

LES MILLS

A large, dimly lit gym with rows of stationary bikes and a curved window on the left. The bikes are arranged in a long line, receding into the distance. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows. The ceiling has several circular recessed lights. The overall atmosphere is modern and professional.

THE INFLUENCE OF SPACE, PLACE, AND ENVIRONMENT ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Sharing industry ideas, experiences, and recommendations about the impact of training environment on member journey and exercise engagement.

With a foreword by Erin Myers,
Marketing Director, Les Mills UK

By Les Mills, supported by ukactive



INTRODUCTION

On 19th September 2019, Les Mills UK supported by ukactive hosted a roundtable to discuss the influence of space, environment, and sensory experience on physical activity. The panel of experts included operators, boutique studio owners, local authority and leisure trust consultants, group exercise specialists, architects, and audio-visual designers. The aim of the roundtable was to look at the impact of the designed environment on people's willingness to engage in physical activity, their enjoyment of exercise, and the effect on retention. The second half of the discussion focused on the role of sensory experiences, and how we can incorporate these into our fitness offerings, and future innovations to improve the member experience. This white paper, produced by Les Mills UK in partnership with ukactive, sets out the main points of the discussion, and summarises the take-home points of the panel of experts. We hope it sparks some interesting discussions in your organisation, and forms part of a wider discussion around the important topic of space and environment in the fitness industry.



PARTICIPANTS

Chair

James Foley - Commercial Director, Alliance Leisure

Roundtable Participants

Mark Hutchison - Managing Director, Hutchison Technologies

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FOREWORD



Erin Myers ,
Marketing Director, Les Mills UK

Research tells us that customer experience is overtaking product and price as the leading metric for Net Promoter Score. Intuitively, we know that the physical environment and atmosphere contribute to our experience of space, but forward-thinking fitness operators are starting to understand that these factors play a significant role in the type of exercise we participate in, how frequently we do it and how long we stay.

In light of this insight, Les Mills UK, supported by ukactive, hosted a roundtable to discuss the influence of space, environment, and sensory experience on physical activity. The panel of experts included operators, boutique studio owners, local authority and leisure trust consultants, group exercise specialists, architects, and audio-visual designers. Together, the group's collective goal was to examine the impact of the designed environment on people's willingness to engage in physical activity, their enjoyment of exercise, and the effect on retention.

A key theme that continued to emerge was that operators need to put their customer at the heart of their design. Taking learnings from other sectors, like retail, travel and entertainment, we can create communities that perfectly connect to the emotional needs of our customers. For new exercisers, this needs to be spaces designed to be deliberately approachable, incorporating audio, visual and perhaps olfactory design elements. For regular exercisers, a space with filtered lighting to create a sense of challenge and competition may be more appropriate. This is a trend we see repeated in many boutique studios around the UK and top facilities around the world. In general, our industry lags behind other sectors who are making powerful use of sensory experiences and technology to enhance customer experience.

With all this in mind, we must not forget about the importance of people and programming. The energy, inclusiveness, and connection created by an inspiring instructor leaves a lasting impact not to be underestimated while the quality and consistency of your programming stands on its own.

But how can we innovate without alienating? Young people, older adults and people with disabilities also need to be considered in the design process and cannot simply be catered for as an after-thought. This group represents a significant portion of the population, and one that is among the most physically inactive.

Ultimately, a physical experience is an extension of a company's brand. The lighting, sound, physical space, smell and culture of your team, impact your customer and leave a lasting impression. This impression not only impacts the bottom line of your business, but our industry's ability to get more people active.

Change will take time. But if continue to do what we have always done, we run the risk of losing customers who prioritise experience and are more willing than ever to switch loyalties.

This white paper, produced by Les Mills UK in partnership with ukactive, sets out the main points of the discussion, and summarises the key points of the panel of experts.

We hope it sparks some interesting discussions in your organisation, and forms part of a wider conversation around the importance of space and environment in the fitness industry.

PART ONE

The Impact of Space and Environment in the Physical Activity Sector

The Impact of Space and Environment in the Physical Activity Sector

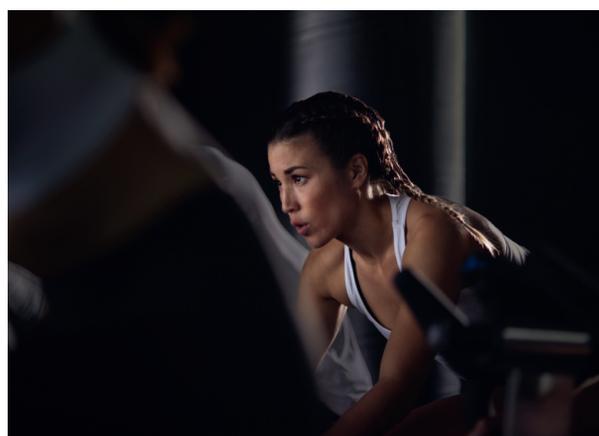
Physical activity can play a role in the fight against some of our major national challenges. However, despite rising obesity levels, declining mental health and increases in cardiovascular health problems, around a quarter of the population are classed as inactive.

