portugal



The ICAA's inaugural UK event p62



An overview of the Dutch fitness market p64

21 competitive edge

Fancy testing yourself in the Arctic Survival Challenge? Find out more in our charity events listing

22 everyone's talking about... change4life

£75m went into the Change4Life campaign. Did this have the desired results, or did it turn out to be a waste of money? With the budget scaled back, what will happen now?

24 interview ramón canela

Kate Cracknell talks to the founder and director of Barcelona-based health club chain DiR

28 spelling it out

In the second of a two-part series on fitness testing and exercise prescription, Kate Cracknell tries out Fitness First's BodyFirst package and the V-Check machine

32 back to school

Zumba is the latest adult-focused craze to hit studios nationwide. Can clubs broaden their group exercise appeal even further by embracing the growing trend towards kids' classes? Abigail Harris reports

37 kids' fashion

What's new in the children's fitness market? What are the trends worth noting? We ask the experts

42 interview fred turok

The founder of LA Fitness tells Magali Robathan how his TAG charity is helping jobless young people find work in the industry

45 creating change

Surgeon and educator Mario Alonso Puig gives us a glimpse into his upcoming IHRSA session on the impact of exercise on our health



Keeping members motivated p54



Staff knowledge is key to maintaining your CRM software p47



What's hot in kids' fitness p37

47 the zen of software maintenance

When it comes to resolving problems with your club management software, the suppliers' helpdesks can of course help – but your own staff knowledge is also key

51 making a splash

We ask our panel of experts for their thoughts on what's new in marketing, and what operators can do to get the biggest bang for their buck

54 that's entertainment

Kath Hudson looks at some of the latest products designed to keep exercise interesting

58 one-stop shop

Premier Training has opened a brand new training academy and job shop in Finsbury Park, north London. Rebecca Douglas pays a visit

62 a new age

Colin Milner reports on the key discussion topics at the ICAA's recent, inaugural, UK event

64 going dutch

How does the Dutch health and fitness sector compare to the UK market? Kate Cracknell reports

68 fitness-kit.net special product round-up

BMX extends its Cruise range, Fitech V5 secures new distributors and EZ-Runner introduces new features

70 activity vs obesity

A recent US study has revealed that there can be 'varying' benefits of exercise. We take a closer look

75 lightweights

The wonders of mental exercise for burning calories, and the company that creates treadmills for dogs

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buyers' guide

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p71



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



London's Central YMCA club has been using NPS for three years

net promoter score – a useful comparison tool

We read with interest Liz's editorial on the Net Promoter Score (HCM Aug, p3). The Central YMCA club in London has been using the NPS for three years now as a means of gauging member satisfaction. Every month, our marketing data shows word of mouth to be by far the most common way in which new joiners heard about our club – if we meet our members' expectations, they recommend others, and the NPS helps us to monitor this.

In our 2007 and 2009 bi-annual member surveys, the club's NPS was 29 per cent and 45 per cent respectively, with the large increase thanks to a major refurb of the club and a thorough review of how we communicate with our members. But there's still some way to go. A 100 per cent promoter score may never be achievable by any club, but it's something we genuinely strive for.

Through our own research, we found that the likelihood of recommending the club to a friend or colleague did not correlate with still being a member in six months' time, and there are some who feel the predictive value of the NPS is limited. Arguments aside, what it does provide is a useful comparison, benchmarking your performance against that of your competitors, as well as your own performance in previous years.

It can offer insight into perceptions of a club's strengths and weaknesses, particularly through the responses of the detractors and, when combined with a broader range of questions, can assist in effectively allocating resources to increase membership sales, improve retention and boost member satisfaction further.

daniel lynn
operations manager, central ymca

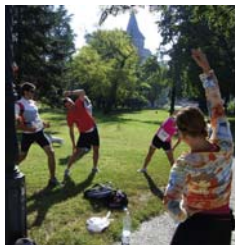
if we're to succeed, fitness needs to be social again

I was interested to read your interview with Robin Cope of British Military Fitness (HCM Aug, p28) and your feature on corporate wellness (HCM July, p68). I'm concerned by the sedentary lives of those working in big corporates and believe that, as with the BMF approach, fitness needs to bring back a social aspect, with a diverse offering, to inspire people to get active.

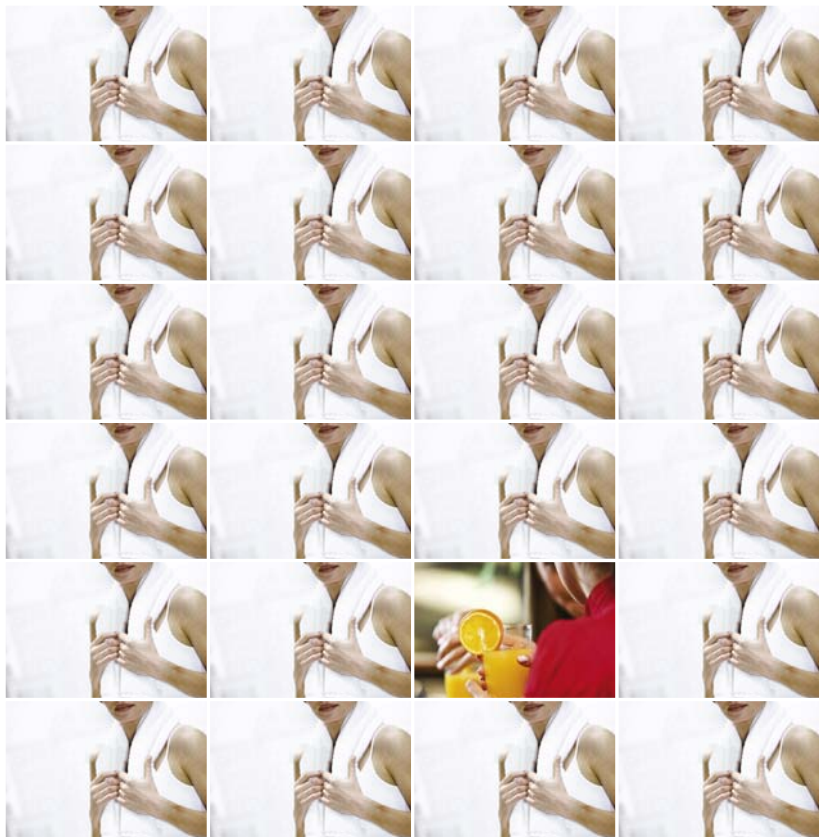
Since arriving in Budapest, Hungary – after working in Australia and the UK as a PT – I've noticed that the impact of corporate life on expatriates is even harder. In a foreign country and with language as a barrier, their lives become an isolated bubble, adversely affecting their health and wellbeing. It's important to actively educate expats and their employers, providing a healthier alternative to the endless bar socialising.

We therefore launched outdoor group sessions in local parks, as well as running/cycling groups. I'm also co-operating with the Budapest marathon organisation to train groups towards participation in local marathons. I believe such initiatives will help create a thriving social atmosphere, bringing the fun back into fitness, and helping ensure a better future for us all in the long term.

lucas leite
founder, budapest outdoor fitness



Expats in Hungary are receiving a helping hand to stay healthy



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in brief...

£10.4m heywood sports village to open

The new £10.4m Heywood Sports Village is on schedule to open its doors to the public later this month.

Funded jointly by Rochdale Borough Council, Heywood NDC and leisure trust Link4Life, the Heywood Sports Village will include two swimming pools, a multi-use sports hall, a large gym, exercise and fitness studios and a range of youth and community rooms dedicated to arts and leisure activities.

The centre will replace existing facilities on the West Starkey Street site, including the 35-year-old Gaskell Pool, which closed at the end of July so final building work could be completed.

Some of the new activities earmarked for the centre include weekly creative arts sessions, a wide range of dance and exercise classes, improved family activities and a dedicated facility for young people that includes a youth gym.

leisure centre introduces simulator in gym

The recently opened Cox Green Leisure Centre in Maidenhead, Berkshire, has introduced intelligent gaming technology – the Dogfight virtual plane simulator – into its workout room (see also p55-56).

The Dogfight, a flight simulator interfaced with a recumbent exercise bike, supplied by Instyle Fitness, is available to all members. It's designed to bridge the gap between exercise and entertainment.

easygroup to launch gym chain

easyJet founder and entrepreneur Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou has unveiled plans to expand the easyGroup brand, with the UK launch of a new budget fitness club chain in 2011.

The new easyGym venture is the result of a partnership with Fore Fitness, a subsidiary of Fore Capital Partners, which has agreed a brand licensing deal to operate and market the gym chain.

easyGym will aim to offer consumers "conveniently located" gym facilities at affordable prices, adopting a similar business model to the one used across the easy group of companies, with a focus on value for money.

Sir Stelios says: "As a gym user, I have noticed many inefficiencies in the system and believe there is a simpler and more efficient way to cater for the needs of the consumer. Together with Fore Fitness and its investors, we will aim to offer value for money in this sector."

Paul Lorimer-Wing, joint CEO of easyGym alongside Keith Burnet (see p16), adds: "The partnership with Fore Fitness offers a platform for the business which is very much in line with our plan to deliver a fun, affordable and fitness-driven product to consumers."



Sir Stelios, founder of easyGroup

leisure careers on the up

There has been an increase in job openings across the leisure industry

Employer demand for new workers within the UK leisure and fitness sector reached "record highs" during August, according to new figures released by recruitment firm Reed.

Launched in December 2009, the Reed Job Index tracks the number of new employment opportunities available across the UK, compared with the previous month as well as against a baseline figure of 100.

The index showed that, although the overall reading remained at the same level as July, at 102, an increase in vacancies within the leisure sector hit their highest level – 133 – since the tracker's launch.

£38m leisure centre for belfast

Belfast-based Farrans Construction has been appointed by North Down Borough Council to build and deliver a new leisure complex in Bangor.

The new £38m facility – designed by McAdam Design with S&P Architects – will include Northern Ireland's first Olympic-sized swimming pool and will be located at Valentine Playing Fields. Other facilities at the planned

complex will include a large health and fitness club, a fun pool, an eight-court multi-use sports hall, a climbing wall and squash courts. Proposed outdoor amenities include artificial grass courts and five-a-side football pitches.

The new complex, which will be backed with up to £15m of Northern Ireland Executive funding, is due to be completed by autumn 2012.



An Olympic-sized pool is planned

edited by tom walker. email: tomwalker@leisuremedia.com



Online voting will be open to all members of participating health clubs

has your club got the 'x' factor?

Health Club Management (HCM) has helped to officially launch a new set of annual awards designed to help health clubs promote themselves locally.

The Members' Choice Health Club Awards are the first consumer awards in the industry, recognising excellence in customer service by asking members to vote for their clubs.

The awards are designed to encourage interaction between staff and members, and – for the winners – will act as an effective tool for local marketing.

The competition is open to all private health clubs, gyms and local leisure centres in the UK. It's free to enter and sites can register until 31 December. Online voting for members will open on 10 January and run until 6 March 2011.

The winning clubs will be announced in May 2011. Awards will be given to 13

regional winners (10 in England, plus Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) in two categories: clubs with up to 2,000 members and clubs with more than 2,000 members. There are also national categories for chains of clubs, including best small, medium and large chain.

In each region, the top 10 clubs will be shortlisted, with an eventual Gold, Silver and Bronze winner being announced. There will also be a National Grand Prix award for the UK's highest scoring club.

Liz Terry, editor of *HCM*, says:

"Creating a successful club isn't just about great facilities. It's about the staff, communication, customer service and whether the club provides value for money. The awards will help clubs focus on these aspects of the operation."

To register for the awards, please visit www.healthclubawards.co.uk

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Rob Beale
Group Health & Fitness Manager
David Lloyd

sencio reports increase in fitness participation

Sencio Community Leisure (SCL) has reported an 18.9 per cent increase in adult participation in fitness during 2009.

The leisure trust, which operates four leisure centres and a golf course on behalf of Leisure Sevenoaks District Council, revealed that it attracted more than 400,000 swimmers and welcomed almost 56,000 people to its Prime Time programme for the more mature sector of its customer base during the year. SCL also disclosed

that 92 per cent of the company's revenue is now generated by income from the use of its facilities.

Mark Whyman, SCL chief executive, says: "This is the first time we have formally published our achievements and I'm proud we can demonstrate impressive and increasing usage of our facilities, a strong and largely supporting revenue stream, and a range of programmes and initiatives that inspire organisations to partner with us."

in brief...

dll appoints make it rain

Make It Rain has been appointed by David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) to deliver pay-per-click (PPC) and search engine optimisation (SEO) services for its 10 European health clubs.

The campaign – in Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and Belgium – follows the success of a marketing strategy led by Make It Rain on behalf of DLL at the operator's 78 UK-based facilities.

The aim is to strengthen DLL's online presence across the continent and help the operator achieve a growth in membership sales by focusing on generating sales enquiries on a cost-per-enquiry basis.

contractor appointed for rochdale scheme

Rochdale Borough Council has appointed Willmott Dixon Construction to design and build the new leisure centre in Rochdale town centre.

Willmott Dixon, which has also worked with the council on St Anne's Academy in Middleton, has been appointed to deliver the £10.8m project and work is now under way to submit a full planning application later this month.

Plans for the new centre include two swimming pools, a sports hall and a large fitness gym, along with a youth gym and dance studios. Work is due to start on-site in November and the centre is scheduled to open in 2012. It will be managed by leisure trust Link4Life.



An artist's impression of the plans

st albans centre plans confirmed

St Albans City and District Council (SACDC) has confirmed that it will be pursuing existing multi-million pound plans for the redevelopment of the Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre.

The council's cabinet backed the facility mix for the scheme at a meeting on 10 August, which will incorporate 647sq m (6,964sq ft) of water space and an overall capacity for 223 swimmers.

When complete, the new Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre will include a 25m x 17m, eight-lane main swimming pool with 50 per cent moveable floor and a 17m x 10m learner pool with fully-moveable floor.

A 52sq m (560sq ft) confidence water area for toddlers is also proposed, in addition to a 200-station fitness suite with group cycling studio, a four-court sports hall, two exercise studios and a climbing wall. A spa area and poolside health suite, a youth gym, a children's soft play area, a crèche and café will complete the amenities, which all featured in original plans approved in 2009.

fitspace chain to expand

No frills fitness operator FitSpace is looking to add to its existing eight clubs.

According to Kenny McAndrew, founder and managing director, FitSpace tends to open brand new sites close to retail and existing leisure facilities – but is also looking into acquiring under-performing health clubs.

The company is funded by Leisure and Media VCT, a private company, and a 'high net worth individual' who combine to create the board.

Leisure property specialist Humberts Leisure is assisting FitSpace with the search for new sites.

McAndrew explains: "The demand for budget fitness facilities has increased significantly during the recession, as people have cut back on what they deem a 'luxury'."

Gavin Brent, MD of Humberts, adds: "People have re-evaluated their fitness requirements, and many realise it's not worth paying a premium for a sauna they will seldom use."



The company operates eight clubs, including one in Mitcham (pictured)

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The combined non-profit company will be responsible for more than 100 sites

gll and nexus complete merger

Greenwich Leisure (GLL) and Nexus Community have unveiled plans to merge into a single business, responsible for the operation of more than 100 leisure centres.

As part of the proposals, Nexus will become a trading division of GLL but will continue to operate under its current brand, retain its head office and serve the Thames Corridor region.

The two non-profit organisations have worked in partnership since 1996, and the merger is not expected to result in any job losses or any changes to business at an operational level.

new kit for western isles

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar – the Western Isles Council – has completed work on the installation of new fitness equipment at two leisure centres on the Outer Hebrides, Scotland.

Technogym has supplied the new machines at Ionad Spòrs Leòdhais, Stornoway, and the Lionacleit Sports Centre, Benbecula. The scheme has been funded by NHS nan Eilean Siar - Western Isles. New strength and conditioning areas have helped to increase capacities by up to 30 per cent.

GLL managing director Mark Sesnan says: "This merger offers a fantastic opportunity for both GLL and Nexus to take our businesses forward, share resources and build on our strengths."

"Having worked in partnership for a number of years, the similarities between the two organisations have become evident and the advantages of working together obvious."

Nexus managing director Rick Durrant adds: "The advantages of the merger will bring significant opportunities for our loyal staff and our local authority partners."

freedom opens falaise centre

The new-look Falaise Fitness Centre, run by Freedom Leisure, has re-opened following a major upgrade and development.

The centre, which is operated by Freedom Leisure on behalf of Hastings Borough Council, has been kitted out with new fitness equipment, new lockers, new shower cubicles and a new air handling system. Nicole White has been appointed as centre manager.

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better body shop opens in kent

The Better Body Shop in Sevenoaks, Kent, has been officially opened.

The 883sq m (9,500 sq ft) personal training and performance centre offers a range of dynamic strength and conditioning training, weight loss programmes, personal training and group training activities, as well as specialising in sports training.

Facilities include 557sq m (6,000sq ft) of dedicated private personal training space, with a special 232sq m (2,500sq ft) area where the more "self-conscious" – or those with specialist requirements – can have the privacy to ease back into exercise. There is also a dedicated 10sq m (100sq ft) rehabilitation area for the integration of sports physiotherapy and exercise prescription.

Led by Jason Crow, the new centre is modelled on the performance institutions and centres in the US, but



Better Body Shop specialises in sports training and conditioning

with a focus on individual and team goals. There are no membership fees and all programmes are individually tailored to each client.

soho gyms launches glee classes

Soho Gyms has launched new *Glee* group exercise classes, with the aim of tapping into the popularity of the US hit TV show of the same name.

Classes will offer members the opportunity to learn dance moves and vocals. Members will then be able to perform the dance routines made famous by the show, which charts the fortunes of a high school show choir at the fictional William McKinley High School in Lima, Ohio.



Members learn songs and routines

motiv8 centre goes holistic



All treatments will be delivered by Motiv8's new partner, EnergisingU

Motiv8 Health and Fitness in Ware, Hertfordshire, has added a range of holistic spa treatments to its offering.

The centre has signed a partnership deal with EnergisingU. As part of the agreement, all treatments at the Motiv8 centre will be delivered by EnergisingU therapists. The spa element will add to the centre's existing offering, which includes a fitness club, a sports injury clinic and nail bar.

The treatment menu will include Thai massage, Thai aromatherapy, Indian head massage, reflexology, deep tissue massage and natural face-lift massage.

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in brief...

expansion plans for soko
SOKO Fitness & Spa Group – the operator of fitness centres, beauty salons and spas in China – has unveiled plans for future expansion.

The company recently opened two new facilities in the north-eastern Chinese city of Harbin: Daoli Fitness and the Legend Spa Central Club. It also entered the Beijing market at the end of 2009 through the acquisition of a majority interest in two local fitness centres.

SOKO currently operates 20 facilities in north-eastern China and Beijing, encompassing fitness centres and yoga studios, beauty salons and spas, a non-surgical medical beauty centre and a beauty school. At the time of going to print, it was due to open its fourth site in Beijing, in the Westin Chaoyang hotel, with the company predicting further co-operations with hotel chains in the future.

goodlife rebrands zest

Goodlife Health Clubs has completed its rebranding of the facilities formerly operated by Zest Health Clubs in Western Australia. This brings the group's portfolio in the Perth area to six sites.

Zest Health Clubs, previously a national operator, now has just five clubs in Western Australia, some of which trade independently while still using the Zest brand.

vivafit's good wife

In Portugal last month, TV channel Fox Life ran an eye-catching advertising campaign for its drama series *The Good Wife* in conjunction with Vivafit women-only health clubs. Life-sized headless images of the protagonist, Alicia, were placed on bathroom mirrors, inviting members to see their own face on her body. Alongside this ran the line: "Imagine yourself in her place?"

Any member who worked out on 14 September, day one of the new series, also received a T-shirt bearing a slogan such as "Men can afford the luxury of being lazy. We can't," or "They run for sport. We run for life."

anytime fitness poland deal

Wayzata Poland Z.O.O., a subsidiary of Wayzata Capital, has signed an Area Development Agreement (ADA) to operate Anytime Fitness clubs in Poland.

MG Kaminski, a native of Poland, and Robert Lada currently operate Wayzata Capital, a US-based asset

management firm that deals in Eastern European securities. "We've spent our lives helping clients achieve excellent long-term rates of return through smart investments, so we know what works. We see great potential for Anytime Fitness' 24-hour business model to thrive in Poland," says Kaminski.

