

The State of Fitness & Wellness

Insider's Outlook 2024



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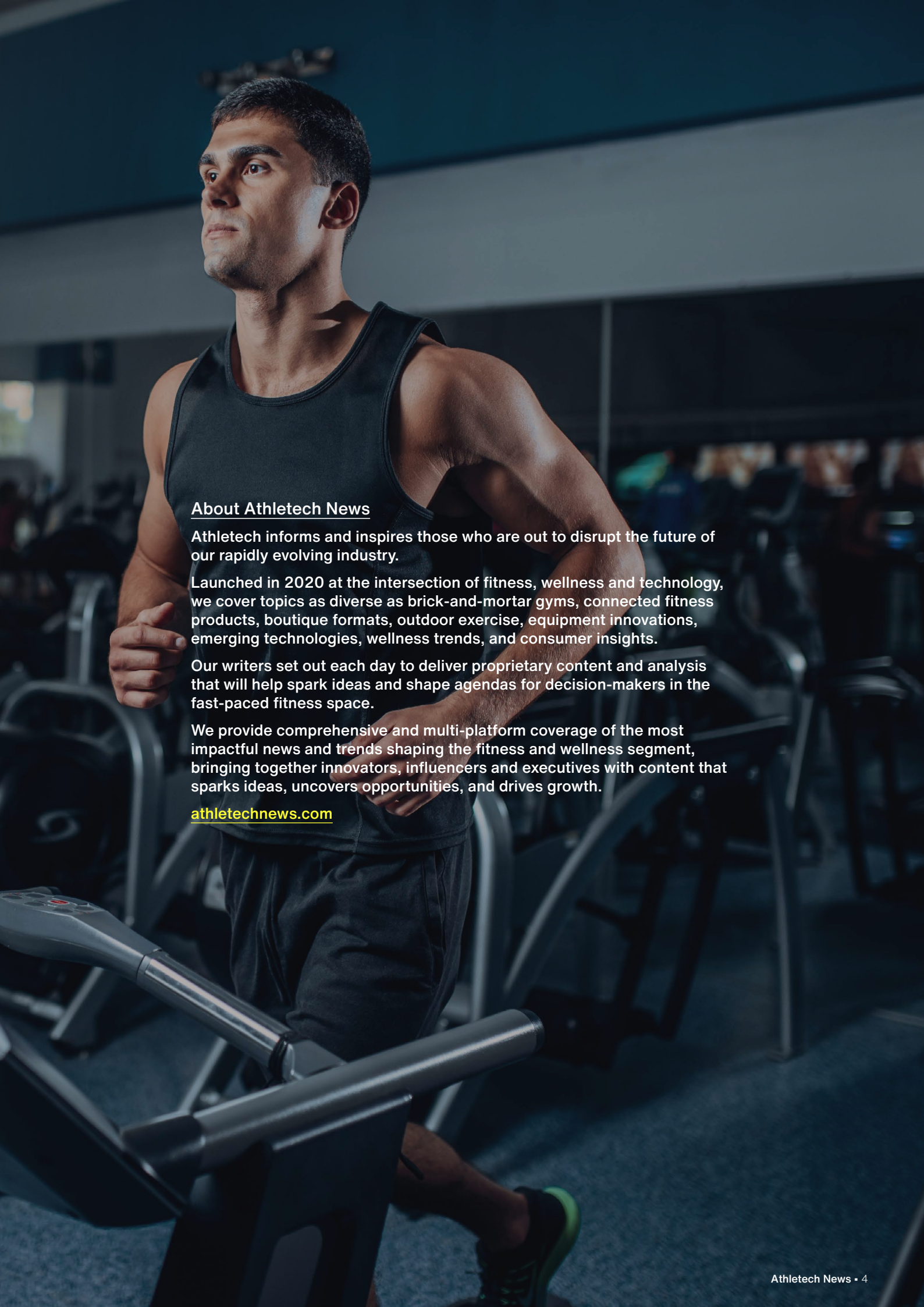
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A man with short dark hair and a focused expression is running on a treadmill in a modern gym. He is wearing a black tank top and black athletic shorts. The background is slightly blurred, showing other gym equipment and a bright, airy space with large windows.

About Athletech News

Athletech informs and inspires those who are out to disrupt the future of our rapidly evolving industry.

Launched in 2020 at the intersection of fitness, wellness and technology, we cover topics as diverse as brick-and-mortar gyms, connected fitness products, boutique formats, outdoor exercise, equipment innovations, emerging technologies, wellness trends, and consumer insights.

Our writers set out each day to deliver proprietary content and analysis that will help spark ideas and shape agendas for decision-makers in the fast-paced fitness space.

We provide comprehensive and multi-platform coverage of the most impactful news and trends shaping the fitness and wellness segment, bringing together innovators, influencers and executives with content that sparks ideas, uncovers opportunities, and drives growth.

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A Letter From Our Founder

Dear Reader,

It's hard to believe I'm writing what is now the third edition of Athletech's State of the Industry Outlook Report. It feels like just yesterday we eagerly emailed PR contacts with the hopes of getting just one reply for this new idea, a B2B media property for the fitness and wellness industry.

Fast forward to 2024, and I'm humbled and beyond thrilled to see the companies and executives who have not only participated in this year's report but invested ample time to provide insights and commentary for their industry peers, and in many cases, competitors.

As I reflect on the last three years and look outward to the balance of 2024, there are a few themes that seem to be consistent.

Among them, the fitness industry no longer likes to be limited to the word "fitness." As wellness, recovery, longevity and integrated health have emerged from fringe modalities reserved for the elite into part of a healthy and fit lifestyle for all, we are witnessing an industry-wide rebrand and a change in the way companies do business.

There is no better example of this than IHRSA, which announced last month at its annual trade show and convention in Los Angeles the rebranding of the 43-year-old organization to the "Health & Fitness Association." This move speaks to the broadening of scope and responsibilities of not only the association but the companies they serve. And if you walked the floor last month in LA, you couldn't have helped but notice the expanding footprint of brands that sold wellness, recovery, health and longevity products. This serves as a strong sign of how the traditional offerings of the four-walled fitness center are being reimaged.

At the end of 2023, we saw Xponential Fitness acquire Lindora, a chain of metabolic health clinics, a move that takes the brand beyond just boutique fitness and into the broader world of holistic wellness.

Life Time, the luxury lifestyle and fitness operator that has long espoused its desire to be more than just a gym, launched its Miora Longevity and Performance Clinic, which will offer services like peptides, hormone replacement therapy and even GLP-1 weight loss drugs under the supervision of doctors, physicians assistants and nurses.

Equinox, another luxury operator, has embraced GLP-1s, designing a training program for its members taking weight loss drugs to aid them in staying healthy and preserving muscle mass.

I expect these to be the first of many major deals, partnerships and announcements we'll see among "fitness" brands in the business of health and wellness.

To be clear, the wellness wave isn't confined to luxury operators. HVLP gyms of all kinds are adding services like infrared saunas, cold plunge tubs, massage beds and more, giving their members access to more than just fitness.

Athletech News is proud to stand at the intersection of fitness and wellness, educating and empowering this industry to continue making the world a healthier, happier place.

Warm Regards,

Edward Hertzman
Founder & CEO, Athletech News



Fitness & Wellness Data Trends



2024 Fitness Data Snapshot

- Fitness center check-ins have increased nearly 90% since pre-pandemic.
- In January 2024, check-ins were up 9% over January 2023, demonstrating strong post-pandemic engagement.
- Global boutiques and gyms saw a 22% increase in new joins year-over-year.
- Paying Membership accounts increased 8.2% compared to 2023 despite a decrease in new joins at North American gyms.

(Data courtesy of the [ABC Fitness January 2024 Innovation Report](#)).

✓ January Check-ins 2019 – 2024

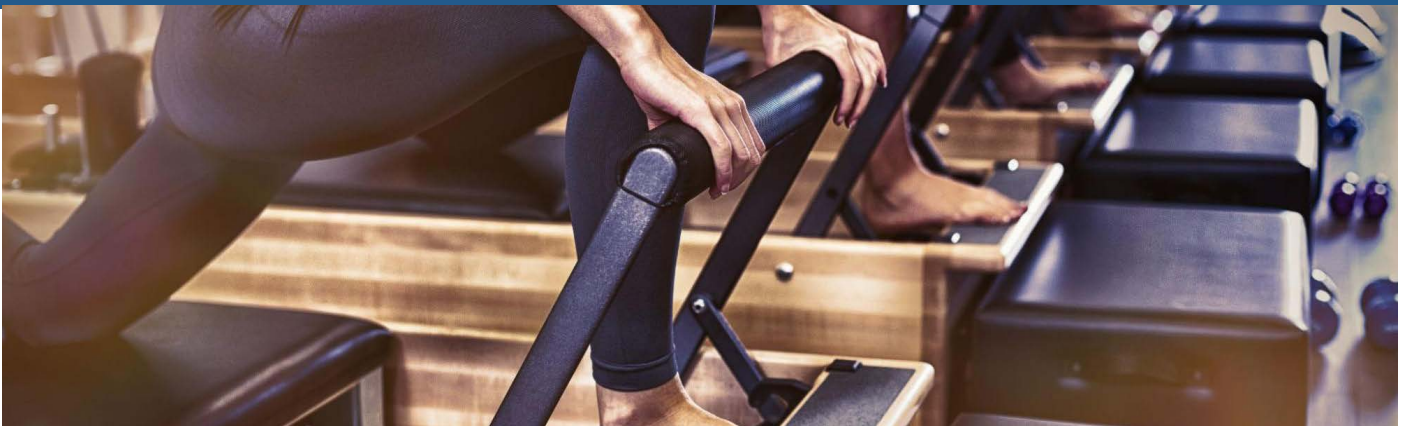
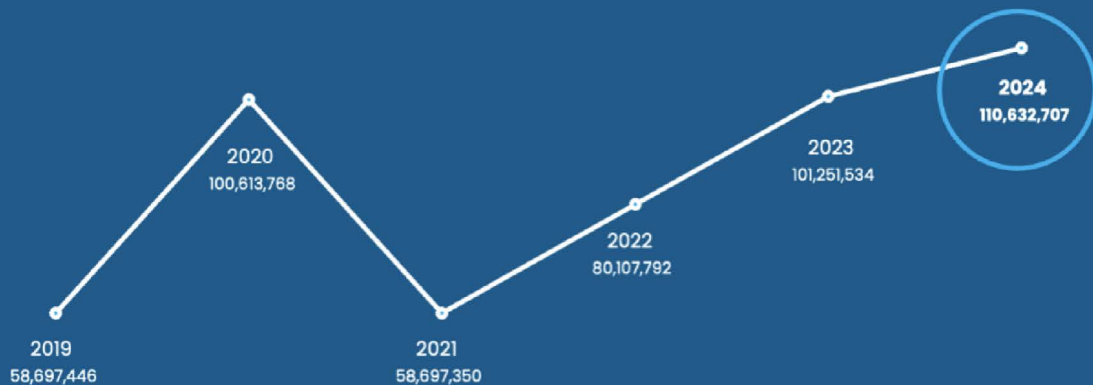


Photo courtesy of vectorfusionart/shutterstock.com

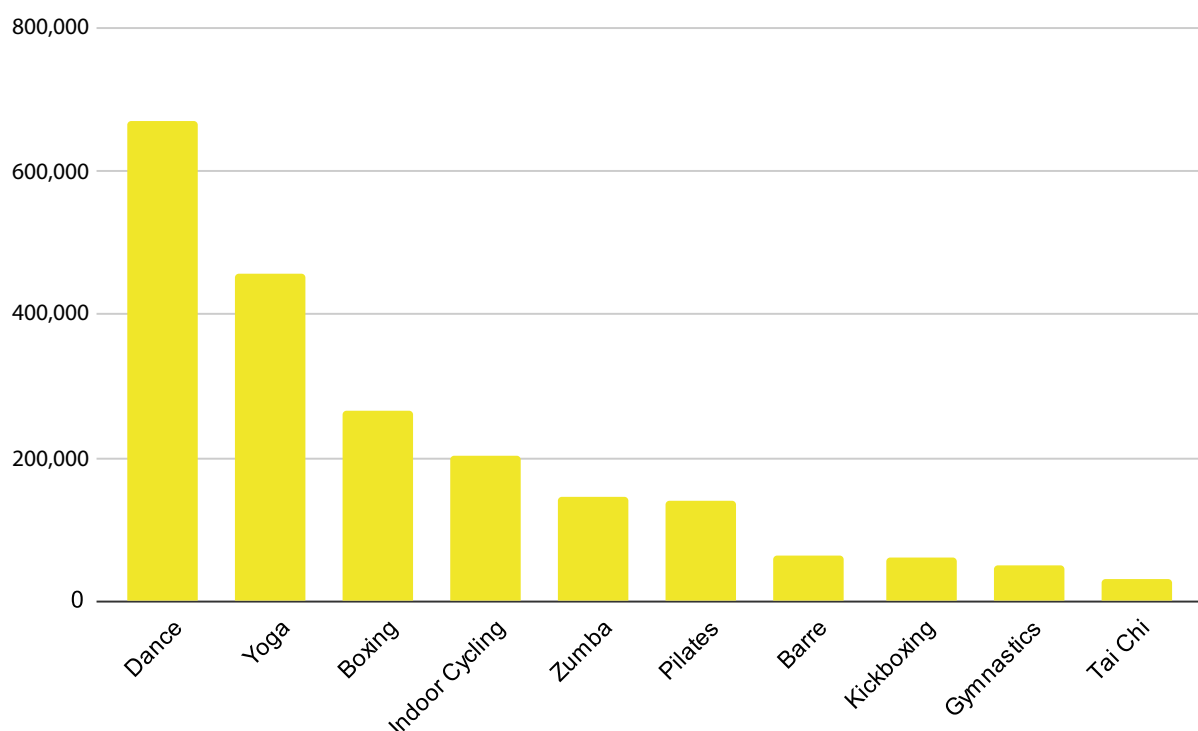
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Fitness & Wellness Modality Trends:

- In 2023, fitness reservations increased 64% compared to 2022 and wellness reservations increased 31%.
- Pilates was the most popular fitness modality of 2023, with reservations up 92%.
- Low-impact training in general surged in 2023, with reservations up 176% from 2022.
- 60% of fitness consumers incorporate weight or strength training into their routine, with over half who do so working out 2–4 times per week.
- 60% of consumers have attended or would like to attend an event at a salon, spa, med spa or wellness center.
- Almost 25% of consumers have tried cold or heat therapies, and 80% of those who have are interested in trying them together.