Sport England's 2019 Active Lives Adult survey reported inactivity levels across all age groups, with inactivity generally increasing with age. The survey also revealed how inactivity levels are falling with a reduction of 122,900 people now being classed as inactive across a 12 month period (May 2018 – May 2019), with fitness activities being one of three major drivers to reducing levels of inactivity in this country.¹

Our industry has a lot to offer, and could present a solution to a number of health challenges. However, as a sector there is still an opportunity to reach our full potential by reaching those in our population who remain inactive.

These statistics - along with an industry-wide awareness of consumer behaviour - set the scene for a lively discussion around how to create a more impactful fitness environment for different demographics.

Space, place, and atmosphere all contribute to the type of exercise we participate in, how frequently we do it, and how long we stay. Environment plays a significant part in whether or not an individual adopts exercise as a lifelong habit.



Drivers for Change in the Gym & Fitness Studio Sectors

In our quest to improve the nation's activity levels, we need consider how we can make our fitness spaces and environments even more appealing - to attract new customers and to retain existing members. People have a great deal of choice, and research tells us that "customer experience" is set to overtake product and price as the leading metric for Net Promoter Score (NPS) by 2020.²

“**Space has the power to influence how our customers feel about exercise, about their workout, and even about how they experience workouts.**”

Sound, lighting, atmosphere, and environment play an important role in creating a winning customer experience.

We have to make gyms and fitness spaces somewhere people want to go - frequently, and for a long time. How can we create spaces that encourage people to come back, to talk positively about their experiences, to bring a friend, and to get excited about even after a long day at work?

Space has the power to influence how our customers feel about exercise, about their workout, and even about how they experience workouts. At-home exercisers typically designate a specific space (even for stretching or yoga, which could be done anywhere). Humans gravitate towards spaces that evoke particular feelings in them.

As operators and designers, we must start by asking what we want people to feel when they enter our fitness space. There is no right answer to this: product and demographic will influence decisions around music, lighting, and use of space.



And it is important that we address these challenges in collaboration: with operators, providers, designers, architects, and our construction partners working together much earlier in the process to create experiences through the built environment.

How Does Environment Impact Motivation, Engagement, & Retention?

Environment has a huge impact on our enjoyment of physical activity. It can be a deciding factor in attendance, membership renewal, and word of mouth recommendation.

“**We have the power to manipulate the built environment to influence how members feel**”

From an operator perspective, environment should be considered a crucial component in motivating members to continue visiting the site.

As operators (and as the designers who help us), how can we use audio-visual (AV), sound, lighting, and virtual to create a space flexible enough to appeal to a range of demographics? How can the environment we offer break down key barriers of accessibility and confidence?

We have the power to manipulate the built environment to influence how members feel before, during, and after exercise. What steps can we take to better understand what will encourage people into fitness spaces, so we can use the design and technology available to us?

Creating a Stand-Out Customer Experience

We can use environment as a differentiator, which creates that crucial “customer experience”. It might seem unimportant to create “Instagrammable” moments at our facilities, but consider how powerful social media sharing is for connecting with customers – and for marketing.

World-class brand experiences in other sectors (such as retail, travel and entertainment) work hard to create a community feel that puts the consumer at the heart of a memorable event.

Remember IKEA’s 2011 “BIG sleepover” competition, created in response to a social media group with almost 100,000 people called “I want to have a sleepover in IKEA”. The brand treated 100 winners of the competition to a luxury night in one of the organisations warehouses. Not only was it a major PR success, but it also provided a meaningful, brand experience for the customers involved.³

In regards to the fitness industry, research tells us there are numerous customer experience benefits that can be gained from participation in group exercise training. The Les Mills Lab “TRIP study” conducted with Penn State University and published in June 2017 looked at links between use of music, lighting, and other factors in an immersive exercise environment to discover the impact on enjoyment and effectiveness. The study found that immersive (music with images) promoted better adherence in participants when compared to an audio-only environment. Participants reported lower RPE and greater enjoyment in an immersive environment.⁴



Equipment Design & Progressive Spaces

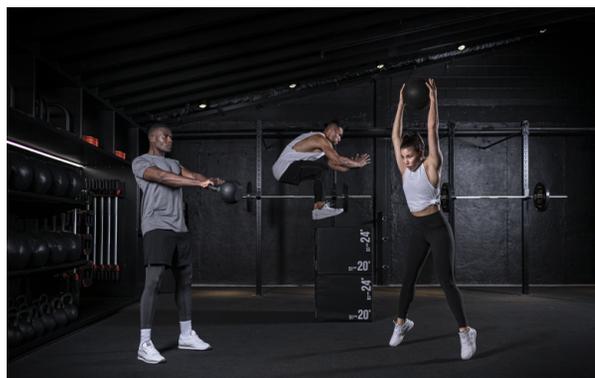
Changes in the variety of exercise classes on offer continue to influence how operators approach the design of their fitness spaces, and equipment designers have a key role to play in this development. The concept of zoning a gym floor, with dedicated space for small group training and group exercise, has significant commercial and social return on investment (ROI). But we must remember not every design decision will result in measurable revenue per square foot. What other metrics can we use to protect important decisions around environment and space?