Wayzata Poland plans to open three clubs in the next two years, with a long-term aim of opening 10 clubs in Warsaw before moving into other Polish cities. The first club is scheduled to open in Warsaw by November, with monthly membership fees of around US\$30–40 (£19–£25).

Wayzata Poland holds the right to expand the ADA into a master franchise agreement at a later date. This includes the option of selling sub-franchises, as well as owning/operating its own clubs.



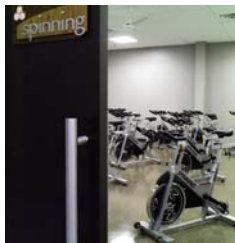
MG Kaminski and Robert Lada plan to open three new clubs in two years

star trac classes at hive lifespan

The independent Hive Lifespan Center – which opened in New York State, US, in March – has introduced Star Trac HumanSport classes to its programming.

The centre aims to offer a broad range of services not normally found at a gym, and the new classes – launched in July – cater for both adults and teenagers.

Facilities at the 1,615sq m club include a health centre (physiotherapy, chiropody, nutrition, massage), a gym featuring a 20-yard track, a group cycling studio, a pilates studio, yoga, a sauna and a natural food café. It is equipped by Star Trac, along with GRAVITY Training Systems and TRX suspension training, with pilates kit from STOTT PILATES.



Facilities include a group cycling studio and a natural food café

nustep enters japanese fitness market

NuStep, the manufacturer of recumbent cross-trainers, has signed a partnership with Exit Inc to act as its distributor in the Japanese fitness and wellness market.

NuStep is already distributed in the Japanese healthcare and medical segments, but this is its first venture into the Japanese fitness market.

Exit offers a range of services, from consultancy, through research and marketing, to distribution. Its Exit Sports division focuses on "the distribution of

innovative products that advance sports performance, rehabilitation and physical therapy" – a portfolio which now includes NuStep's products.

NuStep's equipment is designed to help people stay in motion regardless of physical condition, and is already used at thousands of homes, fitness, wellness and rehabilitation centres across the US, including The Mayo Clinic, The University of Michigan, the Cleveland Clinic and the Duke Center for Living.



The new spa, designed by Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design, cost €2m

holmes place spa for zurich

Health club operator Holmes Place opened its first 'Holmes Place Spa' in Europe on 3 September.

The 600sq m day spa, located in the existing Holmes Place Health Club Zurich/Jelmoli, in Zurich, cost €2m (£1.7m) to create and was designed by Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design.

The new facility, which offers day passes for 60 Swiss francs, is also open to existing members for an upgrade of 80 francs a month. In line with the operator's philosophy – summed up in its tagline 'one life, live it well' – the spa offers a wide range of services focused on individual wellbeing, bringing holistic health and fitness together under one roof.

Working with luxury skincare and spa brand Elemis, the spa offers 60 face and body therapies. Facilities include two treatment rooms and a VIP spa suite, a sauna, steam bath, herbal bath, ice fountain, spa pool, experience showers, silent relaxation room with water beds, and a lounge with vitamin and juice bars.

"With the stress of everyday life, we want to inspire people to find a balance," says spa manager Charlotte Taylor.

The concept will now be rolled out, with the next location set to be a spa club at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Germany.

Holmes Place Iberia, in Spain and Portugal, already has an extensive spa offering under its Sensations brand.

£20m énergie mena roll-out

GSSG Holdings, the Middle Eastern master franchise owner of énergie Fitness, has approved a QR100m (£20m) roll out of énergie fitness clubs across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Under the agreement are plans for three sites: Barwa Clubhouse in Qatar, Landmark in Qatar, and Cairo in Egypt – the first énergie club in North Africa.

énergie Barwa opened in August and is the first énergie Fit4less club in the Middle East – énergie's 'no frills' brand.

Landmark, which consists of two separate clubs – one for men and one

for women – is scheduled to open on 1 November, while the Cairo facility will open on 1 December. The exteriors of all three clubs have been completed, with work now underway on the internal structure.

Jan Spaticchia, énergie CEO, says: "These are exciting times for the énergie Group. We only opened our first club in the Middle East in February of this year [énergie Doha Airport] and, by the end of 2010, we will have five – including the stunning énergie Villaggio." (see HCM Sept, p15)

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Hemmings is a former elite athlete

hemmings for skillsactive

Anna Hemmings, six-time World Champion canoeist, has been named as the newest board member of SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Sport and Active Leisure.

As part of the 12-person board, Hemmings will help set SkillsActive's strategic direction and make decisions about its leadership, management and delivery.

During her 15-year career, Hemmings represented Great Britain at two Olympic Games and won six World Championship titles. After retiring, she helped found Beyond the Barriers, which is dedicated to improving the health and performance of individuals and organisations. She also has experience in sports broadcasting.

in brief...

new sales manager for balancemaster

Jason McMahon has left equipment supplier Star Trac to head up the BalanceMaster team as national sales manager. McMahon spent seven years at Star Trac. Roles prior to that include five years as at PowerSport.

Commenting on his appointment, McMahon says: "The opportunity to head up BalanceMaster is such an exciting prospect. It's now my job to raise product awareness and increase sales so that the BalanceMaster machine takes its rightful position alongside household name products."

burnet joins easygym as joint ceo

Keith Burnet has been appointed joint CEO of newly launched budget chain easyGym (see p8). He will share the executive role with Paul Lorimer-Wing.

An industry veteran, Burnet joined the easyGym team on 4 October 2010, after leaving his role as global vice president of fitness and spa at Hilton Worldwide.

Speaking of his appointment, Burnet says: "I'm absolutely delighted to be joining the easyGym leadership team at such an exciting time for this new brand."

"easyGym is a dynamic, entrepreneurial and market-driven company. I'm really looking forward to the challenge of executing our ambitious growth plans and making high quality fitness facilities and services accessible to people from all walks of life."

Lorimer-Wing, who was announced as joint CEO earlier this year, adds: "We're very pleased that an operator of Keith's



Burnet joins easyGym from Hilton

experience and stature has decided to join us. His appointment helps to demonstrate that we are a serious business, managed by a team that has extensive experience, expertise and a proven track record of leadership."

lemmon joins énergie group

Health club franchise The énergie Group has appointed Mark Lemmon, former CEO of pawnbroker Cash Converters, to the role of deputy chief executive.

During Lemmon's tenure as CEO, Cash Converters – which also operates on a franchise model – developed its own corporate stores and a strong online offering. More recently, Lemmon held senior management consultancy roles with high street brands such as the Game group. He explains: "What is common to all franchise businesses is

the requirement for a strong support system and the back-up of a dynamic brand."

"This is what attracted me to The énergie Group in the first place – first-class systems and a powerful brand."

Jan Spaticchia, énergie CEO, says: "We're delighted that Mark has joined us – his abilities will be invaluable as we expand further."

UK-based The énergie Group has recently expanded into seven countries in the Middle East and Europe.

mason and malik among new sport england board

Sadie Mason, chief executive of Active Sussex, and Hanif Malik, chief executive of the Hamara Healthy Living Centre in Leeds, are among the six new board members to be appointed to the board of Sport England by Sport Minister Hugh Robertson.

London Marathon CEO Nick Bitel, former England women's cricket captain Claire Connor, the former CEO of Cumbria County Council Peter Stybelski, and former Darlington Building Society CEO Peter Rowley complete the line-up.

graves joins shokk

Youth activity provider SHOKK has announced a post-doctorate Knowledge Transfer Project (KTP) with Liverpool John Moores University.

The project will see SHOKK employ the services of Dr Lee Graves as head of research and development. Graves is one of the principal researchers in the UK in the area of physical activity and interactive gaming. As part of his two-year placement, he will work on projects to identify and evaluate scientific evidence of the SHOKK concept and make improvements where appropriate. See also p38.

PEOPLE PROFILE

INDEPENDENT OPERATOR FOCUS



david cross

A former corporate financier, Cross turned his life around and went from weighing 137kg to just 68kg. He trained as a personal trainer and launched EVO Fitness in Cape Town in August

Could you take our readers briefly through the history of Evo Fitness?

The inspiration behind EVO came from the US, where many strength and athletic conditioning facilities are opening up and offering something completely different from your run of the mill fitness facility.

It was conceptualised by me and my business partner in January 2009 and – after a lot of ups and downs, setbacks and changes of plan – we opened our doors to the public on 2 August this year. We wanted to provide a facility that would expose some of the sharp edges again. A facility where, no matter what exercise you do, you have to be involved – you can't just switch off and go through the motions.

What does the club offer?

EVO Fitness' main emphasis is on results, plus a huge element of fun, whatever your goal, whatever your level. Our equipment is incredibly functional and can be utilised for high-end athletes, weekend warriors or anyone wanting to make their first step towards a healthier self. We aim to be as holistic as possible with our approach to getting results, taking into account lifestyle, work, nutrition and so on, all of which impact on how successful people will be.

And the future plans for the brand?

At the moment we're concentrating on our core business in the gym, but we will

be looking to expand: EVO online training, EVO workout DVDs, EVO clothing, EVO supplements, EVO equipment, EVO outdoor, EVO franchise and so on.

What was your first job in fitness?

My first job was working for Virgin Active SA as a part-time lifestyle consultant in Cape Town while studying to become a personal trainer.

What motivated you to get fit and lose all that weight?

After a drunken night out with a friend, who told me how fat I was and that I would never change, the penny dropped and I had a total mind-shift. So it was that, combined with the fact that I'm incredibly competitive and stubborn! I hired a personal trainer, started to use my gym contract and started on the adventure of a lifetime.

What's the number one weakness in the fitness industry?

I'm not sure I can give one particular weakness, but I do think there's a huge amount of accountability missing in the industry, especially within membership gyms and personal training. Big membership gyms aside, there are vast numbers of trainers who just randomly go from session to session with clients. No measurements taken, no periodisation, no goals, no accountability! How are you supposed to keep clients motivated about exercise, eating properly and changing their lifestyle when you can't physically show them progression?

What's your favourite motto?

Je Suis Prêt – I am ready!

If you have any stories for inclusion, please email them to us at newsdesk@leisuremedia.com



Cross at work at the Evo Fitness club

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supplier & training news

life fitness opts for keiser bikes

Life Fitness has struck a deal with equipment manufacturer Keiser, whereby Life will supply Keiser's M3 Indoor Cycle as its favoured product for indoor cycling.

As part of the deal, the M3 will become Life Fitness' preferred option; the company will no longer supply its own LeMond cycles.

Tim Colston, Keiser's managing director, says: "We're delighted to have received this recognition from a global fitness giant like Life Fitness – recognition that the M3 Indoor Cycle is best of breed for group cycling."

The Keiser M3 offers multiple adjustments on the seat, handlebars and pedals and features include an optional onboard computer.



Life Fitness will now supply Keiser's M3 Indoor Cycle as its favoured product for group cycling

The bike also gives feedback to users – such as heart rate monitoring and resistance level awareness – enabling instructors to tailor classes for any customer, whatever their ability.

in brief...

leisure suppliers forum launches at LIW 2010

A new networking group, the Leisure Suppliers Forum (LSF), was launched at LIW with the aim of bringing suppliers together to mutual benefit and recognising excellence and innovation across the sector.

Conceived by Darrell Boxall of Xn Leisure and Jon Johnston of Matrix Fitness, the LSF will target specific objectives. These include giving suppliers in the commercial UK sector an 'industry voice', establishing a peer group of suppliers willing to work together, creating a steering group to champion the LSF and its members, opening up customer bases for benchmarking, and encouraging regular meetings to discuss industry challenges.

Thirteen supplier companies have already signed up to join the LSF.

cybex signs man u deal

Cybox International has secured a deal with Manchester United Football Club which will see the club using the new CYBEX Arc Trainer.

The equipment will be used to enhance the performance of the players, as well as to speed up the

rehabilitation of injured members of the squad. According to a spokesperson, the club selected the Arc Trainer due to its biomechanics, which allow for high-intensity training that places large loads on the muscles while creating less stress on the joints.

active IQ to offer nasm qualifications

Awarding body Active IQ will begin offering National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) qualifications in the UK next month, allowing all UK training providers to add NASM courses to their training portfolio. The courses were previously delivered exclusively by Premier Training for graduates.

Liz Yelling
Olympic
Marathon
Runner



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OCTOBER

12 | LPF Seminar – When Healthcare Meets Health and Fitness

Venue DKA Associates offices,
Welbeck Street, London
Summary

This seminar will review the opportunities and prospects for co-operation between the healthcare and health and fitness sectors.
Tel +44 (0)1462 471932
Web www.leisurepropertyforum.org

13–16 | Interbad 2010

Venue Messe Stuttgart, Germany
Summary

Held once every two years, this event is hailed as one of the most important for swimming pool, pool and bath technology, sauna and physiotherapy and wellness manufacturers.
Tel +44 +49 201 87969-0
Web www.interbad.de

14–19 | BMI International

Venue Malahide, Dublin, Ireland
Summary

The theme – 'From Boom to Bust and Back to Boom' – reflects the optimism in the Irish club management industry.
Tel +44 (0)1428 606466
Web www.cmaa.org

18–21 | IHRSA European Congress

Venue Princessa Sofia Hotel,
Barcelona, Spain
Summary

Featuring presentations and keynote speeches from business leaders from within and outside the leisure industry.
Tel +1 617 951 0055
Web www.ihrsa.org



The IHRSA European Congress will take place in Barcelona, Spain



The Yoga Show in Olympia, London, will feature more than 200 exhibitors

29–31 | The Yoga Show

Venue Olympia, London
Summary

All things yoga under one roof – including free yoga and pilates classes, children's yoga, demonstrations and lectures. The event will include more than 200 exhibitors.
Tel +44 (0)1787 224040
Web www.theyogashow.co.uk

NOVEMBER

3–6 | SIBEC UK & Europe

Venue Grande Santa Eulalia
Hotel & Spa, Albufeira, Portugal
Summary

SIBEC UK & Europe is an opportunity for the major operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in health, fitness and leisure to meet with leading suppliers.
Tel +44 (0)20 8547 9830
Web www.sibec.co.uk

14–17 | IHRSA Asia-Pacific Forum

Venue Hyatt Regency, Mumbai, India
Summary

Speakers at this event will provide commentary on trends shaping the health club industry in the Pacific Rim.
Tel +1 617 951 0055
Web www.ihrsa.org

15–18 | ISPA Conference & Expo

Venue Washington DC, US
Summary

The ISPA Conference & Expo offers spa CEOs, owners and directors a place to gather for networking and education.
Tel +1 859 226 4326
Web www.experienceispa.com

competitive edge

30 JAN-6 FEB 2011

arctic survival challenge

Taking place in northern Sweden, this open charity challenge will give participants a chance to adapt to, and live in, the Arctic environment. Over eight days, participants will learn all about – and try out – husky driving, ice fishing, fire lighting, building shelters, walking in snow shoes and cross-country skiing. The challenge ends in a two-day survival phase where they'll be totally reliant on their new skills. Entry costs £299 and the minimum target is £3,500. Details: www.discoveradventure.com



Participants will learn new skills, such as husky sled driving



7,500 runners took part last year

© STOCKPHOTO.COM

10 APRIL 2011

brighton marathon

Attracting 7,500 runners, this year's inaugural Brighton marathon was a popular event, so why not see for yourself what it's all about in 2011? General entries are now full, but last-minute places will be available in early November, or you might want to opt for a charity place. The route, described as generally fast and reasonably flat, will cover much of the city, as well as taking in the coastal views in the later stages of the race. Details: www.brightonmarathon.co.uk

24-27 MARCH 2011

winter mountaineering

Far from a summer stroll, this challenge will see participants walk through snow and winter weather to the 1,344m (4,408ft) summit of Ben Nevis. Organiser UK Outdoor Pursuits teaches essential skills in navigation, rope work and emergency procedures, but participants need to ensure that they're fit enough to take part in the first place. There's a choice of more than 20 charities to raise money for, including the National Osteoporosis Society. The booking fee is £117.50 and minimum sponsorship is £580. Details: www.ukoutdoorpursuits.com



Climb Ben Nevis in the snow

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change4life

A whopping £75m went into the Change4Life campaign. Did this have the desired results, or did it turn out to be a waste of money? With the budget scaled back, what will happen now?

The intentions of Change4Life were good: a friendly advertising campaign to encourage the least healthy in society to move more. But it cost a lot of money and, just as it reached 87 per cent brand recognition, it's being scaled back by the coalition government. Will this negate the efforts and render the £75m spent on it to date a waste of money? Or will it act as a springboard for better things?

According to the FIA, Change4Life and other related initiatives did have some tangible results. One year on, more than 413,466 people had joined the Change4Life movement: double the

target. Meanwhile MoreActive4Life, the national consumer campaign developed by the FIA and delivered by more than 1,000 FIA members nationwide, achieved over 200,000 sign-ups; on average, every participating site received more than 200 referrals. It would certainly seem to have played a part in the 1 per cent growth of the UK industry last year, which bucked the downward global trend.

Speaking in July, the health secretary Andrew Lansley said he was impressed by the achievements of Change4Life, but that he wanted a new approach: "We have to make Change4Life less a government campaign and more a social movement. Less paid for by

government, more backed by business. Less about costly advertising, more about supporting family and individual responses." He confirmed that government funding will be scaled back and that charities, the commercial sector and local authorities will be asked to stump up cash instead.

This approach might work: Harry MacMillan, CEO of MEND, points out that dynamic partnerships are already emerging which our sector can get behind, such as the six-week More Active Health Programme, devised by nutrition and psychology experts and delivered by PTs. But what's the broader verdict on the value of Change4Life to date?

WAS CHANGE4LIFE A WASTE OF MONEY? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

jon johnston

matrix fitness systems • managing director



"Although Change4Life wasn't a waste of money, definitive action, not adverts, are needed if we are to halt our slide into inactivity, obesity and the health-related issues.

The majority of people are probably well aware of the link between nutrition and general wellbeing and, while the reinforcement of this message has been

important, the main issue is that people still don't do it.

The cessation of the Change4Life programme will have some effect on the general attitude and motivation of the population, but hopefully the vacuum created in the aftermath will stimulate some debate and perhaps a joined-up effort – one that is more pragmatic and effective.

While the government should be applauded for making an effort to inform the population, greater emphasis should perhaps have been placed on legislation to enforce change. I believe incentives would be more effective than advertising, such as eliminating tax on home exercise equipment and gym memberships, and incentives to companies to operate corporate fitness schemes. Longer-term, we need organisational support for fitness within business and local government."

david stalker

fitness industry association • chief executive



"Change4Life was a great start.

It was the first time the government had invested in a large-scale wellbeing and obesity prevention strategy, in line with our vision as an industry. The core message embedded in the campaign – move more – and the £75m social marketing spend raised awareness of the benefits of an active

lifestyle. However, there were limitations when it came to the depth in which it reached into the communities to affect behavioural change in those who need it most.

Through initiatives like MoreActive4Life and Let's Dance, we've demonstrated that, by working together, we can take a proposition like Change4Life and turn it into a strategy that delivers on every high street. Scaling it back will inevitably mean a loss in momentum and it's likely Change4Life will struggle to maintain its 87 per cent brand awareness. The good work initiated needs to be sustained and integrated for a long-term effect to really take place. On a positive note, it could create a real opportunity for our industry to take ownership and work together to meet the long-term goals, through initiatives like working with commercial partners and Business4Life."

The Change4Life campaign reached 87 per cent brand recognition, but did it actually change people's behaviour?

harry macmillan

mend • chief executive



"We are a National Third Sector partner of Change4Life and support the mission to spark a societal movement to encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles. Change4Life is a new look public health campaign – it's targeted and has a simple, slick yet friendly brand which has raised awareness of obesity and ways to be

fitter and more active. I'm sure its success in raising awareness has positively changed some people's behaviour.

But in some ways this was a missed opportunity to really tackle obesity and create a movement of fitter, healthier and happier families. Change4Life hasn't created the "lifestyle revolution" that the Department of Health intended. Indeed, I challenge anyone to remember all the key messages.

