

Keith Burnet

Preparing to row
the Atlantic p16

DELOITTE

“Confidence in the market
is reflected in the level of
financing deals”, p63



*Even if you think
you're in a great
position, you have
to stay focused*

THIERRY DELSOL

The Club Company
CEO is diversifying
the business, p68

Humphrey Cobbold

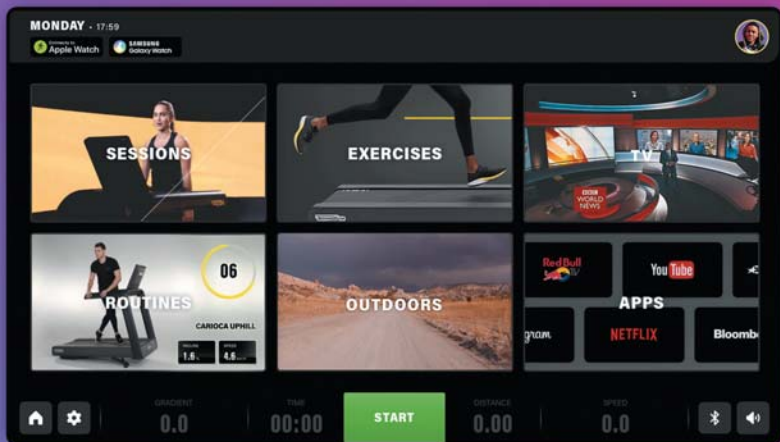
Reveals ambitious plans p38



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Getting reclassified

Our sector is still misunderstood by those in power. It's time to accelerate the fight to change this by creating a new vocabulary to define what we do, why it matters and how we can contribute

The unity of the industry in the UK over the last few weeks has been incredible. Operators, trade bodies and stakeholders have worked as one to win the battle to keep gyms open in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

Part of the urgency felt by everyone involved has been a passionate belief that we are being misunderstood and incorrectly classified as a sector by government.

One point which brought this home was the inclusion of gyms in the same bracket as strip clubs during the government's secondary lockdown planning.

We're arguing the sector needs to get itself 'reclassified', by taking charge of the vocabulary used to define it, so there's no doubt as to our intentions and value.

We're advocating the industry adopts the term 'regulated', and uses it to describe and define what we do.

Operators have invested huge sums in the software and systems needed to run COVID-secure facilities and the levels of regulation we're able to deliver have been proven to be sufficient to keep our customers safe.

Logic and evidence suggest the virus is mainly spreading in unregulated environments, such as homes, so in referring to ourselves as regulated, we're putting the industry firmly in the category of operations that are helping to reduce the spread of the virus and keep people safe.

It's also a 'futureproof' term recognised by government and puts us in the same bracket as trusted sectors such as financial services, the law, airlines and utilities.

We must also fight to become recognised as an essential service, something unactive has been lobbying hard for.

There are other terms we must adopt too. Decisionmakers in the NHS see their responsibilities as being related to 'protection' and 'prevention', with gyms currently filed firmly in the prevention category.

Given the pandemic is bringing protection to the fore as the priority for the NHS, our potential to contribute – via our work on prevention – is currently reduced.

We must argue that as a regulated sector which has proven it can operate in a COVID-secure



SHUTTERSTOCK/OLENA YAKUBCHUK

We must fight to become a trusted sector

‘We’re arguing that the fitness industry needs to get itself ‘reclassified’, by taking charge of the vocabulary used to define it’

way, we are also able to contribute to the NHS's protection work, thereby showing we can deliver in relation to both prevention and protection.

If we can control the vocabulary, we can engage more powerfully with the government and the medical sector for the delivery of things such as COVID-19 recovery programmes and earn recognition for our professionalism.

The reputation management work done this year by the sector has brought us forward decades. The opportunity now is to nail this down by accurately defining ourselves and creating a consumer-facing kitemark to build trust.

Liz Terry, editor
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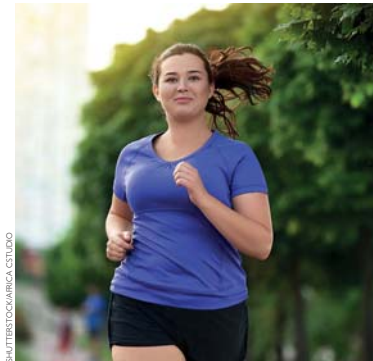
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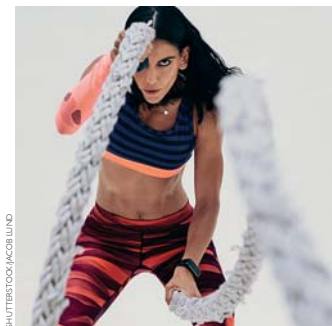
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HCM

MEET THE TEAM



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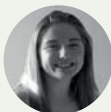
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Write to reply

Emerging successfully out of a crisis as significant as this pandemic requires visionary leadership, creative thinking and innovative collaboration

David Stalker,
EuropeActive

At this critical time in our sector's history, with great challenges and opportunities before us, we've published the EuropeActive Manifesto to unite stakeholders around four critically important areas of improvement for our common future.

Our goal is to rally everyone in the industry to sign the manifesto and mobilise an innovative movement, with the document as the common reference point. The aim being for our sector to successfully move out of the shadow of COVID-19 and reach its fullest potential towards 2025.

The first of the four areas of focus is **health**. Every year new scientific research underscores the potential and importance of fitness and exercise – the core product of our sector – as an effective solution to many of the most common public health challenges.

This doesn't only relate to physical health and wellbeing, but also to social and mental aspects. Becoming recognised providers of physical, social and mental wellbeing in the eyes of consumers represents a huge opportunity for our sector and EuropeActive has made it a public affairs goal for policy-makers to recognise our sector as a deliverer



of public health solutions. Our second area of focus is **digital** and focuses on speeding up digitalisation, educating our sector in this area and strengthening these parts of our ecosystem in order to develop the best possible solutions for our digital infrastructure.

As everybody learned during the lockdown, digital and tech solutions enable all kinds of fitness businesses to operate beyond "bricks and mortar" to reach all types of consumers everywhere.

Becoming valued providers of health and wellbeing in our communities requires us to express visible care for our communities, or what we call active citizenship. The third headline of our manifesto is, therefore, **community**.

We must promote trust and confidence in our sector, by demonstrating our willingness to take responsibility in society. We're in a

Fuel the debate about issues and opportunities across the industry.

We'd love to hear from you –
email: healthclub@leisuremedia.com



EuropeActive is asking everyone in the sector to sign its manifesto

unique position to help strengthen our communities, by promoting the physical, social and mental health and wellbeing of citizens of all ages and backgrounds.

Finally, having **professional standards** is the hallmark of every mature sector, and it's critical we unite around upskilling our workforce and demonstrating the expertise of our professionals through professional registers. This is also a prerequisite for our collaboration with health professionals and the medical community.

Every crisis is an opportunity for leadership. Emerging successfully out of a crisis as significant as this pandemic requires visionary leadership, creative thinking and innovative collaboration. The ambition of EuropeActive's Manifesto is to promote leadership and collaboration to become the best possible version of ourselves in the coming years.

● Sign the manifesto at
www.HCMmag.com/manifesto

● We believe our 'Schools as Community Hubs' model is an unmissable opportunity for the government and the sector to support children and families through the pandemic

Jack Shakespeare, uktactive

Children and young people have experienced unprecedented disruption in their lives since the onset of national lockdown in March. From the closure of schools to the lack of community connection, the impact on the health and wellbeing of our youngest generation has been devastating.

During the initial school closure from March to May, children's physical activity levels in England plummeted, with only 18 per cent averaging 60 active minutes each day (the CMO's recommended level). This has been slowly rising, reaching 21 per cent during the school summer holidays, as restrictions eased.

However, as we enter the winter and there are fewer opportunities for children to be outdoors, we have a long way to go to get back to the (already low) levels of activity we were seeing pre-lockdown.

Now is the time for strong leadership, willpower and a bold ambition and commitment from all political parties to support the most vulnerable in our

society, placing children's health and wellbeing at the heart of our recovery plans. Pre-lockdown, just 47 per cent of children and young people in England did an average of 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Our ambition has to be to raise that considerably and our ability and will to tackle the entrenched inequalities that prevent millions of children enjoying fun and inclusive daily physical activity.

Supporting evidence

Research by the uktactive Research Institute shows that, in a normal year, children and young people suffer significant losses in fitness levels over the summer holidays, with the fitness of those from low-income families falling 18 times faster than their more affluent classmates. Additionally, children aged five from the poorest income groups are twice as likely to be obese than their more affluent peers, and three times as likely by the age of 11.

The provision of out-of-school activities, including after-school clubs, school holiday programmes and

extended-schools provision are vital to achieving these goals, and it's essential that safe, inclusive and accessible activity offerings continue to be available when children and young people are not engaged by school during term-time.

uktactive believes that part of the solution already lies on the doorsteps of the children and young people we need to support. We need to unlock existing assets that are purpose-built for children, are safe and trusted spaces that sit at the heart of local communities, and that house almost 40 per cent of all sports facilities in England – schools.

Through this lens, schools should be regarded as a vital community asset for the health and wellbeing of our children at this challenging time. Opening up school gates can re-shape school holidays and other out-of-school periods for those children and young people that really need it, at a time when positive activity experiences both in and out of school-time are utterly priceless.

The solution

We believe our 'Schools as Community Hubs' model is an unmissable opportunity for the government and the sector to support children and families through the coronavirus crisis. We're working with uktactive members to identify the programmes and pathways we can provide to dramatically impact these health outcomes. This will also create the foundations for early engagement and lifestyle change, increasing confidence and awareness to access the full breadth of local activity provision, such as swimming pools, sports clubs and classes.

We'll continue to work with government to support children's activity providers through this challenging time, providing protective measures and guidance for the safe operational delivery of holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings. ●

● More: www.HCMmag.com/kids



Exercise habits formed in childhood can underpin good health for a lifetime

HCM people



“

Our facility isn't for everyone. In daring to be different, we're attracting people willing to commit to a fresh way of approaching health and fitness

Clare Stobart

Founder, CPASE

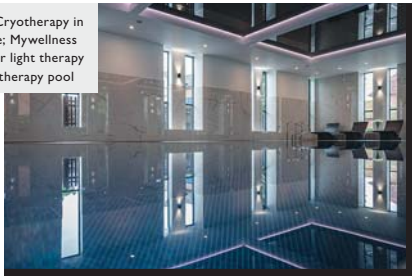
Clare Stobart is a member of the Eddie Stobart logistics family



From top left: Cryotherapy in the Stasis suite; Mywellness bands; Dr Muller light therapy and the hydrotherapy pool



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF CPASE



When Clare Stobart was developing the concept for her boutique health club, she had a strong guiding vision: to provide the best member experience of any boutique club in the UK.

The result is CPASE (Clare's Space Boutique Health Club – pronounced 'space'), an adult-only, five-star boutique health club in the Cheshire countryside, which opened on 1 October.

The club, which features pumped oxygen-enriched air, has a 500sq m gym, studios, a spa and casual dining offerings, as well as a crane and tube slide for interval training with a twist.

Stobart is no stranger to business – as well as having a degree in business, she's part of the family behind logistics giant Eddie Stobart – and she understands what it takes to create a commercial offering with a strong brand. "The Clare's Space story started when I acquired the Cheshire Health Club, where I'd worked as an instructor and PT," she explains. "I wanted to create a destination where members could escape from reality. That vision of providing a sanctuary has become more important than I could ever have imagined."

Stobart set about designing a boutique club that offers a mind, body and lifestyle experience with every detail – from its instructors and interiors, to its equipment and fitness class offerings – designed to be world class.

"Our facility isn't for everyone," she says, "In daring to be different we're attracting

people willing to commit to a fresh way of approaching health and fitness."

CPASE has capped its membership at 800 to ensure every member gets the desired experience at every touchpoint.

"We want members to feel the club is theirs," says Stobart. "Our choice of design and equipment plays a big part in creating a personable atmosphere within the club."

Working out

The club has a functional training area, cardio zone, free weight and dedicated strength space, as well as a dedicated female training zone, while a team of PTs offer one-to-one training and meal planning.

The gym floor is equipped with strength and cardio kit from Technogym's Artis range which integrates with the Mywellness app, so members can access personalised training programmes, move freely between equipment and track and log their workout data using the Mywellness Band.

"For members, this set-up provides everything in one place – from class bookings and challenges in the gym, to programmes to follow, says Stobart. "For our team, the platform pairs with the equipment on the gym floor and in our studios, and enables members to access our facilities through the speed lane, access lockers and use the Tanita body analysis machine.

"It also helps us see how members are using the club and gives us data so we can personalise their experience even further," she explains.



*I wanted
to create a
destination
where members
could escape
from reality*


The studios

CPASE has three studio spaces, including Cyclone, the biggest Technogym Skillbike studio in the world, with tiered flooring and a rotating central podium. The bikes simulate hill climbs by using real gear shifts, so members can boost their cycling efficiency.

This studio also features a full-size screen and bespoke lighting that matches the beat of the music, providing members with an immersive experience.

"We plan to use this studio to host regular races for our members, so they can compete against each other for prizes and to win a yellow jersey!" says Stobart.

The Inferno studio is a specialised bootcamp area that hosts CPASE bespoke classes – designed by Stobart and based around four key pillars



Stobart leads a class
at CPASE, which
opened on 1 October

of performance, agility, speed, stamina and power. The studio is kitted out with Technogym Skillrun treadmills and Skillbenches.

The Oxygen wellness studio is home to concept classes including trapeze yoga, paddleboard yoga, land, sea and sky yoga, vinyasa and yin yoga, meditation classes and Pilates classes.

"This building is very earthy and relaxing," explains Stobart. "It feels very spiritual and was the obvious choice of location for our wellness classes. We'll also use it for talks and seminars to add more value to the member experience."

A casual dining offering called April's Kitchen at CPASE, has 'cosy meets chic' interiors, providing members with a place to recharge and refuel and a menu that takes inspiration from

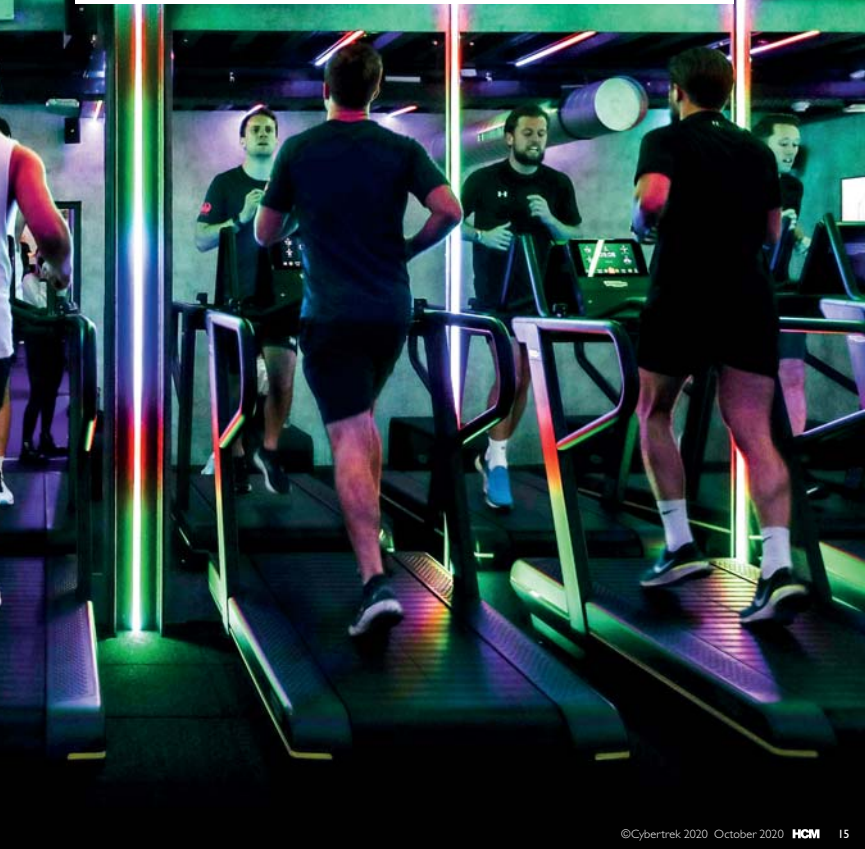
around the world, while the WS No7 Private Room offers "table service in a richly decorated, multifunctional space, designed to be a haven for members wanting to escape the outside world."

April's also serves refreshments on the poolside for members using the heated loungers after a swim.

Spa and wellness

The wellness area – Recharge at CPASE revolves around a series of pools, which offer hydrotherapy and built-in underwater loungers.

Also on offer is a cryosauna in the Stasis Suite, a Light Therapy machine from Dr Muller and a crystal-lined salt steamroom – the overall focus is on regeneration and renewal for mind, body and spirit. Find out more: www.cpase.co.uk





I wanted to do something to inspire others and encourage them to believe that no matter what age you are, anything is possible

Keith Burnet
CEO global markets, Les Mills

What inspired you to row the Atlantic?

I've done a few 'extreme' challenges in the past like the Marathon des Sables and was inspired by the fact that more people have climbed Mount Everest than have rowed across an ocean.

I also wanted to do something to inspire others – particularly my own children – and to encourage them to believe that no matter what age you are, anything is possible if you really commit and dedicate yourself to it.

We've been talking about the race for five years and life goes quick so we have to make the most of it.

What is the point of the challenge for you and your teammates?

Fundraising is a huge part of it. We're raising money for two great charities – UNICEF and Workout for Water, which is a joint charity project between UNICEF and Les Mills to provide clean drinking water for children in East Africa.

We also want to test ourselves on the toughest of challenges, but at the same time really enjoy the whole experience of preparing for and then racing across an ocean.

Tell us the details

The Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge leaves from La Gomera, in the Canary Islands on 12 December and we expect to arrive in Antigua – 3,000 miles away – subject to the weather – in under 40 days.

Tell us about the boat

Her name is Valkyrie. She's brand new and the latest in ocean rowing boats.

She looks like a spaceship and is designed to surf the waves. She's 28ft long and weighs 1.5 tonnes.



Keith Burnet will row across the Atlantic Ocean, from the Canary Islands to Antigua



The team has practiced with several four-day trips out at sea

There are two small cabins, one in the bow and one in the stern. The bow boys will be in the 'honeymoon suite' which is bigger and more spacious, and I'll be in the 'sweatbox', which barely fits one person.

What hazards will you face along the way and how have you prepared for them?

There are lots of physical challenges, like hand blisters, raw glutes, salt sores, sunburn, sea sickness. We've tried to prepare as best we can by toughening our hands and using multiple seat covers.

If the weather is bad, we run the risk of capsizing, so we've tried to get as much practice on the boat as the pandemic has allowed.

It's more likely the big hurdles will be psychological and we've been working with our 'mind doctor', Margi Luzanycia to prepare as best we can.

What have you learned about yourself in the process of preparation?

I've learned that I suffer badly from sea sickness and also that I can row a marathon in less than three hours.

Tell us about your training regime

We've been training hard on the indoor rower, as we've been restricted by COVID-19 as to how much training we could do on the boat.

We've also been monitoring our progress via regular fitness testing and all of us have made huge progress over the course of the last 12 months.

Indoor rowing is very different to ocean rowing, but the physical fitness required on the indoor rower in many ways is tougher. We've also been doing lots of mobility and strength training designed to minimise the risk of injury.

How will you protect your hands and lower back/hips?

With difficulty! Regular stretching before and after each shift will be important. Really good admin on the body – hands, glutes and feet is a necessity – otherwise we will be in a world of pain.