Investment in Studio Space & Gym Floor

Most operators would agree that their gyms are built for all members, but it is important to consider how our spaces appeal to new members (who may be considering a gym membership for the first time). Existing members shouldn't be ignored, but they may already be confident in themselves and in the space. It's imperative we know our demographic and cater for them when making investment decisions into layout, equipment, decor, sound, audio-visual, and tech.

Design decisions should not be driven purely by advice from suppliers and consultants. Think about how your space could be used, and what your audience wants from the space.

Informed, user-driven decisions about equipment and AV are all important considerations when it comes to creating a 'successful studio'. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their offering, and use design elements to strengthen their brand. AV can play a key role in class delivery, maximising use of limited spaces. HIIT-concept classes and cycle studios are great examples of how we can use a timed light show, curated music, and even scent to create an impactful experience through environment.



Some boutique gyms in London are using distributed audio to greatly enhance the fidelity and intelligibility of the audio experience and extending motivational music into the juice bar area and changing rooms, plus effect lighting, display screens in the studios, and automated iPad control to create a premium experience from the moment a member walks through the door. LED tape and wash lighting are synced to the EQ of the class music soundtrack, and the AV and lighting can be pre-programmed by instructors for seamless delivery. This use of lighting and audio supports the brand story and enhances architectural features of the space.

Other boutique operators are making memorable use of technology to transform bland spaces into their famous raw and edgy environments. Brands are utilising feature and effect lighting – enhanced by water-based hazers – to create enhanced mist effects, automated audio levels which adjust to ambient noise, and nightly DJ residences to create an experience that goes beyond a fitness product.

Away from the boutique sector, not-for-profit Nuffield Health used innovative concepts to transform an underused area of their City gym, with dynamic feature and effect lighting to segment zones, acoustic baffling to protect the zones and boost motivation, and HD projection designed to enhance the unique backdrop of exposed brickwork railway arches.

Clubs, leisure centres, and boutiques who do this well report better member feedback, higher occupancy levels, increased retention, and a boost in word of mouth marketing. All operators need to keep the customer journey in the forefront of any design brief.

Designing Activity for the Youth Market

The youth market (aged 12-16) represents the next generation of physical exercise consumers, and the future of our nation's health. Yet reaching this age group is a frustrating challenge for leisure and fitness providers. This demographic aspires to be adults - and generally does not like to be labelled as "kids" - but an adult fitness environment has to be adapted to cater for them.

Les Mills BORN TO MOVE™ has been specifically designed to appeal to young people across five age categories, with programmes to suit their

developmental age. This innovation uses virtual workouts to enable young people to engage in activity in a gym or club setting.

Whether or not we use virtual to engage younger people in exercise, we must consider how we make our spaces more inviting and energising for different age groups. Within an existing gym or club, where can we find a suitable space? What kinds of space would inspire younger people to play, move, and take part in exercise?

Young people, older adults and people with disabilities and health challenges must not be catered for as an after-thought. If we want to engage more people from across our society, we need to provide thoughtful, appropriate spaces designed to different needs and behaviours.

Some boutique operators are demonstrating innovative use of space to encourage participation. Frame runs 1100 classes per week across six London locations, and works with local schools to offer young people the opportunity to use Frame studios. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with school pupils enjoying the grown-up experience of using beautifully-designed, welcoming fitness spaces.

We face lots of barriers to getting Generation Z active, but if we want to engage this age group (and help them adopt healthy habits for the rest of

their life) then we must identify what appeals to youth age groups, and alter the environment of our fitness spaces.

Designing Spaces to Increase Participation in Physical Activity

According to the 2019 State of the UK Fitness Industry Report, 1 in 7 people in the UK have a gym membership, and the UK penetration rate passed 15% (for the first time) with total membership up 4.7% to 10.4 million.⁵

Increasing figures are always encouraging, but operators could achieve even greater numbers. Can we increase footfall and retention by turning our focus to design?

If we can design activity into spaces we don't typically associate with exercise - such as offices, schools, and homes - we could side-step many of the barriers associated with typical fitness venues.

How can workforces encourage and facilitate physical activity, and how can we - as providers and designers - help them identify suitable spaces or creating new environments? Design, AV, lighting, and virtual offer almost unlimited opportunities to transform blank slates into pop-up fitness spaces. We have a responsibility to influence disengaged populations by making non-fitness spaces more engaging.



PART TWO

The Role Sensory Experiences have on Engagement with and Enjoyment of Physical Activity

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Indoor v Outdoor Physical Activity

There are clear benefits to boosting engagement in group exercise, studio spaces, and gyms. Indoor exercise offers a controlled environment which enables members to feel safer, with instructor-led sessions, a ready-made community, and all the benefits of technology.

However, outdoor exercise has unique benefits which we could look at incorporating into indoor workouts. The outdoors offers a light, open, welcoming environment which can be more familiar for beginners.