If the coalition government replaces funding of Change4Life with third and private sector partner funding, this will inevitably change the campaign and could lead to a drop in awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. However, it might encourage dynamic partnerships that combine targeted advertising with practical grassroots behaviour change programmes, such as the More Active Health Programme."

sue upton

heights health and fitness • manager

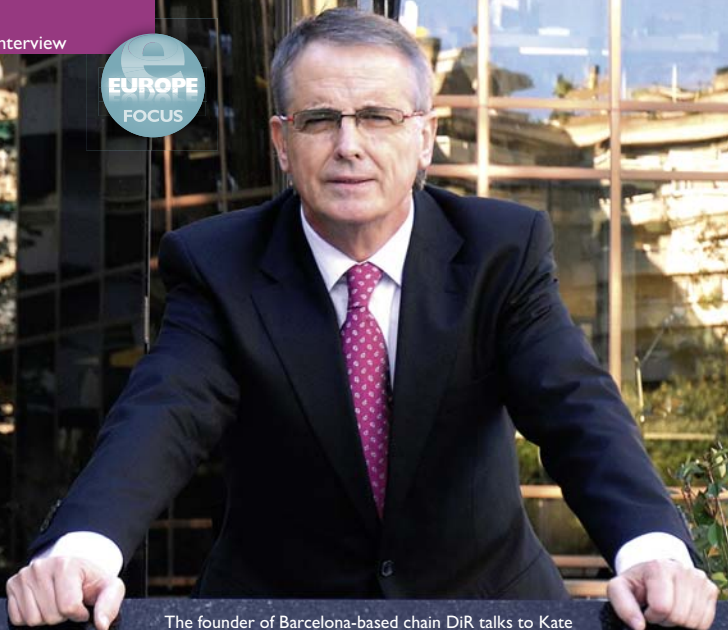


"I don't think Change4Life was a waste of money. However, possibly the money could have been spent slightly differently, giving clubs more support for their promotions. On the whole, I think it's a shame it's being cut back, because it was beginning to gather momentum and gain brand recognition. There needs to be

consistency and continuity in getting this message across – in my opinion, chopping and changing is worse than doing nothing.

As an operator, I found Change4Life very beneficial. It's always good to have a campaign to get behind, giving the team a focus and something to get involved with. We found Change4Life to be a good promotional tool, and we'd been looking at other ways we could have used it – for example, with fundraising. We used it for a promotion earlier this year and found it was successful in attracting a different type of user.

There's still a need to push the message of Change4Life: statistics still show most people are not regularly active and diseases like obesity and diabetes are rising. With the London 2012 Olympics about to put sport into the forefront, we need campaigns like Change4Life to get behind."



The founder of Barcelona-based chain DiR talks to Kate Cracknell about innovation and a possible budget club venture

RAMON CANELA

How did you come to work in fitness?

I worked in my family business from a young age before going on to study business and commerce. After my studies, I set up my own photography business, but a friend and I also decided to open a sports centre in my area of Barcelona; it had always been hard to play football as a youngster, as there were no facilities in my area, so I knew the demand was there. The club, which we called Sport Met, opened in October 1979.

Then, in 1988, I began travelling to the US and discovered fitness and all its benefits. I immediately turned the offering at my facility on its head, introducing a gym as we know them today: CV and resistance equipment, plus group exercise classes. At the same time, I opened another 11,000sq m gym in a nearby area of the city. We called this club DYR – 'deporte y recreación', meaning sports and recreation – which we later translated into catalan, making it 'Deport i Recreació' (DiR).

We were pioneers in bringing the modern gym concept to Barcelona, and we became a reference point for fitness in the city. I realised the impact fitness could have in transforming the quality of people's lives, and I made it my mission to introduce as many people in Barcelona as possible to its benefits, by bringing DiR to them.

How many clubs do you have?

Our aim is for everyone who lives in Barcelona to have a DiR club no more than 10 minutes from their home or place of work, and we now have 16 facilities covering almost every part of the city – residential and commercial areas. We currently have more than 80,000 members, with more than 5 per cent of the city's population visiting our clubs every day.

We will be opening one more club, DiR Tuset, before the end of this year – a 4,000sq m facility located in a really good area of the city. At the moment I have no plans to open clubs outside of Barcelona.

How was DiR financed at the beginning, and how is growth now funded?

It was originally financed by a group of investors, but over time I've secured most of the shares. We've always funded our own growth, or used bank loans, and when we open a new club we sometimes sell shares or bonds to our members. This has been a great success, as our members trust our brand and buy into our philosophy; we currently have around 2,000 members who are share- or bond-holders. Finally, we're thinking about floating the business on the MAB (alternative stock market) to



DiR clubs are kitted out by a number of suppliers, including Life Fitness, Precor and Technogym



finance our expansion plans, as well as the improvement work we're carrying out in our existing clubs.

What are your clubs like?

We have a diverse offering – not just conventional fitness but also nutrition, wellness, mind-body programming, social events, a singles network, beauty services, restaurants serving quick, healthy meal options and so on. Our overall philosophy is to improve people's quality of life.

In terms of size, we've simply adapted to the locations we've found, so our clubs range from 1,600sq m to 12,000sq m. The offering therefore varies by site: some have space for a swimming pool, for example, while others don't. In terms of facilities, then, some of our clubs are more obviously high-end than others. However, all our clubs have minimum standards of quality and service: we offer over 2,200 group exercise sessions across our estate each week, have more than 240 PTs, and feature top of the range equipment from the likes of gym80, Life Fitness, Keiser, Precor, Technogym, Power Plate, TRX, Balanced Body and Kranking (Matrix). Most of our



clubs, other than the very smallest, also have spa areas – sauna, steamroom and spa pool.

Membership fees vary by site. We also have an option whereby people can pay a certain amount each month, then each time they go to the gym they pay a small fee which varies by club and by time of day. The advantage is that, if you don't use our facilities very often, you don't end up paying as much as a full month's membership would cost you – it's cost-effective for anything up to 10 visits a month. It also allows you to use whichever of our clubs you like, so offers great flexibility.

What is DiR's USP?

Innovation. DiR has been at the forefront from the word go: we were the first to bring fitness to Barcelona, introducing the word to people's vocabulary, and nowadays we're quick to introduce the latest trends, ensuring that working out at our



DiR is linked to the people of Barcelona – everyone's been to a DiR club or knows someone who has

clubs is fun, varied and brings results, whether you're new to exercise or an experienced gym-goer.

We're always thinking of what more we can do to ensure the best possible experience for our members. We believe our key opportunity is customer knowledge – really understanding what our clients need – so we can continually surprise them with new ideas that will keep them coming back.

We recently introduced Kranking – we were the first operator in Spain to do so – and have incorporated AntiGravity Yoga (see *HCM* May 10, p52) into our yoga offering. We're also involved in the virtual world: we've created the first 'virtual' DiR gym, which people can access from anywhere at any time, and we offer virtual classes in our clubs – group cycling sessions, for example – when instructors aren't available.

Another important element at DiR is recruitment and staff training. I firmly believe that people are what differentiate your business from another, and it's been a priority for me to recruit the best people in each of the key disciplines of my business, as well as investing heavily in training each year.

You do a lot of charity work. How does this tie in with the chain's philosophy?

The aims of our charitable foundation are the same as those of the DiR health clubs: to improve the quality of people's lives. In the case of our charity, we work with underprivileged groups, disabled people, and people with illnesses whose symptoms can be relieved through exercise.

You're doing well in spite of the global recession. What's the secret of DiR's success?

DiR is inextricably linked to the people of Barcelona – everyone's been to a DiR club or knows someone who has, and there are many people out there who feel genuinely better as a result of coming to us. Our members also see us constantly evolving and innovating, and I think this positive attitude rubs off on them, encouraging them to keep pushing themselves towards self-improvement.

When times are hard, joining a DiR club represents a way of looking after yourself and strengthening yourself to confront the challenges. Local people know that physical activity is a way to be healthier, feel better and see life more positively, as these are messages we focus on heavily in all our communications, from advertising campaigns to our monthly members' magazine. In these tough times, I think we're reaping the rewards of that message.

According to IHRSA research, the Spanish fitness market has suddenly grown in terms of penetration levels. What do you think has driven this?

The culture of sport and physical activity is gathering pace in our country, boosted by the strong performance of the local authority sector. Other factors include the climate, which encourages people to get outside and be active, and the emergence of Spanish athletes on the world stage over recent years – the likes of Rafael Nadal, Gemma Mengual and Jorge

DiR has invested more than
€14m in refurbishing its
estate during 2009 and 2010



Lorenzo. I think this really motivates the local population to get more involved in physical activity.

Barcelona has always stood apart from the rest of Spain. Does this also apply to the health and fitness industry?

Barcelona has always led the way in the promotion of physical activity, and nowadays there are more sporting facilities per square metre than in any other city in Spain. The creation of DiR and the 1992 Olympic Games marked a real turning point for the people of this city, encouraging them to make physical activity a key value in their life.

You've invested a lot of money recently in refurbishing all of your existing clubs. Are you taking this opportunity to evolve the offering?

There's been a huge investment in DiR during 2009 and 2010 – more than €14m (£11.9m) – which has seen us open new clubs, refurbish existing sites, buy in new equipment and so on. We're constantly seeking excellence, making sure we remain the benchmark for innovation in our field, and it's hard to find better facilities in Barcelona.

In our new club, DiR Tuset, we will be launching a back care centre. This will feature medical fitness equipment from MedX, which allows you to isolate the deeper muscles in the back, bringing about results you simply can't achieve with normal exercise. The centre will be staffed by a multi-

disciplinary team comprising doctors, physiotherapists, chiropractors, osteopaths and so on.

Finally, we're also considering the possibility of opening budget clubs in the city.

What has been your biggest success story over the last 12 months?

The opening of Up&Down earlier this year was very important for DiR. This is a club we created in the commercial district, in a former nightclub, and it offers the very highest quality facilities at a higher price point. Twenty-five per cent of its members also use personal trainers. It was a milestone for us, another step up in the provision of truly top-end facilities. This has always been our priority, and the creation of Up&Down exposed us to a new way of looking at things – an approach we're now applying to all of our clubs.

What are your aims for DiR going forward?

We will continue with our expansion, and will continue to explore new ideas and products, ensuring we stay ahead of the pack to meet the needs of the market. We're working on a number of other projects, although the details have yet to be finalised so I can't discuss them yet. One thing I can say for sure: DiR will maintain its position as leader in Barcelona.



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SPELLING IT OUT

In the second of a two-part series, Kate Cracknell looks at how clubs prescribe exercise to their members

In the last issue of *Health Club Management*, we provided first-hand reviews of the fitness assessments and subsequent approaches to exercise prescription offered at Nuffield Health and Lifesmart (see *HCM* Sept 10, p32).

This month our attention turns to Fitness First's BodyFirst programme, and to the V-Check machine, to see how these two systems approach this fundamental aspect of member management.

FITNESS FIRST

Clapham Junction, London – Body First

Assessor: Ryan Levin, health and fitness manager



THE ASSESSMENT: The BodyFirst package consists of three sessions: the assessment, a basic programme, and then a 'PT wow' session with a view to upselling members to regular personal training. It's promoted particularly to new joiners, with prices starting at £39.95 (£45.95 at Clapham Junction), and around 60 per cent of new members sign up for the three-stage package.

Using the Bodystat 1500, with electrode connections to the hand and foot, the tests cover areas such as body fat percentage, fat weight (kilos of fat in the body) and amount of water in the body – all of which are compared to a recommended range – plus metabolic rate at rest and estimated average energy (kcal) needed on a daily basis.

There are also tests for members with specific targets: sport, strength, health or shape. Most of these are included in the basic tests, but a few additional measures may be needed subject to your key goals.

This is followed by a simple postural analysis on the gym floor – in my case, running on a treadmill and doing squats. This allowed Levin to check my gait and to identify any areas of tightness and/or weakness in my body.

THE PROGRAMME: I didn't go through the full three-stage BodyFirst package, which meant I wasn't given a full programme. However, although less in-depth than both the Nuffield and the Lifesmart assessments (covered in part one of this series), I felt the tests – and, more importantly, Levin's interpretation of the results – gave us a good starting point, and I was confident in his ability to design a programme for me had we proceeded to the full PT session.

Based on my results, Levin explained that his first focus would be nutrition: he'd look at calories needed based on my basal metabolic rate, combined with the amount of exercise I do, and would break that into meals for a clear action plan.

In terms of my gait, he immediately identified a few areas of concern – such as tight calves, quads and hip flexors – which led to recommendations for foam rolling, as well as prioritising lunges over squats and the Versaclimber over bikes to develop my glutes rather than my quads. He also recommended I visit a podiatrist.

When it came to the upper body, Levin explained that: "You quickly spot someone's weaknesses once you start



Fitness First's BodyFirst programme is focused towards personal training



The BodyFirst programme uses the Bodystat 1500 machine

training them. It's important to check the lower body – people's gait – but with the upper body you don't really need to test.

"For example, thanks to jobs involving hours at a computer, about 80 per cent of my clients have a tight chest and weak rhomboids/shoulders. You don't need to test for that. You can see it easily, and then you give them relevant exercises."

Interestingly, although based more on observation and less on technology, Levin's recommendations were very similar to my Nuffield programme (see HCM Sept, p32). His observations were also reinforced by the podiatrist I later went to see. All in all, a good illustration of the vital role of the individual instructor in any assessment, quite aside from the use of hi-tech gadgets.



THE VERDICT: Less in-depth than the Nuffield MOT, and perhaps more reliant on the expertise of the individual assessor, nevertheless in this case I felt it was very well executed and translated into good recommendations. The only downside was the lack of dedicated space to conduct the assessment – I had to lie on the floor of the GM's office.

There was also a very nicely produced takeaway folder: three glossy books covering the tests, nutrition and exercising – the latter including diagrams for resistance exercises, for example, and instructions on how to calculate heart rates, with suggested heart rate zones.

I did feel, however, that quality control of the assessment itself was perhaps less rigorous than at other clubs: Levin was excellent, but a number of comments he made suggested that he incorporated a lot of his own ideas into the process. Had it been conducted by anyone less enthusiastic, or less qualified, I suspect the result might not have been as good.

I was also slightly disappointed to realise the impetus was very definitely towards personal training, encouraging all new members to see this as the only real way of getting a fully-tailored programme.

AMSTELHOF

Amsterdam, the Netherlands – V-Check

ASSESSOR: Jan de Jong, CEO, Vital Balance Group



THE ASSESSMENT: More a lifestyle check than a simple fitness test, and drawing on elements from both eastern and western healing practices, the V-Check machine was originally developed by German medical equipment company Wegamed.

It has since been evaluated by universities and research institutes in the Netherlands, Germany and China, and tested by professional sports organisations such as AC Milan and the McEnroe Tennis Academy. Six electrodes are placed on the body: two

on the head, two on the hands and two under the feet. In 15 minutes, V-Check carries out electrograms of the whole body – full body and by segment – and claims to measure: how well muscles, joints and organs are functioning; energy reserves, and the body's ability to make use of them; acid levels, and the body's ability to neutralise them; the nutritional status of the body (including levels of vitamins and minerals); BMI; and optimum heart rate range.

The machine then offers personalised, evidence-based lifestyle recommendations



The V-Check carries out electrograms of the whole body



V-Check results are anonymously fed into university research programmes

▶ off the back of these results. These cover areas such as nutrition, ideal type of exercise and the optimal time to work out by muscle group, plus amount of relaxation required. V-Check also assumes a connection between internal organ systems and specific muscle groups, so the system might, for example, recommend training your quads and abs to help with digestion, or your glutes to help with circulation.

These recommendations are further interpreted by the assessor, in conjunction with the information provided by the member in questionnaires on their medical history and lifestyle, to create a full fitness and wellbeing programme.

At Amstelhoof, a V-Check – a lifestyle consultation, the scan itself, and a Vital Balance lifestyle plan – is free for all members for an initial check. Any subsequent progress checks cost €89 for members or €129 for non-members.

THE PROGRAMME: A full report is printed out for the member. This includes an overview of how the V-Check works before going into the results. There's an explanation of each measurement – the importance of training at optimal times, for example – plus clear charts and diagrams to bring that specific member's results to life.

In my case, we were a little pushed for time, so the recommendations of the machine were only turned into a full lifestyle plan after the event. However, going on the V-Check's recommendations alone would have been almost sufficient, as these were already extensive – the results of my scan showed, for example, that I had a weak lower back and a thyroid problem. Other areas of revelation included a highly accurate assessment



“THINGS I KNEW TO BE TRUE, BUT HADN'T REVEALED, THE MACHINE SIMPLY KNEW”

of my energy levels, and of toxin levels in my body – all things I knew to be true, but which I hadn't revealed before the test. The machine simply knew.

Its recommendations therefore included clear requirements for rest periods during training, as well as guidance on the types of carbohydrate I should eat, advice on targeted back and pelvic training, the prescription of glucosamine for the joints, and suggestions for purification of the body

– from regular saunas to the amount of water I should drink.

Recommendations on the amount of relaxation I needed to incorporate into my lifestyle (much more than I currently do), and the maximum heart rates I should currently be hitting during exercise (much lower than expected), were also very interesting, and tied in with what I was told at Lifesmart regarding support for my adrenal system (see *HCM* Sept 10, p34).

THE VERDICT: A very interesting, thoroughly holistic approach that offered insights I've never before come across in pre-exercise testing. I was fascinated to know which muscle groups I could develop to enhance my digestion and circulation, for example, as well as to find out when the best – and worst – times of the day would be for me to exercise those muscles.

Although a trained V-Check operator will offer added value in terms of interpretation of the data, as well as in creating a robust lifestyle plan, the interesting thing about the V-Check is the fact that it's the machine itself that delivers the initial recommendations, leaving much less margin for human error or individual interpretation.

All V-Check results are also fed, anonymously, into ongoing university research programmes, with the findings fed back into the system; the V-Check database is web-based and constantly updates itself in line with the latest scientific research to ensure the system's recommendations are based on current thinking.



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With adults, Zumba is the latest craze to hit studios nationwide. Can clubs broaden their group exercise appeal even further by embracing the new trend for kids' classes? Abigail Harris reports

BACK TO SCHOOL

From the first tentative steps into specialist kids' equipment in the early noughties to the more recent dance mat revolution, the concept of a kids' fitness offering has gone from an unusual extra to an integral staple in many clubs and leisure centres. But where do operators go from here? A question remains as to how they can attract more under-16s, without compromising their offering to existing members.

Just as new forms of group exercise have raised the bar for attracting – and retaining – adult members, perhaps the key is the already diverse and increasingly innovative option of kids' group exercise. "You don't have to persuade children to go to Alton Towers for the day; kids' fitness should work in exactly the same way. It needs

to be dynamic. It needs to be loud. It needs to be cool. And that's exactly what the new breed of group exercise classes offer," says Marina Saunders, director of sales at ZigZag.

putting kids on the agenda

Group exercise for kids is well established. FitPro launched Fitclub in 1995, SHOKK created its first programme in 1999 and others have followed. But, says Saunders, it's recent social changes that have catapulted kids' group exercise programming to the top of the agenda. "We all know childhood obesity is at an all-time high and it's no secret that the days when kids could safely play – and so exercise – outside, are sadly gone. Recent research shows that almost half of adults now believe playing outside is unsafe. Engaging

ZigZag Strike sessions include the chance to be awarded belts each term

children in fitness is no longer just a revenue generator; it's a social obligation," she says. "Getting young people active is a huge public health priority and we've seen an increase in national and regional initiatives across the UK in response to this," agrees Kieran Murphy, marketing director of SHOKK.





Pulse's Junior MAX scheme (see case study, right) offers three sessions: Motivator, Adrenalin and Xtreme

"Of course this is being driven by government policies [it's recommended that children between the ages of five and 12 get at least 60 minutes of activity a day], initiatives such as Every Child Matters and Change4Life, plus countless hard-hitting statistics in the press. But, for the first time, parents are pushing for us to provide after-school and weekend activities too." Parental interest has been further fuelled by the mainstream media, with the likes of Jamie Oliver putting healthy eating and exercise for kids on prime time TV.

Parents like play-based programming because it captures kids' imaginations and it works. And as any teacher will tell you, parent power is not to be underestimated. There's never been a better time for clubs to take up the baton. Parents aside, the big driver is



CASE STUDY ZIGZAG

The programme

Hooking kids in with a celebrity angle, Britain's Got Talent finalists Strike teamed up with ZigZag to launch a kids' martial arts-based programme last month.