Have you had advice from other people who have made this crossing?

Almost too much, as there are many different and conflicting opinions on all aspects of the race.

It has been a huge learning curve for us, particularly as none of us have any real experience of doing anything on the water.

We've decided to row our own race and have made our decisions based on what we think will work for us. We're committed to three things: first – returning home safely, second – enjoying the experience and third – being competitive.

You're rowing with a team, how do you expect that to pan out?

Being with old friends and rowing as a team was one of the big reasons for taking on the challenge.

There is a lot of talk of teamwork in business but in reality, the type of teamwork required to cross an ocean in a rowing boat is in a different league.

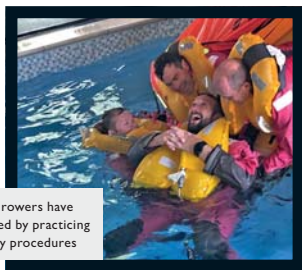
I expect we'll all look after each other and finish with friendships that will last a lifetime.

What will you be wearing?

We'll row just in shorts and T-shirt or will be fully covered up to prevent sunburn or keep the stormy weather at bay. It's more than likely we'll regularly be fully naked to prevent chafing...



Burnet says the race is an opportunity to row as a team with old friends and to fundraise



The rowers have prepared by practicing safety procedures

What will you eat?

More than 6,000 calories per day is required, so food is critical. Ten litres of water also needs to be consumed per day, so hydration will be key.

We're being helped with our nutrition by the team at VIVO (www.vivolife.co.uk) who have also supplied us with their excellent plant-based supplements.

The team at Precision Hydration (www.precisionhydration.co.uk) have been great with our hydration strategy and again, we're using their products.

What backup will you have?

There's a support yacht following the race that can act in case of an emergency call, but it's more likely that any rescue would be made by a passing tanker, as the support yacht will be many days away from each boat.

The race is fully self-sufficient, so we're pretty much on our own once we leave the Canaries. All our support will be back on land.

What final preparations are you making?

We've been out at sea several times for up to four days at a time to prepare for the race.

Our boat is now being transported to the Canary Islands, so recently we all rowed indoors for 24 hours on a two-hours-on, two-hours-off cycle, to replicate the conditions. We'll do the same on 6-7 November and we'll be inviting people to join us for one of the shifts.

About the sponsors and supporters

Who's supporting and sponsoring you?

Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) and Les Mills International are our main sponsors and both organisations have been amazingly supportive – committing financial support, as well as allowing us to take part in this adventure of a lifetime.

We've also had sponsorship from the Les Mills team in Asia Pacific, Holdall Self Storage, FABS, Holiday Extras, Trinity Street Asset Management, Field and Lawn Marquees, Oakley, Grove Property, Stages Cycles, VIVO LIFE nutrition, Precision Hydration, P81, Tooty Fruity and Blackfriars Bakery.

We also have a fantastic support team including: Jodie Pearson, our team manager; Duncan Roy – our rowing coach; Simon Sheehan – our 'banker' at Hilton Worldwide's DM Thomas Foundation; Tom Foley, our weather router; Barry Hayes, our social media guru; Margi Luzanycia – our mind doctor; James Phillips at Precision Hydration; Salvatore Notaro at VIVO; plus all our work teammates, wives/girlfriends and family who, without their support, we couldn't do this.

What do you expect to be the highlights of this journey?

Getting to the start line with no major disasters, the suntan, the beard, no emails, avoiding the annual budget process, our team dynamic, eating non-stop and still losing 15kgs. The wildlife – whales, dolphins, sharks...And then coming into English Harbour in Antigua to finish, having rowed an ocean.

Are you planning anything after this challenge is completed?

The next challenge could be the Pacific Ocean!

Find out more:

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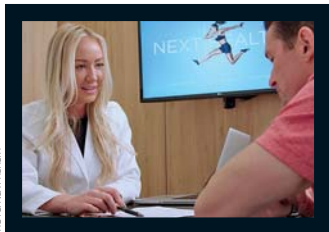


PHOTO: NEXT HEALTH

Wellness services
are complementary
to gym operations



*Our vision is that health is not the absence
of disease but the abundance of vitality*

Dr Darshan Shah

Next Health: co-founder

How did the idea for Next Health come about?

After a 20 year career in medicine, I became disenfranchised with both my work and the healthcare system. The entire healthcare model is built on managing disease and sickness once people are already ill. I wanted to address this and create an improved model, which would proactively keep people healthy and drastically reduce their chances of getting sick.

To help achieve this ambition, I partnered up with my longtime friend, Kevin Peake, who is an entrepreneur with an extensive background in operations and unique brand positioning. He also has a passion for pursuing optimal health, and we set about building Next Health, a business that could deconstruct and flip the old healthcare model, providing a data-driven approach to health optimisation.

What are your professional backgrounds?

After graduating from medical school at the age of 21, I spent almost a decade in emergency surgery, performing more than 10,000 operations. Then I went on to launch Beautologie, one of the first plastic surgery and medical spa chains in California, which scaled throughout the state.

Always an entrepreneur, Kevin started his first business at

the age of 14. He spent a decade working with CDS International Holding, a billion dollar private equity fund out of Boca Raton. As head of new business development, he would vet potential acquisitions and manage newly acquired businesses, restructuring the foundations and brand positioning to set the companies up for exponential growth.

What did you want to achieve with Next Health?

Our goal is to revolutionise the way people interact with their health, sharing our vision that health is not the absence of disease, but the abundance of vitality. The services we offer are life changing in that they give people the ability to truly take control of – and optimise – their health.

We want to make these services available to as many people as possible around the world, so we have aggressive expansion plans and expect to open about 20 locations in the US within the next five years, followed by international expansion.

With the aim of taking some of these services to the mainstream, we are also developing on demand and at-home services through our technology platform, which will mean we can reach people everywhere in the world, as cost effectively as possible.

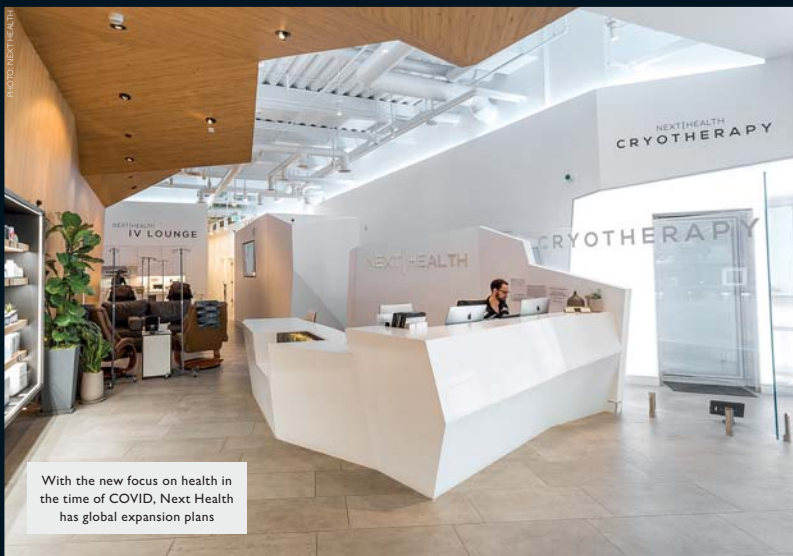
Who are your customers?

Our customers range from 18-year-olds to 65-year-olds, but they are all passionate about their health and are 'peak seekers': not



PHOTO: NEXT HEALTH

PHOTO: NEXT HEALTH



With the new focus on health in the time of COVID, Next Health has global expansion plans



Body scanning (L) and IV drips (R) are just two of the many services on offer



PHOTO: NEXT HEALTH

Dr Shah spent almost a decade in emergency surgery before branching out



complacent, but looking for the next level. Typically, they are already healthy, but they want to experience a heightened new normal and look their best.

Among the benefits our members regularly report back to us are enhanced energy levels, improved sleep, more lean muscle mass, better focus and productivity, healthier skin, more compliments, improved mood, relationships and gut health.

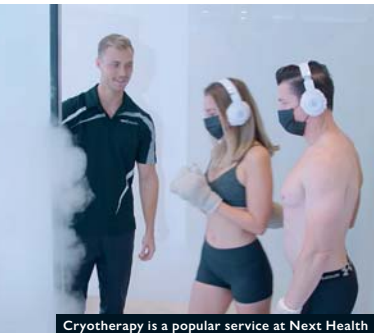
What is the most popular membership package?

The most popular membership we offer gives monthly access to all of our Next Tech services: cryotherapy, infrared, hyperbaric chamber, and Next Fusion IV Lounge Services.

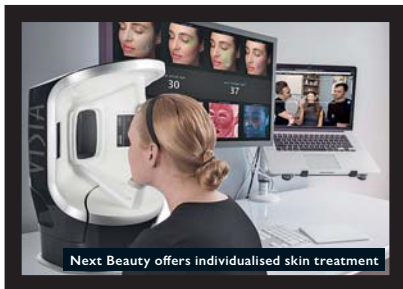
Although services can be purchased a la carte, memberships provide the most value, giving access to a variety of our health optimisation services on a monthly basis. Next Health members receive routine advanced biomarker testing, body scans and medical consultations.

Has demand for services changed since COVID?

We pivoted quickly in the wake of the pandemic and were the first in LA to offer COVID-19 testing outside of hospitals and urgent cares. We saw a very high demand and now the immunity services are steady and almost back to our pre-COVID demand.



Cryotherapy is a popular service at Next Health



Next Beauty offers individualised skin treatment

SERVICES

Next Coach is the personalised health coaching programme, which guides people through goal setting, behaviour changes, healthy habit formation and provides help in implementing medical recommendations.

Monthly one-on-one meetings are structured around assessing progress, supported through biomarkers and body scans. Education around nutrition, sleep, movement and stress management. Support towards changing lifestyle through a structured plan of action and goal setting through reviewing previous goals and setting new ones.

- Next Fusion IV Lounge Services offers a range of IV drips for different outcomes including super immune, longevity, detox and gut health.

- Next Tech comprises a cutting edge collection of health technology including cryotherapy, infrared LED light therapy, infrared sauna, 3D facial scanning and InBody and Styku body scanning.

- Next Labs gives access to the latest in diagnostic testing to offer specialised blood panels measuring hundreds of critical markers to inform the bespoke health optimisation plans.

- Next Level is a suite of services giving access to the most advanced medical technologies available to increase health, vitality and longevity. For

example at \$22,500, the longevity package includes full genome sequencing, full body MRI and CT coronary scan, as well as a year of monthly coaching sessions.

- Next Beauty offers individualised skin treatment and beauty optimisation through a range of minimally invasive beauty services.

MEMBERSHIPS

There are four different memberships. Quarantine Relief IV membership costs \$199 (£154, €168), a month and offers two IV drips, a virtual health coach session and 20 per cent off other services.

For US\$199 a month, Optimise membership offers health coaching, 10 optims (services) a month, annual full body and facial scanning and a Next Health baseline panel.

Premier Membership is \$299 (£232, €252) a month and offers health coaching, 10 optims, two IV therapy sessions, two vitamin shots, as well as the baseline panel and scanning services.

Hormone membership is also US\$299 a month, offering hormone pellets as needed, 10 optims, health coaching, baseline panel and body scanning.

LOCATIONS

There are currently two sites up and running in Los Angeles, with a third due to open soon and another planned for New York City.



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Preventable lifestyle diseases are driving COVID-19

Rising levels of lifestyle disease across the world have exacerbated the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*.

Horton said the three-decade rise in preventable diseases had led to a situation where governments and

public health organisations should reassess the way they are attempting to tackle the pandemic.

"We must confront the fact that we are taking a far too narrow approach when it comes to managing this outbreak of a new coronavirus," Horton wrote in the medical journal.

"All of our interventions have focused on cutting lines of viral transmission. The "science" that has guided governments has been driven mostly by epidemic modellers and infectious disease specialists, who understandably frame the present health emergency in centuries-old terms of plague.

"But we've learned the story of COVID-19 is not so simple.

"Two categories of disease are interacting within specific



Tackling lifestyle disease is the key to beating COVID-19

populations – infection with SARS-CoV-2 and an array of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These conditions are clustering within social groups according to patterns of inequality deeply embedded in our societies.

"The aggregation of these diseases on a background of social and economic disparity exacerbates the adverse effects of each separate disease."

More: http://lei.sr/Y3z5r_H



What we have learned so far tells us that the story of COVID-19 is not so simple

Richard Horton

TWITTER.COM/RICHARDHORTON

Ralph Scholz announces new FitnessConnected B2B trade show

A new fitness industry event is looking to challenge the likes of FIBO with a trade show targeting the European fitness market at the end of next year.

Set to take place in Munich in November 2021, FitnessConnected will be a pure B2B event and will look to bring together all the elements of physical activity – from sports and fitness to health care and the care sector – across both the public and private sectors.

The event is being driven by Ralph Scholz, chair of German fitness trade body DiFG and former CEO of Mirai, McFit's "mega club" concept.



A new fitness industry event has been launched for Europe

Scholz is also a former event director of trade show FIBO.

"FitnessConnected will be more than just a 'new trade fair,'" Scholz said. "It's a sales and marketing oriented

eco-system, which will position the fitness industry as health- and socially-relevant, helping innovations to break through more quickly and opening up new target markets.



As a pure B2B trade fair, FitnessConnected redefines the self-image of the fitness industry

Ralph Scholz

"As a pure B2B fair, it redefines the self-image of the fitness industry, its opportunities and tasks."

More: http://lei.sr/TY26w_H

Equinox launches outdoor gym concept for US market

Fitness giant Equinox has opened its first fully-outdoor gym in Los Angeles, US.

Called Equinox+ In The Wild, the gym is perched on a rooftop and has been designed to provide a boutique experience in accordance to the Equinox brand, with features such as high-end equipment, luxury rubber flooring and surround-sound audio systems.

The 27,000sq ft space is located at Century City, close to an existing Equinox club, and offers members a number of exercise stations, functional fitness areas and personal training.

Facilities include a strength floor area, tented cardio areas,



We're excited to invite our members to go beyond the walls of the club with Equinox+ In the Wild
Harvey Spevak

a covered outdoor class studio area, a regeneration zone and a changing area with lockers.

The space will be accessible for existing Equinox members with either an All Access or Destination membership, who can book work-out slots at the site.

"We're excited to invite our members to go beyond the walls of the club with Equinox+ In the Wild," said chair, Harvey Spevak.



Equinox is opening outdoor gyms in California and New York

"Our first site is an epic site, made for the City of Angels."

In addition to the outdoor gym in LA, the new In The Wild programme has also seen the operator begin offering

outdoor group exercise classes and training at its other sites in California, as well as in New Jersey and New York.

More: http://lei.sr/m8M8U_H

Globally, nearly 70 per cent of gym members have returned

Globally, gyms have, on average, seen nearly 70 per cent of their pre-lockdown members return to their facilities since re-opening their doors.

The global figure comes from a report by brand and consumer insight firm ClubIntel, titled *The Fitness Industry's Re-Awakening Post-COVID-19 Facility Closures*, which gathered data from a

sample of fitness operators worldwide during the month of September in partnership with a number of trade associations.

The report – based on responses from 556 fitness operators across eight global regions, representing 7,300 clubs, gyms and fitness studios – shows that 10 per cent of operators have seen all of their members (100 per cent) return.

"The data leads us to believe that most operators should expect membership levels by year ending 2020 to range from 50 per cent to 80 per cent of pre-closure levels," ClubIntel said in the report.



By end of 2020, membership levels should range from 50 to 80 per cent of pre-closure levels
ClubIntel

More: http://lei.sr/8r9z4_H



Ten per cent of gyms are back to 100 per cent membership

UK government – gyms can stay open in tier 3 areas

HCM understands the UK government has removed gyms and fitness facilities from the baseline measures for all future tier 3 closures.

This means that gyms and leisure centres will no longer be forced to automatically close in areas deemed “very high risk” (or tier 3) in the

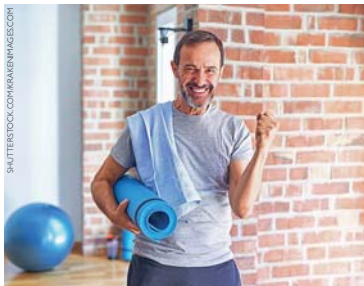
government’s three-tier COVID-19 alert system.

The move comes after it was revealed that the gym closures in the first area to be classified as tier 3 – Liverpool – were agreed specifically for that city, but that gyms had then wrongly been included in the “baseline list” for all further tier 3 actions.

An updated version of the regulations for tier 3 has now been created and removed gyms from the baseline measures, by taking them off the list (in paragraph 19(4)).

Gym closures have also been reversed in the Liverpool area, following intense lobbying.

The government still retains the power to add gyms to the list of businesses to close in any area classed as tier 3, but this would be done following



Gyms in the UK can stay open in the strictest lockdowns

consultation with – and where possible, agreement with – local authorities.

HCM editor, Liz Terry, said: “It’s good news that we now have clarity on tier 3 measures.

“It’s time to position the industry in its rightful place.

“We’re a professional sector, operating regulated environments and we have clear, compelling evidence to prove we can operate without community transmission.”

More: http://lei.sr/C4b35_H



We are operating safe, regulated environments

Liz Terry

Rod Hill signs énergie Fitness master franchise deal for Spain

Rod Hill, former president of TRIB3 and director general of Anytime Fitness Iberia, has signed a master franchise agreement with énergie Fitness to develop 75 clubs in Spain over the next 10 years.

Hill will share the master franchisee contract with George Houtenbos, another long-time fitness industry leader and co-founder of Basic Fit Spain. Hill has been named as executive president of the new venture, while Houtenbos will take up the role as CEO.

The duo will lead the business day-to-day, with support from financial partner Eric Kakebeen, an



Hill will lead a team looking to open 75 énergie gyms in Spain

entrepreneur with a career in the speciality food sector.

The first site to be developed under the franchising agreement has been secured in Barcelona

and will open at the end of the first quarter of 2021.

énergie founder Jan Spaticchia – who led an MBO to buy the business back in June, said: “This is an

important move to expand our international footprint and signals the énergie board’s confidence in the market.”

More: http://lei.sr/2e3r5_H



This is an important move to expand our international footprint
Jan Spaticchia

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ukactive's Active Ageing Consultation looks to "improve sector"

A major new consultation will seek to explore how the physical activity sector can better support people over the age of 55 – and those with long-term health conditions – to lead active lifestyles.

The UK-wide consultation is being led by industry body, ukactive, in partnership

with fitness equipment and technology specialist EGYM.

ukactive is calling for submissions to help showcase the sector's current work which meet consumer needs, as well as to identify areas for improvement and where offerings can be scaled.

The first phase calls for organisations in the sector to submit case studies for evidence, such as solutions, programmes and commissioning models that are in place to support older adults and those with long-term conditions to be active.

Once submissions have been collected and analysed by the ukactive Research Institute, a group of older adults – selected to best represent individuals from this age group – will be invited to take



The consultation looks to identify areas for improvement

part in a qualitative research process, further examining the sector's provision.

The findings will be presented in a report, alongside recommendations for the sector to establish best practice.

"We want to find out exactly what the sector is offering to support older adults to be physically active," said Dr Matthew Wade, head of research at ukactive.

More: http://lei.sr/h9A6Y_H



We want to find out exactly what the sector is offering to support older adults

Matthew Wade

Governments urged to classify gyms as 'essential services'

The UK and Scottish governments should classify gyms, health clubs, swimming pools and leisure centres as essential services to enable them to stay open during any further lockdowns.