(Data courtesy of [ClassPass](#). Compares 2023 fitness and wellness bookings to 2022)

The Most Popular Exercise Classes of 2023



(According to average monthly search volume. Data courtesy of [Set for Set](#)):

Boutique Fitness CEOs Talk State of the Industry

by Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of F45 Training

Boutique fitness is booming post-pandemic as consumers embrace in-person experiences and community interactions.

According to Future Market Insights, which projects the overall fitness and health club market growing nearly threefold to \$302 billion by 2034, the boutique fitness sector is primed for explosion as Gen Z and Millennials seek more intimate fitness experiences.

The future is undoubtedly bright, but boutique fitness brands do face some challenges, such as increased competition from new entrants, macroeconomic concerns including rising costs, and uncertainty over the rise of GLP-1 weight loss drugs.

Athletech News speaks with the CEOs of several top boutique fitness brands to get their thoughts on where the industry is headed.

Orangetheory Strikes 'Balance' Between Tech & Human Touch

As Orangetheory Fitness continues to expand across the globe – the boutique fitness giant has over 1,500 franchised studios in 24 countries – it will do so by leveraging tech and the human touch to create a more personalized experience for members.

Orangetheory co-founder and CEO Dave Long

believes brands that can strike the best “balance between tech and the human element” will be best positioned to succeed in the modern era.

“As we move forward, the industry stands at a crossroads, requiring a shift towards more effectively blending digital innovation with the human elements that foster motivation and a sense of belonging,” Long tells ATN. “Leading with intention and a commitment to offering a unique and holistic wellness journey is crucial for any brand looking to make a lasting impact.”

Long identified “prescriptive fitness” as a key trend, with boutique fitness brands needing to offer their members “tailored, data-driven workout routines that cater to each individual’s unique goals.”

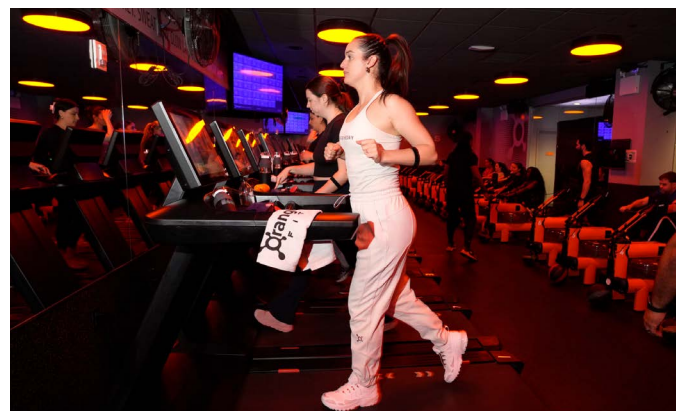


Photo courtesy of Orangetheory Fitness

“Right now, we’re working toward enhancing our proprietary technology to offer more prescriptive fitness experiences. In our Orange 60 classes, for example, we’ve fine-tuned technology’s role in our heart rate-based interval training, fueling each member’s performance in the studio,” Long says, noting the brand is also eyeing “things like connected strength equipment and personalized training recommendations through our mobile app.”

On the human-connection side, Orangetheory will lean on its coaches.

“Our focus on expert coaching and fostering a supportive community underscores this balance, ensuring our members are motivated for consistent engagement and long-term success,” Long says. “This approach particularly resonates with Gen Z, as seen by a 200% increase in memberships from this demographic post-pandemic, who have shown an increased desire for community fitness experiences that merge social connectivity with physical health.”



As we move forward, the industry stands at a crossroads, requiring a shift towards more effectively blending digital innovation with the human elements that foster motivation and a sense of belonging. Leading with intention and a commitment to offering a unique and holistic wellness journey is crucial for any brand looking to make a lasting impact.”



Dave Long
Co-Founder & CEO, Orangetheory Fitness

Xponential Embraces Holistic Wellness, GLP-1s

Xponential Fitness is best known as the parent company of some of the biggest brands in boutique fitness, but late last year, the company made headlines when it acquired Lindora, a provider of medically guided weight management programs (including GLP-1s) and wellness solutions.

Xponential founder and CEO Anthony Geisler says the acquisition of Lindora comes as there’s a rising demand among boutique fitness consumers for holistic health and wellness options.

“Bringing Lindora into our family of brands allows us to tap into the broader consumer demand for holistic and comprehensive approaches to health and execute

on our long-term broader strategic goal to further expand into health and wellness,” Geisler tells ATN.

With wellness rising, Geisler maintains that the “consumer appetite for boutique fitness remains strong,” and could even increase as more people lose weight and become healthier thanks to services like those offered by Lindora.

“There’s been a lot of activity and discussion in the marketplace around the impact GLP-1s and weight loss medications are having on the industry,” Geisler notes. “While we expect this could have an impact on the types of workouts that people are seeking, particularly pushing consumers towards more strength-training types of workout given these medications are shown to cause muscle mass loss, we think that we will be well-positioned to meet this need with our different brands and their class offerings.”



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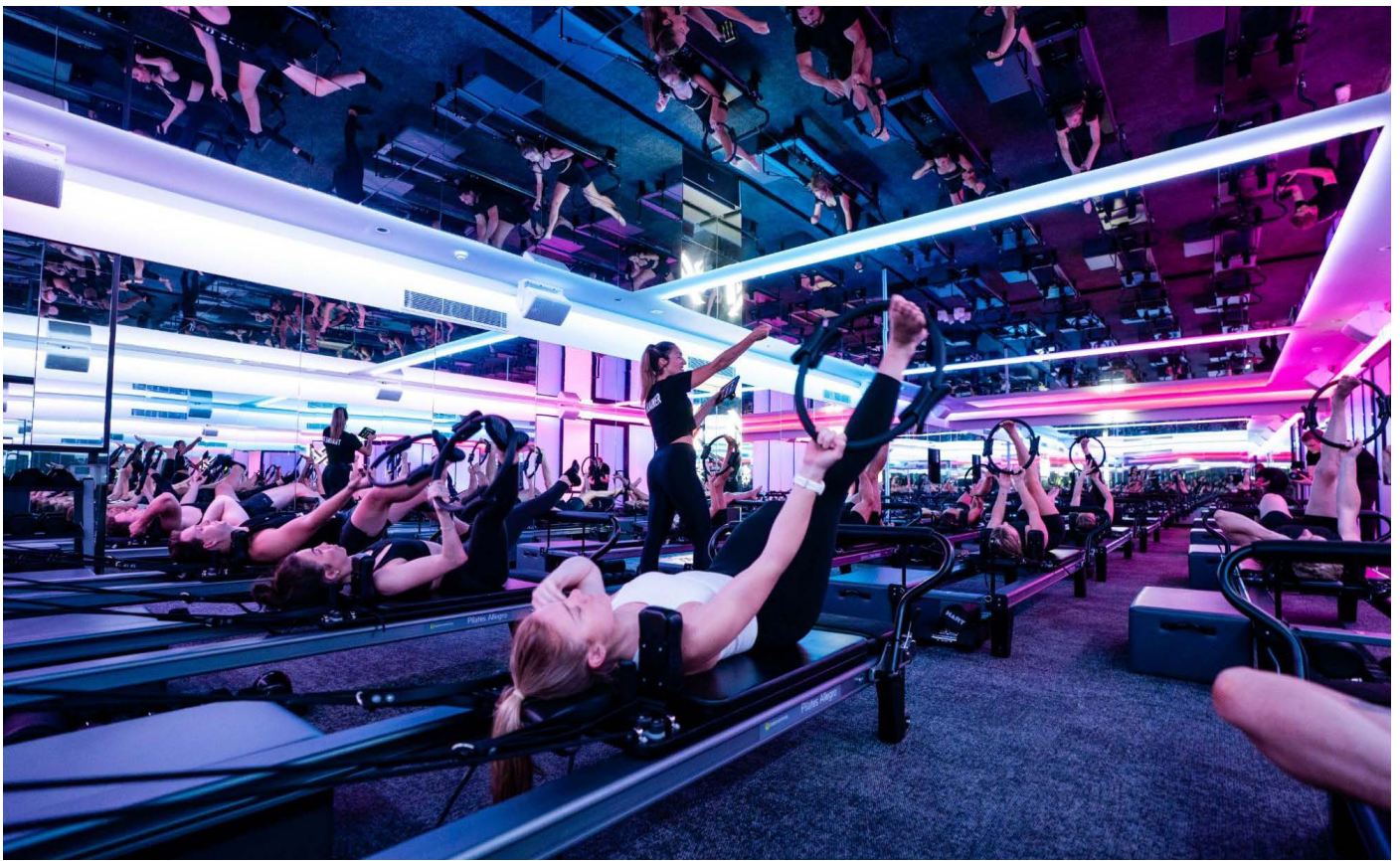


Anthony Geisler
Founder and CEO, Xponential Fitness

F45 Looks to New Modalities

As F45 Training plots its comeback plan under CEO Tom Dowd, the functional fitness brand is leaning into the power of community, forming partnerships with brands like Whoop and Dr. B, and, perhaps most notably, expanding into new modalities.

While F45’s bread and butter is functional fitness, Dowd identified wellness, recovery and nutrition as areas F45 is expanding into. The franchisor has launched education programs and will soon be debuting recovery and stretching classes.



“We’re looking to ramp things up with additional services like recovery and stretch classes,” Dowd shared. “Keep an eye on this space; we’ve got some exciting developments coming up.”

Dowd also noted the popularity of low-impact, strength-focused modalities like Pilates.

“The growing interest in low-impact training is something we’re keenly focused on,” he says. “We’re adapting through our recent introduction of two innovative new concepts: FS8 and Vaura. FS8 combines Pilates, tone, and yoga into a dynamic, low-impact workout, appealing to a broad audience. Meanwhile, Vaura delivers a unique sensory experience with athletic reformer Pilates, targeting the high-end market in urban centers.”



Hybrid work models are reshaping how people plan their days, so we’re innovating our membership models to match. We’re thinking about flexible class schedules and online options—making fitness fit seamlessly into this new way of working and living.”



Tom Dowd
CEO, F45 Training

Dowd mentioned the rise of hybrid work models as a challenge for boutique fitness brands in terms of scheduling classes and pricing membership packages.

“It’s reshaping how people plan their days, so we’re innovating our membership models to match,” he says. “We’re thinking about flexible class schedules and online options—making fitness fit seamlessly into this new way of working and living.”

Solidcore Sees ‘Personalization’ As Key to Growth

As Solidcore eyes the ambitious goal of opening 250 studios by 2028, the Pilates-inspired boutique fitness brand will put its members front and center, with the help of technology.

“Personalization at scale has become the expectation of our consumer – emails, text messages, offers, greetings in our studios are all expected to be built with the specific user in mind,” Solidcore President and CEO Bryan Myers tells ATN. “We’re excited to continue to invest in our data and technology stacks that will allow us to further meet our consumers where they are in a way that allows them to feel seen and well taken care of.”

Myers says educating consumers about the surging but still “relatively nascent” modality of Pilates is a key goal for Solidcore as it expands, along with ensuring Solidcore stands out from competitors in a crowded boutique fitness market exacerbated by macroeconomic challenges.

“The macro environment remains choppy and while consumers are still spending, they are being more selective with where they spend,” Myers notes. “That means, for all of us, our mission is to make sure our unique value propositions are clear and that we consistently execute at a high level in order to preserve and grow our share of wallet.”

Despite those macro concerns, Myers is bullish on the future of boutique fitness, and of the fitness and wellness industry in general.

“Broadly speaking, I think our industry is in better shape in 2024 than in 2023,” he says, noting that consumers are more invested in fitness than ever, brands are more open to collaborating with each other, and the industry has “moved the needle considerably” in establishing credibility before local and national governments.

“This certainly doesn’t mean that there isn’t more work to be done, but I am proud of how far our industry has come in the time since COVID,” Myers says.

“

Personalization at scale has become the expectation of our consumer – emails, text messages, offers, greetings in our studios are all expected to be built with the specific user in mind. We’re excited to continue to invest in our data and technology stacks that will allow us to further meet our consumers where they are in a way that allows them to feel seen and well taken care of.”



Bryan Myers
President and CEO, Solidcore

For Barry’s, Education Is Key

Barry’s, known for its iconic HIIT workouts featuring a mix of cardio and strength training under signature red lights, believes its mixed approach to boutique fitness positions it for success in 2024 and beyond.