How it works

Created by Strike, this fun-based, hour-long class combines martial arts, dance and gymnastics – all choreographed to music – for four- to 16-year-olds. As well as mini grading sessions and the chance to be awarded belts at the end of each term, each class covers life skills with a 'Strike chat', discussing everything from confidence to respect.

What's needed?

Training: Included within the cost of a licence, Strike's Liam Richards and Danny Ball will train existing instructors to deliver the 12-week programme and offer follow-up training days.

Minimum studio size: 10x10m.

Equipment: No specific equipment requirement, other than mats.

CASE STUDY PULSE

The programme

Taking exercise into today's 'PC world', Pulse runs interactive children's programming under a scheme called the Junior MAX programme (standing for Maximum Attitude to Exercise), launched in July 2008.

How it works

The programme offers three different sessions – from the easiest, Motivator, through Adrenalin for intermediates to the toughest, Xtreme – all aimed at eight- to 14-year-olds, and all using the Pulse Vibe circuit. Classes are designed to improve fitness, confidence and self-esteem and engage kids without it feeling like 'hard work'.

What's needed?

Training: Ideally all instructors should be qualified to FOCUS Gym Instructor level and registered with REPs.

Minimum studio size: A space the size of a squash court.

Equipment: Pulse Vibe kids' range.

that, unlike traditional PE sports, group programming is all-inclusive.

"Group classes engage those children typically excluded from traditional competitive sports. They ease insecurity by tapping into that 'pack mentality'," says Andy Jackson, global commercial director at FitPro. "Just consider the success of our teamjam programme in attracting

teenage girls to dance-based activity. It's much more fun for teenagers to work out to the latest chart hits, rather than enduring circuit training to the tune of the PE teacher's whistle."

The stimulus behind the ever-growing list of new kids' classes doesn't stop there. "PCTs have got involved too," explains Glen Jones, managing director of Cyber Coach. "In recent

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CASE STUDY FITPRO

The programmes

Fitclub – which includes teamjam, teamcombat, teampower and teamenergy – launched in 1995.

How it works

Designed to complement the National Curriculum's PE classes and cover essential Key Stage components, Fitclub classes aim to encourage kids from five to 16 years old to embrace movement and activity through play.

The focus is on dance, creative self-expression and martial arts, with sessions designed to combat childhood obesity while instilling lifelong healthy habits.

What's needed?

Training: As well as Fitclub license (from Fitness Professional Ltd), instructors are required to attend a two-day Fitness Professionals course per individual programme.

Minimum studio size: A studio equipped with a sound system, large enough for children to move around in.

Equipment: Class requirements vary depending on the programme, but typically include beanbags, soft balls, bouncy balls etc.



CASE STUDY SHOKK

The programme

SHOKK offers 11 different group exercise programmes, from SHOKK R.A.C.E. (indoor cycling) to the new SHOKK Parkour, launched in March.

How it works

The newest class concept is based on Parkour, the growing sport of 'urban acrobatics' (made popular by films such as *Casino Royale* – see also *Leisure Management* issue 4 2010, p34),

and combines running, jumping and climbing with gymnastics for eight- to 16-year-olds. On a mental level, the class encourages children to look at obstacles not as barriers, but as a path that requires different thinking to overcome.

What's needed?

Training: Instructors must be qualified in the Level 2 SHOKK Core Module.

Minimum studio size: A standard studio, ideally with a high ceiling and sufficient space for run-ups and safe landings.

Equipment: Foam blocks, trampets and heavy-duty crash mats.



years, they've invested significantly in new equipment for a huge variety of schemes designed to encourage youngsters into activity." With PCTs often seeking the expert knowledge of clubs and leisure centres, operators' influence has not been insignificant.

moving forwards

Both suppliers and operators are, however, wary that the 'honeymoon' can't last. The coalition government's proposal to scrap PCTs and place funding in the hands of GPs has implications that may not be realised. "Massive budget cuts in the sport, health and leisure sectors has already

affected the free swimming scheme for under-16s; the worry is that these proposals could see physical activity move further down the list of priorities," says Murphy.

That said, there's no indication of pace slowing any time soon. "As we gear up to providing an Olympic legacy of health and fitness, and a sense of community engagement with physical activity, kids' fitness programming can only grow," says Jackson.

The opportunities for revenue generation may not be immediately obvious, but operators need to think longer-term when it comes to benefits. Few would deny that getting



CASE STUDY CYBER COACH

The programme

Cyber Coach Dance Mat Sessions were launched in 2007.

How it works

Clubs can connect pressure-sensitive dance mats for up to 32 children of all ages. Sessions range from fun Soccer Sevens matches, through Disco Dancing, to interactive games like Space Invaders.

What's needed?

Training: Instructors need no specialist training to run sessions, although REPs-accredited training is offered.

Minimum studio size: Mats can be used in any dance studio or even in a corner of the gym.

Equipment: The basic 10-dance mat package includes a dancing game, more than 100 songs and no PRS music licence required.

CASE STUDY STAR TRAC

The programme

Offering kids the chance to exercise like mum or dad, Teenspin was launched in 2000.

How it works

Based on the ever-popular adult Spinning® class, Teenspin offers group cycling for kids over the age of 11, with specially-designed games, team rides and a contemporary playlist. The programme aims to tap into all the things kids like, while introducing them to an exercise class they can continue into adulthood.

What's needed?

Training: Star Trac offers an attendance course for clubs interested in Teenspin, plus an online workshop where freelance instructors can learn more.

Minimum studio size: Standard sized Spinning studio. The site must be officially licensed as a Spinning facility.

Equipment: Star Trac's Official Spinning Programme bikes.



kids 'hooked' at a young age means they're much more likely to continue exercising as young adults.

"Clubs and leisure centres already know that kids don't want to be shoe-horned into doing activities that suit grown-ups. They want classes specially-tailored to their needs and somewhere they can express themselves, without having to be quiet for adults," says Saunders.

"What's been shown so far is that when they get this, they flock in droves, and their parents come too. And that's when clubs start to see returns."



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KIDS' FASHION

What's new in the kids' fitness market?
What are the trends worth noting?
Kate Cracknell asks the experts



NICKY KAY, MD, FitKid

Celebrity endorsement

We've seen celebrity endorsement make waves in the area of adult fitness – Alesha Dixon's deal with LA Fitness, for example

– and now this trend is coming to kids' fitness, with a new tie-up with popular TV show *LazyTown*.

Airing in over 125 countries across the world, *LazyTown* is renowned for its positive health message to children, and the launch of the new *LazyTown Sports Club* powered by FitKid – a new style of exercise session based on the TV show, with a team of trainers working in the community across the UK

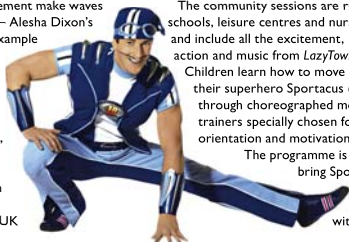
– brings *LazyTown* one step closer to its mission of moving the world.

The community sessions are run in schools, leisure centres and nurseries and include all the excitement, action and music from *LazyTown*.

Children learn how to move like their superhero Sportacus (left)

through choreographed moves and adventures, with trainers specially chosen for their enthusiasm, health orientation and motivational abilities.

The programme is unique and trainers even bring Sportacus in on occasion, so he can see the fantastic results his sports club is having within the community.





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JONATHAN WILLIAMS, CEO, SHOKK



Evidence-based solutions

SHOKK and Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) have come together in a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), a new scheme designed to place talented graduates within innovative companies in a problem-solving capacity, with the supporting expertise of the university. LJMU's first such placement, directly funded by the Department of Health/ERSC and the Technology Strategy Board, is Dr Lee Graves, who joined SHOKK as head of research and development last month.

Dr Graves is one of the principal researchers in the UK in the area of physical activity and interactive gaming: for his PhD, he investigated the effect of active video games on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and health in young people.

At SHOKK, he will evaluate scientific evidence to support the implementation of youth activity programmes, drive national recommendations, and steer the development of SHOKK products and services. In particular, he will contribute to the development of SHOKK Tactics – our web-based activity management, health assessment and retention system – generating unique data on the physical fitness of local children to allow for regional/national comparisons and benchmarks, thereby informing local behaviour change interventions.

This partnership will not only help ensure our products and services cater precisely for our target markets, but will also provide credibility in our research and align us ever more closely to the government's, and NICE's, broader national agenda to combat childhood obesity.

PAUL SHINNERS, commercial director, Pulse



Standalone facilities

No longer are operators content with timetabling the odd children's fitness class: nowadays the demand is for operators to provide a fun, exciting physical activity solution within a dedicated, branded environment exclusively for children.

Pulse has project-managed several such developments over the last 12 months, creating vibrant children's zones where kids can exercise under the guidance of specially trained fitness staff, socialise and play in their own space. With fashionable décor and cool branding, the concept combines our latest interactive fitness products – Dance Machine and Active Wall & Floor – with our Vibe hydraulic circuit and a dedicated sofa chill-out zone that has healthy vending products, active gaming and the latest computer products and games.

We see this type of offering becoming the blueprint for future leisure developments and redevelopments of existing leisure space. A trip to the leisure centre will become a family activity where the parents and children exercise in their own areas, then meet within the social space to unwind.



HARRY MACMILLAN, CEO, MEND

Local mentoring schemes

The Dame Kelly Holmes (DKH) Legacy Trust's work is fantastic. They use elite athletes to inspire young people to find or fulfil their potential in sport and life, supporting children and young people to succeed while promoting healthy, active lifestyles and sport in their local communities.

Using world-class athletes to inspire and engage children to be more physically active lends itself well to the work we do in tackling childhood obesity, and it's especially relevant leading up to the Olympics.

We're therefore partnering with the DKH Legacy Trust to run a mentoring scheme, which was piloted last month. Former Commonwealth Games swimming champion Adam Whitehead shared his experiences with children and parents on the MEND 7-13 Programme in Dudley, West Midlands, and he will continue to support them during post-programme swimming sessions. Whitehead's role as a mentor is a motivational one, which we hope will lead MEND graduates to sustain positive behaviour change and live fitter, healthier and happier lives.



MARINA SAUNDERS, director, ZigZag

Instant feedback

What is it that keeps us going? Fun, motivation and of course, results.

This weekend my partner returned from his run to a video message from Paula Radcliffe congratulating him on completing 500 miles. Instead of bemoaning blistered feet, he was raring to go again!

The Nike chip in his trainers made that possible and, at ZigZag, we've pioneered wireless score tracking cards to introduce this same concept to our young dance mat users. The cards provide an invisible thread to the equipment, much like Nike+, so we can keep in constant contact to say 'well done', 'keep at it', 'look what you've achieved this month'.

These motivational triggers require minimum effort – they're generated by the system rather than by the health club or leisure centre – and yet have maximum effect. Kids don't want to wait six weeks to see results and now they don't have to: dancers can monitor their activity levels and compare scores with people around the world instantly, via the internet.



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DENISE PAGE, executive director, YMCAfit



A boom in dance

Dance is most definitely a growing trend in children's fitness, fuelled both by the continuing popularity of talent shows such as *Britain's Got Talent* and by the urgent need to get kids active in response to the growing threat of obesity.

Kids can now be active without doing sport, which can be elitist financially and in terms of skills. Dance is accessible.

The popularity of groups such as Diversity is helping to remove some of the barriers of prejudice that surrounded

dance, which in turn has contributed to its growth as a trend in fitness. Girls are growing in confidence, boys aren't limited to football, young people can invent their own styles and teach each other, and peer pressure is no longer a barrier as dance is now acceptable.

The YMCAfit Kids' Fitness Street Dance instructor course is popular precisely because of the growing trend of dance within children's fitness. Now a REPs Level 2-accredited qualification, we've frozen the cost of the course to encourage more fitness professionals to get involved in this popular, accessible activity.



GLEN JONES, MD, Cyber Coach



Inclusive equipment

Inclusivity has been a buzzword across the sector recently, with IFI accreditation becoming increasingly important for equipment manufacturers and operators alike. We believe the next generation of kids' fitness equipment will still focus on fun, but with an added emphasis on inclusivity.

With this in mind, Cyber Coach launched a brand new special needs dance mat at Leisure Industry Week last month.



These new dance mats are designed to sit on the lap of a wheelchair user and can be activated by the lightest of touches; the intelligent buttons can detect the presence of a foot or hand, as well as the speed of movement, and alter the game appropriately.

No one product will ever be able to be used by all, but we can strive to make a product as inclusive as possible. Over the next 12 months, we intend to produce a number of different dance mats and aids to include as many people as possible.

ANDREW BAGNALL, director, Revolutionary Products



Adrenalin sports

A key trend in the area of kids' exercise is the move away from electronic game-type exercises – something that's been a huge growth area recently – towards 'risk-taking outdoor activities' that

encourage more physical and mental dexterity.

Especially in inner city areas, communities are now looking at bringing the outdoors to the indoors in an attempt to stimulate kids' desire to experience the thrills of the wider, wilder world,

encouraging travel and learning about other cultures. Exercises such as climbing are now being encouraged, for example, as an activity that not only underpins fundamental physical and mental skills but that can also fit within the school curriculum – geography lessons, for example, can be linked with PE, with kids selecting real mountains and climbing the equivalent height over the space of a school term.

Our product, the Freedom Climber, is a rotating climbing wall that enables clubs, leisure facilities and schools alike to provide climbing as a great functional exercise for kids, without the space and safety issues which can be prohibitive with other climbing systems.

PHIL PICKERSGILL, MD, Innovative Leisure



Growth in climbing

Something we've noticed in particular is schools using our climbing products alongside more traditional sporting activities, to encourage more kids to be physically active; some children won't take part in the usual sports on

offer but will have a go on a climbing wall.

We're also catering to the PlayStation generation, and kids who are into extreme sports – climbing products tick that box too. Climbing walls offer a challenging, physical activity in perfect

safety and can be used by kids as young as five years old. Our motorised wall, The Rock, is one of the products being used in schools. It offers a range of progressive, pre-programmed climbs, but also a manual programme that means it can be targeted to the needs of individual students. It also provides a well-balanced workout of cardio and strength.

Increasingly more schools, including specialist schools, as well as youth groups such as the scouts, are recognising the benefits of climbing products.





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FRED TUROK

The founder of LA Fitness tells Magali Robathan how his TAG charity is helping jobless young people find work in the fitness industry and improving health in deprived communities



As Fred Turok arrives at LA Fitness Piccadilly in London, he spots a young man arriving for work at the gym. "Look at you!" Turok says, slapping him on the back and squeezing his biceps. "Muscleman! You look fantastic. Good on you."

"That was one of the kids from the Transforming a Generation pilot," he says to me later. "He was a disillusioned, angry, unemployed young man. Now he's in full-time employment with LA Fitness, he works hard, he's doing well, he looks the business. That's what it's all about."

Transforming a Generation (TAG) is the charity set up by Turok, founder of LA Fitness and chair of the Fitness Industry Association, in January 2010. Its aims are to provide training and employment in the health and fitness industry for 18- to 24-year-olds not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

"There are around one million NEETs in this country, costing taxpayers in the region of £16bn," says Turok. "The spin-off from being a NEET is increased drugs, violence, gangs and crime. This is a massive problem."

TAG starts from a philosophy that these young people have huge potential, but are being held back by their background, lack of education and a sense of alienation. With the right support, Turok and his team believe, these young people can fulfill their potential and become hard-working members of society.

The TAG programme consists of six weeks of training, delivered by Lifetime, providing participants with the technical skills needed to achieve a REPs Level 2 qualification in fitness instructing. Each student has a dedicated mentor and is also taught the soft skills necessary to

get a job. They then undergo a five-month work placement at a local health club, and are supported for a further six months on their journey to employment or further education. Employers currently supporting the scheme include LA Fitness, David Lloyd Leisure, DC Leisure, GLL and Fitness First.

By the end of September, 900 young people will have been placed in full-time employment as a result of TAG, and Turok is confident that a total of 2,000 will have found full-time work by April 2011. The longer-term target is to deliver 10,000 NEETs into full-time employment within three years.

"TAG works to solve three problems," explains Turok. "Firstly it gives NEETs the possibility of a career in an industry that many of them are interested in working in, because they tend to be quite physical and active people."

"The second issue is the health of the nation. We know that health in deprived communities tends to be very poor. These young people can act as ambassadors and can help people in their communities to understand the benefits of exercise and healthy living."

"The third issue is the massive unemployment problem in the UK."

BIRTH OF AN IDEA

Turok was born in Cape Town and grew up in South Africa, where his parents were imprisoned in 1964 for being ANC members – his father was in prison with Nelson Mandela. In 1967, the family was forced to leave and move to the UK.

Turok's upbringing instilled in him a desire to help others, and he's involved in a number of other charities, including the African Institute of Mathematical Science, which he helped

to launch in 2003 in order to promote maths and science across Africa.

"I come from an anti-apartheid, South African, equal equality background and my family has always been involved in helping deprived communities," says Turok. "I also come from a country where unemployment, youth crime and violence is a substantial problem."

Turok is dyslexic and struggled at school. "I was expelled aged 15," he says. "I have a dreadful record. My experience with education helps me



Turok speaks to a group of TAG apprentices, all of whom must show a desire to change their lives



Turok plans to have 2,000 young people in full-time work by next April and 10,000 within three years



understand the problems faced by NEETs. The education system has let these young people down."

While his upbringing sowed the seeds for TAG, it was really a challenge set by Turok's wife that spurred him on. "We were talking about two of my friends' children, who were unemployed and had no qualifications," he explains. "Sue said: 'You've got this big company, you work in the health and fitness industry, both of these kids are good at sport. Surely there's something you can do.'"

Of course, it's Turok's commercial success with LA Fitness that really enabled him to progress with TAG. He started his career as a PE teacher, moving on to work for David Lloyd Leisure as a swimming coach, before buying his first health club in London's Victoria. In 1990, he teamed up with Jeremy Taylor and David Turner, and they formed the LA Fitness brand in 1996. Just a year later they had joined the UK's top 10 health club operators, and, today, LA Fitness has 80 clubs across the country.

"I've been lucky enough to be successful in my commercial career, which has given me the opportunity to enjoy my passion of helping underprivileged people," says Turok, who attributes his success to "hard work and a team of people who aren't afraid to challenge me".

In 2008, Turok and "a couple of other philanthropists" funded a pilot in west London to test the TAG model. They formed a relationship with community leader Shaun Bailey, who helped them identify 15 local youngsters who he thought would be right for the scheme. At the end of the six months, 70 per cent of the participants were placed into full-time employment and the pilot was declared a success.

The next stage was getting health and fitness operators on board, to offer the students work experience and hopefully paid employment at the end of the course. This part, says Turok, was relatively easy.

"The proposition is a pretty compelling one for an employer," he says. "We tell them: 'We'll find the young people and train them for you, free of charge. We will provide the necessary soft skills so that, by the time they join you, they'll understand what it is to be managed and the importance of being on time and being smart. And we'll employ and mentor these students for five months, while they work in your organisation, giving you the opportunity to develop them and manage them.'"

"All we ask for is a commitment that, if they have a position, and the person is good enough, they will employ them."

Getting a job in a health club is just one of the 'exit routes' for the young people taking part in TAG. Others





The programme costs £6,500 per student, but has a 124 per cent return on investment by year three

- ▶ include further study, setting up their own business, doing voluntary sector work and working within another sporting organisation.

FINDING THE RIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the challenges of the project is finding the young people who will benefit most from the scheme. To this end, TAG has partnered with Jobcentre Plus, which identifies suitable young NEETs. The team at TAG then carries out a rigorous interview process to identify the youngsters who are right for the scheme.

"We're looking for people who are motivated to change their lives," says Turok. "We're also looking for people with some sort of stability in their lives, and someone – whether that's a partner, a parent or a community leader – who's prepared to support them."

"We don't take the very worst offenders, we take the next level up. Most of the time they're just disaffected young people with very little money, looking for some direction, guidance, leadership and opportunity."

"Qualifications are a non-issue, and we regularly take on students with criminal records."

FUNDING

So far, TAG has been funded by the Department for Work and Pensions' Future Jobs Fund. However, the government announced in June that the Future Jobs Fund was going to be axed as part of cutbacks. "I'm not too worried," says Turok. "My understanding



Alesha Dixon leads a class at LA Fitness, the chain that's led the way in the TAG scheme

"The kids are so grateful to be given an opportunity that it makes one feel very humble"

is that, while the Future Jobs Fund is being terminated in April 2011, there will be a new scheme to take its place. There will be less money available, but the government has given a commitment that there will be enough funding to enable TAG to achieve its objectives. I'm confident that we'll be able to continue the work we're doing."