Nevertheless, operators can now use elements of design, lighting, and AV to bring the outdoors indoors - including to those non-fitness spaces like homes and offices (through on-demand and virtual). Design experts recommend using natural light wherever possible, lightbulbs which give a natural glow to mimic daylight (helping to smooth out attendance spikes caused by day and evening timetabling).

Biodynamic lighting can simulate sunlight, falling in step with members' circadian rhythm, and offering further benefits including focus, mood, and energy levels. Chromatic lighting can play into our natural energy systems, with obvious benefits for group exercise classes. Of course, indoor lighting cannot replicate the vitamin-D benefits of real outdoor sunlight, but it can mimic the feeling of being outside in natural lighting.

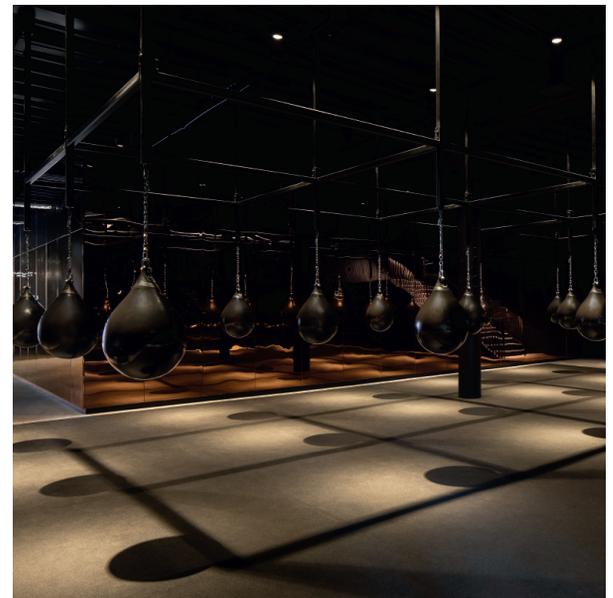
Lighting, Temperature & Music for Physical Activity

Creating an impactful fitness environment goes beyond design, layout, and use of space. Market-leading brands are using sensory experiences to further improve the consumer's journey from the minute they walk through the door to the moment they leave the facility.

As we compete for consumer attention we cannot afford to treat environmental design factors as an afterthought. The days of spaces with harsh strip lighting, poorly-considered music, and off-putting smells belong in the past. Today's consumers

demand more - and will soon go elsewhere to find a brand who offers it.

Effective use of lighting, music, temperature, and scent starts by knowing your product and audience.



There are a range of offerings making headway here. Yoga classes thrive when energy and mood are controlled by eternal factors like lighting, temperature, and olfactory immersion. Fully-immersive studios (like Woom Centre in New York City) use sound, scent, lighting and more to create a fully sensory experience.⁶ Research is sparse (this approach is very new), but we know that overtone sound has a powerful effect on settling the mind, and that some scents can lead to a reduction in blood pressure

The panellists discussed a private boutique studio in Australia which worked with a specialist AV tech design company to create a full sensory journey for customers: with floor-to-ceiling panoramic and time synced content running throughout the class, two scents (for the start and the end of classes), and choreographed audio. The studio lighting is colour tuneable to change 'colour temperature' to mimic light temperatures from sunlight-at-midday to candlelight. Even the acoustics of the studio were designed to control reverberations, to create a soothing experience.

Creating Flexible Spaces

Innovative tech developments in sensory experience could also offer operators a way to create ultra-flexible studio spaces that can switch between exercise modalities with little to no downtime.

In general, our industry slightly lags behind other sectors who are making powerful use of the sensory experience for consumers. Retail and food stores are renowned for their use of scent marketing, lighting, and music to create a persuasive and memorable sensorial journey.

“**Thoughtful use of these concepts could elevate the fitness experience far beyond what anyone currently expects, to inspire, engage, and retain members.**”

Smell is particularly emotive and evocative scent. Richard Axel and Linda B. Buck received the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their exhaustive work on ‘odorant receptors and the organization of the olfactory system’.⁷

From this work – and much more since – we know that a gene family of around 1000 genes (representing 3% of our genes) give rise to the same number of olfactory receptor types on olfactory receptor cells, each of which are highly

specialised to different scents. This complex process enables us to recall olfactory memories long after we smelled the original scent.

As a sector, one of our primary objectives is to create positive experiences. If sensory input (particularly smell) can be manipulated to affect emotion and energy, how can we make more of this olfactory opportunity? Perhaps fitness brands can develop brand signature scents (which could be used to sell products, skincare, at-home items), or use scent to give areas of the facility a different atmosphere.

Thoughtful use of these concepts could elevate the fitness experience far beyond what anyone currently expects, to inspire, engage, and retain members.

Adjusting the Sensory Experience to Support Different Types of Workout

Sensory exploitation could be the smartest (and most unexpected) way for us to engage with savvy consumers who are looking for more from their fitness spend. By stimulating an unconscious response, we could help people workout with more intensity, get better results, and enjoy the experience more than they would without such innovations.