“The desire to cross-train remains a priority for consumers, evidenced by the success of various aggregators across the industry,” Barry’s Co-CEO Joey Gonzalez tells ATN. “We also know that they are looking for health, community and experience. At Barry’s, we live at the intersection of these three

key consumer demands, and offer three different workout modalities (Run x Lift, Ride x Lift, and Lift) that provide our clients with a variety of differentiated experiences all in-house and true to the Barry’s brand.”

Besides workouts that incorporate both cardio and strength, Gonzalez pointed to the rise of GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic as a trend that boutique fitness brands should embrace rather than run from.

“Many speculate this trend will have an impact on how people prioritize exercise, and more generally, health and wellness,” Gonzalez says. “The best line of defense is to educate people on the benefits of exercise, particularly those that cannot be achieved through medication.”

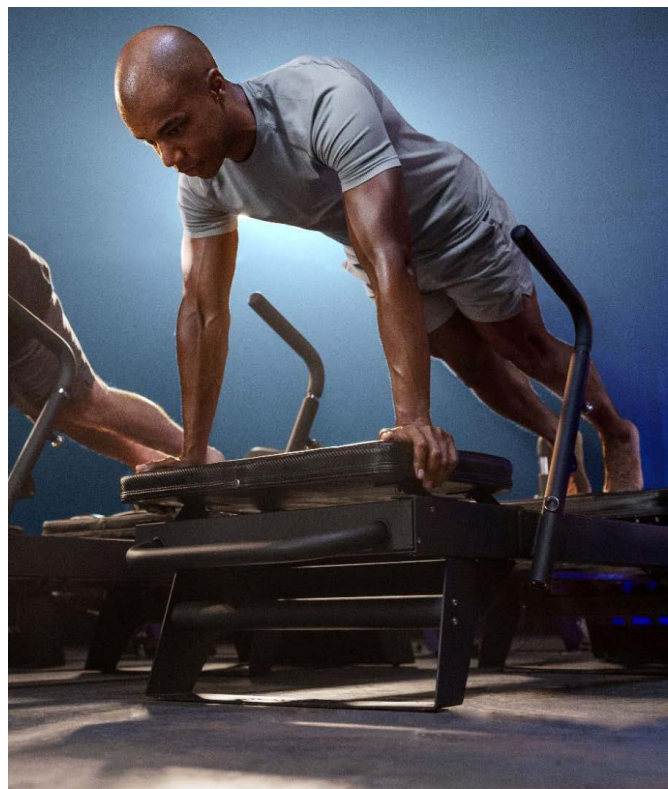


Photo courtesy of Solidcore

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Joey Gonzalez
Co-CEO, Barry's

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How Gyms Are Fueling Growth in 2024

by Josh Liberatore

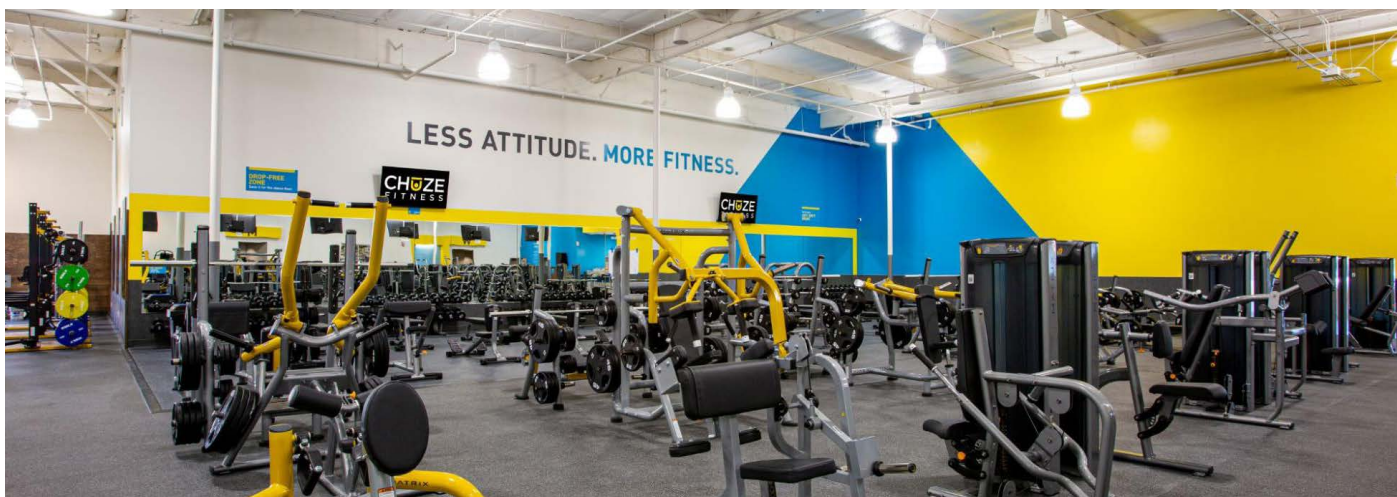


Photo courtesy of FChuze Fitness

Big-box gyms continue to be the lifeblood of the fitness industry, and the primary way most people experience in-person fitness.

Despite a tough real estate market and increased competition from boutique and virtual fitness brands, the prognosis for gyms remains strong. This seems particularly true for high-value, low-price (HVLP) operators, who have struck a chord with cost-conscious consumers, including Gen Z.

Athletech News spoke with leading executives from two of the fastest-growing HVLP gym chains to get a sense of how they plan to drive growth and win members over the coming years.

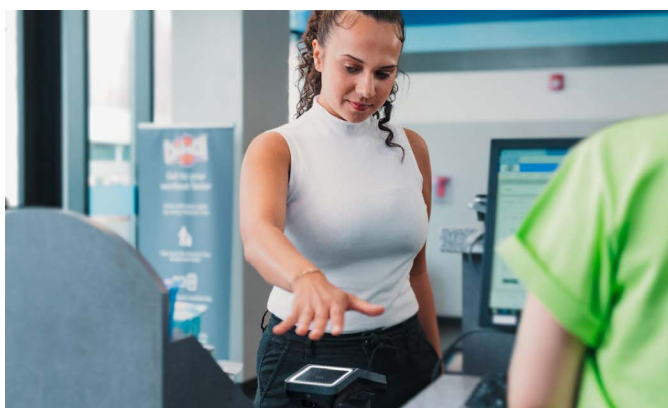


Photo courtesy of Crunch Fitness

Crunch To Expand Recovery & Tech Offerings

Crunch Fitness is one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing gym chains with over 2 million members and 450-plus franchise locations. The HVLP operator opened roughly one club per week in 2023 and is eyeing a similar expansion pace in 2024.

Chequan Lewis, the newly named president of Crunch, identified recovery and tech as two areas of focus for the brand in 2024 and beyond.

"We believe recovery is emerging as a noteworthy trend as more consumers begin to understand its importance for health and longevity - from reducing the risk of injury to enhancing performance and promoting overall well-being," Lewis tells ATN. "For many fitness enthusiasts, recovery will become a fundamental component of their fitness regimen."

Crunch will develop "an even more robust 'Relax & Recovery' program in clubs to meet this emerging need," Lewis adds.

As for tech, Lewis highlighted Crunch's groundbreaking partnership with Amazon, which made it the first gym company to enable Amazon One palm-based entry for its members. Amazon One tech is available at select Crunch locations nationwide.

"Everyone wants a more frictionless experience, so the integration of technology into fitness facilities is likely to become more widespread," Lewis says. "Our Amazon One pilot points forward to likely greater adoption with increased awareness and expansion."

We will look to stay on the cutting edge in reducing friction throughout the member experience.”

As for challenges, Lewis cited inventory as a pressing concern for Crunch as it pursues further expansion. The “No Judgements” gym chain is expecting to open its 500th club soon and is continuing to sign new franchise agreements.

“We are always on the hunt, alongside our franchise partners, for viable locations for new clubs,” Lewis says. “Identifying available retail spaces that fit the size requirements necessary for a Crunch gym, at a reasonable investment level, is a challenge.”

As a relative newcomer to the fitness industry, Lewis maintains that while trends are important, it’s important that fitness and wellness brands stick to the fundamentals.

“

Consumers tend to follow the latest fitness industry trends and fads that they believe will get them the quickest and easiest results. Sometimes, our industry feels deeply reactive to these trends. I think we can better serve people on their fitness journey by sticking to – even if innovating on – the fundamentals of fitness and exercise. We should be aware of trends, but we cannot be captive to them.”



Chequan Lewis
President, Crunch Fitness

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Chuze Fuels Expansion With Acquisitions, Strength Training

With 59 gyms across the country and more slated to open soon, Chuze Fitness has emerged as a new leader in the HVLP gym space.

According to co-founder and CEO Cory Brightwell, Chuze’s expansion has been fueled by well-timed acquisitions, the strategic use of technology and an

ability to adapt to industry trends with innovative in-club offerings.

“Post-COVID, we’ve noticed that people are focusing a lot more on mental well-being, and of course on free weight usage, as opposed to cardio,” Brightwell tells ATN. “To tap into the free weight craze, we’ve developed ‘Lift Labs,’ which are access-controlled areas featuring free weight equipment that is unique to the main gym floor to give our members a more private and less chaotic free weight space to enjoy.”

“

The fitness and wellness space is in better shape this year than last. Last year was still a year of post-COVID recovery, and I think this year is the year of stabilization. I believe the industry is now poised to grow with a new foundation that is stable, and a tailwind of consumer education and focus on mental and physical well-being.”



Cory Brightwell
Co-Founder and CEO, Chuze Fitness

On the mental well-being side, “We’ve also put additional emphasis into connecting mental well-being and physical exercise by leaning into enhancing our mind/body class options such as infrared heated yoga and pilates,” Brightwell says.

Brightwell says that big-box gyms face the challenge of needing to integrate technology to lower operating costs, including labor, while at the same ensuring they don’t lose sight of the need for the human touch.

“Rising operating costs continue to burden most operators, and we’ll all need to find ways to leverage technology and other creative automation opportunities,” he says. “Chuze thrives on human connections, so ensuring that we keep human presence and human interactions present in our gyms, we’ll still need to find a hybrid option in order to stay competitive.”

Overall, Brightwell is bullish on the outlook for fitness and wellness brands in 2024 and beyond.

“The fitness and wellness space is in better shape this year than last,” he says. “Last year was still a year of post-COVID recovery, and I think this year is the year of stabilization. I believe the industry is now poised to grow with a new foundation that is stable, and a tailwind of consumer education and focus on mental and physical well-being.”

SWTHZ Wants To Be 'Global Category Leader' in Hot & Cold Therapy

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of SWTHZ

Americans everywhere are rewriting the definition of “fitness,” and SWTHZ is handing them the pen. Founded in 2019, the chain of infrared sauna and cold plunge studios hitched itself to the recovery and wellness wagon — which continues to pick up speed as a newer way for individuals to improve their health and wellness on top of more traditional concepts such as going to the gym and eating right.

But according to Mike Tan, COO at SWTHZ, the total addressable market and rise in consumer demand is so significant, especially from a worldwide standpoint. SWTHZ aims to close that gap.

“We’re focused on bringing deliberate exposure to heat and cold to the masses,” Tan said. “We know this stuff works. That’s the mission. We want to be the global category leader.”

The Changing Face of Health & Wellness

SWTHZ’s ability to put increased health and wellness in an easy-to-reach spot for individuals lies at the heart of its success thus far — and potentially down the line as people realize there’s more than one way to embark on a health journey. SWTHZ is there, drawing one of those new paths.

“Having been in the health and wellness space for

almost two decades now, what’s crazy to me today, and so inspiring, is that people’s behaviors are really changing to be healthier,” said Tan. “People are looking for longevity, they’re looking to feel better, to do more, but the way that people are looking at it is very different.”

And those people are increasingly seeking options beyond the gym.

“The entry for health and wellness will not always just be the gym,” Tan added. “People default to it, but we see many that start with sauna and cold plunging. All of a sudden they feel better, and are ready for the next step which may be working out. The world needs to be flexible so that a health journey can start with many different things, particularly when science-backed.”

Getting people to realize that going to the gym is not the sole catalyst for a healthier life is objective number one in SWTHZ’s growth plan.

“If you think about the best way to actually get people healthy, many will say the gym,” said Tan. “But the problem is the data doesn’t support the outcome. 20% of Americans have a gym membership and 50% don’t go. The total addressable market for heat & cold exposure is probably 40 to 50% of all Americans, making it an important part of helping folks towards a healthier lifestyle.”



Photo courtesy of SWTHZ

According to Tan, “gyms near me” has typically been the most competitive Google ad word to purchase due to search volume. However, the domestic search volume for “cold plunge” is starting to near “gyms near me.”

Educate & They Will Come

Immersing people in temperature-based forms of recovery and wellness takes more than just marketing. SWTHZ prioritizes enlightening its members on the actual benefits of its services.

“We get people who are less familiar to embrace these modalities by showing them not only that it will feel great, but what’s actually going to happen to their body, mind, and health,” said Tan. “They need to understand the science relative to what they’re trying to achieve if they are recovering from a workout or trying to improve mental health.”

Things only grow from there as SWTHZ relies on word of mouth after the fact. The brand is confident in its product, its ability to convey the benefits and the eagerness of its members to express their appreciation.

“When they leave, they can be, for lack of a better word, part of our ‘cult’ and educate their friends on the benefits,” said Tan. “Education is a big part of what we do and how we invest in our field teams.”

Low Effort & Low Pain

The act of using a sauna or taking a cold plunge are both relatively light lifts compared to traditional fitness regimens, which also works to make the SWTHZ a low-barrier-to-entry modality.

Tan says he thinks of gyms as “high effort and high pain” relative to hot and cold therapy.

“Everything that’s low effort and low pain is really rising to the top,” he says “Think of med spas or recovery. The trend is inevitable.”