The classification would put these facilities in the same bracket as things such as supermarkets, chemists, banks and doctors surgeries.

The call has been made by industry body, ukactive, which says that unless physical activity facilities are treated as vital to public health, thousands of sites could be forced to shut, as the nation grapples with the pandemic.



Gyms play a crucial role in helping people fight COVID-19

"As the government is faced with difficult decisions about restrictions to control the virus, fitness and leisure facilities must be recognised alongside essential retail as providing a

vital service to the nation," said ukactive CEO Huw Edwards.

"The fitness sector has a crucial role to play in keeping people in good condition to fight COVID-19," he explained.

The industry is fighting for official 'reclassification', as an essential service, to secure its long-term future.

More: http://lei.sr/66Z6w_H



Fitness and leisure facilities must be recognised as providing a vital service

Huw Edwards

£1bn decarbonising scheme a “huge opportunity” for leisure

The UK government has launched its £1bn Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), providing grant funding for energy efficiency measures across the public sector.

The funding has been made available for capital sustainability and heat decarbonisation projects within public sector non-domestic buildings, including central government departments and non-departmental public bodies in England.

Public sector bodies can apply for a grant to finance up to 100 per cent of the costs of capital energy-saving projects which meet the scheme criteria



“
Given our centres offer both wet and dry environments, there is a great deal of opportunity

Sarah Watts

– and there is no minimum or maximum grant value

With the aim of delivering significant carbon and financial savings in the public sector and stimulating the economy, the scheme could provide the leisure sector with a “huge opportunity”.

SHUTTERSTOCK/STUDIO ROMANTIC



The scheme aims to make facilities more sustainable

“At £1bn, this is a significant investment,” says Sarah Watts, CEO of Alliance Leisure, which develops facilities on behalf of leisure operators.

Speaking to *HCM*, Watts said: “Given leisure centres can range up to 100,000sq ft or more – delivering services

in both wet and dry environments – there is a great deal of opportunity for the introduction of decarbonising technologies and solutions.” The scheme is primarily targeted at existing facilities.

More: http://lei.sr/N6n2v_H

Operators register for new standard for cancer touch

More than 220 wellness operators have already signed up to the new Standards Authority for Touch in Cancer Care (SATCC).

Initially revealed in March – and launched by

Sue Harmsworth, founder of skincare firm ESPA – SATCC’s mission is to offer a national standard enabling people with cancer to get access to appropriately qualified therapists and facilities that are capable of catering to their individual needs.

The organisation also provides a safe platform for sharing details of how to find training courses.

Speaking to *HCM*, Harmsworth explained that the new organisation has been “hugely well-received”, with new operators from across the wellness sector joining daily.



“
SATCC has been hugely well-received and the number of companies registered grows daily

Sue Harmsworth

More: http://lei.sr/F9q6f_H



SATCC has created new standards for cancer touch

Exhale teams up with Amazon to deliver Halo service

Hospitality giant Hyatt Hotels Corporation has announced a new collaboration between its fitness and wellness brand, Exhale, and the newly launched Amazon Halo service.

Powered by a mobile app and accompanying wristband, the newly launched Amazon Halo service is offering access

to Exhale's streaming video platform, Exhale On Demand (EOD), featuring recorded barre, cardio and yoga fitness classes, as well as mindfulness and meditation sessions.

The Amazon Halo service gives users and Exhale members greater accessibility to EOD's recorded workout tutorials – called labs – which are set up as one-to-four-week trackable challenges, such as a three-week challenge focused on core work.

At launch, Amazon Halo members have access to seven EOD fitness programmes curated with specific goals, fitness levels and schedules in mind.

"We're thrilled to team up with Amazon Halo and provide even more people with the opportunity to easily



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Amazon has launched its fitness tracker and app

access fitness- and wellbeing-focused programmes," said Julia Sutton, CEO of Exhale.

"EOD allows people to maintain their wellbeing routines when they want, where they want, and the collaboration with Amazon

Halo adds a new element of measurement to help people better understand personal health and wellbeing and create a more connected, informed approach."

More: http://lei.sr/u9C6C_H



EOD allows people to maintain their wellbeing routines when they want

Julia Sutton

Accor debuts in-room exercise programmes inspired by nature

Global hospitality group, Accor, is launching in-room restorative fitness and wellness programming at select North and Central America hotels through an exclusive partnership with wellness technology company, Three Sages.

The partnership gives guests at Accor's Fairmont, Sofitel and Swissôtel properties the opportunity to reset through complimentary yoga, stretching, sleep practice, breathwork and mindfulness, all available on the in-room entertainment system.

Focusing on restorative content, the initiative



Each Three Sages video connects guests to nature

highlights mindful movement to make guests feel less stressed, more relaxed and at ease while travelling. "Three Sages experiences are intended to help guests

virtually connect with nature, find balance and ground themselves," said Greg Commins, CEO at Three Sages. "Our short format, nature-inspired programmes are

the ideal way to take a sip of wellness to de-stress." In-room exercise is a growing trend in hospitality.

More: http://lei.sr/K7U8n_H



Our short format, nature-inspired programmes are the ideal way to take a sip of wellness

Greg Commins

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Exercise is being reframed as a way to learn new skills and have fun, rather than as a punishment

Everyone's talking about Fat shaming

Bristol University has committed to embracing body positivity, creating more inclusive physical activity environments, rejecting diet culture and raising awareness of eating disorders across its sports and fitness provision. Should the rest of the fitness sector follow suit? Kath Hudson reports

led by its Student's Union, Bristol University's campaign to reject diet culture and weight stigma will see its fitness instructors and sports captains being given bespoke training, which has been created by the university, in collaboration with eating disorder charities, BEAT and WorkEDout.

The training will educate those involved with physical activity in creating inclusive environments and updating language so clichés such as "burn those calories" will become a thing of the past.

The reasons for doing this are twofold: so those who are vulnerable to eating disorders and over-exercise

don't get triggered in a gym environment, and so those who don't have thin privilege – the ability to go anywhere without being judged for not being the 'right size' – feel that they belong too.

Bristol University and WorkEDout are keen for the rest of the industry to follow their lead. With both obesity and eating disorders on the rise and costing the NHS millions each year, and with the issue of obesity-related deaths from COVID-19, should Bristol University's approach become an industry standard? Could this help get more people active and healthy? We ask the experts...



Abbie Jessop

Bristol University: student advisor to Bristol Sports Exercise and Health



When the industry reframes exercise as an opportunity to have fun and learn new skills and strengths, instead of as a punishment, more people will take part

The messaging that thin equals healthy is all too prevalent in the fitness industry, cultivating and perpetuating a harmful dialogue with our bodies, putting the focus on aesthetics, rather than strength, skills and power.

Commonly used language such as "let's burn some calories" or "slim those waists" presents exercise as compensatory and punishing. It also promotes disordered thinking around food and exercise, which can have extremely negative consequences for those who are vulnerable to eating disorders.

When the industry reframes exercise as an opportunity to have fun, learn new skills and strengths, and build a community around health-promoting behaviours, instead of as a remedial necessity or even a punishment, more people will take part and sustain such behaviours. For example, "I'm

starting a new class, learning Olympic weightlifting techniques and meeting new people" is a more positive and, crucially, unarmful way of presenting the motivation to exercise.

At Bristol University, we're addressing this issue through the provision of a training programme which educates fitness instructors, sports captains and sport society presidents in cultivating inclusive, non-judgmental environments. The training covers weight stigma, diet culture, and the harms of fatphobia on all bodies, particularly when promoted within the fitness industry, as well as explicitly looking at eating disorders and how to spot the signs that someone might have one.

We would like to see fitness qualifications prioritise the cultural and social climate in which professionals practice, by including modules and additional training or accreditation in this area.

Leah Newton

WorkEDout co-founder

I launched the WorkEDout campaign a year ago with fitness instructor Carly Wilkinson in order to raise awareness of eating disorders in the fitness industry and empower fitness professionals to educate themselves to recognise, approach and refer clients with these disorders.

Having personal experience of an eating disorder, which took me to the brink of death, I'm all too aware of how exercise can be a massive trigger for people with eating disorders and how the simple use of language in an exercise class can make individuals feel very unsafe.

There is a lot of stigma and misunderstanding around these illnesses, which are on the increase. Some 1.6m people suffer from eating disorders in the UK, and this is increasing by 7 per cent each year. A survey among Bristol University students found that one in five believed they had started to suffer from an eating disorder since beginning their course. Sadly it is also a condition that kills, claiming 10,200 lives each year.



As gyms and fitness studios have the potential to be triggering environments for those vulnerable to eating disorders, and there is an overall lack of understanding around this, it is incredibly important for the fitness industry to take this issue seriously. We need to challenge the prevalent culture which praises people for exercising and losing weight, as well as the outdated notion of burning calories.

With so many other powerful elements of how exercise makes people feel and move, the industry doesn't need to be powered by diet culture. To help support



Having personal experience of an eating disorder, which took me to the brink of death, I'm all too aware of how the use of language in an exercise class can make individuals feel very unsafe

the industry to change, we are currently exploring options for creating a CPD accredited course for fitness professionals and, going forward, planning to offer in-person and online content. We hope the industry will embrace the change being spearheaded by Bristol University.



Kate Dale

Sport England: campaign lead for This Girl Can

Although everyone in the health and fitness sector wants to offer an inclusive space, it is important that we collectively keep learning and striving to do more – we can never be too inclusive and there are always new members of society to reach out to. Everyone coming through the doors brings memories and baggage, which can make them feel vulnerable.

While the sector has done really well with becoming more inclusive with imagery – representing every type of woman has been at the heart of This Girl Can's work since its inception in 2015 – I think Bristol University is right in saying that some language has become so entrenched that we don't even realise we're using it.

We have to consider that not everyone who walks through the doors of a sport or physical activity facility will be full of



confidence about being there – it could have taken months or years of courage to get to that point – so the language we use is incredibly important in laying the foundation for a positive experience.

To give one such example, one woman told a This Girl Can research focus group

Many people view exercise as a punishment they have to do after eating “forbidden calories”, with this often being compounded by a session on the “dreadmill”

that she walked out of a leisure centre after being asked by the receptionist “how far can you swim?” Although it was an innocuous and well-meaning question, intended to signpost her to the right pool, as an agoraphobic who had been coaxed out of the house by social services, it felt like a judgement. People fear judgement from others, but also often harshly judge themselves.

Eating disorders and over-exercise are both incredibly difficult subjects to broach, so I think it's a good idea to keep upskilling in this area, so fitness professionals have the confidence and vocabulary to handle these difficult subjects while knowing the signs to look out for and what to do.

It's also true that many people view exercise as a punishment they have to do after eating “forbidden calories”, with this often being compounded by a session on the “dreadmill” – both of those terms being common to hear serves to enforce just how important it is that we keep pushing to position exercise as an activity that is fun, empowering and which gives you some space.

This Girl Can uses imagery that is representative of every type of woman



PHOTO: SPORT ENGLAND/THIS GIRL CAN

Creating a comfortable and inclusive environment at the gym

Earlier this year Sport England surveyed women to see if they would be happy to return to the gym post-lockdown. Although 87 per cent said they felt safe to do so, only 27 per cent of them had actually visited a gym and only 13 per cent a swimming pool. Those surveyed outlined some things which would make them feel more comfortable visiting and create a more inclusive environment.

- A discreet offer from staff to help with equipment (48 per cent)
- A code of conduct in the weights room, such as time limits and re-racking heavy weights after use (36 per cent)
- Hooks by the pool to hang towels to restrict time walking in a swimming costume (44 per cent)
- Women's only areas/ dedicated swim time for women (36 per cent)
- Fewer full-length mirrors (21 per cent)

Colin Huffen

CIMSPA: head of education

The training of fitness professionals and the way fitness is offered and consumed is continually evolving, as the industry responds to the need to reach out to all types of customers. CIMSPA will support any organisation wanting to provide additional support and training for fitness professionals and so we offer our support to Bristol University to develop the training in a way that meets an industry-led need and engages with fitness professionals.

It is important not to land the perceived problem at the door of the fitness professional, which would likely alienate them, and so we would support Bristol University in taking a wider look at how they could support the whole industry in addressing the problem they have identified.



It's important not to land the perceived problem at the door of the fitness professional, which would likely alienate them





PHOTO: ACTIVE IQ

Jenny Patrickson

Active IQ: managing director

The conversation on the gym floor should always aim to avoid using terms like 'fat' and 'thin' and discussing diet choices in terms of 'good and bad foods'.

Good instructors and trainers usually emphasise that physical activity is for health, wellbeing and how you feel, not how you look. Group exercise instructors and PTs have a big role to play in creating a non-judgemental environment and setting the right tone at a gym or club.

Understanding the best terminology to use, and avoid, is included in Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications and training, alongside more emphasis on effective communication skills. Over the last few years, we have increased the amount of guidance and content around softer skills and consultation skills so that trainers are able to read and listen to clients more effectively. We have shifted from a paternalistic approach to a consultation approach that is a shared journey with



Of course, 'fat shaming' is wrong – but so too is avoiding talking about weight issues altogether

the client. Our qualifications also include elements of motivational interviewing and behaviour change theory to help PTs and instructors support their clients in taking responsibility for their actions and activity.

While of course it's important to speak to people carefully and non-judgementally, we cannot let things swing too far the other way by letting political correctness stop us from sharing the irrefutable fact that being overweight increases people's risk of disease.

We must ensure instructors and PTs have the necessary skills and confidence to have that important conversation with clients without fear of being criticised. Of course, 'fat shaming' is wrong – but so too is avoiding talking about weight issues altogether. By upskilling trainers to understand how to speak to overweight clients in a sensitive and understanding manner and position physical activity and its relationship with food appropriately, we will start to see the tide turn.

Marco Coppola

Better: National health and fitness manager

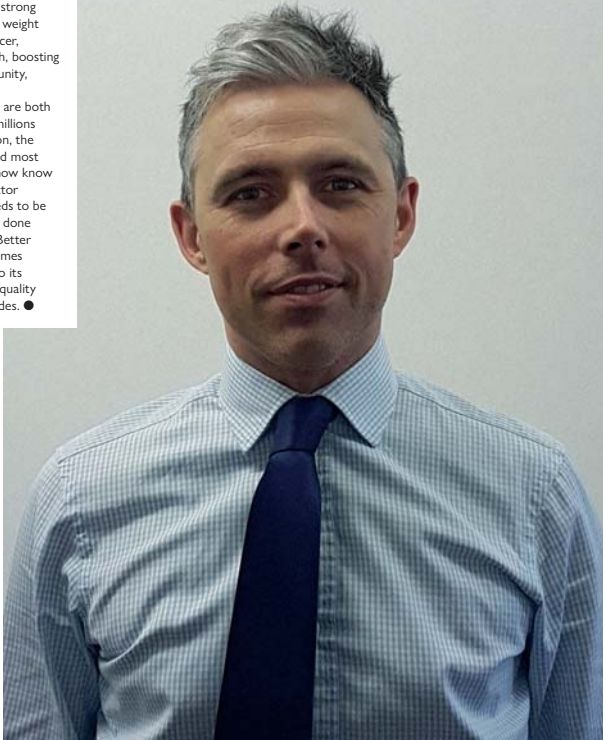
This is an interesting initiative from Bristol University and, as we move forward to tackle obesity, Better would welcome a review of all language, training materials and products in the exercise industry, to ensure there is no stigma and that they focus on the health and wellbeing benefits of exercise, for all ages and body types.

At Better we don't believe in stigmatising anyone, which is why we use a variety of ages and shapes in our marketing material, reflecting our diverse customer base. Weight alone is not the only determinant of health and wellbeing and we advocate the strong benefits of exercise for healthy weight management, as a mood enhancer, promoting cardiovascular health, boosting confidence and a social opportunity, whatever your shape or size.

Obesity and eating disorders are both conditions that cost the NHS millions of pounds a year and, as a nation, the UK is one of the least active and most unhealthy in Europe. We also now know that obesity is a greater risk factor regarding COVID, so there needs to be an intervention, which must be done in a balanced way. As a result, Better will soon be launching programmes aimed at tackling obesity, due to its role in compounding health inequality in some of our poorest postcodes. ●



We now know obesity is a risk factor in relation to COVID-19, so there needs to be an intervention, which must be done in a balanced way



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If I look forward five years, I'd want us to be somewhere around the 1,000-site mark – the 'premier league' benchmark

Humphrey Cobbold

With a portfolio of 516 clubs, the PureGym Group is now the second largest operator in Europe – and it is eyeing continued growth. Its CEO talks to Kate Cracknell

“We believe a premier league of larger-scale budget fitness operators is beginning to emerge: the likes of Planet Fitness in the US, BasicFit in Europe and SmartFit in Latin America,” says PureGym CEO Humphrey Cobbold. “We want to get bigger too. Not at the expense of quality – you have to be both big and good – but scale has real advantages. “Being bigger means you can invest more in all the key elements that respond to scale: technology, digital, data, analytics, information, management processes, quality of management and so on. Of course, these also happen to be the things that underpin the budget model. “One of the other things that’s important about the low-cost model is that it’s more consistently exportable and manageable across geographies than the traditional gym model,” says Cobbold. “In turn, that makes scale even more achievable.

“So, this is a model that will go on growing. In some markets, it already has a 50–60 per cent share, and we believe affordable fitness

will be a very substantial part of all significant gym and fitness markets in the future. Within that, scale operators will have an advantage.”

It was this thinking that led to PureGym’s acquisition of Fitness World – a deal that was completed at the beginning of 2020, just before COVID-19 sent the world into lockdown.

The deal handed PureGym more than 230 clubs in Denmark, Poland and also in Switzerland – under the BaseFit brand.

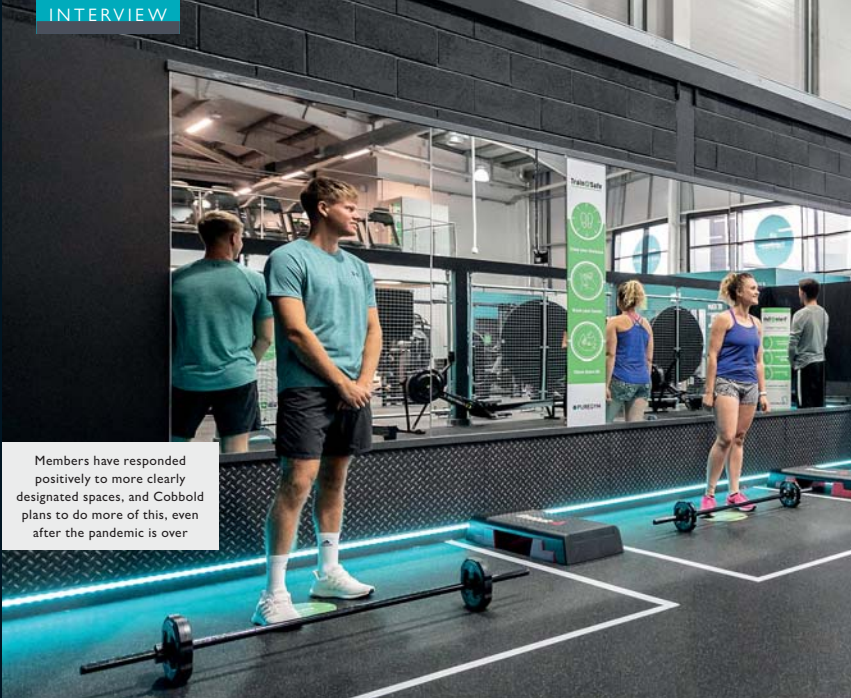
“With hindsight, you could argue the timing wasn’t great,” reflects Cobbold. “However, the underlying strategic logic for the deal is absolutely sound and will play out over the medium to longer term. It’s just going to take a bit longer to get there, as everything is at the moment, because of COVID-19.”