Will it be easy to shift investment decisions and client buy-in? Not necessarily. We would do well to gather data to support outcomes so we can prove the viability of audio visual, lighting, and other sensory design investments in our gyms and studios.



Barriers might include poor quality sound systems, additional instructor training, and the challenges around becoming an early adopter without years of data to look back on. Automating our sensory experiences could remove a number of these barriers, and help instructors feel confident with new innovations, but cost and ROI will remain a key challenge.

What information do operators need, and what questions need to be considered, before more brands invest in this area to improve their customer journey?

Exploring How Gamification Can Boost Exercise Engagement

Which innovations add the most value, and can be measured to prove ROI?

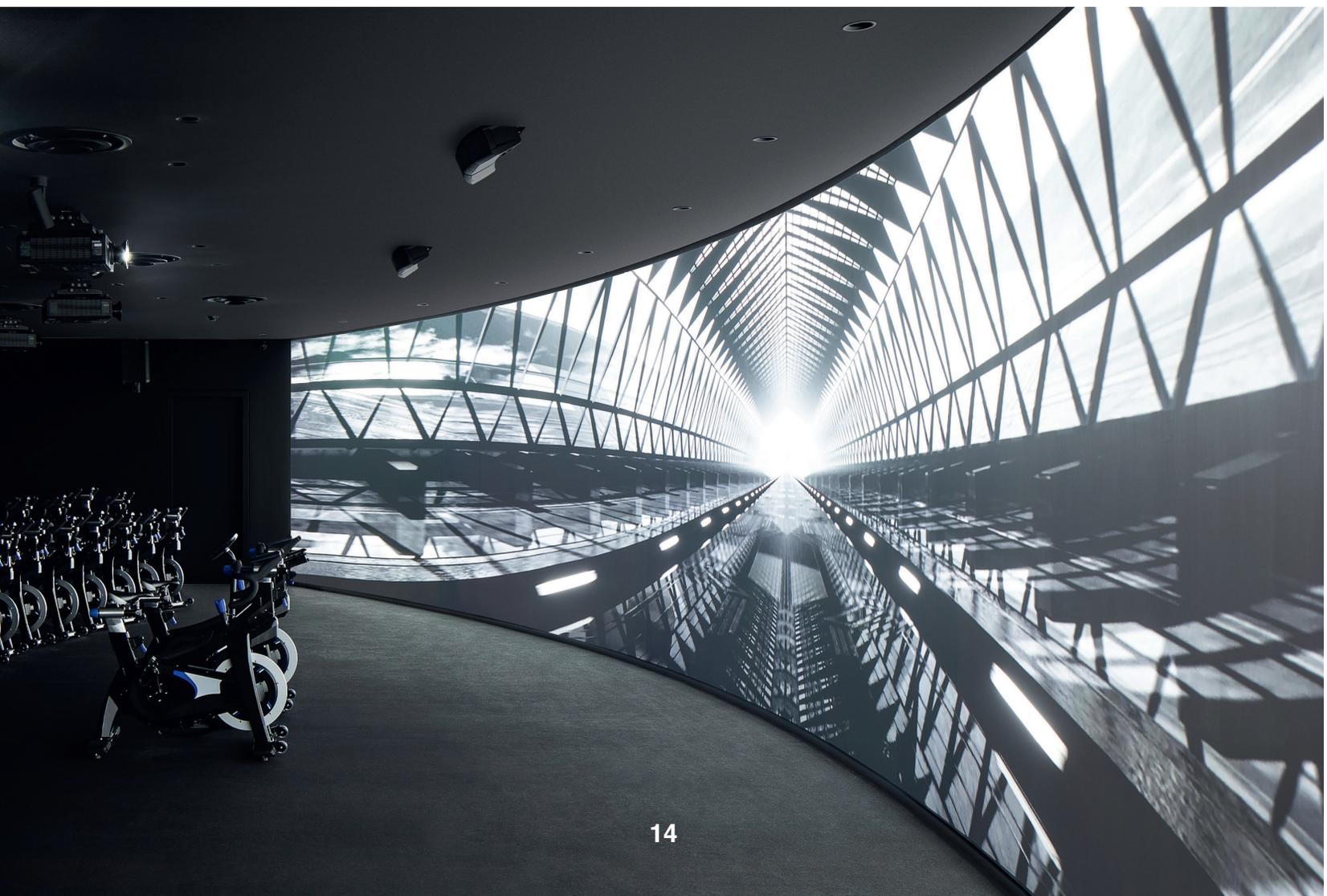
Gamification is being used in our industry (and others) to boost engagement, particularly amongst millennials and Gen Z. Many younger consumers enjoy introducing a competitive aspect to engaging with brands. How can we gamify physical exercise to create a more attracting environment for this kind of member? Innovations in technology could help operators create

communities, allowing members to compete (with themselves or with others), and this can be extended to workplace workouts and at-home exercise.

We all remember the astounding success of Pokémon Go on getting people outside and walking, whilst ostensibly gathering points and unlocking levels of a game. As of February 2019, the game has been downloaded by more than 1 billion people worldwide.⁸

There are a number of elements fitness could take from this: the sense of challenge, the community, the fun with a competitive edge. Perhaps a more gamified approach to fitness could help users learn as they go: giving points, unlocking levels, and moving through a system to access a new set of skills to learn or exercises to engage with.