Working out in traditional gyms can be intimidating or frankly just too much work for individuals only starting out.

“Getting healthy is really hard,” said Tan, recalling his prior experience scaling Orangetheory Fitness’s largest international market, where he met SWTHZ founder Jamie Weeks. “Back in the Orangetheory days, I would say we were trying to sell a membership to someone for a couple hundred bucks a month. They have to wear tight clothes in front of people they don’t know, do stuff that hurts and drive 15 minutes back and forth. At some point, there are enough people in the world who have purchased a membership who haven’t been going who are like, ‘I’m just not going to do this again. I’m going to look for something different.’”



The entry for health and wellness will not always just be the gym. People default to it, but we see many that start with sauna and cold plunging. All of a sudden they feel better, and are ready for the next step which may be working out. The world needs to be flexible so that a health journey can start with many different things, particularly when science-backed!”



Mike Tan
COO at SWTHZ



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Trends Shaping the \$1.8T Wellness Market

by Courtney Rehfeldt



Photo courtesy of Madison Lavern on Unsplash

Wellness is on everyone's mind, and while related products and services seem to be abundant, some consumers are feeling unsatisfied in specific categories, presenting an enormous opportunity for businesses.

Between technological developments, product innovation and a rise in chronic disease, the wellness industry growth continues to grow. Some medical experts even suggest that the pandemic prompted many consumers to take charge of their health, either by making more mindful choices or taking increased ownership of their overall well-being.

Regardless of what's fueling the industry, here are the seven wellness trends shaping the \$1.8 trillion global wellness market this year and where opportunities loom, according to findings from leading management consulting firm McKinsey & Company, which released its Future of Wellness survey.

Women's Health

According to McKinsey's data, consumers spent the most on items related to menopause and pregnancy in the last year. However, menopause remains an

"overlooked segment," with a meager 5% of start-ups catering to the needs of menopausal customers.

Other products — such as menstrual and intimate care, fertility support, pregnancy and motherhood and even women-focused healthcare facilities — all provide opportunities for companies to expand their offerings and services to meet the needs of women, notes McKinsey.

Longevity

If there is a predicted wellness buzzword for 2024, it's "longevity." The rising adoption of preventive medicine alongside advancements in digital health monitoring and anti-aging products has consumers confident that they can not only survive but thrive.

The blossoming longevity space had nearly 70 percent of U.K. and U.S. consumers purchasing more longevity-supporting products and services in this area in the past year versus prior years, with over 60 percent of consumers revealing it "very" or "extremely" important to purchase items or services that support healthy aging and longevity.



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It's also a sector that has attracted a cross-generation of consumers, with even younger people investing in preventive solutions to beat the clock.

Weight Management

It comes as little surprise that weight management would appear on a wellness trends list, especially with the rise of GLP-1 weight loss drugs.

Although McKinsey notes that exercise is still the leading weight management intervention in the U.S., over 50 percent of consumers consider weight loss drugs an effective intervention. In contrast, consumers in the U.K. and China aren't entirely sold on its promises, with less than 30 percent considering GLP-1s effective.

Despite the soaring popularity of Ozempic and Wegovy, McKinsey acknowledges it's too early to predict how GLP-1s will affect the consumer health and wellness market but notes that companies should continue to monitor the space.

In-Person Fitness

Great news for the fitness industry: roughly 50 percent of U.S. gym-goers report that fitness is a "core part" of their identity, with Gen Z consumers indicating that fitness is a "very high priority," finds McKinsey.

Areas such as in-person fitness classes and personal training are where consumers expect to spend more, according to the report, while maintaining their spending on fitness memberships and apps.

While encouraging news, fitness businesses need to work hard to retain consumers in an area of wide selection and competition. However, by offering a solid facility, convenient locations and hours, and loyalty programs, fitness businesses are more likely to maintain their clients. Building a strong sense of community and offering out-of-the-box experiences, such as retreats or even nutritional coaching and personalized workout plans, can also help retain clients.

Gut Health

Over 80 percent of consumers in the U.S., U.K. and China report that gut health is vital to their wellbeing, with over 50 percent anticipating it will become a higher priority in the next two to three years.

That being said, one-third of U.S. and U.K. consumers and half of Chinese consumers wish there were more products to support their gut health.

At-home microbiome testing and personalized nutrition are two areas where companies can zero in on meeting the needs of gut-health-concerned consumers.

Sexual Health

Chances are high that if you wander the aisle of a local pharmacy or department store, you may spot an increase in sexual-health-supporting products than ever before. According to McKinsey, 87 percent of U.S. consumers report having spent the same or more on sexual health products in the past year than in the year before.

Although such products may have been sold online during the pandemic, retailers have begun to reserve shelf space for in-person purchasing, leading to opportunities for "disruptor brands" to reach new consumers.

Sleep

Catching Zs remains the one area where consumers have the most unmet needs, reveals McKinsey — and few tech companies or brands have yet to introduce a way to improve consumer sleep on a holistic level.




The need for a restful night is the second-highest health and wellness priority for consumers, so the need is great for companies to improve sleep quality with data-backed products.



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Life Fitness Is Leading the Cardio Comeback

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of Life Fitness

Cardio is all about endurance, perhaps now more than ever. The versatile fitness modality is still around as a prevalent exercise option, even with the surging popularity of strength training, although it may be in need of some new life.

Life Fitness is doing its part to push cardio forward with the launch of Symbio, an equipment line that features biomechanics technology, premium design and lighting, and immersive workout and entertainment content.

“At Life Fitness, our goal is to inspire healthier lives through innovative fitness solutions. Symbio reflects this commitment,” said Tracy Barrett, Senior Product Manager. “Symbio sets higher standards for the industry, offering cardio solutions that exceed basic functionality. With new levels of personalization and biomechanics, it brings exercisers and machines together in exciting ways, redefining the landscape of cardio equipment, and setting new benchmarks for engagement and performance.”

The equipment line includes the Symbio Runner™ (treadmill), the Symbio™ Incline Elliptical, the Symbio SwitchCycle™ and the Symbio™ Recumbent Cycle. Each possesses LED lighting accents, an Adaptive Flex Deck and a state-of-the-art console.

Cardio Is Still a Goldmine

Life Fitness did thorough market research and looked carefully at industry trends when launching a cardio line amid the strength training tsunami. The brand acknowledges strength training’s popularity, but also knows an appetite for cardio still exists. Just because one modality goes up in popularity doesn’t mean another must come down.

“We have always been passionate about cardio fitness,” Barrett said. “Observing market trends and a shift in product mix in facilities toward strength and functional areas over cardio, we identified an opportunity to bring new excitement and energy to cardio spaces. While exercisers’ interest in strength training has increased, they are still engaging with cardio on the gym floor.”

Life Fitness even views cardio as a somewhat underrated area of the fitness industry for suppliers amid the strength training hysteria.

“It’s been some time since we’ve seen a significant change in cardio product offerings across the industry,” Barrett added. “Our research showed us that customers and exercisers have a desire for advancements in movement, functionality, and industrial design. It was also clear that they value multi-sensory experiences that extend beyond console features and include innovations in the bases of our cardio products.”

“In developing Symbio, we innovated on the established features that have long defined our

products,” she added. “We enhanced these elements to create a product line that exceeds expectations, aligning with market demands and the preferences of our customers and exercisers.”



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Tracy Barrett
Senior Product Manager, Life Fitness

Entertainment Matters – Whether Fitness or Not

The amenities beyond the machines themselves are oftentimes what takes a piece of cardio equipment to the next level. Life Fitness recognizes this with Symbio, bringing the media that gym-goers usually unwind with on the couch into the gym.

“On-screen entertainment and instruction are essential for enhancing the overall user experience,” said Barrett. “With Symbio, exercisers can enjoy traditional entertainment like TV, Netflix, or YouTube, along with over 500 virtual terrains and on-demand classes.”

On the fitness content side, Life Fitness’ on-demand workout classes are not only available on Symbio, they’re supported by the machines. This helps drive member engagement and retention for fitness facilities

“The Symbio Runner elevates the interactive terrain experience further, syncing surface feel and incline changes with on-screen visuals for a truly immersive workout,” said Barrett. “Exercisers focused on performance improvement can monitor their advanced performance metrics in real-time. This includes tracking metrics such as cadence, ground contact time, left/right balance, and step length, enabling them to stay engaged and informed throughout their workout.”

Life Fitness is simply feeding cardio exercisers what they’re hungry for.

“We also discovered in our research that with

premium cardio equipment, customers expect more than just beautiful design, they want the products to be highly functional as well,” said Barrett. “Our LED Smart Lighting is a perfect example of this.”

The LED Smart Lighting does all the little things someone might appreciate when using a treadmill. This includes highlighting adjustment points, putting out a warning when the running belt is moving without a user detected and indicating a cool down so others in the facility can see when a workout is reaching its end.



Photo courtesy of Life Fitness

Personalization Is Key

Making machines highly adaptable to user preferences was also important for Life Fitness when designing Symbio.

“Personalization is at the core of Symbio’s design, enhancing the workout experience in profound ways,” said Barrett. “The Adaptive Flex Deck, for instance, revolutionizes running by providing five surface firmness options, optimizing comfort and performance. Coupled with advanced performance metrics, users can track their progress with precision.”

The Incline Elliptical, for example, automatically changes according to individual preferences. With its interactive Muscle Map, the equipment allows exercisers to target their muscle engagement and tailor their workouts to specifically attack their personal fitness goals.

Other customizable elements of the Symbio line include the SwitchCycle’s ability to transition between a traditional upright bike and a performance cycle. This allows users to ride while standing if they choose to.

“In our research, we found that many facilities are moving away from group cycling bikes on their main cardio floors, particularly if they don’t align with the overall aesthetic,” noted Barrett. “With out-of-saddle riding, dual-sided pedals, 100 resistance levels, and adjustable handlebars, the Symbio SwitchCycle combines comfort with dynamic performance.”

Symbio is currently available to order globally and will debut in premium clubs, hotels, and facilities this summer.

Whoop, Oura Eye Women's Health, Data Optimization

by Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of shutterstock.com

The wearables space is hotter than ever: consumers can now measure everything from sleep to stress, and, increasingly, make sense of those numbers thanks to personalized recommendations.

Oura and Whoop may be competitors as the most prominent brands in the burgeoning wearables space, but their leaders move in lockstep when it comes to identifying the biggest opportunities and challenges facing the market.

Athletech News spoke with Oura CEO Tom Hale and Whoop founder and CEO Will Ahmed to get their thoughts on where the wearables space is headed and how their brands will help drive that change.

Women's Health Is a Top Priority

Addressing the unique health needs of females has emerged, albeit belatedly, as a key priority among fitness and wellness brands. Oura and Whoop are playing key roles in advancing women's health through data insights.

"Women's health is a critical area of overall health and wellness that remains largely underrepresented, particularly how women's bodies adjust during various stages of their life – menstruation, pre- and postpartum, and perimenopause," Ahmed tells ATN. "Subsequently, females don't receive adequate, science-backed information to support them during such critical times.

Ahmed pointed to Whoop's Menstrual Cycle

Insights feature, which provides training and sleep recommendations based on women's cycles, as an important feature in that regard. In January, Whoop published a study in PLoS One, a peer-reviewed academic journal, which analyzed the physiological data of pregnancies. The study found key trends in maternal heart rate variability (HRV) inversion in singleton pregnancies, insights which could lead to being able to better predict delivery dates for premature and full-term pregnancies.

"Understanding this change in HRV has the potential to save lives, reduce medical costs, and provide more insight to expecting parents," Ahmed says.

Oura has also emerged as a leader in the growing women's health movement. The ring maker has introduced Cycle Insights and Pregnancy Insights features, giving women data-backed insights into their menstrual cycles and during pregnancy, respectively.

Oura has also forged key partnerships with companies including Natural Cycles, Flo, and GI to enhance the accessibility of health information for women.

"These recent achievements represent Oura's commitment to women's health, but they are just the beginning," Hale tells ATN. "As we continue to innovate and expand our offerings, we remain dedicated to providing women with the ultimate body literacy tool to support their health and well-being at every stage of life.

The Great Data Race

As wearable devices like Oura, Whoop, the Apple Watch and others proliferate, so too does the amount of health and wellness data floating in cyberspace. This presents challenges but also opportunities as tech brands seek to make sense of that data to deliver personalized recommendations to their customers.

“One of the biggest challenges is the overwhelming volume of data available and improving how we can make it understandable and actionable for people to integrate the insights in a meaningful way,” Hale says.



Women’s health is a critical area of overall health and wellness that remains largely underrepresented, particularly how women’s bodies adjust during various stages of their life – menstruation, pre- and postpartum, and perimenopause. Subsequently, females don’t receive adequate, science-backed information to support them during such critical times.”



Will Ahmed
Founder and CEO, Whoop

Oura is working tirelessly to make its data more meaningful and actionable for Oura Ring wearers, Hale assures.

“By providing members with accurate and personalized physiological insights through cutting-edge sensor technology and research-backed algorithms, Oura provides context that empowers individuals to make informed lifestyle choices,” he says. “Rather than being just a tracker, Oura aims to be a personal health companion that offers insights and suggestions based on a person’s baselines.”

Ahmed says that as data increases, consumers must have more opportunities to access “substantiated, clinically backed solutions tailored to their needs.”

The Whoop founder also pointed to the prevalence of data privacy concerns, a potential problem that’s been exacerbated by the rise of AI.