The cost of the programme is £6,500 per student, but Turok says the return on investment is 23 per cent in the first year and 124 per cent by the third year. This is calculated based on the income tax paid by students in employment and on savings in benefits. "As well as this return on investment, the spin-off benefits include reduced gun crime, knife crime, drug crime and less claims on the Department of Health," says Turok.

The aims for TAG over the next year are to achieve the target of 2,000 students in full-time education by April, to continue to grow the brand and to attract more partners. "We'll continue to build on our relationships with our key partners, but I'm looking for new partners, and the opportunity is there for our industry to get involved," says Turok. "For anyone who's interested, I say, come and see us. Let's talk."

The team is also working on developing new models. A pilot is just finishing which will see TAG graduates

teaching children during after-school clubs and in the school holidays, and the idea of getting graduates to run free exercise classes in their local parks is also being discussed.

In the longer term, Turok would like to see the TAG model rolled out to other industries. "This is not just about health and fitness. We see TAG expanding into a variety of other sub sectors," he explains.

"The beauty of the TAG model is that it could be replicated anywhere. We're actually talking to the leisure sector, the retail sector and the hospitality sector at the moment."

Turok says he's motivated by making a difference, and he's also clearly enjoying the work he does with TAG immensely. "I find it very emotional seeing these young kids doing so well," he says. "They are so grateful to be given an opportunity that it makes one feel very humble."

"They come from deprived and sometimes abusive backgrounds, they might be involved with drugs and crime and gangs. When they come to us they're scared all of the time. Suddenly they have the opportunity to be a real part of society. It's just fantastic to see."



magali robathan
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

event preview



Creating change

This year's IHRSA European Congress features top speakers from both within and outside the global fitness industry. Representing the medical community, surgeon and educator Mario Alonso Puig gives us a glimpse into his general session on the impact of exercise on our health. Rhianon Howells reports

As the demands of ageing and obese populations put pressure on healthcare systems throughout the developed world, the move towards a preventative healthcare model – and the role the fitness industry can play in making this a reality – is an increasingly hot topic. In light of this, Dr Mario Alonso Puig's choice of title for his general session at the IHRSA European Congress (18–21 October) in Barcelona, Spain, is particularly timely: 'Exercise is Medicine: Unleashing Our Potential and Creating Change'.

maximising our potential

A renowned specialist in general surgery and gastroenterology, native Spaniard Alonso is a fellow of Harvard University Medical School as well as a member of the New York Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

As a neuroscientist, Alonso became interested in how the way we think affects our mental and physical health, and he started giving lectures and seminars to companies on this topic.

So what does exercise have to do with 'unleashing our inner potential and creating change'? First, says Alonso, it's essential to understand the relationship between our minds and our brains. "Our mind is the software that programmes our brain, but sometimes that software is dysfunctional," he explains.

"As a result, we don't maximise our brain's true potential. What makes a problem insurmountable is not the problem itself but our way of thinking about it. This is no "beautiful message," he says. "There's

**Mario Alonso
Puig: A fellow of
Harvard
Medical School**



Exercise reduces anxiety, by releasing oxytocin, endorphins and dopamine

real science behind it. Our emotions are translated into molecules and hormones that affect the genetic material."

the role of exercise

When it comes to fixing our mental software, exercise is a crucial part of the process. "We're living in an era plagued by anxiety," says Alonso. "When we're anxious, the stress hormone cortisol builds up in our bodies, causing neurons in an area of our brain called the hippocampus to die. The hippocampus is important for helping us not to panic, and also for learning new skills and concepts – you can imagine the impact losing a number of those neurons has on our ability to cope with challenges."

"During exercise, we release hormones such as oxytocin, endorphins and dopamine, which reduce anxiety. This lowers the level of cortisol in our system, allowing new neurons to replace those that have died."

As well as its impact on mental capability, exercise can have powerful implications for physical health. "All kinds of disease can be alleviated for a

very simple reason: exercise increases appetite, which is essential for getting the nutrients you need; it improves sleep patterns, and it boosts the immune system," says Alonso. "Exercise is valuable for fighting disease, but its true value is its ability to reduce our chances of getting sick and boosting vitality."

In terms of what the fitness industry can do to promote this message, Alonso has the following advice. "There's a wealth of research which backs up the importance of what [health clubs] are doing. They should be more aware of this and willing to share it. In these times of uncertainty, people really need to understand the impact exercise can have on their lives."

ABOUT THE 10TH ANNUAL IHRSA EUROPEAN CONGRESS

Venue: Princesa Sofia Hotel, Barcelona, Spain
Dates: 18–21 October 2010
Details: www.ihrsa.org/congress, or call +1 617 951 0055

"I'm the club manager.
No, I didn't attend the
training and the people
who did attend have left."

"My computer
is running
really slowly."

"My computer
won't switch
on."

"I need a comparison
report for a board meeting
in 10 minutes and I don't
know where to start!"

"It's not
printing
anything!"

the zen of software maintenance

When it comes to resolving problems with your club management software, the suppliers' helpdesks can of course help – but your own staff knowledge is also key. Sean James reports

The quotes noted above, and many more like them, represent over 60 per cent of the calls that come in to the software support departments of club management software suppliers.

Nowadays, most problems can be easily fixed; with the evolution of online 'desktop sharing', the speed of incident resolution is much faster now than it was just a few years ago. Possibly thanks to this, the expectation tends to be that, if there's a computer problem in a health club, software support will be able to fix the problem instantly – which of course leads to frustration when that doesn't happen. Sometimes the fix can be just a button press, but more often than not, software support will need to do a full set of checks and diagnostics – and that may take time.

complex systems

There's a reason why your software support team often has to go through such thorough and lengthy checks before an issue can be resolved: software programmes are just not as simple as they're generally perceived to be. Software programmes are not unlike cars in many respects, particularly in terms of the number of working parts and concurrent processes that have to happen to make them work. When a fault occurs, software mechanics have to go through a similar process of diagnostic checks that a car mechanic has to go through.

Health club management software is designed to process transactions, incidents and interactions between users, staff and the membership or sales database – across computers, sometimes multiple computers and peripherals







including turnstiles, receipt printers, cash drawers and more.

There are thousands upon thousands of lines of computer code making up a club management software programme, and programmers and software support are constantly having to adapt the software code to keep up with latest operating system patches and upgrades from the likes of Microsoft, as well as drivers for printers and turnstiles, data security and protection laws and much more.

To highlight this, think of how many times a week Microsoft Windows installs on your computer a 'new update'. Software suppliers have to test against these new updates every time one is released, and then revise their software code if they find that the latest update throws up any kind of issue.

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Good software operation is
not too far removed from
good car operation

▶ best practice operations

Continuing the car analogy, good software operation is not too far removed from good car operation. Before you drive a car you need to know how it works, know the rules of the road, have fuel and know where you want to go. Before you can drive you need to learn some theory, passing both theory and practical tests.

Likewise, with club management software, health club operators need to know what the software can do, what it can't do, how it works and the rules of the road. They need to be trained and possibly even pass a theory and practical test set by a software trainer.

Equally, if something goes wrong, they need to know what to do, who to call and what is likely to happen.

With all of this knowledge in place, they can then realistically expect to get the best out of their software, as well as out of software support.

Good software operations require understanding and acknowledgement of six key elements of a health club computer environment:

1. The club management software and what it does: There should be a member of staff (preferably the club manager, as turnover of managers is lower than among other staff) who knows the software back-to-front, what it can do and how it works.
2. The membership database and the quality/detail of this data: A club

management software system should have a dedicated administrator who's specifically responsible for the accuracy and order of the membership database. The cleaner and more well-ordered your data, the more effective your data operations, for membership and sales.

3. The computers the software runs on: You may have one or multiple computers. Whatever the situation, it's imperative to have a supplier on-hand who knows your computers and computer network and who can quickly and easily attend a computer emergency. It's unlikely that software support will be able to help you if you have a computer or network problem, so make sure you have someone on board who can. Remember that your staff will likely use applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Hotmail and Twitter, all of which will interact with the computer and leave their mark.

4. Additional items of hardware controlled by the software: In addition to knowing who your computer suppliers are, you need to know who supplies your turnstiles, receipt printers, cameras, till drawers and so on. You need to know how these work and how they interact with each other, and who to contact in the event of anything going wrong.

5. Staff training to use the software: Have a member of staff who knows the software well and is able to train new staff when they join the club – ideally an assistant or deputy manager. They



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Clubs should have a member of staff who's able to train other staff on the software

should be responsible for working with the club manager to know the software system, maintain any operating manuals and deal with software support in the event of an emergency.

6. Software support in the event of a problem: Don't shirk on this – even the best software users won't always be able to fix a problem, and there will be times when you need support. However, with good software users in your club, the relationship between your staff and the software supplier support desk will be a positive and efficient one. Problems will be quickly diagnosed and fixed and your club will run smoothly.

software support resources

Throughout the process of installation, club management software suppliers will gladly advise and, in most cases, assist in the set-up of the various structures and processes necessary for good club management software operations, covering all of the six areas described.

In terms of supporting your software operations, the software suppliers provide an extensive array of support resources. Generally these cover four main areas: a helpdesk, upgrades, training, and knowledge resources. Let's look at each of these in turn.

helpdesk

The helpdesk comprises a team of people available for software users to contact in the event of a software issue. Modern technologies like desktop sharing mean that the helpdesk team is able to see what you see and identify a solution quickly and easily.

Clarity Commerce, for example, provides a multilingual helpdesk service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in order to assist a number of international clients as well as supporting a huge number of UK clubs and centres.

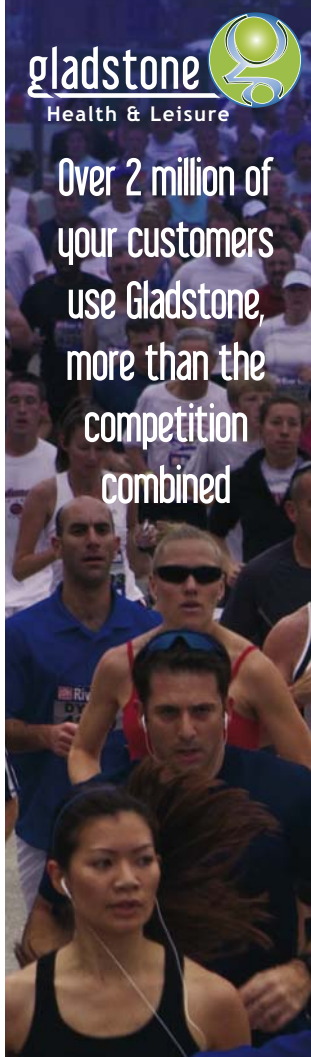
Utilising industry-leading telecommunication tools, telephone calls to the Clarity support desk are answered on average within 35 seconds by a team of frontline analysts.

The aim is for at least 65 per cent of issues to be resolved by this frontline team, after which they're escalated to Clarity's in-house second-line support team, or to a third-party 'resolver group', which is able to deal with hardware or network maintenance.

All incidents are logged into Clarity's customer support system and assigned a unique ticket number. The ticket remains the responsibility of the support desk even when escalated to third parties. Once a resolution has

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► been achieved, the support desk will contact the original caller to ensure they're happy the issue is resolved and for the ticket to be closed.

upgrades

Club management software is often in a state of constant development in order to optimise efficiency, as well as to keep up with the latest Microsoft Windows updates and more. This means that, from time to time, new version releases of your software may be available.

Usually, under a support contract, sending a trained technician to a club to upgrade to the latest version is a chargeable item, and the responsibility of the client. However, Xn Leisure Systems offers free upgrades to all of its customers with a software support contract, which means its clients benefit from the software's ongoing development enhancements.

Other suppliers' support desks do offer telephone support if any issues occur during upgrades; this is covered by the support contract, but it's advisable to let your supplier know when you are doing the upgrade.

training

Training is nearly always provided when software is installed, and software suppliers are always able to provide a package of training where required after installation, whether that's a package of telephone and web training or onsite training for new staff or as a quick refresher course.

With over 6,000 clients in 52 countries, Fiserv Club Solutions is one of the largest health club management software suppliers in the world. Helpdesk performance is constantly evaluated and, in order to provide a practical solution to the number of 'training issue' calls that the helpdesk receives, free online module training is provided to customers on a monthly basis. This free training is all carried out online, where a trainer runs through a module and has an open free-phone conference line with attendees.

Using a desktop sharing application, users log in to any training session they want to attend.

Using a desktop sharing application, staff can log in to any training session they like



knowledge resources

Club management software systems are hugely capable programmes covering a wide range of business-critical operations, from point of sale and cash reconciliation to membership billing and communication, as well as many other wonderful features and functions.

Software suppliers usually provide extensive manuals covering effective operation, but more often than not these manuals are online in the form of a digital knowledge base.

SDA Solutions has embraced today's social media, providing an interactive community approach to its product knowledge base; this runs alongside its other, more standard, array of software support services.

SDA's online knowledge base is an ever-evolving support resource built by SDA's technical and support teams as well as by SDA customers. Both groups constantly contribute ideas and

knowledge of the products to provide a helpful, interactive and ever-growing support resource for all.

vital knowledge

In the event that something goes wrong with a computer or with club management software, the aim for all parties will always be to minimise business disruption. This is why it's important to have a solid software operations structure, so that all parties have a thorough understanding of the whole computer environment, as well as some realistic expectations for problem resolution.

Good software operations will make business operations more effective and efficient – this of course is what club management systems are designed to do – and software suppliers have a lot of resources in software support available.

However, above all else, just like driving a car, club management software users – and particularly new users – need knowledge and training. They need to pass the software theory and driving tests and, crucially, need to know what to do if something goes wrong.



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healthclub@leisuremedia.com

making a

SPLASH

Kate Cracknell asks the experts for their thoughts on what's new in marketing, and what operators can do to get the biggest impact for their budget

ANDY KIDD, MD, HATTRICK MARKETING

Digital marketing for short-term revenue and tactical lead generation



Over the last year, Hatrick Marketing has been increasing the focus of its clients' marketing campaigns towards digital activity that delivers both short-term revenue and new membership leads.

The return on investment in these cases is measured both by the number of names, email addresses and mobile numbers that can be used on an ongoing basis by the sales team to close memberships and, more importantly, by the revenue directly

generated from the activity itself. This is a significant evolution from the days of sales teams simply conducting outreach activity and giving away 'one day free' passes in return for data.

By using third-party online partners such as Voucher Cloud or lastminute.com – as well as numerous others – together with improved, campaign-specific search engine optimisation of the client's website, we're able to set goals for data capture from our client's website. This, depending on the offer, generates

immediate sales and valuable prospect data that can be used on an ongoing basis for communicating offers, trials or general news updates.

For example, for the club at Cadbury House – the FLAME Award winner – we recently ran an online Spa Voucher promotion at a value of £10 per voucher. The result was over £10,000-worth of voucher sales for day visits to the club, with more than 1,000 new potential members visiting the club between April and August this year.



The Gadget Show recently used an augmented reality digital poster



ABIGAIL HARRIS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, BIG FISH PR

Interactive media for involvement, data and a 'wow' factor



Interactive gaming has become a global phenomenon and interactive fitness – think Wii Fit and ZigZag equipment – is hot on its heels. But now it seems interactivity is set to be the latest marketing 'must have' too.

The presenters on Channel 5's *Gadget Show* were recently challenged to promote the programme using cutting-edge technology. Presenter Suzi Perry put a hi-tech spin on old-fashioned posters, creating interactive

bus stops with touch-screen billboards, some dispensing chocolate mints, others with the ability to vote for your favourite presenter or play games such as jigsaw puzzles and pairs.

But the pièce de résistance was the digital poster with an augmented reality pop-up message, where a virtual Suzi appeared – like Princess Leia's holographic message in *Star Wars* – to deliver her promotion. This eye-catching concept was exciting, got people actively involved

and collated valuable data.

The opportunities this could present to the fitness industry are endless. I'm not suggesting we encourage prospects to take the bus and reward them with chocolates, but imagine an interactive high street 'health hub' where games give you the lowdown on your fitness, virtual trainers offer advice and encouragement, and prospects are pointed in the direction of your club.

DEBBI MOORE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, BIG WAVE MEDIA

Harnessing new technology for micro-marketing



Social media, e-marketing and Bluetooth are leading a culture shift towards digital information and engagement that grows apace year-on-year. In answer to squeezing every penny from a marketing budget, the current trend focuses on micro-marketing – engaging with audiences and targeting individual consumers.

Sites like Facebook and Twitter offer an immediacy and a connection with consumers like never before; one-third of Big Wave's web traffic is

now generated through social media and clients such as Slough Community Leisure use it well to gather feedback on facilities and activities, offering free passes in exchange for engagement.

The pace of technology has lived up to older streams of marketing. E-campaign software is now widely available and systems like Big Wave's 'E-campaigns' allow users to easily manage databases, send personalised messages and track every email and link opened. In mobile technology, apps for the

iPhone have risen to prominence, generating profit or providing a useful tool that doubles as a soft sell.

Bluetooth is still on the rise and one of our current projects is rolling out a Bluetooth marketing system: companies hire a portable gadget that transmits free advertising to any active phone within 350m. The possibilities for outreach is staggering as campaigns urge passers by to pop in, sign up or visit a website.



The Change4Life TV ads might be ending, but the campaign still holds potential, says Wright – see also Talkback, p22

DAVE WRIGHT, CEO, CREATIVE FITNESS MARKETING

The continuing value of Change4Life

Never before have we, as an industry, had such an ideal opportunity to benefit from national press coverage and government marketing spend as we have through the Change4Life initiative. This campaign – designed to encourage the nation to “eat well, move more and live longer” – is exactly what we embody with our health clubs.

Clubs should capitalise on that free marketing like a surfer capitalises on a big swell in the sea. Firstly, join Change4Life as a partner, then work with other partners – such as shopping centres and food retailers – to get your club into the eyes, ears and hearts of your potential market.

There should be a reason why someone must respond to your marketing, so include a call to action prompting them to visit or join your

club. Combine multiple-exposure marketing through newspaper ads, direct mail pieces, corporate letters, shopping stalls, hand-outs at local schools and presentations at weight loss groups. All of this should be linked in to Change4Life; if your marketing ties in with the government's initiative, then when a person sees Change4Life in your town, they should think of your club as the delivery solution.

The Change4Life TV ads might be stopping, but the rest of the campaign is continuing – on food packaging, through commercial partners and so on. Given its incredible brand awareness, which is up near 90 per cent, from a marketing perspective we'd be mad not to get involved.



ADRIAN MARKS, MD, ENJOY MARKETING

The internet as the central focus of a marketing strategy

For the last two decades, fitness clubs have led the way in local marketing with sales-led, proactive marketing campaigns. Now most clubs are finding themselves having to play catch-up to survive as sales are becoming harder and harder to generate. Clubs will have to adopt a web-centric approach to their marketing, and their business in general, if they're to continue to prosper over the coming years.

With all the affordable improvements in broadband speeds and technology, the internet's ability to help generate and retain business has grown exponentially. Just having a website is no longer an option – it must be the central focus of a club's marketing strategy, as the majority of

new membership enquiries start with a visit to a website or via a search engine such as Google.

The budget concept is leading the way through necessity, but every club must embrace this new technology as the internet, if used effectively, becomes a 24/7 sales person.

Clubs that thrive over the coming years will wholeheartedly embrace some, if not all, of the following: 'pay per click' advertising, Google Local Business, 'join online' facilities, online self-administered memberships, data capture, email auto-responder tools for retention, regular and constant email marketing, online video tours, online member-get-member referral generation and the subsequent 'thank you gift' administration.



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enjoy!

Pounding the treadmill can get a bit, dare we say it, boring for some members. Kath Hudson looks at some of the latest products designed to put the spring back into their step

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

In a survey conducted in December 2009 by Precor – in conjunction with Leisure-net Solutions – 66 per cent of respondents said they got bored during their CV workout, with 10 per cent saying they felt bored every time. Many of them complained about the in-house music and found “pop videos featuring near naked women gyrating irritating”.