A cross-market strategy

“Part of the rationale for the transaction was geographic diversity,” says Cobbold. “That’s a good thing generally, because it means you’re not entirely exposed to the economics and situation in one country. Of course, I didn’t expect it to play out in quite the way it did, with a global



PureGym's CEO, Humphrey Cobbold, has growth in his sights



Members have responded positively to more clearly designated spaces, and Cobbold plans to do more of this, even after the pandemic is over

viral shutdown and some markets opening before others, but it's proof that diversity in a business portfolio is never a bad thing.

"Switzerland re-opened on 11 May, Poland on 6 June and Denmark on 10 June, he says, "we brought in maybe £20m from the Swiss and Danish clubs, while the UK clubs were still closed.

"I haven't done this sum exactly, but I think the cost of financing the Fitness World deal was more than compensated for by the revenue that Fitness World brought in over that period.

"There were operational advantages of owning the European clubs too. We were able to see and understand how new protocols worked in environments well ahead of anybody else in the UK market, which allowed us to strengthen our own protocols and gave us real confidence in re-opening.

"Because our number one priority is making sure our gyms are safe places to work and safe places to work out. We've put a lot of effort, money and staff and colleague time behind this. We currently have about 1.5–1.6 million paying

members attending our facilities and giving us feedback to say they're happy doing so, and I'm very proud of the way we've re-earned people's trust in this new environment.

"Our figures are down on where we were at the end of February, we're very open about that: we peaked at 1.9 million members in February. But by any measure, given the dislocation we've all been through, that's a pretty good all-round performance."

Post-lockdown performance

Indeed, where many operators around the world are still operating at a loss, PureGym was already back in the black by the time of this interview (28 September 2020).

"If you look at our Q2 results, you'll see a break-even analysis," says Cobbold. "Based on 2019 data, our top level of break-even – including not only operating costs but refurbishment CapEx and interest payments too – is reached at 89 per cent of volume. In fact, with yields up slightly in 2020 versus



We realised we had a great franchise proposition: a really strong core model and technology platform, excellent data and analytics – we also generate 45 per cent site margins in the UK

2019, that figure is more like 82–83 per cent, and we're ahead of that on average across the group. The UK is slightly behind Denmark and Switzerland – it was closed for longer and hit harder by the pandemic, and confidence levels are a little lower as a result – but across the group, we've passed the break-even point.

"I'm massively reassured by how quickly a very large number of people – 80 per cent of our membership – were back in the gym within five or six weeks of re-opening in all our markets," says Cobbold. "It's an important affirmation of the model given the sort of difficulties we've just been through."

He adds: "We're also seeing new people joining our gyms. In the UK in August – the latest fully analysed data I have for this – only 50 per cent of joiners had been members of PureGym before. And we're getting overwhelming

feedback from members telling us just how glad they are to be back in the gym, how physically they're feeling better, mentally they're feeling better. We had queues outside pretty much every gym in the country when we reopened."

Learnings from 2020

Yet challenges remain: taking place in late September, our interview is set against the backdrop of rising cases in the UK and the looming threat of a second lockdown.

"The big unknown about any further lockdowns is what government will do," observes Cobbold. "We're still benefiting from the UK government's rates holiday, which is excellent, I have to say. But the big unknown is what support they will give to job retention and for furloughing of staff. By the time you're publishing this, of course, all this may be

more apparent. What I can say is that we're positioning to come through this strongly, and we will need people to be able to do that.

"We're in a good place, though, having secured a further £100m cash injection to boost our total liquidity to over £250m. We didn't need that much to see us through COVID, but I wanted to have the platform to invest in technology, new sites, refurbishment of existing sites."

He elaborates: "Clearly digital and online is going to be an accelerating part of what we're doing: as we stand today, over 700,000 existing members have our app on their phones, as do 400,000 non-members in the UK, and many are still using it for the group exercise and classes we're offering on there.

"Moving forward, I believe digital will be a complement to facility-based fitness for most people, not a replacement, but it will be a very important part of the mix. Whether we're able to charge for it at some point remains

to be seen, but we're increasing our numbers of software engineers and putting significant investment into our tech development.

"I also think there are learnings from COVID that will change the way we operate our gyms for the long term. We believe expectations around hygiene will remain high, so our cleaning and sanitisation points will become a permanent feature.

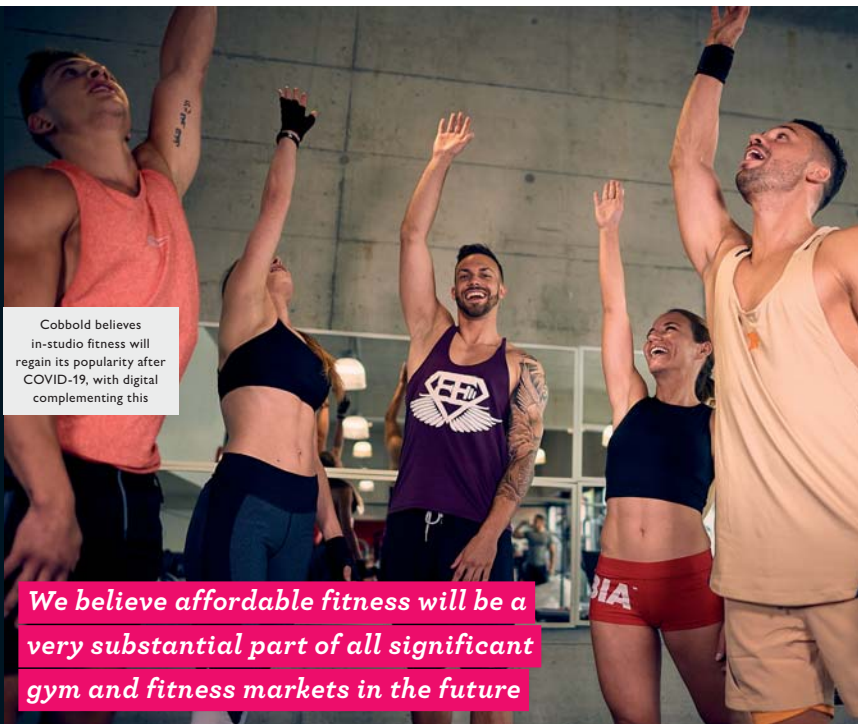
"Secondly, members are telling us they're enjoying their workouts even more because we've clearly delineated the workout spaces: we have white boxes around benches and in studios for classes, for example. I think we'll see a bit more management of space for people coming out of this."

Growth of the estate

All this thinking will be applied to an even greater number of clubs, as PureGym Group continues to grow its estate through various channels.

Cobbold believes in-studio fitness will regain its popularity after COVID-19, with digital complementing this

We believe affordable fitness will be a very substantial part of all significant gym and fitness markets in the future





PureGym's stringent cleaning procedures have ensured members feel comfortable returning to the clubs

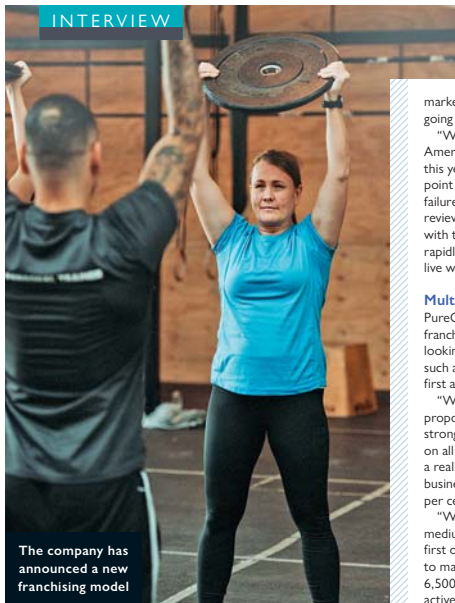
"We're just coming out of a big dislocation and it looks as though we might be heading for more disruption. That isn't the easiest environment in which to think about strategy and growth. But we're doing it anyway, because we believe low-cost is a winning model for the future," says Cobbold, "and we intend to be a large and significant player in the market. That principle is guiding us still.

"In time, I fully expect us to get back to significant growth in the UK – I believe we'll ultimately operate north of 500 sites in the UK. Switzerland certainly has room for growth, as low-cost is much less saturated there, although it will take more work as it's a more juvenile business. Denmark is a more mature market: there, I think it will be less about lots of growth and more about improving the estate, either in existing sites or building new clubs to replace old sites where we find a better location. We don't talk about Poland much because it's that much smaller, but it has some potential too.

"So, within the existing countries where we already operate, there's plenty of room for us to grow. Of course, we're going to be careful, considered and measured in when and how we do that, given the ongoing issues. We're working towards 15–30 openings next year across our current markets and I think, even longer term, further acquisitions are unlikely in core



PureGym is working towards opening 15-30 new sites next year



The company has announced a new franchising model

markets where we're already big. We're always going to get caught by CMA-related issues.

"We had some sites coming together in North America. However, given what has happened this year – especially in the US, both from a viral point of view and in terms of the high-profile failures of some major gym operators – we're reviewing whether and when we go forward with those. That market is changing quite rapidly and, for the moment, we don't have any live work taking place on sites in America."

Multi-format franchising

PureGym also recently announced a new franchising model, as Cobbold explains: "We're looking very hard at franchising for markets such as the Middle East and Asia, with a first agreement currently being finalised.

"We realised we had a great franchise proposition: a really strong core model, a strong technology platform that we're building on all the time, excellent data and analytics, a really strong revenue management and business process approach – we generate 45 per cent site margins in the UK, for example.

"We also have multiple formats: smaller, medium-sized and larger sites. I think we're the first operator in the world to work out how to make the budget economics work from 6,500sq ft up to 26,500sq ft and we're using that actively in the UK, Denmark and Switzerland.

Making the case to UK government

Humphrey Cobbold explains how PureGym is contributing to keeping the industry open and trading in the face threats of further lockdowns

It's difficult to over-emphasise how important having the opportunity to go to a gym, to work out in a safe and well curated way, is to millions of people who do that every week across the UK," says PureGym CEO, Humphrey Cobbold. "Government shouldn't just lob us in with pubs and restaurants – that does a deep disservice to our sector.

"There have been very few cases of transmission in gyms around the world, and where they've happened, they have all had particular circumstances attached to them that make them outliers.

"I'm very much on the front foot with this and am working with ukactive to continue to fight to try and avoid any further lockdowns."

Cobbold, who is widely credited for being a major contributor to the fight to keep the industry open, by appearing on TV, lobbying and tackling the legal issues, is passionate in his beliefs, saying "I think our arguments are incontrovertible truths, such as that:

- Approved protocols are in place to minimise the risk of virus transmission in gyms.
- Those protocols are working, with a growing body of evidence to prove this, and gyms are going to great lengths to ensure they're adhered to.
- The value to society is clear: gyms make a material contribution to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the country.
- The importance of gyms will only rise in winter months,

when other forms of activity become less feasible and the extended crisis impacts ever more heavily on people's mental and physical wellbeing.

- Keeping gyms open will therefore help society fight the virus.

"Put simply, there is no inconsistency with the government's lockdown objectives if they keep gyms open – even if they have to lock down other elements of society.

"Just as they encouraged people in spring and summer to get outdoors to exercise, they should be positively encouraging people to go to COVID-safe gyms in the event of any ongoing lockdowns that may occur. That's the very straightforward story that we want to get out there."





Cobbold expects PureGym's multiple format model to make it appealing to potential franchisees

I think the cost of financing the Fitness World deal was more than compensated for by the £20m Fitness World brought in while the UK gyms were closed

"We can therefore help franchisees to operate at 6,500sq ft, 12,000sq ft or 20,000sq ft, and they can do so under any of our brands: PureGym, Fitness World, BaseFit or even Pure Fitness as we've called ourselves in the US. We would, I think, even be OK if they wanted to use their own name and just pay for our systems and processes.

"Ultimately, we're a 'do it, try it and then plan it' sort of organisation. We could have spent a year and a half analysing franchising to death. Instead, we said: 'Here's a really interesting opportunity. This is real, this is now. Let's build on what we need to take this opportunity and, in so doing, we'll understand much more about franchising.

"We're not saying it's a very purist approach to strategy, but it's very low risk to us – we aren't deploying a lot of capital – and it's a really effective way of building our learning in parallel with our thinking.

"In fact, this first deal we've signed will pretty much pay for us to create all the franchising documents, systems and capabilities we

need – so at worst, franchising will wash its face for us. It's a zero-cost route to discovering all about franchising and our investors at Leonard Green are fully behind the idea."

Premier league ambitions

Cobbold concludes: "If I look forward five years – assuming we get through the pandemic and grow as planned – I'd want to be somewhere around the 1,000 sites mark. Our strategy will still be quality first, quantity second, but I'd say 1,000 clubs is the premier league benchmark and that's where I'd like us to be.

"Our current thinking is that we will maintain the distinct brands as we do this. The model is the same, whether it's PureGym or Fitness World; it's one of the reasons we bought that business, because behind the scenes it's the same model as ours.

"We're pretty relaxed about being a multi-business, multi-brand, multi-format company. Our focus is on opening the right size site for the right market and operating it really well; the brand just has to be relevant in that country." ●

Joe O'Connor

The owner of Nisus Fitness in County Kerry explains how MZ-Remote helped grow memberships during the pandemic and transform Nisus into a hybrid boutique

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A like or a share on Instagram has never paid the rent. MZ-Remote has allowed me to continue revenue streams during Covid-19 that covered my operating expenses and effectively kept my business open



MZ-Remote is a live virtual gym training tool that displays the heart rate feedback of all participants on one screen



Our focus at Nisus is direction, accountability and motivation. Myzone lets us do all three – both in the club and online. Once I got wind of MZ-Remote, I wanted it. We've used Myzone as a remote training tool for five years and having retrospective heart rate data has been great, but having remote data live has been a game changer.

While our competitors are fighting among each other for Instagram live video space, we have a white label offering for our clients.

Within 12 hours of hearing about MZ-Remote we had 50 clients online doing a session. It now runs across our 15-session online LIVE schedule each week drawing an average of 30 clients per session.

True hybrid

We've always offered online training and coaching in some form or other, but MZ-Remote has allowed us to become a true hybrid training club, with an equal number of club-based and online members.

Members tell us that it's like being in the club, which is music to my ears. We can scale our business and grow in a way that would not have been possible without MZ-Remote and its integration with the Quoox gym management software.

Winning back former members

Tralee is a relatively small town and people regularly move away for work. Some of these members are now back with Nisus.

GET MZ-REMOTE

MZ-Remote is included in the Myzone regular licence fee, with no additional charge made to activate it. For more information or to reserve your space on an MZ-Remote experience session get in touch today: remote@myzone.org

Although they are living in other cities or as far away as Montreal and Dubai, they are back in the club online, thanks to MZ-Remote. It means they can work out with their former training buddies, enjoying their favourite sessions with their favourite coach.

Keeping business open

The hybrid club is the future and without MZ-Remote you risk becoming a club that provides endless free content online that makes no difference to your bottom line. A like or a share on Instagram has never paid the rent, but MZ-Remote has allowed me to continue revenue streams during Covid-19 that covered my operating expenses and effectively kept my business open.

It's a key tool to improve our membership experience and scale our business. It's here to stay and will be essential for the hybrid club experience. ●

More: www.myzone.org/mz-remote

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

New research shows that UK public sector health and fitness is on track for recovery, but operators face shifts in their member profiles that mean operators will need to adapt to thrive

In a story now all too familiar, March 2020 saw the temporary closure of the sport, leisure and physical activity industry at the hands of the pandemic. Thousands of facilities were forced to close as the country went into lockdown.

Two months later, with the industry showing signs of life as we got closer to a reopening date, ukactive and 4global – powered by the DataHub and supported by organisations from across the sector – attempted the impossible. Researchers used modelling and analytics to predict the future, providing public sector operators, trusts and national bodies with evidence on which to build their financial and operational plans.

The research

Using member and participation data from pre-lockdown, combined with consumer confidence data from inside and outside the industry, the research team used predictive modelling to map the sector's expected path out of lockdown.

The calculations considered restrictions on facility capacity, a lower rate of participation by older age groups and a reduced amount of swimming and team sports. It was estimated that if restrictions were lifted

six months after opening, the industry would reach -1 per cent (minus 1 per cent) of participation by the end of February 2021, when compared to 2020 figures.

Taking into consideration a steady increase in consumer confidence (the willingness of people to use facilities), and with operators across the UK being required to limit class sizes and gym entry during peak time, calculations for late September 2020 projected that participation at local authority and trust facilities would be 51 per cent of the figure for the same week in 2019.

Is the sector on track?

Against these projections, live participation figures from the DataHub show that the calculations from the research team were exactly right, at an accuracy level above 98 per cent in the first eight weeks of re-opening.

"The projections we made back in May are being realised, as participation across the sector is impacted by consumer confidence and capacity restrictions," says Utku Toprakseven, partner at 4global Consulting.

Toprakseven led this latest research, which was published almost exactly six months after the UK first faced lockdown.



Group exercise continues to present high occupancy levels, with the quickest recovery rates and highest demand of the three main activities



The industry is on track for recovery according to the 4global study



Pool space has contributed to a difference in recovery journeys between the public and private sectors, due to costs and footfall

The data, which was taken from over 800 local government and trust sites across the UK, showed the proportion of the industry that was open grew from 48 per cent in the first week post-reopening, to 69 per cent by the end of week eight.

From this representative view, the participation data has been analysed by facility type, focusing on health and fitness, swimming and group exercise.

As shown in Figure 1, fitness has shown a steady increase from 36 per cent in the first week following re-opening, to 63 per cent by the end of week eight, when compared to the previous year.

Group exercise, which has been impacted to a greater extent in terms of capacities and floor space than fitness, has had its participation numbers capped in comparison with last year, but continues to present high occupancy levels and be a driver for returning to centre-based activity – it's also had the quickest recovery rates and highest demand of the three main activities.

Operating swimming facilities has also been a challenge across the sector, driven by low consumer confidence immediately following lockdown, combined with high running costs and the extensive processes required to run a pool safely.

Among other considerations, pool space has contributed to a difference in recovery journeys between the public and private sector. While the public sector has struggled to make the numbers add up in the absence of swimming lessons and lower overall participation, the private sector has recovered more quickly. Fitness and group workout represent a higher proportion of footfall and revenue for private operators, leading to higher participation figures and greater member recovery.

Changing face of leisure centres

COVID-19 has impacted the traditional leisure facility member base. "The profile of people using leisure facilities is changing," says 4global's Ed Hubbard – co-author of the original *COVID-19 Impact Report*. "Women and girls have returned to facilities more

slowly than their male counterparts, while some older people have chosen to exercise at home or outside."

The data shows that participation for members aged 65+ is falling slightly as a proportion of all visits to leisure facilities, but with only a two per cent swing against figures from 2019. The proportion of participation by children aged 1-15 has also fallen slightly, from 23 per cent of total participation in late September 2019 to 19 per cent at the same point this year – primarily as a result of restriction in school swimming and other courses.

This has been offset by an increase in the proportion of visits by those aged 16-54, a trend which was forecast following early survey data that indicated older adults were less confident returning to health and fitness facilities than their younger counterparts.