“At Whoop, we recognize the importance of offering our members robust, clinically validated support,” Ahmed says. “We leverage cutting-edge performance science data to deliver highly personalized, easily understandable responses tailored to each member’s unique health and fitness journey. By prioritizing accuracy, reliability, and individualized guidance, we aim to address the industry’s need for trustworthy and

effective solutions amidst the abundance of health and wellness data available today.”

A Bright Future for Wearables

Looking ahead, the leaders of Oura and Whoop are excited about where the industry is headed as more consumers look to take charge of their health and wellness.

Hale identified an “increased focus on longevity-focused health management” and the “surging demand for personalized wellness solutions” as key industry trends that bode well for Oura and the entire wearables market.



One of the biggest challenges is the overwhelming volume of data available and improving how we can make it understandable and actionable for people to integrate the insights in a meaningful way.”



Tom Hale
CEO, Oura

Ahmed pointed to Whoop’s recent introductions of its Whoop Coach AI tool, Stress Monitor and Strength Trainer as examples of the company’s commitment to innovation and commitment to making the “best and most personalized performance tool on the market.”

“Over the years, many have DM’d me on social media to share personal stories about how Whoop has changed their lives, which gives me tremendous hope for the consistent innovations that Whoop is able to provide members to better their health,” he shares.

Ahmed is bullish on the future of wearables as technology and research continue to evolve.

“Access to new technology and research has only increased and grown more efficiently through advancements like AI - the sky’s the limit for where the fitness industry can go,” he adds.

Hale is encouraged by consumers’ increased focus on using wearables to uncover personal insights rather than compare themselves to benchmarks.

“We’re seeing more emphasis on recovery, rest, and individuality, rather than pushing to meet goals or numbers that exist for the ‘average,’” he says. “That is a good thing!”



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How Les Mills & Its Gym Partners Are Meeting Fitness Trends

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of Les Mills

Few fitness and wellness organizations keep their ears as close to the ground as Les Mills.

The international fitness brand makes identifying and studying consumer demands a science. At the forefront of those efforts lies its 'Limited Edition Collection' a series of science-backed workout programs built around up-and-coming fitness trends.

"As an organization dedicated to driving the success of clubs, we're always tracking the latest fitness industry developments," said Sean Turner, CEO of Les Mills US. "Limited Edition is changing the game for operators, who can now get their hands on trending workouts that deliver the enjoyment and results that keep members coming back for more."

What's Popular With Gen Z

Les Mills goes through an exhaustive process to gather these findings and deliver results with Limited Edition.

Most recently, the brand conducted the largest-ever study in Gen Z fitness, merging quantitative and

qualitative insights from more than 4,000 people across the globe aged 16 to 26. After that, Les Mills Head of Research Bryce Hastings and his team tested different programs that were informed by the findings. A series of trials and a feedback process then took place.

"Gen Z told us their likes, dislikes and barriers to entry - and we'll use this information going forward to ensure we're creating programs that service clubs with the ability to reach all age groups - especially Gen Z," added Turner. "Nothing is left to chance. We're listening and reacting to our participants' feedback so we can deliver an incomparable workout."

Les Mills views Gen Z as a "must win" demographic for gyms moving forward, hence this point of concentration.

"As the largest generation ever and the next big global spending power, Gen Z are the next big battleground for operators," Turner noted.

Strength Training, Pilates & More

Proof that Les Mills is on the right track with their

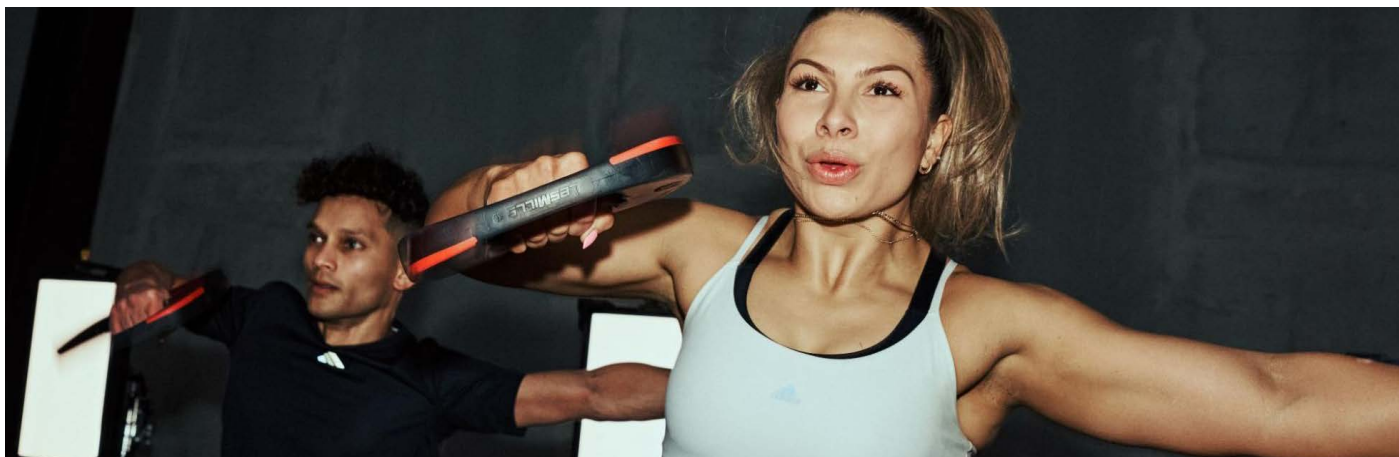


Photo courtesy of Les Mills

research already exists. With strength training's clear increase in popularity the brand brought this to life in the Limited Edition Collection with the launch of LES MILLS STRENGTH DEVELOPMENT™.

The group training program combines heavy compound lifting, sports conditioning and performance training techniques to deliver a one-of-a-kind exercise regime. Smart equipment and a "build as you go" style of lifting make it applicable to those new and familiar with strength training. Coaches are also present to ensure a safe environment and progress in the gym.

"It gives members who may feel intimidated in that space a safe place to master form and technique," explained Turner. "For members already comfortable with strength, there's a chance to push themselves, as well as make new gym buddies to take back to the squat racks."

Even with this commitment to strength training, Les Mills can pivot fast should it need to. Trends can change in a flash, and the Limited Edition Collection stays ready for whatever might pop up next in the fitness space. That flexibility benefits members and operators.

"We can't expect movers to be happy doing the same thing for the rest of their lives, which is why it's crucial to inject variety into their activities," said Turner. "Show them that you know what they like, need, and want. Show you're committed to keeping it fresh and you're on to a winner – why else would they need to look elsewhere?"

The Limited Edition Collection also includes LES MILLS SHAPES™ and LES MILLS FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH™. While FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH also plays off the strength training trend, focusing more on seasoned lifters, SHAPES features elements of Pilates, barre and power yoga. All are trending upward in the fitness sector.

This programming flexibility also plays into Les Mills' targeting of younger gym goers. In its recent report Gen Z Fitness: Cracking the Code, Les Mills found 64% of Gen Z members strongly agree they like to

choose different workouts and discover new ones.

"Choice is a must-have for all age groups," said Turner. "Being able to service that requirement at speed is crucial as operators evolve to meet their members' demands."

All Roads Lead to Increased Engagement

Les Mills partners are welcome to incorporate the Limited Edition Collection and its findings in whatever way works best for them. Doing so only adds to the variety of offerings the brand can present for gym and club operators, which spurs engagement.

"We designed the Limited Edition Collection to support clubs and enable them to offer a timetable that surprises and excites," added Turner. "We're seeing our partners increase engagement by using Limited Edition Collection programs in a variety of ways. Some are running them as 'challenge' based workouts: limited-time offerings that attract new faces into the studio with something they've never tried before, or to reinvigorate tricky timeslots. Others are running them as small group training add-ons to generate secondary revenue. There's ample flexibility built in to ensure that every club can benefit from the programming and support their goals."



Gen Z told us their likes, dislikes and barriers to entry - and we'll use this information going forward to ensure we're creating programs that service clubs with the ability to reach all age groups - especially Gen Z. Nothing is left to chance."



Sean Turner
CEO, Les Mills US

The Ozempic Outlook: GLP-1s & Fitness

by Courtney Rehfeldt



Photo courtesy of Stock-Asso/shutterstock.com

In 2024, it's impossible to discuss the outlook of the fitness and wellness industry without acknowledging the magnitude of weight loss medications such as Ozempic and Wegovy.

Despite the increased prevalence of weight-loss drugs among overweight and obese people in America and around the globe, not everyone is sold on the longevity of GLP-1s. Famed fitness guru Jillian Michaels prefers to endorse good old-fashioned diet and exercise rather than weight loss medication, warning that it's not a feasible long-term solution. Michaels isn't alone — there is a sense of hesitancy

from many fitness industry leaders to fully embrace GLP-1s or even publicly comment on their long-term perspective.

That said, over 70 weight loss drugs are in development, while 764 million people around the world are in the medically-defined obese category. Plus, nearly half of Americans have expressed interest in trying weight loss medication, and early findings suggest that semaglutide may be promising for those who suffer from other addictive behaviors related to alcohol, smoking and even shopping.

The bottom line is that weight loss medication has upended the fitness and wellness industry, with some speculating that GLP-1s may open the door to invite new consumers to the market as overweight and obese people lose weight and feel more comfortable buying a gym membership, attending boutique fitness classes or subscribing to a digital fitness app.

Here is how some top fitness and wellness brands – brick-and-mortar and digital – are responding to the rising use of GLP-1s.

Equinox Creates GLP-1 Programming

Luxury lifestyle and fitness operator Equinox has launched a program specifically geared towards weight-loss medication users and those interested in using them. The move makes Equinox one of the first fitness brands to roll out a GLP-1 program.

Equinox club coach Michael Crandall has explained that while the drugs work well, the famed fitness operator felt like something was missing for clients on medications like Ozempic and Wegovy. GLP-1s have notably raised concerns about decreasing muscle mass, with strength training programs touted as a way to combat that downside.

“Weight loss interventions should always be done with a training program to get the best results,” Crandall said.

Equinox also added a health advisory board consisting of a panel of medical and wellness experts to support its Fitness Training Institute, which is educating Equinox fitness coaches on how to create a workout plan for those experiencing GLP-1 side effects, such as the loss of muscle mass. It also empowers Equinox members to develop better habits for the long haul, which Crandall noted weight loss medication users want.

Life Time Embraces GLP-1 Takers

Luxury lifestyle operator Life Time has also leaned into GLP-1s in a big way with the launch of its Miora Longevity and Performance clinics, a holistic approach to wellness that offers weight loss medications.

Initially launched as a pilot program, the brand is expected to roll out the clinics to its 170-plus locations.

Jeff Zwiefel, Life Time president and chief operating officer, indicated that the push into wellness therapies and GLP-1s seemed like a natural extension for Life Time.

Despite offering weight loss medication, Life Time’s Miora doesn’t consider it just a “hero medication” to

treat obesity. Instead, the brand creates treatment plans for members that support a long-term healthy lifestyle.

The brand says it hasn’t experienced any reduction in membership from the weight loss medication surge, with Life Time founder and CEO calling it a “huge opportunity” for Life Time.

“We have exactly the right customer base in our clubs,” Life Time founder and CEO Bahram Akradi said on a recent earnings call. “This is going to remain a megatrend. It’s going to stay, and it’s not a negative for exercise because you absolutely need to combine the proper weight training and nutrition with these drugs. The exercise business is going to get a win out of it.”

Akradi suggested that weight loss consumers who are spending \$500 to \$1000 a month on drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy will want the proper facilities, professional personal trainers and nutritionists to support their health investment.

“Lifetime is uniquely positioned because, in every market, we have facilities where we can launch Miora Clinics for longevity, for addressing weight loss, peptides, all of that,” he said.



Photo courtesy of Life Time

FitOn, Noom Play (Muscle) Defense

Digital health and fitness platform FitOn is eyeing the GLP-1 space as an opportunity to guard muscle mass, teaming up with Noom Med, a weight loss medication telehealth supplier.

Launching this spring, FitOn’s “Muscle Defense” program will combat muscle mass loss while offering protein-tracking, resistance training, behavior change, and expert guidance to promote a healthier outcome when taking GLP-1s.



“We designed Noom GLP-1 Companion with Muscle Defense to be the adjunct diet and exercise program that addresses key dangers associated with taking GLP-1s such as loss of muscle mass,” Noom CEO Geoff Cook said. “We believe prescribing the drug without such a program carries dangers, given the amount of muscle mass people often lose while taking a GLP-1 and the fact that most people will stop taking the GLP-1 and regain the weight absent of behavior change, which can potentially lead to future conditions like sarcopenic obesity.”

As FitOn co-founder and CEO Lindsay Cook puts it, it’s critical not to leave people “worse off than before they started the medication,” adding that “healthy habits have never mattered more.”

The new Muscle Defense program incorporates FitOn resistance training exercises that combat sarcopenic obesity and help prevent the reduction of important lean muscle mass.

“This partnership with Noom combines FitOn’s best-in-class fitness content with Noom’s expert nutrition tracking and guidance to help people taking GLP-1s build muscle mass and set them up for a more successful long-term weight loss journey,” Cook explained of the program.

BODi Views GLP-1s as Major Opportunity

BODi, the subscription health and fitness system formerly known as Beachbody, has been open in the

last year about presenting a positive mindset into the health and fitness experience, mindful of preventing the “permanent dissatisfaction” that many consumers experience in their health journeys.

BODi views GLP-1 weight loss drugs as a sizable opportunity to welcome new fitness enthusiasts into its health and wellness system.