Only 14 per cent said they never used any kind of entertainment while exercising, while 51 per cent said they would spend more time on the CV equipment if it provided entertainment and motivated them.

“It’s vital that the fitness industry provides equipment that meets with

member expectations and enhances their enjoyment,” says Miles Rimell, Precor’s head of marketing. “We’re continually updating our offering and aim to provide operators with a variety of entertainment options which they can make available to their members.”

Precor has a number of established entertainment products. ChannelCast TV offers a range of channels, while the Personal Entertainment Player (PEP) allows members to upload content from an iPod to the Personal Viewing Screens on the equipment, as well as to upload workouts to the Nike+ website.

The latest innovation, launched in August, is a dual tuner for the Personal Viewing Screens, which allows clubs to

utilise their in-house analogue system as well as introducing freeview channels.

Pulse also launched a new CV range at LIW last month, with self-powered screens offering 50 freeview channels.

media access

Currently only available in the US, but set for a UK launch in 2011, Netpulse has an exciting new platform – the Netpulse Media Network – that allows members to bring up their own playlist, plug in their iPod or iPhone, connect to social media and choose from a massive library of TV programmes and videos, as well as save their workout results for further analysis.

The company predicts that this workout data will be useful as proof of



Technogym (left and above) and Precor (right) are both investing in new technology to keep members interested



participation to show employers, or healthcare providers in order to get a discount on insurance. Meanwhile the social media function allows members to go on a virtual run with someone in another part of the country.

"Everyone takes their mobile everywhere now, so they have access to content wherever they are – except in the gym, which is the one time you want access to media," says Bryan Arp, CEO of Netpulse, who expects the product to have a big impact on motivation levels.

And it's not just members who will benefit from this technology. It can help inform clubs' buying decisions by tracking what equipment is being used and looking at the workout data. It also shows how much individual members are exercising, helping clubs to identify those who are in danger of lapsing.

The platform is currently being rolled out across some of the larger US health club chains, but Netpulse has also struck deals with a number of major equipment manufacturers – details as yet undisclosed – to embed the technology into the latest versions of their equipment in time for the European launch early next year.

"We're working on UK launch plans and there's a great deal of interest," says Arp. "We believe our platform creates unique opportunities that will change the criteria consumers look for when choosing a fitness centre."

Star Trac Coach offers on-screen coaching from a professional running coach



web-enabled

Last year, Technogym launched Visio, an upgrade to its digital platform – Wellness TV – which provides entertainment, allows members to monitor results and guides them through their workout. The latest version, VisioWeb, includes web access and is available this month. It can be retrofitted to Excite+ equipment.

As well as giving users access to live TV, radio, iPod, USB multimedia devices and games, the touchscreen display also shows the lapsed time, calories, distance, heart rate, speed and goals for the workout. There are a variety of exercise programmes on offer and different interfaces for different categories of user, from beginners to the more advanced.

"With increasing focus on technology within fitness, the inspiration for Visio's development was to deliver the ultimate

digital platform to increase motivation, show results and provide entertainment in a simple and intuitive way while users work out," says Technogym's Visio product manager Craig Swyers.

virtual reality

And then there's the whole category of interactive offerings, with exercisers taken into a virtual training environment via their personal screens.

Trixxer launched its Sony Playstation bike at LIW, with users able to play Playstation's race-based games on-screen while they cycle. It also launched an updated version of its Xdream bike at the show, with a ghost racing mode that allows users to race against themselves.

Meanwhile Matrix Fitness Systems launched a video programme, Virtual Active, in the summer, which allows users to work out to cinema-quality videos of iconic destinations, including the Las Vegas strip and the Hollywood Walk of Fame, while the cardio equipment automatically adjusts to the elevation changes seen on screen.

MD for Matrix Fitness UK, Jon Johnston, believes this is a great way to give members a new experience and keep them engaged. Compatible with Matrix 7xe Series cardio equipment, it's sold with five videos, although many more are available to buy.

And InStyle carried out the first European installation of its ▶

The fitness industry is notoriously hesitant to accept new changes in technology

► virtual plane simulator last month, at Cox Green Leisure Centre in Maidenhead, Berkshire. The Dogfight virtual plane simulator is connected to a recumbent exercise bike and is designed to bridge the gap between exercise and entertainment. Users propel the plane by pedalling and control the simulator via spring-loaded handles. Graphics and sounds "instantly transport the user to the breathtaking world of virtual flight".

There's a choice of futuristic aircraft in which users can undertake their mission, with environments including a hostile winter landscape, a tropical archipelago, a cityscape and a desert. Once the player has mastered the art of flight, battle commences: users compete against other players in the gym for an adrenaline-pumped game of aerial combat.

Duncan Lawson, director of Instyle Fitness, says: "The fitness industry is notoriously hesitant to accept new changes in technology, but doing so is vital if leisure centres are to maintain interest from new generations. Today's young gym-goers demand to be entertained and kept mentally motivated during a workout; Dogfight is the perfect solution."

guided training

But is there a danger that too much entertainment might put people off their workout? Star Trac seems to think so and has responded with a personalised workout led by a professional running coach. Offering more than one million workout options, the Star Trac Coach programme has been embedded into the E-TRxe treadmill and goes hand-in-hand with the increased industry focus on the benefits of personal training.

"Treadmill users tend to choose their workout programme, then listen to their iPod or watch the TV, so never engage 100 per cent in their workout. They zone out, concentrating more on what they're listening to or watching rather than pushing themselves further, increasing speed, intensity or inclination," says Star Trac Europe MD

Matt Pengelly. "Star Trac Coach engages with them from the beginning of their workout to the end. This is the first programme to offer real-life training to each individual user, providing them with a better workout experience and helping them achieve greater results."

Pengelly says the launch was inspired by the success of the eSpinner, a Spin bike for the gym floor that offers instructor-led workouts members can follow in their own time, via the personal screen.

MyRide, with its Livestrong-branded bike distributed by Matrix, also offers coaching in the latest version of its software. Launched at LIW, MyRide v3.0 offers high-quality graphics, with a range of scenery through which to cycle; a MyRide app store will also be launched, offering more rides for download. However, the key focus is on coaching. Workout programmes can be entirely personalised, and encouragement is based on a modified version of RPE (rate

A Precor survey found that 66 per cent of members get bored during their CV routines

of perceived exertion) to ensure no user groups are alienated.

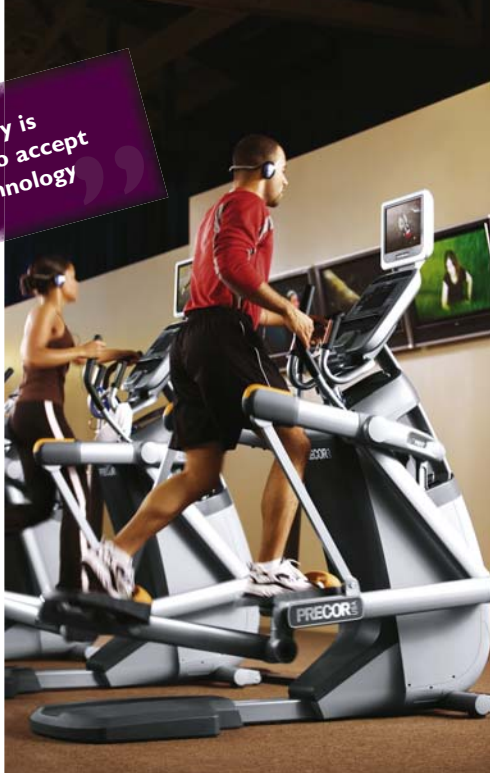
Also offering motivational advice are two new CDs from Audiofuel. These take members through well-constructed running programmes: high tempo music specially composed to match the running stride, combined with voice coaching.

staying relevant

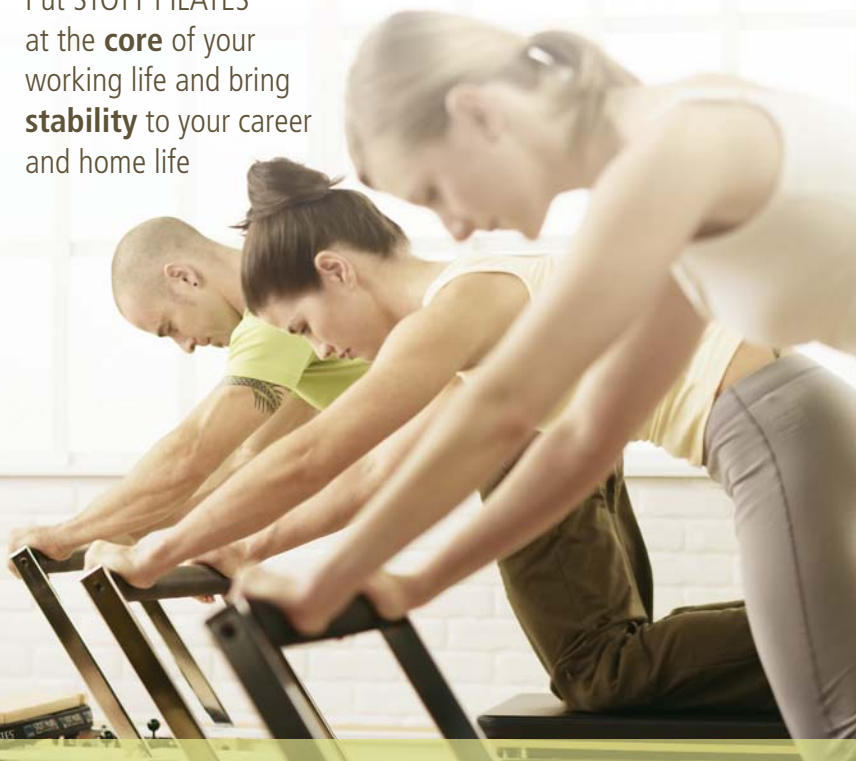
People are now used to carrying around their own stock of music, checking social media accounts whenever they want and watching their favourite TV programmes when it suits them. Clubs will have to embrace this shift in behaviour to keep the 'i-generation' motivated.



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new
opening



ONE-STOP SHOP

Rebecca Douglas reports on the new Premier Training Academy in north London

Finsbury Park is one of the busiest tube stations in London and, as you walk out of the Wells Terrace exit, you find a small but bustling street, dotted with small independent shops and outlets. Just opposite the station, nestled among all this activity, is a state-of-the-art health and fitness educational training centre – the new flagship training venue for Premier Training International (PTI) and one of the first fitness job shops in the country.

When PTI was told that its existing training site in Finsbury Park was due to be demolished as part of a multi-million pound regeneration project by Islington Council, the London team – and indeed their students – were faced with an uncertain future.

"It was a shock and, in the early days, extremely worrying, but this was the best thing to have happened to us," says Simon Rhodes-Chamberlin, academy

manager of the London training centre. "We were reaching capacity in our old building. It was a great facility but, at 743sq m (8,000 sq ft), it was becoming a bit of a squeeze. We knew we needed somewhere bigger, but in the same area. As luck would have it we found our new home within weeks – and the cherry on the cake was that it was around the corner and in a high street location."

The London Academy is the first PTI centre to be based in a purpose-built facility. Mark Botha, chief operating officer for Premier Training International, says: "We traditionally benefit from space in health clubs, which are fantastic facilities, but our new centre allows us greater flexibility."

training facilities

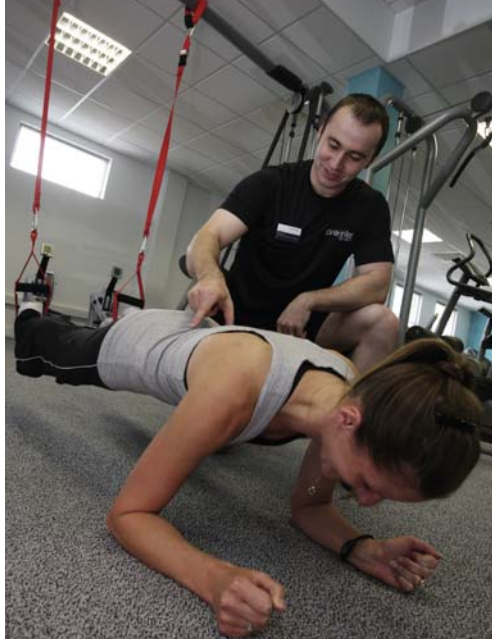
The design and build stage of the refit was started in January 2010 and the project was completed on time and on budget (£550,000), with the team moving in to

its 1,132sq m (12,187 sq ft) home on 5 April 2010. The official opening was in June and since then it's been business as usual, with students graduating every four weeks, ready to embark on their new careers in the fitness industry.

"We train more than 500 students each year and have a 96 per cent pass rate," says Rhodes-Chamberlin. PTI also guarantees its graduates interviews and meetings with all the local employers towards the end of the course.

Traditional full-time courses, such as the diploma in personal training, run five days a week, taking 10 weeks to complete and comprising classroom- and gym-based programmes. At any one time the centre will host three full-time courses, each catering for 15–25 students.

"We also aim to lead the way on CPD, through courses such as our recently launched Power Clubs qualification and by delivering training in the latest fitness crazes," adds Botha.



Matt Brown, senior fitness trainer at Premier, talks about the current training trends: "As you would expect, our full-time courses are largely made up of young people, mainly males in their mid-20s.

"However, we've seen an increase in blended courses over the past 12 months, which allow students to spread the modules over a course of nine months. The demographic here is very much people who are planning to change careers and people balancing family life, with around 60 per cent of students being women."

Rhodes-Chamberlin continues: "In 2011, we're looking to shorten our full-time course from 10 weeks to eight, but at the same time increase the content and the quality. Working with the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM), we'll be in a position to deliver truly international qualifications here in the UK."

Designed absolutely with students in mind, to ensure the richest possible learning experience, the centre is split into distinct zones so students can learn in quieter areas of the building. The teaching rooms are spacious, light and airy, staffed by a teaching and support team of 16 that offers a wide range of specialities.

The technology is also first-class. Interactive white boards are the stand-out attraction of each classroom, promoting student participation and allowing the trainer to access the internet to bring the lessons to life.

fitness facilities

There's also a 186sq m (2,000 sq ft), 35-station gym at the centre, featuring brand new Technogym equipment, which sits alongside an airy studio. The facilities are currently for use only by students, but PTI aims to open this brand new gym to the public too. At



The gym has the capacity for 750 members, providing real-life case studies for students

the moment timescales are not definite and are subject to planning permission, but Botha is committed to this opportunity. "If everything goes to plan I envisage pre-sale starting on 1 January next year, with an official launch in March," he explains.

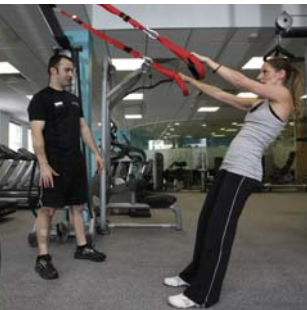
"We have the capacity to welcome 750 members and the price point will be around £30-£35 a month. From a latent demand study, which we've already carried out, we know that 65 per cent of the local population fits this price point, and 87,000 people live or work within a one-mile catchment area. We don't see our facility competing with the big players, but instead see it as a complementary facility for local people.

"We're happy with our national estate and this is not a model we're looking to roll out nationwide, but we are committed to our flagship centre and want to ensure it flies. We think this concept is a win-win situation – real-life case studies for our students and trainers to work with, while the public benefit from working out with our PTs."

With students and teaching the focus at the centre, Botha talks about how the team will balance the commercial gym with the education programme: "Most people use a gym before 8am and after

We've seen an increase in blended courses over the past year; 60 per cent of these students are women

The students will use the gym between 10am and 4pm – outside of peak times for local members



The Job Shop attracts potential recruits, who can then be directed upstairs for the relevant training

► 5pm and our students will be in the gym between 10am and 4pm, so the cross-over should be limited."

the job shop

Meanwhile a job shop is located on the ground floor, underneath the academy, staffed full-time by PTI careers advisors. It has a large shop window onto the high street; as well as job opportunities for graduates and students, the shop is targeting the general public, encouraging people to consider a career in the health and fitness industry. With the academy upstairs, potential recruits can witness first-hand what it would be like to train with PTI, and can be referred onto an appropriate training course by the career advisors.

Botha talks about the light bulb moment for the job shop: "PTI has a great reputation among those in the fitness sector, but we wanted to take our brand values and messages about life in the health and fitness industry to a wider audience. And when we toured our new location and learned about the retail area downstairs it just clicked – why not open a job shop for our students?"

He continues: "The job shop officially opened its doors at the beginning of August and it's already proving popular. Our students, past and present, can use it to browse current job opportunities and get career advice. It also acts as a shop front and offers insight into Premier Training and the health and fitness industry to people who aren't familiar with it and who are considering a new

career." The job shop also represents a good opportunity for employers, as there's no charge to advertise jobs.

looking forward

As public sector funding for training and education is cut, it's going to fall on the shoulders of the operators to ensure that their fitness teams are trained and developed – and the operational experience of Botha and global marketing manager Victoria Branch, who both joined PTI from Leisure Connection, will help ensure PTI delivers the support operators need.

Botha explains: "We understand the challenges clubs and operators face and we know the issues keeping them awake at night. We're perfectly placed to work in partnership with operators to ensure we're upskilling and enhancing their workforce, but at the same time achieving value for money."

"We understand what the industry wants. When it comes to PTs you need someone with excellent knowledge, but at the same time someone who's personable, friendly and approachable. We spend time with our students teaching them the softer skills they need and preparing them for the world of work. We deliver 'fit for purpose' PTs with the best expertise."

Rhodes-Chamberlin continues: "So far the new centre has been a tremendous success. We've achieved an uplift of 80 per cent in product sales over the past 12 months, with much of this a direct result of the new facility. A great deal of our business is generated through word of mouth and approximately 50 per cent

of our students come to us via referrals.

"The objectives for the new site are linked to revenue and we're on target there, but as well as the financial side we want to be positioned as a one-stop shop for trainers and employers alike."

As important as referrals are to Premier, however, the organisation took the step to ensure a strategic, considered approach was taken. This is being driven by Branch, who says: "When you say Premier Training to someone in the industry, they instantly recognise the brand, but few people know of our complete offering and the consumer market certainly isn't aware."

"We're about to deliver our first nationwide consumer campaign, which is a call to action and promotes 'a job for life'. As well as the typical channels to consumer, we'll also be working on getting our messages out virally and via social media."

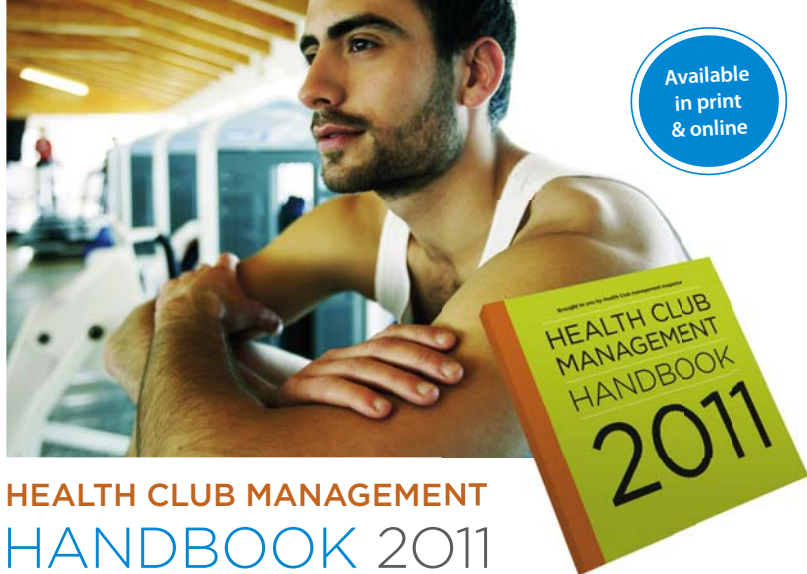
In addition to extending its reach across the UK, PTI has its sights set internationally, as Botha explains: "As challenging as the next 12 months will be for Premier in London and across the UK, it's also very exciting. We're also moving our operation abroad, setting up training centres across Europe and as far away as Saudi Arabia."

Premier Training International certainly plans to push at the boundaries when it comes to education and training. It will be an interesting company to watch in 2011.