The next challenge

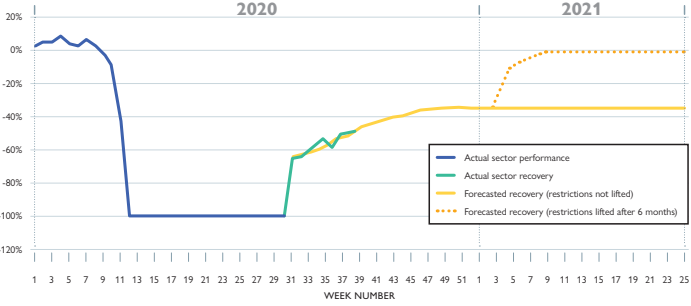
In line with projections for the sector, participation has grown steadily since reopening and members have continued to gain confidence in the safety, cleaning and operational processes instated by



The absence of swimming lessons has hit public sector pool operators hard

Sector recovery graph – Projections and actuals since January 2020

(visits in a single week compared to the same week previous year)



operators. Now we have the opportunity to look at the challenge the sector faces going forward.

Local and regional restrictions continue to be broadened, with approximately one third of the UK's population subject to restrictions at the time of writing. This will undoubtedly have an impact on the performance of the sector in these geographical areas, either through mandated closures or reduced consumer confidence.

As member and participation data in these areas of the UK is available and statistically robust, the research team at 4global will continue to monitor sector performance and update future projections accordingly.

Modelling undertaken as part of the *COVID-19 Impact Report* assumed, as a worst case scenario, that restrictions on capacity and entry to facilities would be lifted at the start of the seventh month following the original re-opening date.

This anticipated that consumer confidence would increase significantly and that a removal of restrictions would allow the sector to get close to full recovery by early 2021. However, if – as implied by government announcements in September 2020 – restrictions are in place beyond March 2021, operators will be unable to reach the predicted figures. Based on current levels of government support for local authority leisure, this would mean the long-term sustainability of many facilities would be under threat without further support.

Analysts had predicted that with more people working from home and work-life balance appearing to become more flexible, the age-old challenge of facilities being too busy in peak hours and not busy enough during off-peak hours would become a thing of the past.

However, the data does not show this to be the case, with people continuing to exercise in the morning before work and in the early evening.

Operational challenges around this are exacerbated by entry restrictions and limited facility and class capacity, which has ultimately led to willing gym-goers being turned away or asked to queue to access facilities, with all the challenges that accompany this in terms of customer engagement and retention.

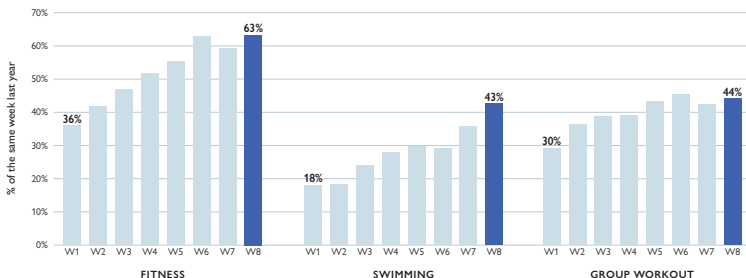
The operators being surveyed have so far failed to persuade customers to exercise during off-peak hours – something that would ease this situation and improve their bottom line.

Re-engaging in autumn

To some extent, the mental health of people in the UK was saved by the warm, dry weather that coincided with lockdown. Participants were able to replace their regular gym workout with outdoor exercise and in some demographics, we saw increasing activity rates, as people were motivated to escape the house and improve their health and wellbeing. For the leisure industry, this created further challenges, as some members cancelled their memberships in favour of a new hybrid of outdoor activity and digital classes.

As autumn arrives across the UK, these new behaviour patterns and habits will be put to the test. Operators will be hopeful that, through a combination of vastly improved digital offers and the promise of a tried and tested membership offer, old and new members will be tempted back into the facility. Only time will tell whether the dark nights will remind people that the motivation of an instructor, class or fitness professional is just what they need to reach their goals and get through a long UK winter.

Sector recovery rates - activities



Despite more flexible working arrangements, most people continue to exercise at peak times

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If we want to build a compelling evidence base about the benefits of physical activity, we must use data and insight to support decision making

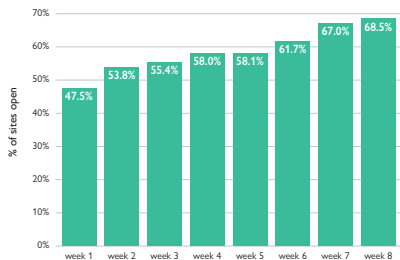
Monitoring the recovery

If the now customary 5.00pm government news conferences have taught us anything, it is that COVID-19 has brought data and insight to the forefront of everyone's minds. Whether friends are discussing the change in the R number over their socially distanced picnic, or local newspapers are reporting on the latest increase in case numbers, the need for robust data and a process that people can understand has become of paramount importance.

“As a sector, it's clear that if we want to build a compelling evidence base about the benefits of physical activity, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of operators, we must use data and insight to support our strategic and operational decision making,” says Toprakseven. “We must be responsive to the changing requirements of our customers, but we must also be proactive in designing facilities, programmes and initiatives that get people active and keep them coming back.” ●

More: www.HCMmag.com/4GlobalCOVID

Proportion of UK leisure sites open



NEW NORMAL

New opportunity

Hussle is offering operators the opportunity to take part in a pilot for its new MAP service to enable them to secure new members without upfront costs. Hussle's Jamie Owens tells us more about the insights that drove this initiative



PHOTO:HUSSLE

*We're creating a
new joiner channel
for gyms*

Jamie Owens



Jamie Owens has been busy this summer and with a unique perspective on the market, having worked for operators such as Nuffield Health and Virgin Active prior to his appointment as head of sales at Hussle, he's experienced the aggregation model from both sides.

His brief on joining the company last year was to bring an operator mindset to the services provided and better align them to the needs of the industry.

The pandemic has turned the fitness industry on its head and Owens has spent the last few months hosting a series of virtual roundtables with gym operators from across the sector to get their views on what happens next.

With the insights gained from these conversations, he's recently released a three-part blog series discussing the impact of lockdown on operator revenues and pioneered a new service from Hussle called MAP. More on that later.

The need to shift strategies

"Most operators I've spoken to hit their revised membership targets by the second week of August," he says, "but the general consensus is that this pent-up demand is comparable to the mini-bubble being reported in the housing market.

"The sustainability of this demand is the bigger challenge for operators, with September results proving to be sobering for many. Operators I've spoken to are reporting losses of as many as 40 per cent of pre-lockdown members."

Owens' discussions reflect a consistent experience from fitness facilities across the sector. Everyone's experiencing a chunk of members who have not yet renewed or returned.

As well as cancellations, operators are also reporting a big shift in usage patterns. While a proportion of customers have moved towards digital home workouts, there's also a difference when it comes to which clubs are getting used and when they're busy.

"Operators I've spoken to during our roundtables have reported that although overall member usage is creeping up to around 60 per cent of visits, compared

The new HUSSE MAP service has been designed to support operators in rebuilding their membership base

PHOTO: HUSSE

to last year, this is dominated by suburban and residential sites," says Owens. "City centre locations are being impacted the most, with usage down to as little as 5 per cent compared to pre-lockdown.

"If this becomes a longer-term trend, some operators will find their estate is now in the wrong location to attract members," he says. "I suspect we'll see increased demand for property deals for new gyms, especially in the budget sector, to reflect this shift towards residential locations."

The focus now is on how to grow again, says Owens: **"The real challenge is knowing how much to commit to marketing while customer demand remains relatively unknown.** One operator we spoke to reported that a Facebook campaign that would previously have generated around 20 new members per club, only attracted one per club in August. At that level, the investment in that marketing channel is uneconomic."

Handing over high value members

"It remains a turbulent and unpredictable time to be trading, says Owens. "Fitness facilities are going to need new strategies to regain momentum.

"One thing we can agree on is that the fitness industry is a flexible and resilient sector. The overall sentiment from the operators I've spoken with is that they're willing to try new solutions even if that means changing the way they think about member acquisition."

This brings us back to the Membership Acquisition Programme (MAP) that Owens has pioneered to support operators and help them rebuild their core membership revenue stream.

WE'RE IDENTIFYING AND UPSELLING CUSTOMERS WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM A DIRECT GYM MEMBERSHIP, SO WE CAN HELP THE SECTOR GROW AGAIN

MAP from HUSSE is an algorithm-driven service which segments customers using the HUSSE marketplace and targets them with offers for an operator's membership options.

The idea for the service came from findings produced by *Aggregation in Fitness*, the independently-audited Whitepaper from Fusion Analytics which was published in late 2019.

"The Whitepaper revealed two standout things about gym membership that – as a former head of membership sales – really got my attention," says Owens.

"Firstly, 71 per cent of HUSSE customers used a gym they wouldn't otherwise have visited. These customers offer a new revenue stream that operators can access, without risking their own marketing money, as that cost and risk falls on HUSSE.

"Secondly, 26 per cent of HUSSE customers go on to join a gym directly. To date this has occurred completely organically, but in a trading environment where operators need to rebuild their membership base, HUSSE can help significantly."

"We're launching MAP on a pilot basis with selected operators and we believe that with the right collaboration, we can continue to provide valuable revenue for customers who require multi-club access, as well as identifying and upselling customers who would benefit more from a direct gym membership, so we help the sector grow again."

● If you're interested in your business participating in the MAP pilot, please contact: jamie.owens@hussle.com

Surviving a COVID-19 scare

Your worst nightmare happens – a member with COVID-19 attends three group exercise classes in a period of 18 hours. Sarah Shortt explains how one operator dealt with this crisis while staying open throughout and avoiding community transmission



Dione Forbes-Ryrie, MD of Les Mills NZ's chain of 12 gyms and **Guy Needham**, head of marketing

Learning someone with COVID-19 has been in your gym is every manager's worst nightmare, however, for the team at the Les Mills-owned Takapuna gym, in Auckland, New Zealand, this was something they'd anticipated.

On learning an infected member had attended three group fitness classes in 18 hours, they had an action plan ready to deploy.

Due to the effectiveness of their preparation and actions, no further cases were discovered – despite 86 members coming into contact with the infected member – and the club was able to remain open for business. So how did their four-part plan enable them to contain the virus and deal with the resultant media attention?

1. Plan ahead

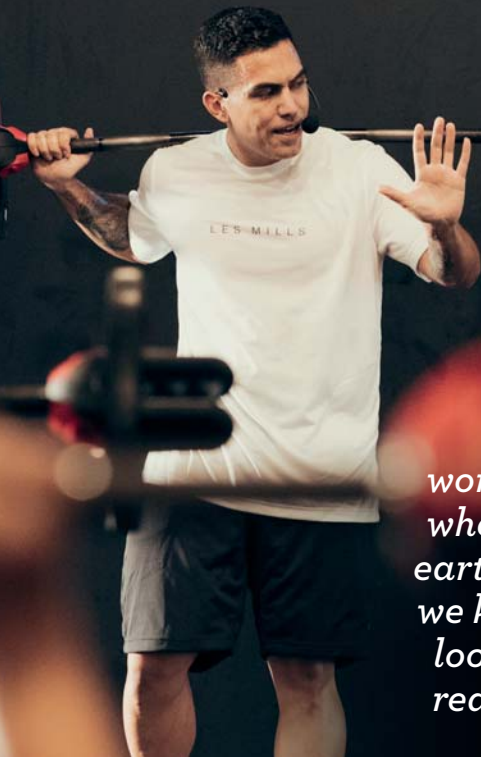
"We took the pandemic seriously early on – talking about it back in January, which meant we were getting organised in February," says Dione Forbes-Ryrie, MD of Les Mills New Zealand's chain of 12 gyms.

"We started planning so early on that Exercise New Zealand, our bank, and even our auditor thought we were being over the top!

"But many of us had worked in the business when the Christchurch earthquake occurred – that had seen 24 per cent of our assets in lockdown for 12 months back in 2011 – so we know what the world looks like when things really go pear-shaped.



With the COVID-19 interventions already in place, the gym was allowed to stay open



“

Many of us had worked in the business when the Christchurch earthquake occurred, so we know what the world looks like when things really go pear-shaped

“When COVID-19 came onto our radar, our immediate thought was, have we got another Christchurch coming at us? We established a critical incident team so we were ready if and when lockdown hit.”

Ironically, Les Mills NZ was already planning to run a practice drill of a COVID-19 case in another of its clubs the week the real-life case was discovered in Takapuna. That meant plans were already in place and draft communications had been prepared for a variety of scenarios.

“This case was clear cut, but it could have gone either way if we hadn’t had processes in place,” says Guy Needham, head of marketing and sales. “Especially when you consider the person visited the club three times in 18 hours.”

2. Communicate

Maintaining timely communication with club members and staff was critical to ensuring everyone felt informed and cared for, as well as avoiding the spread of misinformation.

“Many members have commented on how much they appreciated the strong communications,” explains Forbes-Ryrie. “We were open and transparent, explaining what had happened and when people would be contacted by the Ministry of Health if the case affected them. We also ensured they heard the news from us first, rather than from the media.”

“We were also mindful to engage with our internal team,” says Needham. “We’ve got more contractors on our team, such as group ▶

KEY FACTS

COVID-19 case management @Les Mills

- Eighty-six people were recognised as having been in close contact with the infected member who attended group exercise classes at Les Mills Takapuna.
- They immediately went into self-isolation and of these 86 people, all returned a negative result when tested for the virus.
- Due to the club having already conducted extensive deep cleans, the local authority advised it was able to remain open.
- Despite this, the company also conducted an additional full deep clean of the club, followed by an antiviral fogging treatment.

► fitness instructors, than we have employees, so it was important they were also kept up to speed with what was happening, because they're often the people our members are talking to.

"If a member approaches one of our instructors on social media, we want that instructor to have one central source of truth they can refer the member to."

3. Reassure members

Some members are naturally cautious about returning to exercise facilities after a case has been identified, but when members saw how seriously Les Mills Takapuna was taking the threat, attendances bounced back.

"Attendance declined to 58 percent after the incident," says Forbes-Ryrie, "but it's now back to 90 percent as a result of us communicating the protocols we've got in place – as well as the fact we've been able to share the news that there have been no instances of club transmission."

This dip is similar to that experienced after lockdown, when attendance dropped to around 60 percent, but was back up to 95 percent after three weeks.

"Confidence has been restored quickly – not only in our existing membership, but also in new prospects. Even with the case happening at Takapuna, the sales team achieved over 70 percent of its monthly pre-COVID target," she says.

Even with the COVID-19 case, the team achieved 70 per cent of its pre-COVID-19 target

4. Manage the media

The case generated a significant amount of attention from the press.

So how did the business respond?

"We prioritised our members and internal teams," says Forbes-Ryrie. "Engaging with the media wasn't the number one thing on our list, but we knew we needed to get our media communications right."

"We had a lot of requests for interviews but felt the best way forward was to provide comprehensive answers to their questions, so we did this with a media statement. We also set up a FAQs page on our website at www.lesmills.co.nz/covid-19, that answered a lot of the questions media outlets were asking, such as what we were doing around cleaning, and who might be at risk of contracting the virus. Again, it came back to being transparent."

Forbes-Ryrie says the reaction from members has been incredibly positive. "We've had a lot of people commenting on how well cared for they feel – a letter was published in the New Zealand Herald the other day, praising how well we've handled the situation." ●



“

Confidence has been restored quickly – not only in our existing membership, but also in new prospects

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Keep ahead of the situation, be ready to act. Be proactive, not reactive
- Run simulations, stress test your systems, practice drills, identify gaps and fill them – make sure you're ready to handle an incident if it happens
- Have a communication plan ready to go for each stakeholder group – members, in-house staff, freelancers, local authority and health inspectors – and keep these updated
- Organise regular inspections, keep in touch with local health authorities, so they know your baselines for COVID-19 control
- Establish a central 'source of truth' to avoid the spread of misinformation
- If the worst happens, focus your energies on looking after your members, your staff and the health authorities, while managing the media effectively by issuing clear statements and using a web-based FAQ
- Ensure your contact-tracing systems are working effectively and audit these regularly
- Track the recovery of member numbers and lovebomb members to reassure them and get them back to the gym



The reopening of the industry, encouraging confidence in consumers and maintaining business is a collective responsibility



Matthew Pengelly

The MD of Matrix Fitness UK, the fastest growing commercial fitness brand in the world, talks about adapting to business challenges through COVID-19 and beyond

How has Matrix Fitness experienced the impact of COVID-19?

We've seen a dramatic change to business since the start of COVID-19, but as a global company, Johnson Health Tech [the parent company of Matrix Fitness] is stable and has worked hard to adapt at every stage of uncertainty.

There's been decline in commercial sales, but on a positive note, in response to lockdown and home fitness becoming such a vital cog in many people's daily routine, the sale of our home and wellness equipment – brands such

as Matrix retail, Vision, Horizon and Fujiryoki – grew by 99 per cent in H1.

With nearly 300 owned Johnson retail stores and five manufacturing warehouses in Shanghai, Taiwan, Vietnam and the USA, Johnson Health Tech is able to own all components, from the first development phase through to manufacture, allowing us to maintain the highest quality standards with minimal costs to the customer.

This consistency has been key through turbulent times. And due to the increased consumer demand for home equipment, the opening of our warehouse in Vietnam

has been timed to perfection when it comes to managing consumer at-home products for the foreseeable future.

How has the company been supporting its staff and customers?

Johnson Health Tech is strongly built on family values, and therefore the health and safety of our team and clients has remained a top priority. We have taken every extra measure we can to protect them. As it stands, a large proportion of our team are still working from home so that we can fully abide by social distancing restrictions.

For those that need to be office-based, we've organised a shift system to ensure we keep numbers at a safe level. Our warehouses have been made COVID-19 safe and all of our service team have been provided with relevant PPE.

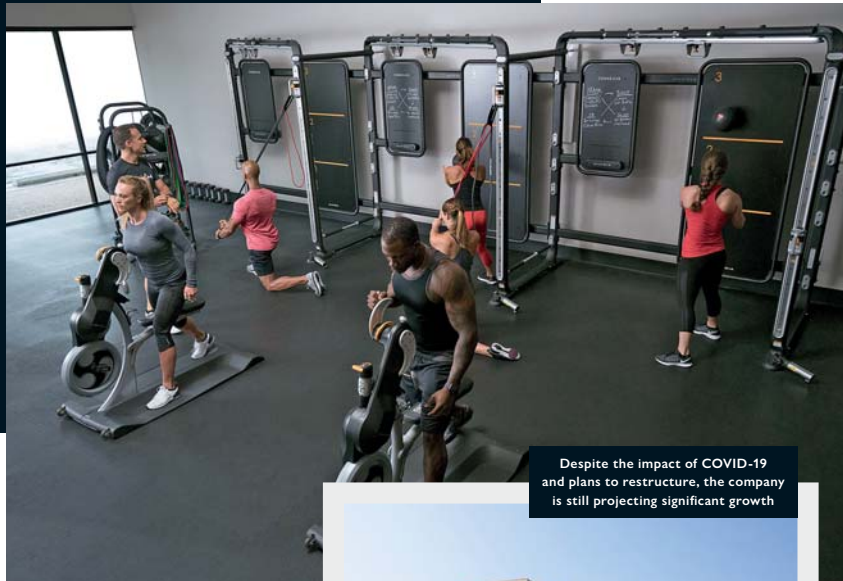
What is Matrix Fitness doing to sustain the UK fitness industry?

We've been working closely with ukactive to support its Fit Together campaign, which was launched to provide operators with practical resources for a safe and successful return to business.

We've also placed a real focus on our support and service efforts throughout



Johnson Health Tech has nearly 300 retail stores and five manufacturing warehouses



Despite the impact of COVID-19 and plans to restructure, the company is still projecting significant growth

this time, assisting with COVID-19-safe equipment layouts and moving or holding stock in our warehouses where required.