“With over 145 million American adults categorized as overweight and more than 75 million of those people considered clinically obese, the TAM for BODi is massive,” predicts Mark Goldston, executive chairman of BODi’s board of directors, finding that many consumers who are considerable overweight either face challenges starting an exercise program or are self-conscious about hitting the gym.

As GLP-1 users also need to keep up a healthy nutrition regimen, Goldston sees a major “boon for BODi” in terms of its meal plans and nutritional supplement offerings.

BODi’s vast library of fitness content can also serve to help offset the loss of muscle mass.

“The GLP-1 drugs have been known to have an adverse effect on lean muscle mass, and therefore, the use of programs like those contained in the BODi library will help reduce the risk of losing lean muscle mass and help people maintain and gain strength while getting their weight under control and improving their overall level of fitness,” he said.

How Fitness Brands Can Win on Social Media, With Ekhos

by Athletech Studios

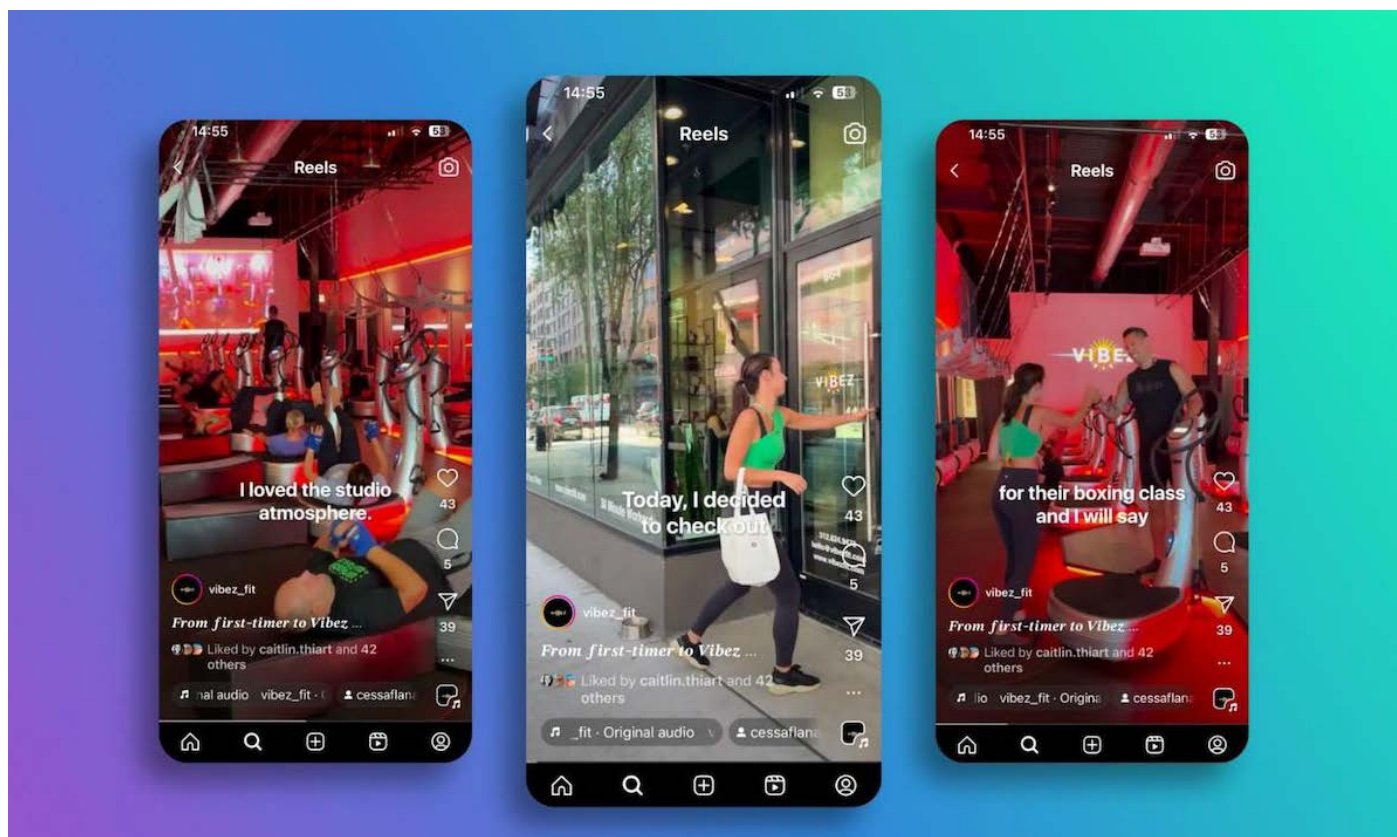


Photo courtesy of Ekhos

An established and appealing online presence is no longer a luxury but a necessity for successful fitness businesses, and social media is king.

While a strong social presence is a must-have, constructing one from the ground up is easier said than done. Ekhos, the full-service digital marketing agency specializing in health and wellness, is eager to help.

“We elevate our partners’ social media presence, using innovative strategies tailored to the health and wellness industry,” said Saskia Topp, Ekhos Founder and Managing Director. “What sets us apart from other digital agencies is our deep understanding of this niche market and our commitment to exploring new products and studios continually. This ensures that we stay ahead of trends and deliver exceptional results for our clients.”

Ekhos already works with fitness brands including equipment maker Power Plate, boutique fitness studios Vibez Fit and Shred415, and CBD brand fourfive. The agency is quickly expanding its client list.

Be Unique – And Consistent

Standing out from the crowd and a steady diet of content are the two most important factors brands need to nail if they hope to create something sustainable in the social landscape. Naturally, Ekhos centers a majority of their management efforts around those pillars.

“Creating an individual voice that resonates with the target audience while standing out in a saturated market can be difficult,” Topp said. “Generating

unique content that captures attention and fosters engagement requires creativity and expertise.”

Ekhos works closely with clients to develop a distinct voice that reflects their specific values. They focus on human-first principles and pair with imaginative storytelling. Cutting-edge data analytics are then used to identify target audiences for brands, ensuring that their messages reach the right people.

“Posting consistently and in a timely fashion to maintain audience interest can be demanding,” Topp noted.

Ekhos plugs that hole with advanced scheduling tools and strategies. Both guarantee timely and consistent posting, keeping client channels active and relevant.

Focus on Building a Community

Fitness brands trying to manage their social strategies on their own often fall into a variety of traps. Of them, mining for clicks rather than trying to cultivate a loyal audience is the most deceptive.

“While immediate engagement can be important, it’s equally crucial for fitness brands to prioritize long-term relationship-building and community engagement on social media,” said Topp. “Instead of solely chasing vanity metrics, we emphasize the importance of building a genuine connection with the audience and fostering meaningful interactions. By focusing on sustainable audience growth and engagement, rather than just immediate clicks, Ekhos helps clients lay the foundation for long-term success and brand loyalty in the fitness industry.”

Ekhos executes that by pushing out content that adds actual value to the lives of a fitness brand’s audience. Examples include informative posts, inspirational stories and interactive challenges.

The Future of Social Media

Even as Ekhos continues to follow these general principles backed by their extensive research, they admit there’s no set-in-stone formula to follow for social media success. The landscape is always changing. Ekhos prides itself on keeping a watchful eye on new client demands and then adapting to deliver them.

“Over the past five years, there has been a noticeable shift in the demands of fitness brands regarding social media management,” said Topp. “One significant trend is the increasing emphasis on authenticity and transparency in brand communication. Fitness brands are now expected to showcase real-life experiences, genuine stories, and transparent interactions with their audience on social media.”

“To meet this demand, we’ve adapted our approach to social media management by prioritizing authentic content creation and fostering genuine connections with the audience,” she explained. “We work closely with our clients to uncover their unique brand stories and values, and then translate them into engaging and relatable content that resonates with their audience.”

Topp also mentioned an increased call for personalized and targeted communication across social channels as a newfound request from clients. With the rise of data-driven marketing tools, brands want in on targeting specific audiences.

“Our team has invested in advanced analytics and audience segmentation capabilities to deliver highly targeted and personalized social media campaigns for our clients,” Topp noted. “By leveraging data insights and audience intelligence, we can create custom-tailored content that speaks directly to the interests, needs, and preferences of different audience segments, driving higher engagement and conversion rates.”

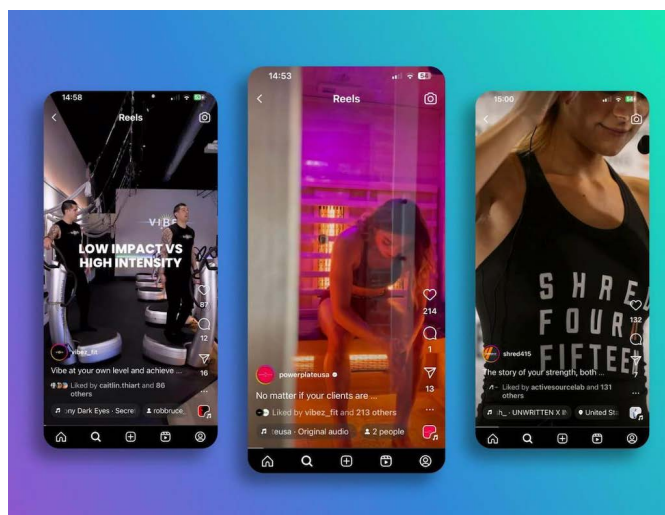


Photo courtesy of Ekhos



While immediate engagement can be important, it’s equally crucial for fitness brands to prioritize long-term relationship-building and community engagement on social media. Instead of solely chasing vanity metrics, we emphasize the importance of building a genuine connection with the audience and fostering meaningful interactions.



Saskia Topp
Founder, Ekhos

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Technogym, Zumba, Aktiv CEOs Embrace Fitness as Medicine

by Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of Technogym

As the fitness and wellness industry fights for more recognition from governments and traditional media, being seen as an effective healthcare option will go a long way.

The leaders of three major fitness brands are calling for the industry to embrace its role as the purveyor of health and wellness solutions rather than just workouts and products.

Technogym Uses AI To Improve Health

Technogym founder and CEO Nerio Alessandri has long championed the view that fitness is medicine, or more precisely, that “Technogym is medicine.”

As fitness and wellness become increasingly intertwined, Alessandri calls on industry operators to “become key players within health.”

“Health is without a doubt the huge emerging trend in the market,” Alessandri tells ATN. “When it comes to health, being able to prescribe a ‘precision training’ program and being able to monitor this over time becomes fundamental.”

Technogym looks to accomplish that with the newly released Technogym Check Up. The AI-powered assessment tool measures physical and cognitive parameters to create “a fully personalized program for every single individual that evolves over time thanks to AI,” Alessandri explains.

Check Up allows users to hyper-personalize their training based on body composition, strength performance, balance, mobility and even cognitive abilities. The data collected is used to calculate a “Wellness Age” for users, which Technogym Coaches can utilize to prescribe effective training plans that adapt over time.

Check Up integrates into the Technogym Ecosystem,

an open platform that clubs and members can use to track their entire fitness, health and wellness journey.

With its tracking and assessment tools, Check Up effectively takes Technogym one step closer to realizing Alessandri's goal of marrying fitness with medicine.

"I'm very positive on the outlook and the opportunity" for the industry, Alessandri shares. "The scientific evidence of the benefits of regular exercise are clear and solid, consumers are more and more willing to spend for health and prevention, and many stakeholders (insurances, companies, public sector) are investing in health-related models. The opportunity is there, but in order to catch it we need to make our businesses and our offers more credible, scientific and trackable through technological innovation."

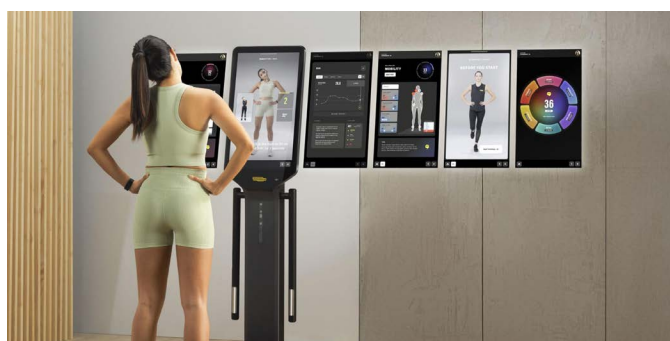


Photo courtesy of Technogym

“

Health is without a doubt the huge emerging trend in the market. When it comes to health, being able to prescribe a 'precision training' program and being able to monitor this over time becomes fundamental."



Nerio Alessandri
Founder and CEO, Technogym

Zumba Champions the Health Benefits of Dance Fitness

Zumba is rightly credited with bringing more people into the fitness fold with a highly engaging take on exercise that feels more like a dance class than a grueling workout. Zumba classes burn tons of calories and help participants shed pounds.

They're also a potent tool for mental health. According to an evidence review recently published by the BMJ, dance not only shows significant promise to help those suffering from depression, it's the most effective form of treatment out of all exercise methods.



Photo courtesy of Zumba

Zumba co-founder and CEO Alberto Perlman notes that exercise's powerful ability to improve mental health is growing in awareness among consumers, which should bode well for the entire fitness and wellness industry.

"The focus on mental health is becoming increasingly important and studies show that dance is the best workout to improve stress management, making Zumba a solution for not only physical upkeep but as a mindfulness practice as well," Perlman tells ATN.

Besides getting people moving, dance seems to foster community better than most, if not all, forms of fitness.

"Fitness communities are an antidote to loneliness," Perlman says. "We know that one of the ways to combat loneliness is group fitness classes."

Fitness is also a powerful tool for general preventive care. As the longevity movement grows, Perlman notes that cardio is an effective tool for increasing one's healthspan.