Consider BlazePod – a ‘flash reflex training solution’ which introduces a strong element of gamification to exercises, encouraging users to respond to lights on the BlazePod. Or Les Mills ‘The Project’ which used gamification elements to showcase the future of immersive fitness at pop-up boutique style fitness roadshows.



PART THREE

**The Impact of Innovation
on Exercise Environment:
Improving the Physical
Activity Experience
through Technological
Developments**

The Impact of Innovation on Exercise Environment: Improving the Physical Activity Experience through Technological Developments

How Can Innovation Increase & Improve Member Experience?

This paper has discussed a number of innovations, from immersive experiences, to virtual and augmented reality, supported by sensory experiences with lighting, AV, scent, and temperature. How exactly can we use these innovations to increase engagement and improve member experience of physical activity?

Innovation is different for every age group, and the adoption of technology has to be suitable to each demographic. We have a top-heavy ageing population, plus a fast-moving younger generation. All have their own demands, needs, and ways of interacting with technology and brand experiences.

Looking To the Future of Improving Fitness Environments

What is next for improving the environment for physical activity - both in studios, gyms, workplaces and outdoors?

“**Our priorities need to be lowering intimidation factor and improving the entire member journey.**”

The percentage of immersive fitness studios, offering an all-round sensory experience is still very small. We must ask honest questions: is this kind of experience really appealing to the majority of fitness users anyway? How many people have a more traditional view of exercise, and what are their expectations?

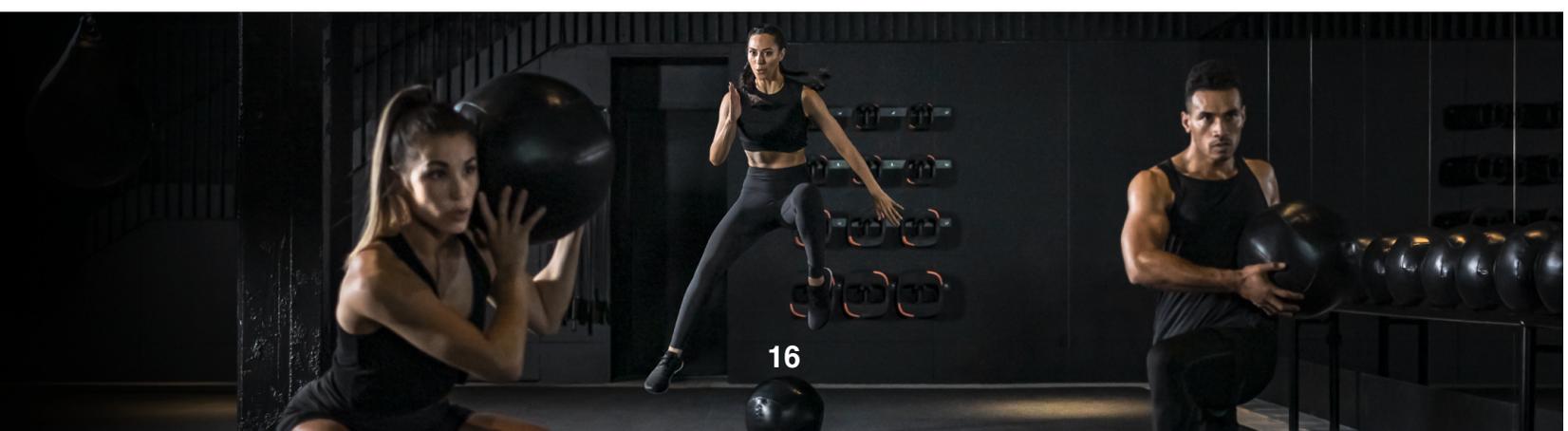
How can we innovate without alienating existing customers and the more traditional consumers?

The solution may lie in starting to combine traditional fitness offerings with advanced technology and design around space and the workout environment. Our priorities need to be lowering intimidation factor and improving the entire member journey. Advanced technology may have a more important role to play once a new member is confident with the basics of being around a fitness facility.

We might also consider altering the fitness environment to tackle one of the most challenging issues in the physical activity sector: engaging inactive populations and non-members. Using tech to alter unassuming spaces could be a way to pass messages to consumers when they are not expecting it, gently marketing a welcoming message about active lifestyles.

We can extend this marketing, messaging, and brand experiences including outreach through pop up gym environments and making use of other non-fitness spaces like shopping centres, cafes, libraries, schools, workplaces and more.

Ultimately, this discussion is about enhancing the entire consumer journey - from the first step of getting someone into physical exercise, to encouraging them to stay (and then bring others). As operators, we can give more thought to the environment we present. The end goal should be to give amazing experiences in the best environmental spaces. Nobody is expecting overnight changes but with marginal gains we can close the gap.