The reopening of the industry, encouraging confidence in consumers and maintaining business is a collective responsibility. Physical activity has a vital role to play in our resilience and recovery from COVID-19 and therefore, the industry has to unite.

We'll continue to work with our customers, key accounts, partners and ukactive to ensure the industry has the necessary tools and protocols in place to keep the nation active.

How will COVID-19 shape Matrix Fitness UK moving forwards?

It is inevitable that we will have to restructure our business. Despite the fact that globally the business is stable, we can only assume that our market will continue to feel the impact for at least 6-12 months yet. We will need to future-proof and reorganise ourselves internally in order to thrive moving forwards.

As part of this, we will be relocating our Head Office as a way to help drive costs down whilst pushing efficiencies within the business. On a positive note, we are still projecting significant growth as a company and our aim is

to maintain our position as the fastest growing fitness brand in the world.

What are your predictions for the industry?

Physical activity was at record levels before the pandemic, and during lockdown we saw new activity habits forming, as even the more sedentary took to exercising at home in order to keep fit and active. We've also seen an influx of research into the benefits physical activity and fitness can have on immunity and long-term health.

Now there's a focus on fitness and health, there's an appetite for facilities to open, but also for them to offer outdoor and digital, at-home

options, so people can access their fitness journey anywhere, anytime.

It's our job to work together as an industry to provide a safe environment to reignite the confidence of the nation and encourage them to build on the great activity habits started during lockdown.


It's undoubtedly a very challenging time, and as an industry we will still be feeling the impacts of COVID-19 on business for some time to come. But it's also a time to encourage change, adapt the way we operate and to really listen to the needs of our customers. ●

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A woman with dark hair is captured in a dynamic pose, performing a battle rope exercise. She is wearing a blue and black striped sports bra with an orange waistband, and red and black striped leggings. She is holding a thick, braided white rope with both hands, one near her head and the other lower down. She is wearing a smartwatch on her left wrist and a necklace with a small pendant. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Operators with rolling one year contracts fared the best



Confidence in the future of the fitness market is reflected in the number of M&A and financing activities taking place

FUTURE GAZING

Deloitte has produced a report in partnership with EuropeActive, analysing the impact of COVID-19 on the European health and fitness market, as Karsten Hollasch reports

When the coronavirus hit the European health and fitness market in March and governments enforced the closure of gyms across Europe, there was no manual on how to handle the situation.

As it turned out, initial club closures lasted anywhere between eight and 18 weeks, depending on how severe the impact of the virus was in the country in question. Some regions suffered a second lockdown and some look likely to experience further disruption.

Although governments were quick to provide financial help, the financial damage for operators and other actors in the fitness industry is still massive. In fact, it's still unclear how high the losses really are.

For this reason, Deloitte and EuropeActive launched a study to examine the business impact of the crisis on the sector, in both the short- and the longer-term.

The fieldwork took place in August and a total of 17 European key operators were interviewed, covering around 10 per cent of all members in the European health and fitness market.

Key findings

As of 31 March 2020, the surveyed operators experienced an average membership shortfall of around 3.5 per cent compared to their original budgets. By comparison, by 30 June 2020, these shortfalls reached their highest point, at 15.8 per cent, primarily through a combination of membership cancellations and the absence of new membership inflow during closures.

The average shortfalls compared to budget in respect of the number of clubs amounted to 2.5 per cent by 30 June 2020, as clubs reopened across Europe.

In the medium- and long-term, both average membership shortfalls and average club shortfalls are expected to decrease. As of December 2020 and December 2021, European operators said they expect average shortfalls in memberships to be 13.9 per cent and 9.9 per cent respectively. Looking at clubs, the average shortfalls compared to budget are expected to be 1.8 per cent by December 2020 and 0.6 per cent by December 2021.

Overall, the shortfall could be higher in the European fitness market, especially for single club operators,

who could face greater financial difficulties than chain operators.

The pandemic-related closures in Q2 also impacted finances, primarily due to the absence of membership fees. European fitness operators experienced an average income shortfall of about 65 per cent compared to budget. Discrepancies in income shortfalls between operators in the study can be explained by different approaches to the handling of membership fees during the period of club closures.

While some operators continued to collect membership fees unless customer objections were received, there were also companies that stopped collecting membership fees altogether.

Operators were able to achieve cost savings of 43 per cent compared to budget in Q2, mainly due to paying less rent and fewer people and other reductions in operating costs.

Additional savings were realised when personnel costs were subsidised by local governments.

Income shortfalls vary considerably between regions. Operators with a UK focus expect the highest financial shortfalls when compared to the initial



Data indicates that in-person club visits and use of digital offerings can not only co-exist, but can also accelerate each other

budget and the income shortfalls of UK-focused operators were especially high in Q2 2020 (-94 per cent).

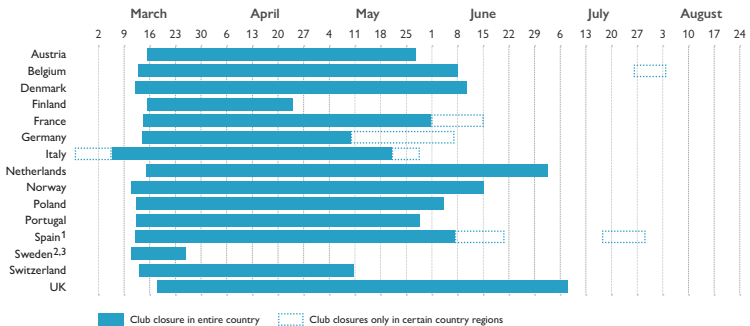
This is in part attributable to UK operators' heavy reliance on monthly cancellable contracts, in contrast to Germany and most of the other European markets, which mainly offer longer-term contracts.

Published H1 reports of listed European key operators also show the significant impact of COVID-19 on financial results. Due to an approximately 18-week lockdown in the UK, total revenues of UK operator The Gym Group decreased by around 50 per cent in H1 2020, compared to H1 2019. Similar results have been published by PureGym for its UK business (-49 per cent in H1 2020, compared to H1 2019). In comparison, Dutch operator Basic-Fit, which operates in various European countries, recorded an overall decrease in revenues of 24 per cent compared to H1 2019.

Measures taken

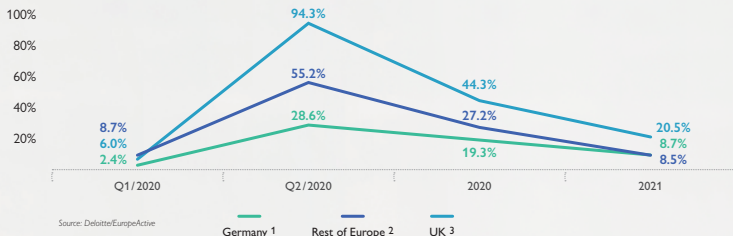
To counter the crisis, operators have undertaken a wide range of monetary and non-monetary measures. Among the monetary measures, short-time work, government grants and loan application were the most popular.

Overview of club closures



Notes: 1) The second lockdown in Catalonia (17 July to 29 July) was stopped based on a court decision. 2) There was no government constraint with regard to club closures. 3) Only SATS
Source: Deloitte/EuropeActive

Total income/cash inflow shortfall



Single club operators, which represent the majority of clubs in the European market, appear to be more threatened in their existence than larger operators

Other popular non-monetary measures introduced by operators include frequent scenario analyses – introduced by all operators surveyed – the creation of emergency plans and the introduction of early warning indicators.

The use of digital fitness offerings increased during the lockdown. Survey results suggest that consumers' interest in digital offerings is not a one-off, but rather that COVID-19 is serving as an accelerator for increasing demand for digital sports offerings (apps, videos, etc.).

By providing relevant content through digital channels and engaging with customers via their websites and apps, operators have been able to keep in touch with members during the crisis.

Basic-Fit, for example, actively increased member engagement through its already existing social media channels and mobile app, by offering additional services and contents.

The company-own mobile app was also temporarily made available to the general public.

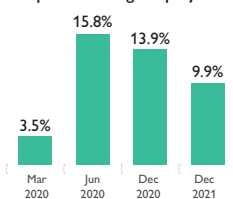
According to Virtuagym's COVID-19 impact study, the number of fitness app users more than tripled to reach its first peak in March, when COVID-19 started in Europe. However, the highest peak was reached in July, when clubs started reopening. This indicates that in-person club visits and use of digital offerings can coexist (and accelerate each other) rather than cannibalising each other.

Future outlook

As an overall result, major European club operators consider their existence only partially threatened, assuming no further forced club closures: None of the operators stated that their existence was or will be either severely or highly threatened in the future. However, single club operators, which represent the majority of fitness clubs in the European market, appear to be more threatened in their existence than larger operators, due to limited resources and refinancing possibilities.

The fact that fitness club operators are looking confidently into the future can be proven not only by the lower expected shortfalls, but also

Average membership shortfall compared to budget – projected



by further studies: more than 60 per cent of Spanish operators surveyed in the FNEID/Valgo COVID-19 impact report believe revenues will return to previously expected levels by the third quarter of 2021.

This could be supported by the fact that the behaviour of some consumers in the fitness market has barely changed. Eighty-eight per cent of consumers in the ukactive/Global COVID-19 impact report stated that after the reopening of public sector clubs in the UK they would visit the gym as often or even more often than before the pandemic.

Confidence in the future of the fitness market is reflected in the number of M&A and financing activities that have taken place in the last couple of months. For example, RSG Group expanded its investments by acquiring the US-operator Gold Gym for US\$100 million, as well as 35 per cent of the shares of Gym80. Furthermore, other players such as PureGym, BASIC-FIT and The Gym Group were able to raise large sums of capital during this period.

Herman Rutgers, co-editor of the report noted: "It's not possible at this stage to predict what the full impact of this crisis will ultimately be, due to the increasing number of cases and the uncertain future of policy decisions. However, the study shows the impact on membership and financial losses, and also that – assuming there are no further club closures – the industry can recover quickly and is still confident of achieving the long-term goals of 80 million members by the midpoint of the decade and 100 million by 2030." ●

Get the report:
www.HCMmag.com/Deloitte

Exceed your potential



Legend partners
with leading UK
leisure operators

We look at how you can unlock hidden value in your operation with a complete end-to-end leisure management solution

Legend software, with integrated membership payments and value-added services, offers a complete end-to-end leisure management solution delivered via a single database.

This makes it easier to run your facilities more effectively, with greater insight into your customers.

COVID-19 is increasing the pressure and competitiveness of the already challenging leisure industry. Consumers have access to ever greater choice; increasingly attractive offerings; lower price points; and a wide variety of exercise options. What's more, many of those who were confident gym goers, are now cautious about returning.

As an operator, your ability to communicate via timely and personalised messages, deal efficiently with payments, and deliver a seamless service across all aspects of the customer lifecycle, is now intrinsic to business recovery and success.

Leisure management software has developed rapidly to streamline operations and improve customer management. However, the majority of operators lack the resource, expertise, and time to unlock and leverage actionable insights from customer data, or manage the complexities of membership payment processes and delivery.

Legend combines software, membership payments and value-added services to perform all these functions, enabling you to focus on delivering your business potential.

Legend can help you overcome daily challenges and maximise the value from your software investment. As Legend is a TSG solution, you'll benefit from global insights and specialist expertise across business management software, payments and services for health and fitness operators.

Proven performance - increase in collection rates

Client 1
98,900
monthly transactions



+3.8% pts
+£98,900 per month net of fees

Client 2
15,791
monthly transactions



+5.0% pts
+£18,980 per month net of fees

Client 3
9,471
monthly transactions



+3.2% pts
+£4,400 per month net of fees

Business management software ↔ Integrated payments ↔ Value added services



Online joining &
digital agreements



Billing & payment
processing



Recovery
& retention



Reporting



Migration
& security

Integrated, Value-Added Services

Billing and payment processing – BACS Bureau

Jon Layton, systems and membership manager at Halo Leisure, explains: *‘Legend offers a fully integrated service, offering Direct Debit collections, representations, tailored CRM platform including automated customer journeys, and credit control for debtors.’*

Increased collection rates

Lee Wood, commercial director and deputy chief executive of Active Tameside, adds: *‘We started using Legend BACS Bureau in 2012 and from a pre-Legend collection rate of 87 per cent, we’ve now risen to 96 per cent, which is absolutely fantastic. We have one very happy FD!’*

Flexible payments

With Legend, you can design a payments calendar to suit your preferred submission timetable by adjusting the timing and/or the frequency of collections.

Claire Turnbull, business development manager at Abbecroft Leisure, adds: *‘Legend has changed the way in which we collect our Direct Debits.’*

‘Historically, we had one monthly collection for our membership fees, now we do four collections a month, offering a choice of four different dates to our customers.’

‘The great benefit for us is that we’re able to take a month’s membership fees in advance for every single member, so it’s uplifted our income. For customers and for staff, it’s a much simpler and more flexible way of joining.’

Member retention and engagement

Legend’s integrated approach is designed to retain members and maximise revenue, freeing up time for your team and enabling them to focus on what they do best – providing an exceptional customer experience.

Benefits operators have seen include improved customer retention, reduced business administration and overheads, and increased profitability.

Online joining and digital agreements let customers join anytime through a digital payments process, capturing vital demographic information and creating a platform

to increase revenue from membership, pay and play, bookings, marketing campaigns and online sales.

Layton says: *‘Legend has transformed the way we interact with our customers. We originally started with a new member journey, where all new members get an automated email welcoming them to our centres. This has helped increase engagement rates; retention rates are better and our customers are better informed.’*

Retention and recovery services

Legend’s retention and recovery services proactively re-engage and win back members, extending the life of customers.

Unlike a pure payment gateway, our processes ensure that if a payment becomes overdue, the Legend team is in immediate contact, to notify and attempt to resolve and retain the customer.

Layton says: *‘We’ve introduced credit control journeys that have helped increase the amount of revenue we get back from people who have defaulted on Direct Debits.’*

Andrew Hetherington, from Inverclyde Leisure, adds: *‘Inverclyde has seen great improvement since the introduction of the Legend BACS Bureau. It has helped not only our debt recovery in terms of financial, but also the management processes and the automated systems behind the scenes that help to maintain that debt control.’*

Unlocking value

Hetherington continues, saying: *‘Since utilising the bureau, not only have we increased our uplift percentage to well over 98 per cent, we’ve also found efficiencies with staff time. Automated processes have freed up our employees to focus on duties in other areas, which adds to overall customer satisfaction.’*

Legend’s integrated membership payments and services solve complex challenges, increase revenue, drive retention and maximise profitability, without leaving the work to you.

Now more than ever, it is imperative you can unlock the full value of your leisure management solutions. Legend is here to help.

Find out more: www.legendware.co.uk

Thierry Delsol says
the Club Company
is recovering better
than anticipated

A man in a light blue shirt and dark trousers is riding a black stationary exercise bike on a grey wooden deck. To his right is a bright orange Srixon golf bag on a black stand. In the background, there is a building with large glass windows and doors. The reflection in the windows shows the man sitting on a sofa. The overall scene suggests a lifestyle of fitness and leisure.

It felt as though we were
building a new business

Thierry Delsol

The CEO of The Club Company is working both to rebuild and expand the business, with ongoing acquisitions happening and the launch of a new lodge product. He talks to HCM

It's still early days, but Thierry Delsol, CEO of The Club Company, is quietly optimistic about the group's recovery, following the coronavirus pandemic.

There's no doubt that these last few months have been the toughest of his 23-year career with the company, yet in some strange way, he says that the situation has made him even more determined to make the company as successful as possible.

"The first six weeks post-lockdown were absolutely dreadful," he says. "We were facing something completely beyond our control and had no idea how long it was going to last. It was hugely frustrating. But as we started to put plans in place, it felt as though we were building a new business. Don't get me wrong, we could have done without it, but there's no point in moaning; we just have to embrace the situation and do as much as we can to get the business back to where it was as quickly as possible."

The company is recovering better than anticipated, says Delsol, but it is going to take time and no one knows when it will fully recover.

"What we do know is that our members have always been, and continue to be, very loyal to our clubs, which gives us optimism about the future," he explains.

Company evolution

The Club Company started life in 1996 as a public golf operator, with five sites. It quickly grew to 25 golf clubs across Europe. In 1998, the group acquired The Tytherington Club in Cheshire, its first golf and country club. Following the acquisition, the company decided to focus on the golf and country club format and over the next few years disposed of its European assets as well as those sites in the UK with no planning opportunities for health and fitness clubs.

A management buyout took the group into private ownership in 2004, by which time its portfolio consisted of four clubs combining golf with health and fitness facilities, and six golf sites with planning for health and fitness offerings. Today, the company is majority-owned by the private equity firm Epiris – its fourth investor – and has 15 golf and country clubs.

The family-orientated clubs are located in affluent areas across England. All sites offer championship-standard golf courses and premium health and fitness facilities, which include large gyms, extensive group exercise programmes, swimming pools and sauna and steam facilities, along with bars and restaurants. Some sites also offer tennis courts, the company's health and beauty brand Aura Spa and accommodation.

The group had some 40,000 members as of 1st March 2020, 80 per cent of which were health and

Being physically active is the best way of withstanding this pandemic



Golf was one of the only permitted leisure activities when lockdown eased, increasing its popularity

fitness members. Almost three-quarters of golf members use the health and fitness facilities regularly.

"Most of our members want to belong to a club, rather than a gym," says Delsol. "They often join with another member of their family and respond well to the other activities we provide. People spend a lot of time in our club lounges with their friends and family; it's almost as important to them as the exercise."

Golf is booming

The golf side of the business has enjoyed something of a revival since reopening on 13th May and has already recovered 1st March levels.

"The combination of the great weather this summer in the UK and the fact that there were so few other leisure activities people could do when golf clubs reopened, has meant that our golf business is doing better than ever," says Delsol. "We're attracting younger people to the club and even today, after the other facilities have opened, we're still joining new members. It's been really positive to see new people discovering or re-discovering the fun and enjoyable aspect of golf."

The health and fitness business is also starting to pick up. "Sales are going well, but I expect health and fitness will take longer to recover. I think we'll see more traction in a few months' time, when people realise exercising is an important part of the fight against coronavirus; the physical and mental benefits have been explained repeatedly over the last weeks and months," he says.

Like many operators, The Club Company launched a digital offering in lockdown, which proved very popular. It also communicated with members every week and hosted a Friday night quiz for staff

and members to keep engagement high. Prior to reopening, the company invited members to take part in small focus groups to visit the new set-up of local clubs, which provided valuable feedback for the team.

"After the success of the focus groups, we invited members to take a guided tour of their club to see the changes we'd made," says Delsol. "We did 2,000 tours in 10 days. It really helped to reassure people, and now whenever we talk to members who are unsure about returning, we invite them on a 15-minute tour."

"During lockdown we retained approximately 7 per cent of our workforce," he says. "They all worked extremely well to maintain the clubs and golf courses, which also made it easier for the sites to reopen quickly."

"Visiting the clubs since reopening has reaffirmed the importance of a quality team. It has been so interesting to see how our team members connect with members. They're genuinely pleased to be back, to catch up with members after four months of lockdown."

Entering new markets

The crisis has not stopped the company progressing its plans for growth. Every year it invests in improving its existing facilities and looks to expand its estate through acquisition. In 2019, the company invested £1.5m in the refurbishment of The Tytherington Club and added two new sites to its portfolio: Chesfield Downs Golf and Country Club in Hertfordshire, once part of the Eddie Shah empire, and Cams Hall Estate Golf Club in Hampshire.