"Newer science is showing that increasing your aerobic capacity and improving your VO2 Max threshold will help you live longer," he says. "People who are not doing cardio will start to include it in their day-to-day, and we know Zumba is the cardio that people stick to the most."

In the spirit of longevity and healthy aging, Zumba also offers Zumba Gold, a lower-intensity class designed for older adults.

The beneficial effects of dance fitness on mental and physical health could help the fitness industry in its long-standing fight for better treatment on Capitol Hill and from state and local governments.

Perlman laments what he sees as "slow-moving government policies on fitness incentives such as value-based care and tax incentives," and calls for the industry to continue fighting for better legislation.

Overall, the Zumba CEO is encouraged by where he sees the industry headed as more people embrace fitness in all its forms, whether at the gym, at home or on the go.

Perlman says the industry is in “100% better” shape in 2024 than it was in 2023.

“We see it in Zumba classes where participation is 20% higher year-over-year,” he says. “At-home fitness did not replace but only augmented in-person fitness. Hybrid fitness is here to stay.”

“

Newer science is showing that increasing your aerobic capacity and improving your VO2 Max threshold will help you live longer. People who are not doing cardio will start to include it in their day-to-day, and we know Zumba is the cardio that people stick to the most.”



Alberto Perlman
Co-Founder and CEO, Zumba

Aktiv Builds Health Solutions, Not Just Fitness Products

Aktiv Solutions, a commercial gym design and supply company specializing in movement-based training, sees its products as tools to help more people live healthier lives.

Aktiv founder and CEO Bryan Green says “meeting people where they are” on their health and wellness journeys is the biggest challenge facing the industry. This means creating products that can cater to all experience levels instead of just hardcore fitness junkies.

“As an industry, we’ve generally built toward the fitness enthusiast versus the onboarding of others on the basis of health,” Green says. “A practice of well-being is a far more efficient and desirable solution than reactive healthcare. We all know it, but our largest industries are designed to capitalize on sickness, not incentivize around prevention.”

For fitness brands, “getting the message out has been and will be the only way to demonstrate there are far better approaches to reaching longevity naturally,” Green says.

Aktiv is doing its part to bring a greater swath of the population into fitness by creating products that can be used by people of all experience levels, and at facilities of all sizes, whether a big-box gym or hotel fitness center.

“There is no shortage of equipment or products that are designed to support greater health,” Green notes. “The missing component is effective guidance and convenience mechanisms designed to better facilitate the use of the tools we already have.”

Aktiv recently unveiled the Smith 3D Trainer, which innovates on the traditional smith machine by mimicking the free bar path of barbell training with the safety and ease of use of a machine.

“There’s room to refine how consumers are leveling up with their more rapid adoption of strength training modalities,” Green says. “The advent of the Smith 3D Trainer is both tremendous in terms of its timing and its ability to onboard a greater population of less-experienced enthusiasts, female lifters, and those who simply don’t wish to intertwine in the chaos of the weight-dropping or CrossFit-style culture.”

Looking ahead, “there’s never been more opportunity” for fitness and wellness brands, according to Green.

“However you look at it, the demand for wellness-based solutions is nearly insatiable,” he says.



Photo courtesy of Aktiv Solutions

“

As an industry, we’ve generally built toward the fitness enthusiast versus the onboarding of others on the basis of health. A practice of well-being is a far more efficient and desirable solution than reactive healthcare. We all know it, but our largest industries are designed to capitalize on sickness, not incentivize around prevention.”



Bryan Green
Founder and CEO, Aktiv Solutions

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Equipment Outlook: Cardio Reemerges, Connected Fitness Is Top of Mind

by Courtney Rehfeldt



Photo courtesy of Echelon

Athletech News surveys a selection of the industry's top fitness equipment brands to get a sense of what they're focusing on in 2024 and how they aim to serve operators and their members with new machines, software and content.

In 2024, it's clear that manufacturers haven't forgotten about cardio, with major brands releasing new lineups centered around content, performance improvements and luxury features. Equipment providers are also pushing to bring connected fitness inside the four walls of the gym, unveiling large screens complemented by large libraries of fitness and entertainment content and in some cases, gamification elements.

Life Fitness Reinvents Cardio

Life Fitness is taking cardio up a notch in 2024, unveiling Symbio, its ultra-premium cardio line that

offers premium features including content-creation tools.

The new collection includes a Runner (treadmill), Incline Elliptical, SwitchCycle and Recumbent Cycle. Beyond sleek looks, Symbio allows club operators to create on-demand workouts with their own instructors and add video content crafted for new club members.



Photo courtesy of Life Fitness

“(It) gives you the ability as a trainer, instructor, facility owner, operator — to really completely customize the experience,” Life Fitness Global Training and Education Manager Leigh Wierichs explained. “The content doesn’t have to be a class — although it could be an actual on-demand class or something nutrition-related. It could be something explaining the different capabilities of the treadmill; it could be something talking about how to prepare for a 5K. It can be anything that you think would resonate.”

Just as Life Fitness is personalizing the experience for operators, it’s also providing rich insights for users, as seen with its partnership with fit tech brand EGYM on a Smart Cardio project that integrates EGYM’s fitness software with Life Fitness machines. Users receive real-time workout data, performance tracking and personalized workout recommendations --- a highly desired experience in today’s data-forward world.

“Life Fitness is committed to offering our customers the ability to personalize their equipment experience according to their unique needs,” the company’s chief product officer, Dan Wille, said of the partnership with EGYM.



Photo courtesy of Technogym

Technogym Adds AI-Powered Wellness & Longevity Tracking

In 2024, Technogym is all in on its AI-powered fitness ecosystem. The Italian fitness equipment and tech giant has made it a mission to deliver a completely personalized experience for fitness users while increasing ROI for operators.

Using AI, Technogym has pulled back the curtain on users’ training evolution, allowing operators to leverage the findings to boost retention and upsell members based on hyper-individualized workout preferences, such as training typology, preferred days, and average session duration.

The advanced capabilities also extend to Technogym’s smart equipment, which adjusts load, range of motion, speed, posture and sets, as well as its app, which recognizes a user’s profile, past session history, and personal goals.

Even with Technogym’s advanced technology, the brand doesn’t shy away from a hybrid experience. Instead, its ecosystem supports clubs by delivering

facility-produced training content to homes through live streams and on-demand video.

In March, the fitness giant took the wraps off Technogym Check Up, which uses AI to assess physical and cognitive conditions, prescribing the ideal fitness program that adapts over time based on the individual user.

Nerio Alessandri, Technogym founder and CEO, says the latest innovation represents the access point to the entire Technogym ecosystem, offering a “fully personalized program for every single individual that evolves over time thanks to AI.”

Technogym Check Up also dives into longevity, an emerging trend for both fitness operators and users. Going beyond cognitive function, body composition, strength performance, balance and mobility, the equipment can calculate a data-powered “Wellness Age,” a nod to the brand’s “Technogym as Medicine” philosophy.

Not only does the new device empower users, but it also gives operators an edge on the longevity movement, which is expected to be more than just a passing trend.

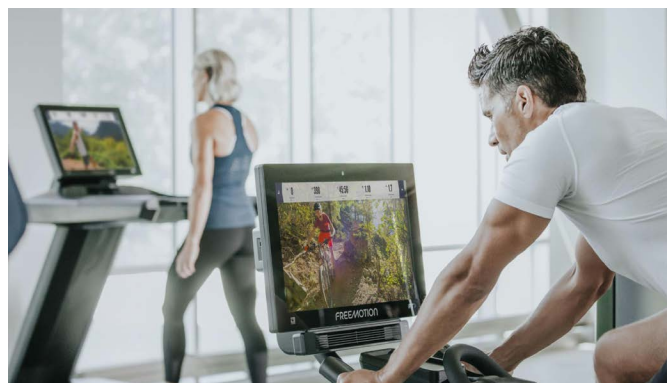


Photo courtesy of Freemotion Fitness

Freemotion Leans Into iFIT Workout Content

The future looks bright for Freemotion Fitness: the equipment maker’s latest innovation, the 22 SERIES cardio line, spans an incline trainer, a REFLEX treadmill with an impact-reducing deck, an elliptical and three bikes, including CoachBike.

True to its name, the machines making up the 22 SERIES tout 22-inch HD touchscreen displays that stream workout content from iFIT, Freemotion’s parent company.

iFIT’s behemoth library of around 17,000 coach-led workouts offers endless options for users to choose from. The 22 SERIES also features auto-adjusting technology so machines can change things like speed, incline and resistance based on the workout happening on screen.

Freemotion believes that following the pandemic, gym members are seeking connected fitness

experiences, so fitness facilities adding 22 SERIES machines will experience an uptick in engagement.

“(Members are) coming in predisposed to iFIT, so being able to provide iFIT content on those 22-inch monitors is a huge benefit for attraction and retention,” said Adam Guier, VP/North America Sales at Freemotion.

For operators, the 22 SERIES might prove to be a game-changer in terms of labor and scheduling, since users can work out while being led by an expert iFIT instructor virtually.

“When I talk to operators, the biggest thing that they’ve had a hard time getting back post-COVID has been instructors, be it an indoor cycling instructor or a trainer on the floor,” Guier said. “We provide you with the content that bridges the gap.”



Photo courtesy of Echelon

Echelon Brings Connected Fitness To Gyms

For Echelon, connected fitness is the name of the game in 2024 and beyond.

The Tennessee-based company is looking to shake up the fitness equipment game by balancing mindful design with immersive content that includes 3D worlds, trainer-led workouts, and even Netflix.

The end goal? Becoming a one-stop-shop for commercial operators with high-quality equipment, entertainment and content.

Armed with a suit of commercial equipment that includes treadmills, ellipticals, bikes, recumbents, stair climbers and rowers, along with strength and cross-training hardware such as the Reflect Fitness Mirror, Strength Pro, Air Bike, Ski Machine Pull and smart digital strength machines, users can embark on a live and on-demand coach-led class, participate in a virtual competition or just workout while watching Hulu.

“Commercial gym owners and operators – whether they are an independent studio or a franchise – are constantly having to prioritize where they spend their resources,” Echelon Founder and CEO Lou Lentine said. “We wanted an offering that allows owners to give members an upgraded, curated and tailored

experience that is more accessible, personalized and motivating.”

Echelon has also considered users’ desires and what the key is to keep them engaged and motivated. Having a variety of options seems to be ideal.

“Consumers want feedback --- and entertainment,” said Mike Rabinovitz, Chief Marketing Officer at Echelon. “They want to watch what they want to watch, whether it’s scenic, whether it’s someone teaching them or they’re streaming, and they also want to have the metrics.”

Echelon is also looking to enter the glute game, with upcoming equipment launching in the commercial space this spring. The equipment maker also sees a strong demand for the treadmill.

“Treadmill sales are exceptionally strong,” Rabinovitz reports, adding that Echelon has unveiled three robust treadmills to capitalize on the trend.



Photo courtesy of Matrix

Matrix Takes Luxury to a New Level

Matrix Fitness, a leading commercial equipment provider under Johnson Health Tech, has launched a stunning five-piece lineup with the Onyx Collection, which encompasses a treadmill, Ascent Trainer, ClimbMill, upright cycle and recumbent cycle. Topping it off is impressive 32” touchscreen consoles and interactive touch controls.

The outlook on fitness means providing an element of luxury and the ability for fitness operators to customize the Onyx machines with selected ambient lighting or branded messages on the screens.

“Every touch point and every element of the Onyx Collection was designed to be exceptional, immersive, and unlike anything else in our portfolio,” said Andrew Kolman, vice president of global product development. “At Matrix, meaningful innovation is at the heart of everything we do. Our partners can expect to see this guiding principle artfully expressed in every design detail.”

A true head turner, Matrix has mastered the art of making equipment look and feel elegant, ideal for

a next-level fitness experience at high-end health clubs or luxury hotels. Rippling textures, an app-based display and an oversized screen console, Onyx commands attention and guarantees engagement as users sprint, interval train, complete fitness tests or run on immersive rolling hills.



Photo courtesy of Precor

Precor Embraces Strength Trends

Precor, the Washington-based fitness manufacturer operating as a subsidiary of Peloton, is embracing strength training trends.

As glute training takes off on TikTok and in gyms around the world, Precor has partnered with Glutebuilder to breathe new life into glute training. Precor and Glutebuilder will launch an all-new line of six patent-pending glute training products that combine the motion design of Glutebuilder's founder and CEO, Arturo García López, with Precor's engineering and manufacturing expertise.

Besides looking good, training the glutes has numerous benefits including hip stabilization and pain prevention in the back and neck.

"We recognize the surging popularity of glute training worldwide, and the innovations within the new Precor Glutebuilder Line offer novel ways to engage and attract new fitness enthusiasts," said Precor CEO Dustin Grosz. "We are delighted to partner with this esteemed brand and leverage Arturo's groundbreaking developments."

Woodway Sees Treadmills & Strength as Complimentary

Known as the Cadillac of treadmills, Woodway is in a class of its own when it comes to performance.

Synonymous with durability, a unique technology that offers less stress on joints and muscles, industry-leading non-motorized 'Curve' treadmills and one machine that can reach speeds of up to 25 mph, Woodway has mastered the art of quality.

A rich insight into treadmill training has positioned Woodway at the top of the category, giving the Wisconsin-based company a distinctive vantage point on the future of cardio.

"Thanks to our lineage in high-performance training as well as the research and medical space, we typically see trends well before they hit the mainstream," said Eric Weber, director of sales and marketing at Woodway.

Although Weber acknowledges that strength training is undoubtedly a popular trend that will likely stay in some form, he predicts it will evolve as members better understand how to incorporate strength into their overall health goals.