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Colin Milner reports on the key discussion topics at the ICAA's recent, inaugural, UK event

Get out the trumpets, paint the placards and line the streets – the celebrations are about to begin. On 1 January 2011, the first of the Boomers will turn 65. This generation fascinates the media, and we can expect a parade of stories about the Boomer milestone throughout the coming year. Just imagine how many times journalists might repeat that “65 is the new 45” mantra.

We can look forward, too, to reports about the continued proliferation of products and services geared to helping fool Mother Nature – from wrinkle creams and fat-fighting drugs, to brain stimulants and longevity treatments. No matter how you slice it, the 2011 milestone is sure to set the pace for years to come, just as we saw post-1996 – the year the Boomers turned 50.

But what does all this really mean for you and your business? Simply put, it represents untold opportunities!

The first such opportunity is the millions, if not billions, of pounds we will gain in free publicity, as the media continues to rethink and realign on concepts of ageing. However, this free

marketing is only of benefit to you if you have the right programmes, staff, equipment and facility designs in place.

UK FOCUS

To help set the stage for the impending new dawn, the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) – the world's largest active ageing association – ran its first ever UK event on 13 July this year, in partnership with Vida Wellness and the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health.

In this feature, we outline some of the key messages that attendees walked away from the event with. We trust that you too will benefit from these insights.

Because of the tireless work by researchers worldwide, we're continuing to learn that age itself has a much smaller impact on how we could live in our later years than is commonly believed. We now know that the opportunity for a better, healthier life is possible at any age. Cue the marketeers!

With the evidence growing that lifestyle is the trump card to combat disease, prolong life and achieve a better quality of life, governments,

communities and businesses have begun creating more lifestyle opportunities to help the population age well. Some of these options include:

wellness

The two trillion dollar global wellness industry is being driven in part by the Boomers' insatiable appetite to feel and look youthful. Because of this, you may wish to place a greater emphasis on the multi-dimensional model of wellness – physical, spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, environmental and vocational – instead of just fitness. Examples range from brain fitness programmes for the cognitive dimension, to meditation gardens for the spiritual dimension. No matter which, providing programmes that focus on the seven dimensions of wellness is good for business, as older populations find these services more compelling, based on their life stage.

fitness to function

For the past few years, functional fitness has been a hot entity in the fitness industry. Moving forward you may wish to hone in on a tailored version of this

A basic strength training programme can help maintain older adults' ability to continue with their normal lives

when serving the older population. That's right – many older adults need your services to help them achieve their basic activities of daily living.

Let's use strength as an example. By the age of 80, 46 per cent of older adults cannot lift 10lbs. This inability has a profound effect on the lives of these individuals, from playing with their grand-kids to carrying grocery-filled shopping bags. This can, in most cases, be altered with a basic strength training programme, enabling them to achieve the fitness levels they need to function.

energising your members

If you're like most people, you may feel a little sluggish on some days of the week. As we age, 82 per cent of older adults state that they wish to maintain their energy levels to help them age on their own terms. As a matter of fact, 69 per cent of older people exercise to gain energy – yet lack of energy is a major barrier to exercise.

The opportunity? Offer energy-boosting programmes for a population that's seeking alternative solutions. You may be asking yourself: what is an energy-boosting programme, and where do I start? Start with a simple questionnaire to establish why your



**46 PER CENT OF OLDER BRITS DON'T FEEL
ADVERTISING IS GEARED TOWARDS THEM.
WHEN ATTEMPTED, IT'S STEREOTYPED**

customer lacks energy. The reason could be as simple as poor scheduling or poor diet. It could also be a medical issue, so be sure to work hand-in-hand with their doctor during this phase.

Once you've established why they lack energy, you can create a programme to help them regain it. Examples of this could be life/time management, stress reduction or assessing social contact, as a lack of the latter can create depression and a feeling of fatigue.

Be sure to add in a nutritional component and, of course, fitness and a sleep regime. By incorporating these elements, you now have a marketable Energy Boosting Programme.

MARKETING

Another topic covered at the ICAA event was the challenge we face in marketing to older people – especially given the fact that 46 per cent of older Brits don't feel that advertising or marketing is geared towards them, and when it is attempted, 50 per cent of this group say that advertising is often stereotyped or patronising.

To set yourself apart from the competition, you will want to become more relevant to an older population. To accomplish this, incorporate images of regular older people into your advertising and marketing while telling a story about how they can maintain or improve their quality of life with your offering, and be sure to make it fun. A key point to remember: this effort will be foiled if your marketing message does not reinforce what you actually offer at your centre.

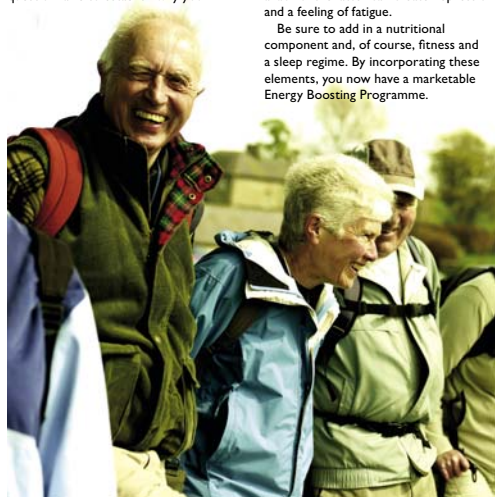
NEW ERA

The dawning of an older society is now upon us. To profit in this new era will require a new way of thinking – in many cases unlearning what made you successful in the past, for what works for the young has limited appeal to a seasoned crowd.

With every opportunity there is fear, risk and change. There is also reward, leadership and a more prosperous future. The media, based on the research, has made their choice. Will you profit from it?



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GOING DUTCH

Kate Cracknell reports on the health and fitness market in the Netherlands

For those who work in the health and fitness sector in the UK, the Dutch market offers no great culture shock. There are a number of striking similarities between the two markets, from consolidation of the larger chains and an emergence of the budget club, to a move towards preventative wellness and growing governmental interest in the potential of the sector.

Not only that but, although the market in the Netherlands is smaller – just short of 2,000 fitness centres across the country at the end of March 2010, according to the Dutch chamber of commerce – the offering at the clubs themselves is also familiar. There are the full-service, family-focused chains that offer something for everyone within a buzzing

environment. Other top-end clubs lead on design, offering an aspirational environment for a more adult-centric audience. Public facilities and a growing budget sector snap at the heels of the chains with increasingly high quality offerings. And an innovative independent sector delivers a highly personalised offering that focuses on service as a key differentiator.

I visited the Netherlands a few months ago and my host Jan de Jong, CEO of Vital Balance Group, explained: “There are a few key issues in the Dutch market as a whole, including high attrition rates, a scarcity of qualified personnel with the right attitude towards customers, and too little attention paid to clear brand positioning.” So far, still, so familiar.

focus on wellbeing

De Jong continues: “Supply outweighs demand as far as number of clubs are concerned, with consequent high levels of competition based on price. However, fitness remains popular [according to IHRSA, around 16 per cent of the population are members of a fitness centre] and there are opportunities going forward. We’re starting to see some specialisation in the sector, for

example, such as a growing number of ladies-only centres. I also think there’s more opportunity for fitness at work, as well as co-operation with hotels, schools and physiotherapy centres.

“There’s increased interest among older population groups too, who are starting to see the value in preventative healthcare. While the budget clubs focus mainly on offering fitness activities, the multi-purpose fitness centres are therefore starting to incorporate wellness components into their offering.”

And this is an area in which, at least based on the clubs I visited during my trip, the Netherlands is arguably more advanced than the UK.

Azzurro, in the seaside town of Noordwijk aan Zee, is a very high-spec independent club and spa that’s been inspired, says owner Marcel Zijlstra, by the UK’s Amida clubs. Jerusalem stone walls and pillars, slate floors and oak ceilings meet you as you walk into the large, beautiful reception area. Lines of sight are well thought-out, making everything seem connected but without making anyone feel exposed: there are partial views to the very funky, dimly-lit hydrotherapy pool from reception, for example (photo above), as well as to the first-floor gym.

The gym – equipped by Technogym, WaterRower and Power Plate – is a wonderfully attractive space, with all wires hidden beneath the floor and equipment laid out in low-profile pods.



Azzurro’s group exercise studios are all fully soundproofed, meaning their location next to the spa is not a problem



Azzurro in Noordwijk aan Zee (left and this page), while luxuriously appointed, has only 1,000 members – halfway to breaking even



Floor and equipment are all black, contrasting with warm oak ceilings and expansive windows, and with large glossy-leaved plants adding splashes of green throughout. A Kinesis studio is set off to the side, while studios elsewhere in the building offer perfect soundproofing.

Linking in with the emergence of wellness in the Dutch market, Azzurro's instructors are known as 'wellness coaches', and are able to offer broad lifestyle advice to a membership with an average age somewhere in the mid-40s. There's also a physio and nutritionist, plus four spa treatment rooms that are open to day visitors too. Membership costs from €67 (£57) a month based on a three-year contract, or €82.50 (£70) a month for a year.

But is this bold strategy paying off in what seemed to me a rather sleepy seaside town? Having opened in September 2009, eight months later the club had around 1,000 members, only around halfway to break-even. It was also – though beautiful and actually, I'd say, good value – very quiet when we were there, even accounting for the mid-week daytime nature of our visit.

extended wellness

Taking wellness one step further, around two years ago Frank Vahle, the owner of Amstelhof – a large, full-service facility located just outside Amsterdam – launched a scheme called



“In Holland, companies are obliged to take care of their employees' health and wellbeing”



Feelgood Company. Essentially a network to which clubs can subscribe for €200 (£171) a year provided they meet certain criteria – an on-site physio and rooms for doctors, for example, as well as more intangible aspects such as a human feel to the club – it's an initiative designed to sell, in Vahle's words, "health, not fitness".

The concept – which brings together physio, doctor and instructor in an integrated approach – was tested at Amstelhof, with Vahle approaching corporates to deliver both preventative and curative wellbeing services; in Holland, he explained to me, companies are obliged to take care of their

employees' health. The concept was rolled out in February 2009.

Clubs joining the network are encouraged to incorporate the V-Check lifestyle assessment tool into their offering (see p29); it's been used at Amstelhof since September 2009 and, says Vahle, helps deliver the sort of evidence-based services that corporates require.

Such has been the success of the initiative that, by the time of my visit in May of this year, Feelgood Company encompassed 104 locations, all sitting beneath an umbrella brand that's increasingly recognised by companies across Holland as a way to help them fulfil their obligations to their staff. ▶



- Speed of service, and ultimately a client's recovery, is key to the Feelgood Company offering, and the goal is to have everyone assessed within 48 hours – a significant improvement on waiting times at local hospitals. Vahle is also negotiating with a number of hospitals to allow his clients fast-track entry should specialist treatment be required. Ultimately the goal is to have everything available on-site at Amstelhof within the next year to 18 months –

Top operators – by number of sites

- **HealthCity** – 82 clubs in the Netherlands, including 31 BasicFit sites, plus 40 clubs in Belgium and 22 in Germany
- **Sportcity** – 42 clubs, including 24 Fit4Free sites (the latter continuing to operate under a separate brand)
- **Achmea** – 30 owned clubs, plus 10 franchises
- **Fitness First** – 23 clubs
- **Fitland** – approximately 20 clubs
- **Laco** – predominantly a swimming pool operator, 15 of its sites also include health clubs
- **Your Health** – a budget operation with 10 clubs

doctors, physios, sports doctors and so on, covering all mental and physical requirements – and a forthcoming refurbishment of the tennis court area will include the installation of permanent sports doctors' surgeries.

Wellnesselande was another interesting site. The country's largest club, it offered perhaps the most extensive range of services I've ever seen: from a cavernous room full of climbing walls to special padded-floored studios for classes such as yoga and Body Combat, and from a golf simulator suite and pilates equipment studio to a spa and professionally-run restaurant for use by members and non-members alike.

What I found particularly interesting, however, was the medical gym that sits alongside the main gym. Installed with the Life Fitness medical range of equipment, and with computers integrated into every piece of kit to precisely measure every movement, the gym is used for both treatment and preventative work, including group sessions for older members.

Supervised exclusively by physios, and run by a third party – Medical Wellness Centre – which rents the space from the club, nevertheless the two sides of the gym work closely together, with patients moved over to the main fitness suite usually within four to 12 weeks. Access to the medical

Amstelhof, near Amsterdam, caters for all the family, but also offers integrated wellness to meet the needs of corporates

gym comes at an additional cost, but is covered by medical insurance.

Taking this health insurance link further, the Achmea chain – which sadly I didn't visit during my trip – is a health and fitness operation owned by the health insurance company of the same name. Currently expanding through acquisition and new site development, via both owned and franchised offerings, it is – according to Jan Middelkamp, former COO of HealthCity International and now CEO of HDD Group – one to watch. An interesting strategy, and one that goes beyond the current partnership-based ventures undertaken by the likes of Bupa in the UK, it will be interesting to see if Achmea's success will prompt similar initiatives in the UK market.

defining the offering

More of a conventional offering came in the shape of the Pellikaan club I visited in Breda. A refurbished former casino, the futuristic building now offers a very nicely laid-out, spacious gym equipped by Star Trac, Life Fitness, gym80 and Power Plate, while glass-fronted group exercise studios overlook the gym and



Sportsworld is a full service independent operation built in a former factory, with a strong focus on design

the pool. Catering for all the family, and with around 6,300 members, single peak-time membership costs €69 (£59) a month. It's a buzzy, colourful, inviting club, busy even mid-week, and I'd certainly have enjoyed using the extensive, well-designed facilities – but of all the sites I visited, it was perhaps the most predictable in its offering.

Could this become an issue going forward? Middelkamp explains: "As the Dutch market becomes more mature, we're starting to see more segmentation. Some of this is at the top end of the market, but most of the clear, differentiated positioning is taking place at the lower end of the market.

"I'd say the Dutch market is second only to Germany when it comes to the budget clubs. Meanwhile, the mid-market is struggling, cutting prices and cutting elements from its offering.

"To me, this is one of the key trends in the market: the move from all-inclusive offerings to a profit centre model, with a low basic membership fee and members paying for each of the elements they use; personal training is growing as a result of this trend, and I think will continue to be a significant growth area."

market structure

Middelkamp continues: "The other key trend in the market is, I believe, consolidation, including a number of full-service chains that have acquired budget operations recently to get a toe-hold in this segment of the market. Sportcity, for example, has acquired Fit4Free, while HealthCity announced in June that it had bought BasicFit, further consolidating its position as market leader [see information box, p66]. For now, though, the top five operators account for only around 200 clubs of 2,000."

In this environment, the independents play a key role. I visited a number of these on my trip, but two really stood out: M-Point and Azzurro, the former for its incredible focus on personal touch and the latter, as noted, for its stylish design and high level of finish.

Owned by the very hands-on, hyper-enthusiastic and inexhaustible Martin van Assendelft, M-Point is located in an old farmhouse by the side of a lake and set in tranquil gardens. A clear demonstration of what passion and leading by example can do for a club, it's also a hotbed of 'out of the box' thinking, with improving the customer

experience at the heart of everything. M-Point's retention levels are incredibly high and members spend a good deal of time at the club, participating in events – whether that's card games or high tea, treasure hunts for the kids or sports tournaments – or just relaxing in the homely communal areas, all of which leads to good levels of secondary spend.

The fitness facilities themselves are good without being remarkable, although van Assendelft creates highly bespoke programmes to ensure his members get results. But what sells it as a place I'd love to be a member of is the sense of fun, of belonging, of there always being something new to try.

"As a small country, we speak many languages and have a strong international focus, quickly adopting trends and developing these for our market," concludes Middelkamp. Nevertheless, although similar to the UK at face value, the Netherlands also has its own very interesting best practice trends and offerings from which we could certainly learn.



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Cranberry relaunches grab bags at lower price

Specialist supplier of pre-packed dried nuts and fruit snack foods, Cranberry Enterprise, has relaunched its Grab Bags in updated packaging at a reduced price. The grab bag range of 10 different products, which includes whole cranberries and honey cashews, are intended to be a crossover between healthy snacks and confectionery treats to appeal to a broad cross-section of customers.

fitness-kit.net keywords
cranberry enterprise



BMW extends cruise range

BMW's Cruise Bike is now available in a fresh orange hue. Offset by white on the upper frame, as well as on the Suntour suspension fork and the saddle, the orange aluminium frame has been manufactured using hydro-forming technology, where the pipes are filled with oil and pressure moulded to ensure the bike is extremely durable and solid.

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A cool solution from the Helix Airmover

A new air flow system called has been unveiled: the Helix Airmover. Said to be ideal for use in gyms and sports clubs looking to provide a fresh environment for users, the system is portable and easy to use.

Combining power with a low AMP usage to save on electricity, key features of the system include three speed settings, multi-direction usage, a stackable design and lightweight construction. The 7.5m cord means the Airmover can easily be put into more difficult to access areas, while the system can also work in tandem with the Capture 55L dehumidifier,



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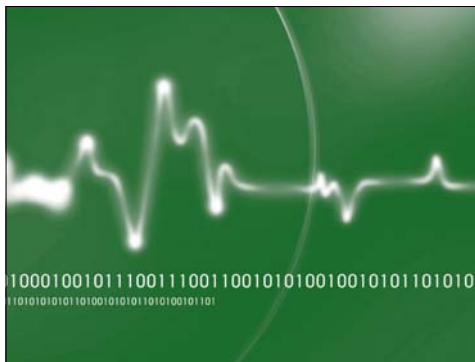
also available from Restoration Express, which works to create evaporation and collect moisture with significant effect on air quality.



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hanovia

Hanovia UV system is easy on the eyes

A new Hanovia UV water treatment system has been installed at a Learn to Swim pool at AC Baths in Taupo, New Zealand. The system has boosted the comfort levels of both swimmers and instructors, says AC Baths manager Virginia Munro: "Since we installed the UV system, combined chlorine levels have been reduced from as much as 1.2ppm to 0.1ppm. The pool is now much nicer to swim in, the kids don't come out with sore eyes and the water is much clearer."



Fitech V5 goes global with new distributors

Health provider Fitech has announced that it has secured two new distributors for its V5 software in the US and South Africa.

The software tool monitors fitness, health and wellbeing, and can highlight areas of concern while producing easy to understand, customised reports.

Rowland Kendall, UK business development manager, says: "Fitech is already used in over 30 different countries, currently serviced by the UK and Australia,

but having a regional contact is key for training and support. People like to talk personally to an individual attuned to the requirements of the local market."

Gym-goers can use Fitech as part of an initial health assessment/body MOT, while the data captured on the V5 can help trainers understand the profile of their clients, as well as identifying secondary spend opportunities.

fitness-kit.net keyword
fitech

iGo Figure® software available in Chinese

The iGo Figure® Membership and Business Management software is now available in Mandarin and simplified Chinese. "We saw the growth of the Chinese fitness market and started receiving increasingly more requests to translate our software to Chinese," says CEO Kyle Zagrodzky. "With the iGo Figure Software already available in 14 other languages, it only made sense to also make it available to the fastest-growing economy in the world."



fitness-kit.net keywords
igo figure



New from EZ-Runner

EZ-Runner has introduced new functionality to its club management software. New features include Campaign Manager, which allows health club operators to create and automatically run marketing, retention and promotional campaigns through the use of a simple wizard. It takes the stress out of running campaigns: no need to spend hours each day running reports or sending out emails and texts. Just tell Campaign Manager what you want to achieve, programme in the criteria by which you'll judge the campaign's success, and then sit back and monitor the results.

The system will also allow you to identify and follow-up with those who weren't persuaded by the campaign.

There's also an opportunity to go paperless thanks to ongoing enhancements. Signature pads can be used in-club, for example – to sign documents such as pre-exercise questionnaires and membership forms – while online solutions mean members can be processed and managed through your website, from joining online to booking classes.

fitness-kit.net keyword
ez-runner

research round-up

A study by US researchers has revealed that there can be 'varying' benefits of exercise. We take a closer look

activity vs obesity

Research carried out by Indiana University in the US has revealed that an increased amount of exercise may be more beneficial to some people than to others in tackling obesity.

The study – published in May's *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health** – was conducted by Dong-Chul Seo: an obesity expert and an associate professor at the university. It is the first population-based study that shows a graded relationship between the total amount of leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) and obesity.

A study sample of 12,227 people was drawn from 1999 to 2006 data from the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). NHANES data is unique because study participants are physically measured for their height and weight rather than self-reporting the information. It also includes metabolic equivalents (MET) for the participants' LTPA.