This year, the company has invested just over £2m in the revamp of Chesfield Downs and The Essex





The company has focused on adding premium health and fitness facilities to all of its clubs





By adding complementary facilities, such as pools and spas, the company has increased its profitability

Golf and Country Club near Colchester, and is due to open a 65-bed hotel at The Tytherington Club before the end of the year. In addition, it's developed its first collection of luxury holiday lodges in the grounds of The Essex Golf and Country Club. Launched in October 2020, the two and three-bedroom lodges are available for rent, as well as private ownership, and guests have access to all of the club's facilities.

Meanwhile, planning permission has been secured for a 63-bed hotel at Witney Lakes Resort in Oxford, as well as an 18 holiday lodge development at Benton Hall. Two further sites are currently going through the planning process for more lodge developments.

"Our evolution has been about adding different, but complementary activities to our offering to expand the business and increase the profitability of our sites. From golf clubs we have evolved to include health and fitness, spa, hotels and now luxury lodges. The strategy has worked well for

us, but ensuring we have the right skills in place to deliver to a consistent standard across all elements of the business is critical," says Delsol.

The company embarked on a rebranding exercise earlier this year to reflect its identity as a provider of a diverse range of leisure products and services founded on a legacy of sporting and leisure experiences and expertise.

"We wanted to introduce consistency and familiarity, while pulling all of our clubs under one umbrella," says Delsol. "While the clubs retain their individual names, collectively we're looking at renaming the group to better represent the business we've become."

The sector's challenge

"One thing this pandemic has taught us is that we can't afford to be complacent. Even if you think you are in a great position, you have to stay focused," says Delsol.



As a society, we all need to make a conscious effort to be more active and our industry is in the best position to help people do that



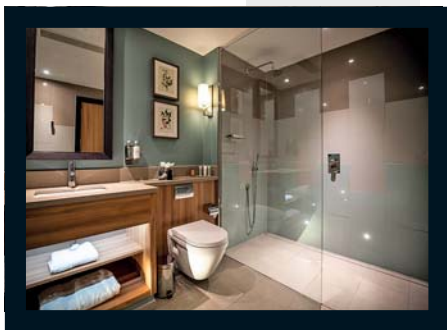
Luxury lodges and hotel rooms are currently in development at several sites across the portfolio

His immediate priority is bringing member numbers back up to where they should be and developing the hotel and holiday lodge arm of the business.

As the UK health and fitness industry works to return to business as usual, Delsol believes now is the time for the sector to play its trump card.

"ukactive has done a brilliant job of supporting the industry during this crisis," he says, "and I've been impressed by how the sector has come together over the past five months. We need to continue to work together to show the public that being physically active is the best way of withstanding this pandemic.

"This is not about selling memberships; it's about starting people on their own personal exercise journey. It could begin with them taking a walk and it may end up with them booking a spin class, a tee time on the golf course or joining the gym. As a society, we all need to make a conscious effort to be more active and our industry is in the best position to help people do that." ●



lessons from lockdown

Active IQ optimised lockdown to create new opportunities for students and stakeholders

Once the extensive activity that was required to respond to lockdown subsided, the opportunity to use the time to take stock, update, improve and future-proof services became apparent.

As did the true value of collaborating with like-minded, open-minded organisations and individuals.

Active IQ pivoted quickly to meet the new demands, working closely with other awarding organisations, the Federation of Awarding Bodies, CIMSPA, Ofqual and the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education, in the best interest of its many training partners, learners and leisure employers.

Far from creating policies to 'just get through' lockdown, some of the adaptations and ideas brought improvements that are here to stay.



Jenny Patrickson

“The COVID-19 lockdown proved that digital learning and assessment can be highly effective.”

Versatility of virtual

The irony – and opportunity – that many students had more time to study and prepare while working from home or on furlough, was not lost on Active IQ.

The team moved quickly to introduce assessment adaptations for its Level 2 Gym Instructor and Level 3 Personal

Trainer core qualifications to keep learners on track. Online theory assessment, outdoor or home-filmed practical assessments and professional competency assessor interviews enabled learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and competence.

“The COVID-19 lockdown proved that digital learning and assessment can be highly effective,” says Jenny Patrickson, MD of Active IQ. “Remote and adapted assessment models for our centres, learners and apprentices worked well. We were also pleasantly surprised to find the format of our virtual meetings with training providers yielded great new business opportunities, as everyone was thinking more quickly, clearly and innovatively than before.

“Taking everything online enabled us to recruit learners from across the UK,” says Ben Tomlin at UK Sports Training. “We recruited people who couldn’t previously commit to fully face-to-face delivery, as they could fit the virtual sessions around their needs. We were bold in our decision making and backed by Active IQ whose confidence allowed us to be flexible in our delivery.”

Some of the innovations created in response to the pandemic are here to stay

Active IQ partnered with Study Active and fibodo to create free online fitness sessions for NHS staff



#DoingOurBit

As the nation stepped up to support the NHS, Active IQ was approached by key worker and amateur powerlifter, Julie Davis, whose #DoingOurBit idea to offer free workouts to her local NHS colleagues was snapped up by The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust for its 10,000 staff. Active IQ joined forces with Study Active and fibodo to create a platform of over 40 free, bespoke online fitness sessions for NHS staff, donated by 28 PTs. Every minute of every workout was verified to ensure quality, safety and integrity.

So far, over 60 NHS trusts have signed up, giving more than 450,000 NHS staff access to the sessions, and it's still growing. #DoingOurBit has just been officially endorsed by the 'United by Birmingham 2022' programme which recognises grassroots projects having a positive impact on the community.



Digital delivery

Most training providers and students were already using a degree of digital delivery and learning, but with lockdown came full reliance on e-learning, e-manuals, proctored exams, online assessments and digital certificates.

"Digital learning allows for individual pacing, enabling people to take longer over more tricky aspects and make swift progress in areas that come more easily," says Patrickson. "This can be better than classroom learning, where the pre-ordained pace and simultaneous targets can see some people pushed on too fast, while others are held back."

Trying new tactics

Early in lockdown Active IQ offered its online Skills Hub CPD and Chief Medical Advisor training resources free to all fitness professionals, enabling them to maximise their enforced break. Sign-ups rose by 103 per cent as fitpros took the opportunity to learn new skills and broaden their knowledge, ready to return in a stronger position.

Another first for Active IQ was launching its Level 3 Diploma in Working with Clients with Long-Term Conditions, online as well as in-person. Personal trainers were looking to upskill ahead of clients returning to the gym post-COVID, while fresh impetus from the Government's obesity strategy, combined with people struggling with health conditions that went unaddressed during lockdown, made this launch well-timed.

"Knowing people had more time for online learning, we tried a five-week 'fast track' timetable," says Luke Johnson, CEO at the Personal Trainer Collective. "Setting times for live group tutoring on Zoom, with units/videos to watch, Active IQ manual sections and worksheets to complete and regular theory exams focused everybody. This supportive/intensive learning model boosted business and is now here to stay."

Being agile, alert and open to new ideas and possibilities has seen Active IQ and many of its partners learn valuable lessons in lockdown. Some concepts will naturally end when the pandemic ends; but others will remain, making business practice all the better.

More: www.activeiq.co.uk

COVID-19 can cause heart damage, but many people, especially those who have been asymptomatic, may be unaware they're at risk

“

There will be many post-COVID patients who are asymptomatic and will be unaware of the risk of a cardiovascular event on their return to strenuous physical activities

Safe Return

Simon Harling explains how exercise professionals can ensure a safe return to exercise for post-COVID patients

As we look for ways to co-exist with COVID-19, fitness professionals face the prospect of managing the increased risk to the exposure to the virus for themselves, their clients and those clients who have previously been infected with COVID-19.

With considerable pressure being placed on routine medical and rehabilitation services for the foreseeable future, fitness professionals can play a significant role in providing knowledge in the form of education content, skill in the rehabilitation and care planning process and emotional support.

The illness severity pattern so far observed for COVID-19 is as follows:

1. Asymptomatic infected patients.
2. Symptomatic patients isolating at home.
3. Symptomatic patients admitted to hospital
4. Symptomatic patients requiring ventilatory support in critical care.

Clients who have received hospital treatment

During community reintegration, post COVID-19 patients should be supported with a long-term care plan that includes supported self-exercise and a return to work schedule.

Adaptation of clinical experience to a post-COVID rehabilitation programme to meet the occupational and environmental needs of the patient, will be our challenge.

Clients who have not received hospital treatment

In the UK, the numbers of post-COVID patients present in the community who did not require hospitalisation is unknown.

What we can be sure of is that many post-COVID patients based in the community will require rehabilitation aimed at relieving symptoms of dyspnoea, psychological distress and improving participation in rehabilitation, physical function and quality of life.

When is it safe to return to exercise?

COVID-19 is associated with cardiac complications, in particular, arrhythmias and myocardial injury, putting all patients exposed to COVID-19 at an increased risk of a cardiovascular event. The cause of the cardiovascular complications are likely multifactorial and include viral myocardial injury, elevated systemic inflammatory burden and hypotension.

Higher risk groups include those patients who have been hospitalised, required ventilatory support and those with co-existing diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

Aside from rehabilitation of post-COVID symptomatic patients there will be many post-COVID asymptomatic patients who will be unaware of the risk of a cardiovascular event on their return to strenuous physical activities.

It is imperative, therefore, that fitness professionals play a significant role in identifying, educating and managing the risk of both asymptomatic, symptomatic cardiovascular disease clients and those with co-existing diseases. ▶

“

The opportunity exists now to demonstrate the ability of the fitness industry to make a tangible difference. To have a bigger conversation

Members requiring rehabilitation following COVID-19 should have a functional assessment

► **Key points:**

- Any patient who has had COVID-19 should complete an assessment of their cardiac symptoms, recovery, function and potential impairments.
- Particular attention should be given to patients with underlying disease.
- Patients returning to high-level sport or physically demanding occupation following confirmed myocarditis require a three- to six-month period of complete rest.

Exercise rehabilitation programme recommendations

It's important to remember that exercise is considered an important element of pulmonary rehabilitation and when considering the prescription of exercise for post-COVID clients, the same principles of duration, intensity, frequency, specificity and reversibility apply.

Low intensity exercise (≤ 3 METs or equivalent) should be considered initially in all post-COVID patients. Patients with COVID-19 who experience the following symptoms: severe sore throat, body aches, shortness of breath, general fatigue, chest pain, cough or fever should avoid exercise (> 3 METs or equivalent) for between two and three weeks after the cessation of those symptoms.

Clients requiring rehabilitation following COVID-19 should have a functional assessment to determine residual musculoskeletal impairments in order to determine appropriate rehabilitation.

Key points:

- Exercise training is effective when used as a tool in the treatment of pulmonary disease patients.
- Low intensity exercise (≤ 3 METs or equivalent) should be considered initially in all post-COVID patients.
- Clients with COVID-19 who experience the following symptoms: severe sore throat,

body aches, shortness of breath, general fatigue, chest pain, cough or fever should avoid exercise (> 3 METs or equivalent) for between two and three weeks. Resumption of training (> 3 METs or equivalent) once the symptoms have cleared.- Post-COVID clients with new-onset shortness of breath or chest pain, should have a full medical review.
- With every client having a unique response to exercise, exercise prescription should be based on individual tolerance thresholds and workloads. Previous exercise tolerances and workloads should not be taken into consideration. It's important to prescribe exercise on what the client can tolerate now.

The choice we face as an industry

The opportunity exists now to demonstrate the ability of the fitness industry to make a tangible difference. To have a bigger conversation.

The fitness industry is faced with a choice – we can ignore the inconvenient truth surrounding the increased risk of return to exercise for post-COVID-19 clients, or we can reach out to over-stretched medical and rehabilitation services, listen to their needs and those of their patients and offer our time, empathy – and our facilities.

We can essentially make a generous decision to engage a large section of the community that have been affected by COVID-19.

Well managed fitness programmes can restore health, but if we go down this road, they won't all be well managed initially. The rehabilitation may be clumsy in some cases and the health service may be wary. Yet our intentions will be unquestionable and in time our knowledge, skills and relationships will flourish.

The alternative is to wait for a budget, a marketing plan or a campaign strategy.

What will you do? Wait, ignore or engage? ●

About the author

Simon Harling helps coaches build extraordinary coaching practices. An author and speaker, Harling has worked as a consultant to national governing bodies and professional sports teams. More: Simon.a.harling@gmail.com



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Speedflex THRIVES

HIIT Without the Hurt. It's one of the most memorable straplines in the fitness industry and it's been at the core of every Speedflex session for almost ten years

Over the last nine years, the unique group training concept has rolled out with leading operators, including Bannatyne Health Clubs, Everyone Active, Go Gateshead, Everybody Sport & Recreation, and énergie Fitness. Speedflex studios now span right across the UK and into Ireland. We spoke to Paul Ferris, CEO of Speedflex, to find out how the company has evolved, and why in a post-lockdown world, it's now considered one of the safest group exercise concepts on the market.

With Speedflex turning 10 next year, how has the organisation grown since its inception and what key lessons have you learned along the way?

Speedflex has grown significantly over the last nine years. We've gone from a single site in Newcastle to 19 Speedflex studios and three Fortis Powered by Speedflex studios. We now have partnerships with some of the UK's leading operators such as Bannatyne Health Clubs and Everyone Active.

We've always known we had a good product, but in the early days I think we tried to run before we could walk. We were bringing a whole new concept to market and yet we just assumed everyone would instantly get it. In reality we needed to put in the hard work, build key relationships and partner with the right people to ensure we could get Speedflex the recognition it deserves.

Speedflex has some great partnerships with operators, why is it such a good group concept for clubs?

The magic of Speedflex is the inclusivity of the concept. A free motion bar generates personalised resistance and every participant, from the professional athlete to the deconditioned obese individual, can train at their optimum level. So regardless of age or fitness level, all participants in the same session are getting the same great workout.

There aren't many concepts on the market that can be offered to an operator's entire membership base, but Speedflex certainly ticks that box.



Paul Ferris



It's been nine months now since you launched your Fortis partnership with Everyone Active, can you give us some insight as to how things are going?

We launched our partnership back in January 2020, opening Fortis Powered By Speedflex studios at three locations; Chichester, Hemel Hempstead and London. All three have exceeded expectations, with sessions at full capacity and with regular waiting lists. Then of course COVID-19 hit, so whilst it has been a bit of a bump in the road, things are now starting to look up again.

Speedflex is one of the safest group exercise concepts on the market right now; we've reconfigured our studios to allow for social distancing, so instead of 16 people in a session, our studios will now only hold between six and eight people. Prior to COVID-19, participants would move around the studio in a circuit, now each member remains on their own machine throughout the session. They also have their own assigned set of auxiliary equipment to use.

What are the future plans for Fortis Powered By Speedflex?

We're excited to roll out the concept with Everyone Active further. In January 2021, we will be launching another two locations, with several more scheduled for later in the year.



To keep the Speedflex programme COVID-safe, participants remain on one machine during the session

We heard Speedflex has launched a new programme specifically aimed at helping fight the battle against obesity during COVID-19. We'd love to know more

Speedflex already lends itself perfectly to an overweight demographic and so we've created a subsidised six-week programme for anyone with a BMI of 30 or over.

The programme starts and finishes with an InBody assessment which allows us to measure, track and record progress. We're offering this at our flagship Newcastle studio and have created a blueprint for our partners to follow.

Why is Speedflex such an effective workout for overweight and obese individuals?

Speedflex allows participants to work out at a high intensity while keeping the impact low. An obese participant can safely join a standard session and burn more calories than anyone else in the room.

Deconditioned individuals often begin with high levels of motivation but are quickly derailed by aches, pains and injury. Speedflex only uses concentric movements, completely

eliminating the DOMS which can be so off-putting for beginners. It enables overweight individuals to receive all the proven benefits of HIIT without any comeback on the joints.

In just two Speedflex sessions we enable deconditioned individuals to achieve the same workout intensity that would take six weeks to reach with other forms of exercise.

What does the future hold for Speedflex?

We look forward to creating new partnerships with health and fitness operators to install Speedflex studios either as standalone operations or as club-in-club facilities, as we've done with Everyone Active as part of our roll-out of the Fortis Powered By Speedflex brand.

As our work and home life becomes more blurred and the way people want to work out has changed forever, we also have a really exciting project in the pipeline, which we look forward to announcing in the coming months. Watch this space!

Find out more: www.speedflex.com

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With new products, ground breaking technology, online education and new workout content, we have been working hard this summer to make sure that when you are ready, we are here to help you come back stronger.



Ride inside

As winter draws nearer in the north of the world, it's time to set your members up for their indoor workouts by taking advantage of the latest developments in indoor cycling

Bikes are hot, with Peloton continuing to capture the imagination of consumers, Barry's adding a cycle workout to its class mix and bike sales booming. Now's the time to ensure your gym is set up to welcome members in for their winter training sessions with top of the line bike tech that outperforms what most people can afford to have at home.



Ride the Tour de France on the Atom X

Wattbike Atom X

With sales booming during lockdown, Wattbikes are the weapon of choice for many keen cyclists.

The top of the range, the Wattbike AtomX, with its high-definition touchscreen, automatically adjusts resistance for each individual rider, to maximise every pedal revolution.

The Wattbike Hub is the 'brain' of the bike, acting like a coach or personal trainer, providing riders with relevant training plans and workouts, while testing performance and analysing training data.

A new 'climb' mode lets riders tackle iconic mountain routes from events such as the Tour de France and the Giro, with the

bike's smart tech changing the resistance automatically to map the gradient of the virtual ride.

Also new to the Atom X is custom-built electromagnetic resistance, designed to make the bike more reactive. Special sensors read rider data 1,000 times a second to give high level performance feedback.

The Wattbike's performance computer enables the accurate measurement of 40 parameters and when combined with a customisable ride setup and the feel of riding a real bike, provides the user with an effective, efficient power-based training solution.

● **To find out more about the Wattbike range, go to: www.wattbike.com**

Precor Spinner

Precor offers its Spinner range of indoor bikes in three models – Ride, Shift and Chrono – all designed with a heavy, perimeter-weighted flywheel to give a distinctive ride, consistent with the Spinning philosophy.

The bikes give a range of readouts, depending on model, including cadence (pedal RPM), watts and average watts, heart rate, time, distance and calories burned – they also have a low battery indicator.

An optional Studio Console provides an easy-to-read LCD screen for all three models, automatically pairing with ANT+ compatible heart monitors and allowing the bike to connect with Precor's Spivi system of shared workout content.

Spivi also serves up summary reports and riders' feedback, to help them adjust and refine their workouts.

PHOTO: PRECOR

Precor's Spinner bikes link to the Spivi system of shared workout content

The bikes' power console, has an ultra-bright, always-on LCD colour screen which doesn't require batteries

The open base of the bike design and the aluminium stabilisers make cleaning easier – an important consideration in the age of COVID-19.

Spinner bikes also have aerodynamic, rounded tubing

to stop the pooling of liquids on flat surfaces, and ensure quick shedding of liquids, while stainless steel and aluminium frames and parts provide a rust-resistant frame for longevity in rust-prone areas.

Precor also offers an instructor certification in Spinning.

● **To see the full range of Precor bikes, go to www.precor.com**

PHOTO: SCHWINN

Schwinn AC Power

Ideal for metric-focused group cycling, the Schwinn AC Power bike from Core Health and Fitness has been designed to enhance the indoor cycling experience.

The bike has a crank arm powermeter from 4iiii®, which can be connected to the Motosumo phone app via Bluetooth, transforming members' smartphones into personal consoles.

Schwinn's Echelon consoles on the AC Power bike show direct power output and can be connected to a group display or leaderboard system via ANT+. The console also runs off a generator, removing the need for batteries.