SUMMARY

Recommendations & Key Learnings

Recommendations & Key Learnings

We all want to create unforgettable experiences for our members. This doesn't have to be advanced, highly technical, or expensive. There are scalable models proven to deliver tangible benefits - both commercially and for the customer experience.

We need to prove that focusing on space, place, and environment has a direct impact on outcomes. Customer experience will continue having a significant impact on near-future NPS – research found that 76% of customers now report that it's easier than ever to take their business elsewhere — switching from brand to brand to find an experience that matches their expectations.⁹

Changing the fitness environment has huge potential for creating winning customer experiences. If we continue to do what we have

always done, we run the risk of losing customers who prioritise experience and are more willing than ever to switch loyalties.

Looking to a future, can we hope for a collaborative industry where operators and providers share tech and expertise? Who can take the lead on creating a mutual platform where we can share and collaborate? If people in leadership and operations are willing to champion this kind of innovation, we could come up with some simple quick wins which can be implemented more easily. From there, we can measure and assess, building up a body of data to support future investment.

Acting on the recommendations in this report is important for individual business owners, and collectively as an industry delivering physical and mental health benefits.

CASE STUDY

Nick Mennell,
Leisure Lead at Willmott Dixon

A Collaborative Conversation around People Architecture for a Healthier Nation

Nick Mennell, Leisure Sector Lead at Willmott Dixon spoke to us about the changing relationship between the physical activity and construction sectors, and how we can work together to create exercise spaces with a human focus.

How has the relationship between our sector and the construction sector changed since you have been at Dixon?

NM: "In the past, the relationship was quite distant. The construction of a building was done as one phase, and then the physical activity sector moved in to run it.

"Things are changing rapidly. The construction sector is realising that people architecture is more important than physical architecture. We welcome this deeper relationship with operators and local authority leisure providers.

"Digital has transformed what space means to people and what experiences they want. The construction sector has to be at the heart of this, so we can understand what the buildings need to achieve.

"I come from a leisure industry background, and my move to Dixon represents a shift towards being 'outside in'. By bringing people in from other sectors, we get a better understanding of how buildings will be used and what they need to achieve."

How does space and the environment affect the type of exercise we participate in?

NM: "It's difficult to measure, but we know that it's extremely significant. We need to create experiences that are inspirational, and this starts with space and the environment. By investing in spaces, we can reach the human experience, and therefore assist in retention. You can't put a price on how much you should invest in this (but it is well above what most operators actually do!)

“If I could change one thing about how our two industries work together, it could be starting the conversation earlier in the process.”

Does exercise environment have a big impact on motivation, attendance, and retention?

NM: “Absolutely, but we need to keep working on this. If we fail to be continuously agile and reflective with exercise environments, the retention effect will be limited. We need to keep creating exciting, engaging environments to prevent things getting stale.

“Whose job is this? I think it should be the role of everyone within a facility – everyone should be culture coached so they can contribute to creating the right environment and experience.

“Creating exercise spaces is about much more than a building. It’s about creating a human experience, a feeling, and a positive psychology so people can enjoy being active. The environment should minimise barriers and annoyances.”

How can we design leisure facilities that improve retention rates and motivation for customers?

NM: “The key word is collaboration. We all have to start talking earlier in the process. Imagine bringing together specialists from multiple sides – architects, designers, contractors – at the start of the brief. You’d end up with much better spaces, and fresh ideas that could push the industry forward.

“We are not just there to deliver. We can all help you create your vision. This kind of model would inspire the entire sector to do better.

“Look at the boutique model – phenomenally successful, but actually relatively simple. It’s all about the human experience. Great boutiques create a feeling of community which has people thoroughly engaged.

“Think like a boutique – and by that I mean think differently. Engage with creative agencies right from the start. Look at other markets like hospitality, retail, and disruptors.