MET is a way of quantifying the total amount of physical activity in a way that is comparable across various forms of physical activity – walking briskly for 30 minutes, for example, is around 100 MET, while running 6mph for 30 minutes is about 300 MET. National guidelines in the US call for a minimum of 450–750 MET minutes a week.

the results

The sample of 20- to 64-year-olds found that obesity rates generally declined as the amount of weekly LTPA increased. However, the decline was not necessarily the same for all participant groups.

White women saw the steepest decreases in obesity rates, particularly when they met the minimum national guidelines for physical activity – they had an obesity rate of 27.7 per cent if they met guidelines, compared to 40.6 per cent if they engaged in no LTPA. In



White women participating in the study saw the biggest decrease in obesity rates

contrast, Hispanic and African American women who met MET guidelines had obesity rates of 34.5 and 50 per cent respectively, which increased to 41.5 and 51 per cent when they had no LTPA.

Men were also worse off than white women. They had obesity rates of 29.8 per cent when meeting MET and 34.1 per cent for those with no LTPA.

Seo says: "The majority of health professionals, even researchers, say the more LTPA you engage in, the less likely it is you'll get obese. This is true, but it's probably only applicable to white women and some white men."

workplace wellness

Seo looked deeper and found that job-related physical activity might have influenced obesity rates. He referred to research showing that men and Hispanic

women are more likely than white women to have manually demanding jobs, which could affect the amount of LTPA they accumulate – with higher levels of occupational physical activity (OPA), LTPA may account for a smaller proportion of total daily energy output than among white women. This could lead to an attenuated relationship between LTPA and the prevalence of obesity.

This notion is supported by examining the relationship between OPA and obesity. Mexican women showed a lower prevalence of obesity with an increase in the level of OPA, whereas respondents of other races did not. A similar finding was observed for men.

"This illustrates the importance of physical activity in the workplace," says Seo, "especially for people who do sedentary work."

*Seo, D et al. Leisure-time physical activity dose response effects on obesity among US adults. *The Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, May 2010, p426-431

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536-538, 540-542, 544-546, 548-550, 552-554, 556-558, 560-562, 564-566, 568-570, 572-574, 576-578, 580-582, 584-586, 588-590, 592-594, 596-598, 600-602, 604-606, 608-610, 612-614, 616-618, 620-622, 624-626, 628-630, 632-634, 636-638, 640-642, 644-646, 648-650, 652-654, 656-658, 660-662, 664-666, 668-670, 672-674, 676-678, 680-682, 684-686, 688-690, 692-694, 696-698, 700-702, 704-706, 708-710, 712-714, 716-718, 720-722, 724-726, 728-730, 732-734, 736-738, 740-742, 744-746, 748-750, 752-754, 756-758, 760-762, 764-766, 768-770, 772-774, 776-778, 780-782, 784-786, 788-790, 792-794, 796-798, 800-802, 804-806, 808-810, 812-814, 816-818, 820-822, 824-826, 828-830, 832-834, 836-838, 840-842, 844-846, 848-850, 852-854, 856-858, 860-862, 864-866, 868-870, 872-874, 876-878, 880-882, 884-886, 888-890, 892-894, 896-898, 900-902, 904-906, 908-910, 912-914, 916-918, 920-922, 924-926, 928-930, 932-934, 936-938, 940-942, 944-946, 948-950, 952-954, 956-958, 960-962, 964-966, 968-970, 972-974, 976-978, 980-982, 984-986, 988-990, 992-994, 996-998, 1000-1002, 1004-1006, 1008-1010, 1012-1014, 1016-1018, 1020-1022, 1024-1026, 1028-1030, 1032-1034, 1036-1038, 1040-1042, 1044-1046, 1048-1050, 1052-1054, 1056-1058, 1060-1062, 1064-1066, 1068-1070, 1072-1074, 1076-1078, 1080-1082, 1084-1086, 1088-1090, 1092-1094, 1096-1098, 1100-1102, 1104-1106, 1108-1110, 1112-1114, 1116-1118, 1120-1122, 1124-1126, 1128-1130, 1132-1134, 1136-1138, 1140-1142, 1144-1146, 1148-1150, 1152-1154, 1156-1158, 1160-1162, 1164-1166, 1168-1170, 1172-1174, 1176-1178, 1180-1182, 1184-1186, 1188-1190, 1192-1194, 1196-1198, 1200-1202, 1204-1206, 1208-1210, 1212-1214, 1216-1218, 1220-1222, 1224-1226, 1228-1230, 1232-1234, 1236-1238, 1240-1242, 1244-1246, 1248-1250, 1252-1254, 1256-1258, 1260-1262, 1264-1266, 1268-1270, 1272-1274, 1276-1278, 1280-1282, 1284-1286, 1288-1290, 1292-1294, 1296-1298, 1300-1302, 1304-1306, 1308-1310, 1312-1314, 1316-1318, 1320-1322, 1324-1326, 1328-1330, 1332-1334, 1336-1338, 1340-1342, 1344-1346, 1348-1350, 1352-1354, 1356-1358, 1360-1362, 1364-1366, 1368-1370, 1372-1374, 1376-1378, 1380-1382, 1384-1386, 1388-1390, 1392-1394, 1396-1398, 1400-1402, 1404-1406, 1408-1410, 1412-1414, 1416-1418, 1420-1422, 1424-1426, 1428-1430, 1432-1434, 1436-1438, 1440-1442, 1444-1446, 1448-1450, 1452-1454, 1456-1458, 1460-1462, 1464-1466, 1468-1470, 1472-1474, 1476-1478, 1480-1482, 1484-1486, 1488-1490, 1492-1494, 1496-1498, 1500-1502, 1504-1506, 1508-1510, 1512-1514, 1516-1518, 1520-1522, 1524-1526, 1528-1530, 1532-1534, 1536-1538, 1540-1542, 1544-1546, 1548-1550, 1552-1554, 1556-1558, 1560-1562, 1564-1566, 1568-1570, 1572-1574, 1576-1578, 1580-1582, 1584-1586, 1588-1590, 1592-1594, 1596-1598, 1600-1602, 1604-1606, 1608-1610, 1612-1614, 1616-1618, 1620-1622, 1624-1626, 1628-1630, 1632-1634, 1636-1638, 1640-1642, 1644-1646, 1648-1650, 1652-1654, 1656-1658, 1660-1662, 1664-1666, 1668-1670, 1672-1674, 1676-1678, 1680-1682, 1684-1686, 1688-1690, 1692-1694, 1696-1698, 1700-1702, 1704-1706, 1708-1710, 1712-1714, 1716-1718, 1720-1722, 1724-1726, 1728-1730, 1732-1734, 1736-1738, 1740-1742, 1744-1746, 1748-1750, 1752-1754, 1756-1758, 1760-1762, 1764-1766, 1768-1770, 1772-1774, 1776-1778, 1780-1782, 1784-1786, 1788-1790, 1792-1794, 1796-1798, 1800-1802, 1804-1806, 1808-1810, 1812-1814, 1816-1818, 1820-1822, 1824-1826, 1828-1830, 1832-1834, 1836-1838, 1840-1842, 1844-1846, 1848-1850, 1852-1854, 1856-1858, 1860-1862, 1864-1866, 1868-1870, 1872-1874, 1876-1878, 1880-1882, 1884-1886, 1888-1890, 1892-1894, 1896-1898, 1900-1902, 1904-1906, 1908-1910, 1912-1914, 1916-1918, 1920-1922, 1924-1926, 1928-1930, 1932-1934, 1936-1938, 1940-1942, 1944-1946, 1948-1950, 1952-1954, 1956-1958, 1960-1962, 1964-1966, 1968-1970, 1972-1974, 1976-1978, 1980-1982, 1984-1986, 1988-1990, 1992-1994, 1996-1998, 2000-2002, 2004-2006, 2008-2010, 2012-2014, 2016-2018, 2020-2022, 2024-2026, 2028-2030, 2032-2034, 2036-2038, 2040-2042, 2044-2046, 2048-2050, 2052-2054, 2056-2058, 2060-2062, 2064-2066, 2068-2070, 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2436-2438, 2440-2442, 2444-2446, 2448-2450, 2452-2454, 2456-2458, 2460-2462, 2464-2466, 2468-2470, 2472-2474, 2476-2478, 2480-2482, 2484-2486, 2488-2490, 2492-2494, 2496-2498, 2500-2502, 2504-2506, 2508-2510, 2512-2514, 2516-2518, 2520-2522, 2524-2526, 2528-2530, 2532-2534, 2536-2538, 2540-2542, 2544-2546, 2548-2550, 2552-2554, 2556-2558, 2560-2562, 2564-2566, 2568-2570, 2572-2574, 2576-2578, 2580-2582, 2584-2586, 2588-2590, 2592-2594, 2596-2598, 2600-2602, 2604-2606, 2608-2610, 2612-2614, 2616-2618, 2620-2622, 2624-2626, 2628-2630, 2632-2634, 2636-2638, 2640-2642, 2644-2646, 2648-2650, 2652-2654, 2656-2658, 2660-2662, 2664-2666, 2668-2670, 2672-2674, 2676-2678, 2680-2682, 2684-2686, 2688-2690, 2692-2694, 2696-2698, 2700-2702, 2704-2706, 2708-2710, 2712-2714, 2716-2718, 2720-2722, 2724-2726, 2728-2730, 2732-2734, 2736-2738, 2740-2742, 2744-2746, 2748-2750, 2752-2754, 2756-2758, 2760-2762, 2764-2766, 2768-2770, 2772-2774, 2776-2778, 2780-2782, 2784-2786, 2788-2790, 2792-2794, 2796-2798, 2800-2802, 2804-2806, 2808-2810, 2812-2814, 2816-2818, 2820-2822, 2824-2826, 2828-2830, 2832-2834, 2836-2838, 2840-2842, 2844-2846, 2848-2850, 2852-2854, 2856-2858, 2860-2862, 2864-2866, 2868-2870, 2872-2874, 2876-2878, 2880-2882, 2884-2886, 2888-2890, 2892-2894, 2896-2898, 2900-2902, 2904-2906, 2908-2910, 2912-2914, 2916-2918, 2920-2922, 2924-2926, 2928-2930, 2932-2934, 2936-2938, 2940-2942, 2944-2946, 2948-2950, 2952-2954, 2956-2958, 2960-2962, 2964-2966, 2968-2970, 2972-2974, 2976-2978, 2980-2982, 2984-2986, 2988-2990, 2992-2994, 2996-2998, 3000-3002, 3004-3006, 3008-3010, 3012-3014, 3016-3018, 3020-3022, 3024-3026, 3028-3030, 3032-3034, 3036-3038, 3040-3042, 3044-3046, 3048-3050, 3052-3054, 3056-3058, 3060-3062, 3064-3066, 3068-3070, 3072-3074, 3076-3078, 3080-3082, 3084-3086, 3088-3090, 3092-3094, 3096-3098, 3100-3102, 3104-3106, 3108-3110, 3112-3114, 3116-3118, 3120-3122, 3124-3126, 3128-3130, 3132-3134, 3136-3138, 3140-3142, 3144-3146, 3148-3150, 3152-3154, 3156-3158, 3160-3162, 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3528-3530, 3532-3534, 3536-3538, 3540-3542, 3544-3546, 3548-3550, 3552-3554, 3556-3558, 3560-3562, 3564-3566, 3568-3570, 3572-3574, 3576-3578, 3580-3582, 3584-3586, 3588-3590, 3592-3594, 3596-3598, 3600-3602, 3604-3606, 3608-3610, 3612-3614, 3616-3618, 3620-3622, 3624-3626, 3628-3630, 3632-3634, 3636-3638, 3640-3642, 3644-3646, 3648-3650, 3652-3654, 3656-3658, 3660-3662, 3664-3666, 3668-3670, 3672-3674, 3676-3678, 3680-3682, 3684-3686, 3688-3690, 3692-3694, 3696-3698, 3700-3702, 3704-3706, 3708-3710, 3712-3714, 3716-3718, 3720-3722, 3724-3726, 3728-3730, 3732-3734, 3736-3738, 3740-3742, 3744-3746, 3748-3750, 3752-3754, 3756-3758, 3760-3762, 3764-3766, 3768-3770, 3772-3774, 3776-3778, 3780-3782, 3784-3786, 3788-3790, 3792-3794, 3796-3798, 3800-3802, 3804-3806, 3808-3810, 3812-3814, 3816-3818, 3820-3822, 3824-3826, 3828-3830, 3832-3834, 3836-3838, 3840-3842, 3844-3846, 3848-3850, 3852-3854, 3856-3858, 3860-3862, 3864-3866, 3868-3870, 3872-3874, 3876-3878, 3880-3882, 3884-3886, 3888-3890, 3892-3894, 3896-3898, 3900-3902, 3904-3906, 3908-3910, 3912-3914, 3916-3918, 3920-3922, 3924-3926, 3928-3930, 3932-3934, 3936-3938, 3940-3942, 3944-3946, 3948-3950, 3952-3954, 3956-3958, 3960-3962, 3964-3966, 3968-3970, 3972-3974, 3976-3978, 3980-3982, 3984-3986, 3988-3990, 3992-3994, 3996-3998, 4000-4002, 4004-4006, 4008-4010, 4012-4014, 4016-4018, 4020-4022, 4024-4026, 4028-4030, 4032-4034, 4036-4038, 4040-4042, 4044-4046, 4048-4050, 4052-4054, 4056-4058, 4060-4062, 4064-4066, 4068-4070, 4072-4074, 4076-4078, 4080-4082, 4084-4086, 4088-4090, 4092-4094, 4096-4098, 4100-4102, 4104-4106, 4108-4110, 4112-4114, 4116-4118, 4120-4122, 4124-4126, 4128-4130, 4132-4134, 4136-4138, 4140-4142, 4144-4146, 4148-4150, 4152-4154, 4156-4158, 4160-4162, 4164-4166, 4168-4170, 4172-4174, 4176-4178, 4180-4182, 4184-4186, 4188-4190, 4192-4194, 4196-4198, 4200-4202, 4204-4206, 4208-4210, 4212-4214, 4216-4218, 4220-4222, 4224-4226, 4228-4230, 4232-4234, 4236-4238, 4240-4242, 4244-4246, 4248-4250, 4252-4254, 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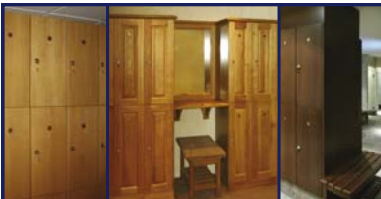
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lightweights

GIDDY UP AND DON'T REIN IN YOUR PACE

While many people might take part in marathons and run against the clock, you don't often see them competing against an animal with four legs for the winning position.

The Man vs Horse Marathon, held in June, is a 22-mile race that starts in the town square of Llanwrtyd Wells and that takes in some of the finest scenery in mid-Wales. It began in 1980 as an event to attract tourists. Today, hundreds of runners and horse riders from across the world tackle the hilly course which covers varied terrain – from farm tracks and footpaths to forestry roads and open moorland – with a total ascent of 3,000ft.

Individuals, or teams of three, can take on the horses for a fee of around £22 or £60 respectively. It took 25 years before a man finally beat a horse; Huw Lobb won in two hours, five minutes, beating the fastest horse by two minutes. Details: www.green-events.co.uk



MENTAL EXERCISES CAN BURN CALORIES TOO

Health clubs that want to boost their members' workout results, without requiring too much extra physical effort, might think about incorporating crossword puzzles or sudoku into routines.

An hour of mental exercises, such as puzzles and quizzes, can burn up to 90 calories according to researchers. That's more calories than a chocolate chip cookie or a custard cream biscuit.

The researchers say that neurons in the brain use around 75 per cent of sugar glucose (available calories) from the blood to relay messages to the body via neurotransmitters.



DRAGONS' DEN DOG TREADMILL SUCCESS

Fit Fur Life, a treadmill for dogs, was one of the wackier inventions presented on BBC TV's *Dragons' Den* in 2007.

While the machine didn't impress most *Dragons* – and would probably be frowned upon by fitness professionals as a lazy way to walk your dog – James Caan saw something in it and invested £100,000 for a 50 per cent stake in the company.

Since then, drawings of the concept have been brought to life by a fitness company and Fit Fur Life turnover has nearly tripled in two years.

Models have been sold to the MOD for training military dogs and are to be sold in Harrods' new pet department. There are four sizes to suit all breeds and the machines are noiseless so the dogs aren't scared by them.

meeting manners in decline

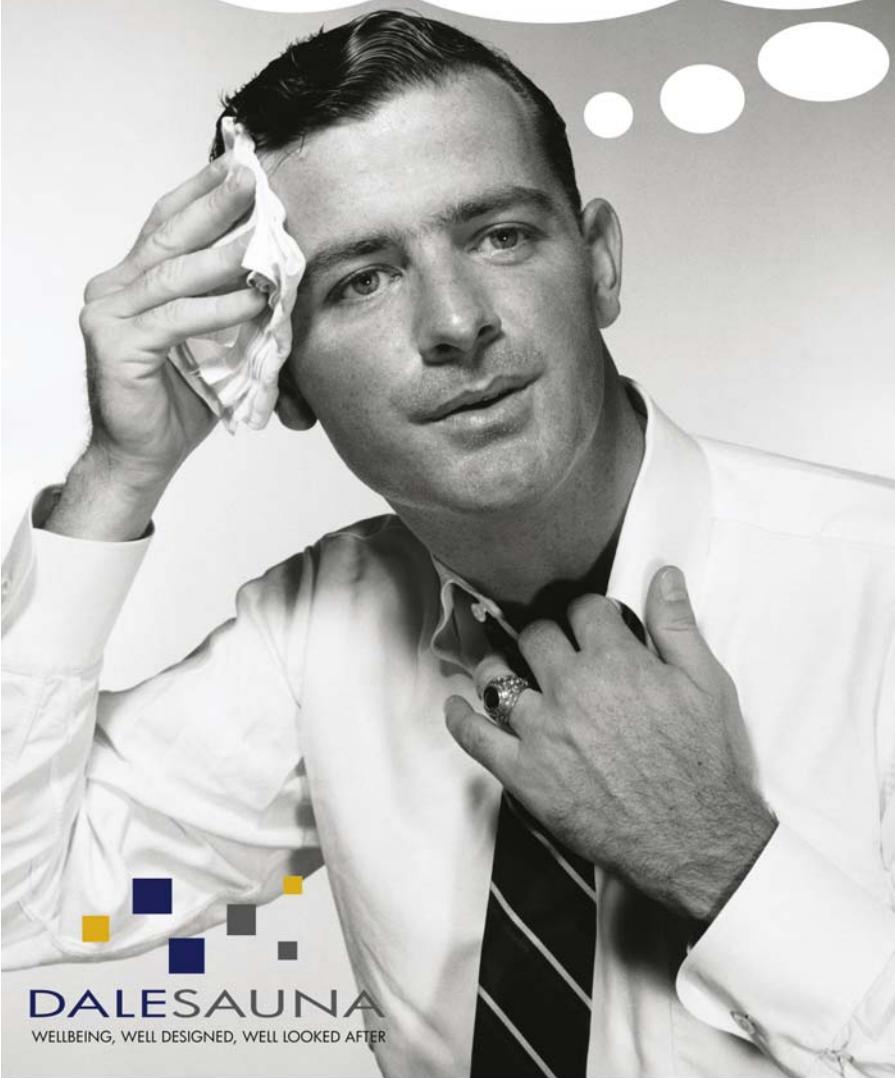
The next time you gather for a formal meeting with your work colleagues, you might want to be more mindful of politeness: a survey on behalf of Future Inns has found that British manners are fast disappearing in business meetings.

According to the survey findings, 41 per cent of British businesspeople think it's reasonable to answer phone calls or respond to email during meetings, while 50 per cent won't think

anything of leaving the room to take a call. Ironically, 70 per cent of those questioned said they thought it was rude when others did this.

People were also asked about meeting mishaps. Some of the most common included falling asleep – 28 per cent – while others included calling clients wrong names or forgetting their name altogether, and arriving at meetings on the wrong day or in the wrong venue.

Gosh...it's nearly as hot as a Dalesauna!




DALESAUNA
WELLBEING, WELL DESIGNED, WELL LOOKED AFTER

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