Schwinn's range of Power bikes come with a choice of drive trains – the AC Power, with its Carbon Blue belt gives the feel of a road bike, while the SC Power model, with its Poly belt gives a smoother ride.

The AC Power has

ergonomically designed, performance handlebars to replicate the feel of an outdoor bike and comes with the Schwinn Fit System which enables easy seat and handlebar adjustments, so members can get in the right position for a sweet ride.

The Schwinn AC Range features magnetic resistance for zero drive train maintenance.

Bikes can be customised to add your gym's branding, with a range of 19 colours to choose from and a choice of pedal styles.

Also available on the AC Power is on-bike LED studio lighting, in blue, green, orange, pink, red, yellow or white, that powers on when the wheels turn, adding drama to the cycle studio environment.

Schwinn rounds out the packages with marketing support and instructor training.

● **To find out more about Schwinn bikes, go to <https://corehandf.com>**





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Packed with all of the best-in-class features of top tier indoor bikes, Schwinn's AC Power and SC Power bikes take your ride to a whole new level. Our power bikes come with the amazingly accurate 4iiii® crank arm powermeter which uses patented 3D strain gauge technology for accurate, reliable and consistent data. View all of your metrics on the Echelon2G console, powered by an eco-friendly built in generator.

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Technogym

Technogym Bike

With 13 bikes in its portfolio, Technogym has to have a model for every application and situation.

In news hot off the press, the Technogym Bike – originally launched as a consumer product – is now also available for in-gym applications, enabling operators to develop their gym floor offering of non-supervised group classes.

Built on the Technogym Live platform, the bike enables anyone to join a wide range of classes, both live and on demand.

These are delivered via the bike's 22" HD touchscreen display, which creates an immersive environment for users to enjoy the wide range of custom-made content on offer.

In terms of ride characteristics, the bike's six-rib Poly-V Belt with Kevlar cords gives a smooth, quiet ride, but with an authentic road feel. Kevlar cords are harder wearing than many traditional belt drive materials, allowing a virtually maintenance-free product, which doesn't need tensioning or lubricating.

For studios, another Technogym bike, – the Group Cycle Connect, tracks workouts, enabling users to improve their performance through the delivery of an immersive riding experience.

The bike uses the same Poly-V belt with Kevlar cords to give a silent ride, as well

as featuring the Technogym four-way adjustment system.

Users can sign in to the wifi-connected, self-powered console via a range of connections to track and save workout data, including Bluetooth Smart, QR code, NFC, the Technogym mywellness key or Technogym key.

The touchscreen is back-lit to ensure visibility in darker environments and it only takes one touch to change settings, ensuring that the cadence of the workout is maintained.

The bike's flywheel resistance uses the strongest available permanent magnets (made from neodymium) to give a smooth ride, while from a practical standpoint, the bike has 'splashproof' design, to protect electronics from moisture damage during heavy use.

The Group Cycle Connect has also been designed with wheels and minimal incline, to make it easy to move and ensure that studio spaces can be optimised.

● To see the full Technogym product line, go to www.technogym.com

PHOTO: TECHNOGYM



The Technogym Bike streams live and on-demand content through the Technogym Live platform

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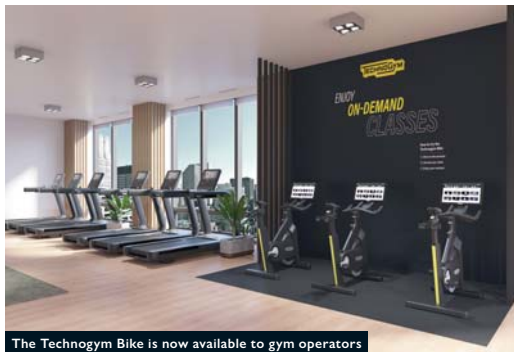
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Scifit
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The Technogym Bike is now available to gym operators

EGYM



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Offer valid from 5th of October to 7th of November 2020



A close-up photograph of a woman with short, styled grey hair. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. Her hands are positioned in front of her chest, with her fingers interlaced to form a heart shape. She is wearing a light blue t-shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

E G Y M

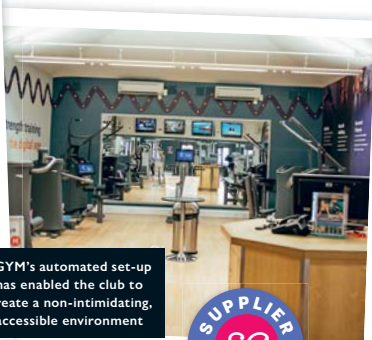
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and goals?

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EGYM's automated set-up has enabled the club to create a non-intimidating, accessible environment



Bouncing Back

During the COVID-19 enforced lockdown, Club Kingswood, an independent 2,800-member multi-activity club in Essex, froze all its gym memberships with no charge, uncertain of what the effect would be on the future of its membership

Fortunately, nine weeks post-reopening, over 85 per cent of gym members have returned and general manager, Alex Owen, says EGYM is an integral part of this success.

"The EGYM Smart Strength Series has been an integral part of our offer since 2019," he explains. "We realised, long before the pandemic, that well-managed, bespoke, progressive strength training provision could play an important role in the promotion of many health benefits, not just for those who want to become physically stronger, but also for a much wider demographic that simply wants to live a longer, more mobile and fulfilling life.

"EGYM's automated set-up, with visual cadence coaching from the high-resolution, integrated screen, has enabled us to create a non-intimidating, accessible environment where anybody – even those completely new to strength training and the gym – can feel comfortable and able to complete regular, effective and safe resistance programmes.

"The science-based, pre-installed training plans, such as Metabolic Fit, which is designed to tackle diabetes and the recently added Immunity Boost, which has been designed to strengthen the body's defences against infection, also enable trainers to administer effective, health-oriented programmes



"When we re-opened our doors, in the first month, 83 per cent of our EGYM users returned"

Alex Owen

that are progressive, safe and effective, without having to fully understand the complex science behind the prescription," he says. "These features have enabled us to attract a much more health oriented demographic.

"People in this market segment prioritise attendance at our club because they value the contribution our provision is making to their overall quality of life through the promotion of better health," explains Owen. "As a result, when we re-opened our doors, in the first month, 83 per cent of our EGYM users returned, despite much of the industry reporting general trepidation. Now, nine weeks post reopening, 86

per cent have returned, making an average of 4.9 visits per month.

"EGYM has also helped us manage a safe environment, through automated on-screen messages, both via the Smart Strength Series and the Branded Members App, that reminds members to wipe down equipment and carry out regular hand sanitisation. This all helps improve member confidence that the club is COVID-19-secure and helps us encourage more members to return.

"Over the last 18 months, we've introduced the Trainer App and Branded Member Apps, which are provided as part of EGYM Digital. These provisions have enabled us to provide a wraparound service of care, giving members access to advice and coaching – helping them to maintain exercise habits even when unable to visit the club in person. This provision has helped us maintain relevance to our members and meant that when we were permitted to re-open, a visit became a natural progression.

"EGYM has been a significant factor in our club's post-lockdown bounceback," says Owen. "I'm confident the software driven solution will continue to help us build business resilience moving forwards, thanks to its focus and support of health-oriented goals.

More: www.egym.com/uk



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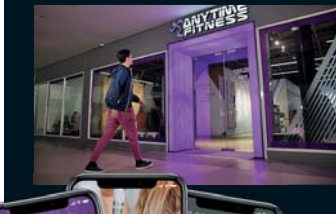
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 **VOLUTION**





By integrating a remote model, Anytime Fitness Asia has been able to stay operational



Powering through

Volution worked with Anytime Fitness Asia to enable the company to minimise the impact of the pandemic



“We rapidly developed a remote-focused solution to pivot the Anytime Fitness Asia business model”

Andy Hall, Volution

“We were able to monitor data visualisations of each of our selected KPIs in real-time, which has been a big advantage”

Ryan Cheal, Anytime Fitness Asia

Anytime Fitness in Asia tasked Volution with an urgent challenge to deliver a customised technical solution to keep the company operational during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The challenge

Following the news that each of its 120+ locations would be closed as lockdown measures were enforced, Anytime Fitness quickly realised its members wouldn't be able to engage with its services as normal – and that position could continue for some time.

“The team has worked with Anytime Fitness on its digital transformation strategy for the past two years, developing a strong partnership, so we were in the ideal position to rapidly develop a remote-focused solution, capable of pivoting the business model to keep staff employed and members engaged during lockdown and beyond,” says Andy Hall, COO of Volution.

The solution

Volution immediately set about designing a virtual platform and mobile application that enabled Anytime Fitness to deliver first-class personal training sessions from any location, to keep revenue flowing and engagement high.

Financial, tech and infrastructure disruption was minimised – in fact, it was non-existent – and budgets were kept in check by ensuring virtual sessions cost the same to run as normal PT sessions.

A rigorously tested and optimised payment module was also built to

handle increased user traffic and facilitate simple and secure bookings.

“As soon as the solution launched, we were able to monitor data visualisations of each of our selected KPIs in real-time from a central dashboard, which has been a big advantage,” says Ryan Cheal, MD of Inspire Brands Capital, the master franchisee for Anytime Fitness Asia.

The data enabled senior managers to track key trends in user engagement, how many PT sessions had been sold, where penetration rates were high, which classes were proving most popular and how much revenue had been generated; even providing a clear view of staff availability, to reduce double bookings and other scheduling complications.

The results

Since the virtual platform and mobile application launched, Volution has helped Anytime Fitness to achieve the following results:

- +14.2% increase in PT revenue
- All staff remaining employed during lockdown
- + US\$1M increase in revenue
- 50% of virtual hub sign-ups using assisted services for the first time, enhancing member engagement

By integrating a remote model now, Anytime Fitness has not only stayed operational and sustained revenue throughout the most challenging crisis of our time, but has also opened a new revenue stream that will continue to support business growth for years to come.

More: www.volution.fit

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Supporting our personal trainers

Gympass added personal training to its platform during the lockdown and has now delivered 30,000 sessions globally

As the COVID-19 lockdown forced the temporary closure of businesses across the country, the future for companies supplying services to corporate partners looked precarious.

Among them was Gympass – the world's largest corporate wellness platform – whose business model moved to zero on the day office and gym doors shut.

Prior to lockdown, the Gympass model gave employee members access to over 2,200 fitness facilities across the UK. When gyms closed, Gympass tackled the challenge head on and swiftly pivoted its business model to deliver physical activity and mental health solutions remotely.

As part of the solution, Gympass also wanted to support personal trainers whose workload had fallen away and – following a successful trial in Brazil and the US – added personal



“As Gympass focuses primarily on getting inactive people started on their fitness journey, it's very fitting that we should bring personal training within their reach”

Eamon Lloyd

training services to its UK platform.

The new service was specifically introduced to support personal trainers who had been forced to move their businesses online by the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing them to work with Gympass users and access its entire network.

Gympass clients in the UK can enjoy up to eight online PT sessions a month as part of their membership.

“When coronavirus forced the lockdown of gyms, we had to pivot in order to operate effectively,” says Eamon Lloyd, senior director – head of partnerships for UK and IE at Gympass. “We looked closely at our consumer base to understand how we could best support them and, through the provision of PT, we've provided a practical solution to meet their changing needs.

Since launching in the UK, more than 1,500 PTs have signed up to Gympass to provide their services and 78 per cent have already received bookings. Globally since launching, over 30,000 PT sessions have been completed.

“Private personal training can be unaffordable and intimidating, so by providing access to this level of support and education, we are enabling an option that many may otherwise not have been able to use,” added Lloyd.

“One-to-one training is a great way to find motivation and encouragement for those who may be worried about joining a group class or going to a gym and so as we focus primarily on getting inactive people started on their fitness journey, it's very fitting that we should bring personal training within their reach. People want to stay active in different ways and the addition of PT completes our suite of services to help fulfill our mission of defeating inactivity.”

Find out more: www.gympass.com

VITAL REVENUE FOR NEW PT

One personal trainer who has seen great success since signing up is Tommy Router, who had just qualified as a PT in January of this year.

“Becoming a PT was something I thought long and hard about over the past couple of years but it was only when I had an opportunity to join a newly-opened F45 Studio in London that I decided to obtain my Level 2 and Level 3 Personal Trainer qualifications, knowing I had a job lined up,” says Router.

Things were going well and then of course coronavirus hit! As a new PT, that worried me,” he says. “But with F45 already working in partnership with Gympass, I was really lucky. I was one



“Ultimately, this is a brand new revenue stream I never had before, so it's amazing to be able to dial up or dial down my availability”

Tommy Router

of the first to sign up to the Gympass PT service.

“I hadn't really given much thought to online training prior to this, as I had always preferred in-person interaction with a client but I couldn't be more wrong. The service has been great to use and the team has been brilliant in helping me get started.

“Ultimately, this is a brand new revenue stream I never had before, so it's amazing to be able to dial up or dial down my availability if I feel I need more or fewer shifts.

“With Gympass' personal training service I'm in control of my workload and can fit it around working at F45, plus it's given me access to a whole new client base which is fantastic.”

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Liz Terry rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness



Freemotion has partnered with iFit to launch a new range, explains **Dan Toigo**

Freemotion has launched its new 22 Series range, with iFit integration, which enables gym members to explore the world without leaving the gym floor.

iFit, the interactive, connected fitness platform,

provides access to thousands of on-demand, coach-led workouts with Google Maps integration, which allows users to create their own routes and train across 10 million miles (16 million km) of mapped locations.



We've put people at the heart of this new range

Dan Toigo

content-driven experiences that motivate members, while enabling them to stay connected outside the gym through their iFit-enabled home fitness equipment.

This creates a consistency that helps members develop healthy fitness habits and better results, leading to an increase in retention and lifetime membership value.

Freemotion's Dan Toigo said: "We've put people at the heart of the development of this new range to deliver a fully interactive, engaging and immersive experience."

Interactive, auto-adjusting technology matches the machine's movements to the on-screen terrain, for an immersive experience.

The new cardio line enables fitness operators to provide

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

FREEMOTION



Freemotion's new cardio range has iFit integration

Ariston's range of water heaters can reduce running costs for gyms, says **Victoria Gutierrez**

Ariston's electric water heaters create hot water cost-effectively, ensuring gym-goers can enjoy a post-workout shower, due to fast reheat times and large storage capacities.

The heaters have an anti-legionella function, which automatically increases the water temperature up to 65°C once a month, to eliminate the risk of legionella bacteria developing.

Both heaters utilise the ABS Safety System, which includes 'anti-overheating', 'anti-freezing' and 'dry heating self-diagnosis' functions, offering added protection in the event of energy or water failures.

The storage water heaters have capacities of 50, 80 and 100 litres. They include a display that allows for easy operation,



The system has an anti Legionella function

alongside temperature setting and control for advanced performance – lending themselves to light commercial environments and public washrooms with high hot water demand.

Ariston's Victoria Gutierrez said: "We've developed our

Velis Evo and Pro1 Eco units to cope with high levels of use without affecting performance or end user comfort – so there will always be plenty of hot water."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

ARISTON



Our units can cope with high levels of use

Victoria Gutierrez



The pandemic has forced us to re-evaluate approaches to preventing the spread of viruses

Rory Donnelly



Copper has been proven to kill COVID-19

Copper clothing can keep staff and members safe, says **Rory Donnelly**

Snap Fitness franchisee, Kunal Patel, is kitting out all staff – from personal trainers to cleaners – with copper-infused masks and gloves from medtech company, Copper Clothing.

Copper Clothing infuses copper ions into fabrics – which are proven to kill strains of coronavirus, including COVID-19.

“We know this is a worrying time for many, so we wanted to make our gym spaces a safe haven for our employees and customers,” says Patel.

“The science behind copper-infused fabrics proves that the material can stop the spread of bacteria, fungi and viruses. When we spoke with Copper Clothing, it had recently carried out

tests that showed the fabric also kills COVID-19. We knew then it was a safety measure we had to invest in.”

Rory Donnelly, clinical research director at Copper Clothing said: “The pandemic has forced everyone to re-evaluate their approach to preventing the spread of diseases and viruses and the latest tests have

found copper ion-bonded fabrics have a 99.99 per cent success rate in killing COVID-19. This is because of copper’s oligodynamic properties which exert a lethal effect on pathogenic cells, making it a natural, chemical-free solution.”

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
COPPER CLOTHING

Some of the best facilities in the country are underutilised due to poor technology, says **Jamie Foale**

Playfinder has launched Bookteq, a booking system aimed at increasing revenue for operators of independent physical activity venues.

CEO, Jamie Foale, said, “Some of the best facilities in the UK are underutilised and sitting behind closed doors, due to the lack of suitable technology in the market.

“We see venue managers – the unsung heroes of the sports industry, who work night and day to open up facilities – struggling with lack of time and the constant task of collecting money and keeping up with bookings. That’s why we’ve created Bookteq.”

Around 78 per cent of the UK’s facilities are independent, yet only

35 per cent offer online booking, as software has been too expensive or complicated for their needs.

Bookteq has been designed to be affordable, cloud-based software that can manage bookings and take payments across a host of



Bookteq has been designed to manage bookings across a host of facilities and spaces

Jamie Foale



The software enables online booking of facilities

facilities and spaces, with a design created with the help of venue managers.

There are 23,250 independent venues across the UK with 90,000 sports and active leisure facilities, and many need to adapt to the changing landscape caused by COVID-19.

Foale says that even before the pandemic, average facility utilisation rates across the UK were 30 per cent, with small

venues struggling to attract customers as a result of their limited marketing budgets.

Bookteq also increases booking rates by giving exposure to millions of sports players via its Playfinder marketplace, which has increased utilisation by up to 38 per cent, adding tens of thousands of pounds of revenue.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
PLAYFINDER

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Aerobic exercise was proven to lift mood

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Rewarding workout

A new study has found that exercise can reduce the symptoms of depression in young adults by amplifying reward processing, as Tom Walker reports

A study by Rutgers University suggests it could be possible to predict which young adults with major depression would benefit most from exercise.

The Rutgers-led team studied two groups of young adults with major depression, focusing on aerobic exercise and its impact on depressive symptoms.

For a period of eight weeks, one group undertook moderate-intensity aerobic exercise three times a week, while the other group did some light-intensity stretching.

Reduced depression

Symptoms of depression were reduced by 55 per cent in the aerobic exercise group, compared to 31 per cent in the light-intensity stretching group.

Crucially, while aerobic exercise didn't influence reward processing or cognitive control, people with better reward processing when the study began were more likely to successfully respond to exercise treatment as a result of the exercise regime carried out.

“Symptoms of depression were reduced by 55 per cent in the aerobic exercise group – people with better reward processing when the study began were more likely to respond to exercise treatment”

The term 'cognitive control' refers to processes that allow adjustments in behaviour to help people achieve goals and resist distractions.

Reward processing (or reward-related brain activity) reflects the response to rewarding stimuli or outcomes and the ability to process and then modulate your response to positive and negative outcomes, such as achievement or loss.

Reward processing

Deficits in reward processing have been linked to multiple psychiatric conditions, including major depression. These deficits may reflect anhedonia – the loss of interest in or inability to experience pleasure – which can be found in many cases of depression.

“Our study needs to be replicated to investigate further, but the precision medicine approach of predicting who may or may not benefit from exercise as an antidepressant is provocative,” said senior author Brandon Alderman, an associate professor at Rutgers University. “We also need to know whether exercise has a similar antidepressant effect in younger adolescents and in adults with more treatment-resistant forms of depression who have not responded well to traditional treatments.”

The study was published in the journal *Psychological Medicine*.

Find out more about this research at: www.HCMmag.com/rutgers



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