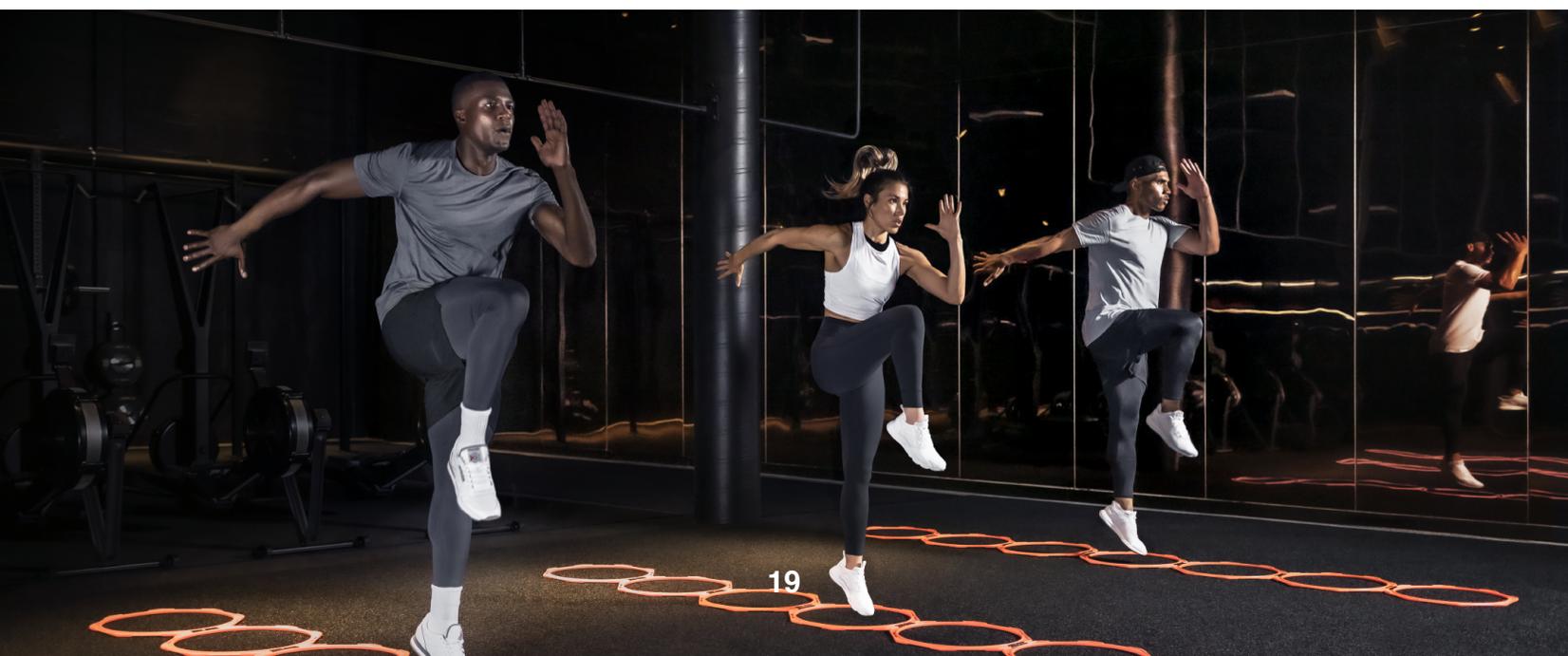
“The sector is swayed by a quick fix, but we need to get away from that and see the bigger picture. If we can present the public with a perfect suite of choices, all wrapped up in a wider message of wellness, we will improve that 15% penetration rate!”

Are gym operators investing more in the design of studios and other facilities?

NM: “Operators are definitely starting to recognise the power of design and experience. I think the boutique sector has played a part.

“But it’s really important that operators pause to think about the drivers behind their design decisions. Is it just what they feel they have to do? Or is it truly built into the DNA of the business? Think about the member demographic, the target market, about how you want to interact with customers.

“We can help you achieve more, but we need to be included in the conversation a lot earlier than is typical.”



What are your favourite examples of unique facility design in the industry?

NM: "I have to mention boutiques – some of them really are doing flawless work and creating something different. For example, 1Rebel showcases fantastic experiences.

"For local authority operators, look at people like Active Tameside who have increased their focus on customer journey and adopted different models to support themselves.

"Check out University of Warwick Sports hub for the wow factor on both size and experience. The use of technology to craft their experience is future thinking"

"Village Hotels are impressive in the way they think about the entire guest and customer journey, they have embraced a number of design elements that speak to a specific demographic and make the destinations memorable. They are thinking about their entire identity as a brand, tying the hotel and gym together in an appealing package."

How can we design activity into spaces we don't typically associate with exercise?

NM: "We're already seeing an encouraging crossover of sectors, with health and leisure coming together to offer preventative health, and with the mixed model of residential, leisure, and retail in the same site.

"Corporate wellness is driving more activation in preventative health and wellness, creating better office space, and destinations within that support an active workplace.

"However, it has to be about habits as well as products. When we think about combining leisure with the home or the office; you still need to make people feel part of something. Otherwise that crucial human element is missing.

"This isn't just about designing spaces, it needs to be about a whole culture shift – and that won't happen overnight.

"But if there are enough people focused on the activity agenda, then we can all push in the same direction, towards a healthier nation. Choice architecture can nudge the industry forward."

What should our next step be?

NM: "We need a commitment to 'do' rather than 'talk'. Talking is great, and white papers like this are a valuable part of that nudge towards change. But what action are we going to take, and who leads on it?

"We're turning a tanker which has never been turned. It's a big task, but it's an exciting and important one. I'm pleased to be part of it.

"Let's build some momentum, and start collaborating on working to create experiences and consumer journeys that inspire a healthier nation."

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

The following resources are mentioned in this white paper.

1. <https://www.sportengland.org/media/14239/active-lives-adult-may-18-19-report.pdf>
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3. <https://www.prweek.com/article/1155154/social-media-ikea-happy-bed-down-its-customers>
4. https://journals.lww.com/acsmmsse/Fulltext/2017/05001/Immersive_Cycling_Environment_Yields_High.653.aspx
5. <http://www.leisuredb.com/2019-fitness-report-contents>
6. <https://www.eventbrite.com/rally/london/immersive-yoga-london/>
7. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S009286749190418X>
8. <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/pokemon-go-statistics/>
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