"Power and strength have always been at the forefront of athlete training, and thanks to our dominance and relationships in the professional sports/high-performance markets, we have always designed products with this in mind," he said. "As such, all our treadmills have a power component."

Woodway's core motorized products feature a '3n1' drive system, allowing users to use them as traditional treadmills, self-powered treadmills, and in a resisted self-powered mode that enables users to train with power focused on glute, hamstring and core strength while still challenging and improving their cardio conditioning.

"We have recently introduced the RidgeRunner, an extreme incline treadmill with a range from -5 to + 35, adding more variety of strength and endurance requirements on our proven platform," Weber explained. "This treadmill, combined with our 3n1 drive, allows users to power climb up or down extreme elevations in a resisted manual mode, allowing even more glute activation and muscle development in a safe and functional manner."

Woodway also relaunched the CLMBR at IHRSA 2024, a full-body workout that allows fitness enthusiasts to integrate cardio and strength in one workout within a small footprint.

"As the focus on strength and time efficiency continues to rise, this machine is an ideal combination, allowing clubs to use it in a functional space as part of a circuit and on the cardio deck, replacing products that are no longer being used regularly or don't have the upper body aspect to them," Weber said. "We are even seeing clubs use them to supplement a group class area where a spin room or other modality is underutilized."

With cardio still a "bedrock of the (fitness) experience," Weber also notices a focus on higher quality, better variety of cardio equipment.

"We have focused our development to allow greater flexibility on the floor to meet the demands of the members, whether a simple one-touch display with



Photo courtesy of Concept2

full app connectivity, all the way to our full touch screen experience that can be fully customized to be bespoke to the club,” he said.

Concept2 Gamifies Rowing

Concept2 just unveiled a next-gen edition of ErgData that levels up the training experience, allowing users to set up workouts, view custom stats, track progress and participate in daily challenges from their iOS or Android device.

The latest version of ErgData, which holistically connects fitness enthusiasts to Concept2’s rowing, skiing and exercise biking equipment, is information-focused, with the team gradually adding features so users can access the data they desire.

Notably, ErgData’s real-time tracking logs every move made on the equipment it’s associated with, so users can share results or workouts with other users or trainers.

“You can share it with anybody that you want to, be that one person or be that thousands of people,” said Alex Dunne, a member of Concept2’s Technology Team. “If you’re working with a group, to be able to set a training plan, program it and send it out to them so all they have to do is tap a button on their phone to load it in.”

While sharing workout methods and stats can drive engagement, so can two other features: The Real Time Loop and Workout of the Day.

The Loop allows for a gamified element where users can work out on a live, virtual course with other Concept2 users. The Workout of the Day feature keeps things interesting, with a new exercise for users to perform every 24 hours.

“You don’t get into a rut of doing the same thing each day,” Dunne said, adding that Workout of the Day gives people an elected workout task to perform and then discover where they rank. “Over time, they’ll get motivated by seeing a little bit of progression.”

NASM's New CEO Mehul Patel Talks Fitness Industry Trends

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of NASM

Modern-day fitness and wellness is evolving at a rapid pace and those serving and educating fitness professionals will need to be agile to navigate the road ahead. However, understanding this evolution and change is no easy task.

Under the leadership of CEO Mehul Patel, NASM is leveraging industry trends and data to inform their strategy, products, and services to better equip professionals and their clients for success in 2024 and beyond.

NASM is one of the industry's marquee fitness education brands with nearly four decades of experience. With Certified Personal Training at its core, NASM offers an extensive catalog of products and services to serve fitness and wellness professionals throughout their career.

"We are here to partner with all fitness and wellness professionals, throughout their journey, no matter what that looks like," Patel told Athletech News. "Through our certifications and specializations, continuous educational opportunities, and a dynamic community of professionals, we help them achieve their goals."

Patel brings nearly 30 years of experience driving

business performance through strategic growth, operational effectiveness, and corporate development. He has extensive experience in the educational sector as well as a broad background in marketing, operations, and product management.

Fitness Is More Holistic Than Ever

NASM knows today's consumers are taking a more comprehensive approach to what fitness and wellness means.

In a recent study, NASM discovered that 36% of consumers said improving their overall well-being is their top fitness goal. That's a major change; previously weight loss consistently topped the list of motivations for exercise.

"We are finding an increased interest in mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and mobility workouts," Patel said. "This shows a move towards a more well-rounded definition of what it means to be fit and healthy."

As part of the movement towards holistic well-being, there is a shift towards healthier, more sustainable diets. And younger generations are at the forefront

of this trend with 34% of Millennials and 43% of Gen Z prioritizing healthier diets as a key fitness goal this year. This study also showed that healthier eating is a leading reason Gen Zers are considering working with a personal trainer this year.

“It’s not just about the physical stuff anymore, it’s also about mental health, recovery, and nutrition,” said Patel. “Athletes like Tom Brady and LeBron James have been vocal about this, and it makes sense. You need to be mentally strong to perform at your best and stay healthy in the long run.”

To meet that demand, NASM plans to update its Certified Nutrition Coach (CNC) program later this year.

While the current CNC program teaches the science of nutrition, better health through dietary choices, and how to have a better relationship with food, this update further prepares professionals to address modern trends by providing the latest information on innovations in nutrition science.

Sports Participation Picks Up Steam

An additional change to the fitness landscape includes the increased popularity of community-based sports. Current research reports 23% of Americans participated in team sports in 2022. Sports like pickleball, alpine touring, and trail running have seen exponential growth.

In response, NASM revamped its Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES) credential, which sets up fitness professionals to work with athletes. The program focuses on the foundational concepts of exercise physiology, coaching and communication, performance psychology, and sports nutrition.

“It’s designed for everyone - from young athletes just starting out to older folks who want to stay active,” said Patel. “The goal is to create personalized training plans that help people perform better, recover from injuries, and keep enjoying the activities they love for years to come.”

“We want to make this advanced sports science knowledge more accessible,” he added. “By democratizing performance concepts, we help people at any level achieve their peak potential and encourage a lifelong love for physical activity.”

Soft Skills Are a New Necessity

Relationship-based expertise presents an area where professionals can expand their skills. NASM views the ability to connect with clients as important as knowing how to keep them fit and on track with their goals.

“We are seeing a need to address soft skills as essential

for professionals,” said Patel. “The human connection and relationship with the client is key.”

As a result, NASM is launching an update this summer to its Certified Wellness Coach (CWC) program through a new simulation course. This course instructs professionals on how to create lasting change with empathy, sincerity, and confidence in clients through a systematic approach.

“It provides a comprehensive and immersive experience that empowers coaches with confidence, actionable feedback, and the necessary tools to expand their skills,” Patel explained. “This experiential learning approach blends the science of education, the art of conversation, and the power of gaming technology.”

NASM: A Partner on Trend

NASM is an essential partner for fitness professionals seeking to navigate the evolving fitness and wellness landscape and to empower their clients for success. Patel’s leadership and NASM’s commitment to innovation ensure both the organization and the professionals it supports remain at the forefront of the fitness and wellness industry.



It’s not just about the physical stuff anymore, it’s also about mental health, recovery, and nutrition. Athletes like Tom Brady and LeBron James have been vocal about this, and it makes sense. You need to be mentally strong to perform at your best and stay healthy in the long run.”



Mehul Patel
CEO, NASM

A photograph of three people running up a set of concrete stairs. In the foreground, a woman with long brown hair is running towards the camera, wearing a black sports bra and grey leggings. To her right, a man in a black tank top and orange shorts is running. Behind them, another woman in a red sports bra and leggings is running. The background is a light-colored wooden wall.

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Connected Fitness CEOs Are All-In on AI

by Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of Tonal

Connected fitness is at a crossroads: at-home digital fitness tools have never been more popular, but many brands are struggling to rebound from a post-pandemic dip in demand as consumers have settled back into in-person routines.

For Tonal and iFIT, two leaders in the connected fitness space, the answer to this conundrum is increased personalization through artificial intelligence (AI).

Tonal Democratizes Strength Training

Tonal, the popular digital strength training company, is using AI to help users get more out of their workouts with automatic weight adjustment, real-time performance tracking and personalized content recommendations.

“AI is enhancing our fitness experience,” Tonal CEO Krystal Zell tells ATN. “While AI won’t replace personal trainers anytime soon, it will serve as a valuable resource for creating programming and freeing up coaches to focus on the human elements of training that can’t be replicated by a machine.”

By personalizing workouts, AI can motivate people to work out and help them stay committed to a routine. Tonal reports that its customer churn rate is less than 1%, an impressive metric given the notorious fickleness of at-home fitness consumers.

As strength training gains popularity, women and older populations are increasingly gravitating to Tonal, choosing digital weights instead of – or as a supplement to – working out in a gym or studio.

“Our report shows that over 14 billion pounds were lifted by women in 2023, proving that the old myth of ‘bulking’ is being shut down and women are embracing the strength training benefits,” Zell reports. “Against options like yoga, barre, HIIT, and dance cardio classes, women picked strength training 62% of the time.”

Looking ahead, Tonal is planning to improve its member experience by rolling out new updates over the next several months. Those include features that will help members more easily discover workout content they like as well as personalize their experience by setting sub-goals, modality preferences and physical movement limitations.

For connected fitness companies like Tonal looking to become a bigger part of consumers' lives post-pandemic, using AI to create a personalized experience might just do the trick, especially when combined with human coaches on screen.

"Through tailoring each user's experience and having world-class coaches, we want our customers to not just see Tonal as a piece of exercise equipment, but as a partner in your fitness journey because we recognize the importance of fostering a strong sense of community," Zell says.

“

AI is enhancing our fitness experience. While AI won't replace personal trainers anytime soon, it will serve as a valuable resource for creating programming and freeing up coaches to focus on the human elements of training that can't be replicated by a machine."



Krystal Zell
CEO, Tonal

iFIT Will 'Tailor' Your Workouts Using AI

One of the world's largest digital fitness platforms with over 6 million subscribers and thousands of workout videos, iFIT is using AI to stay relevant in a new era of fitness.

"How people exercise has fundamentally changed since the pandemic and we are remaining nimble to match our customers' needs," iFIT CEO Kevin Duffy tells ATN. "The hybrid approach to fitness is a new reality – from the home gym to studios to sports and hobbies – people are no longer compartmentalizing where they break a sweat. We see ourselves as part of this mix."

iFIT recently launched a beta version of its new AI Coach, named "Tailor," which acts as a personal guide for users on their fitness journeys.

"I personally use (Tailor) every day to stay on track with my fitness regimen while testing the product," Duffy shares. "Tailor allows you to easily interact via text message and receive personalized fitness support 24/7. Based on your goals and schedule, Tailor will create a custom fitness plan with the content you want, schedule your workouts, and send reminders to keep you motivated while also adapting to your progress and pushing you forward."

AI is important for personalizing fitness, but it won't replace personal trainers, Duffy says.

"We are creating an expert human panel of fitness, wellness, nutrition and mental health experts to inform our AI Coach to ensure we are meeting our athletes' real needs," he shares. "iFIT will be one of the first fitness and wellness brands to enhance its real trainers with AI support with the debut of our AI Coach this fall."

Duffy is shaking off any notions that connected fitness is in trouble post-COVID. Instead, the iFIT CEO believes the industry is undergoing an evolution and a "great leap forward in technology."

"Undoubtedly, the connected fitness market will be markedly bigger 5 years from now than it is today and iFIT will play a central role in crafting that future," he says. "We remain optimistic about the fitness and wellness industry in 2024 as we see consumers increasingly investing in their longevity, holistic health and hybrid fitness."



Photo courtesy of iFit

“

Undoubtedly, the connected fitness market will be markedly bigger 5 years from now than it is today and iFIT will play a central role in crafting that future. We remain optimistic about the fitness and wellness industry in 2024 as we see consumers increasingly investing in their longevity, holistic health and hybrid fitness."



Kevin Duffy
CEO, iFIT



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VersaClimber Sees Non-Impact Cardio as the Future of Fitness

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of VersaClimber

VersaClimber, the fitness equipment supplier founded in 1981, is focused on moving upward in more ways than one.

Having invented the industry's first-ever climbing machines, the brand naturally has a thing for verticality. Users stand in an upright position, continually pumping their feet and arms on pedals to "climb" while burning an abundance of calories.

But the brand is also committed to ascension from a business standpoint, having already made significant ground.

Since celebrity trainer Jordan Walsh opened the first rhythm-based climbing studio, Rise Nation, in 2015, over 100 climbing studios using VersaClimbers now exist in 18 countries. The equipment's popularity continues to surge due to its unique set of offerings.

The Impact of Non-Impact

Much of VersaClimber's popularity stems from its ability to grant users a non-impact cardio workout experience. This feature makes it more applicable to the masses than something taxing on the body like a treadmill or bike.

"Non-impact workouts are gentler on the joints compared to high-impact exercises like running, and they're more accessible to a wider variety of people, in terms of both age and fitness level," said VersaClimber CRO Jim Siegrist. "Maybe someone has mobility issues, or they're recovering from an injury – they can still get a great workout and burn a ton of calories, all without the pounding on their knee and hip joints."

VersaClimber is not just a piece of equipment but an effective tool to get more people in gyms or studios who are often left hanging by the more common cardio machines that are becoming boring to them.

"This type of training is more sustainable and people can push themselves more," Siegrist said. "It's also a full-body exercise that allows people to be upright, which is great for anyone who's sitting down all day, like most of us are."

It's onward and upward for the brand in terms of product design as well. VersaClimber recently replaced its hydraulic resistance with a patent-pending magnetic resistance that creates an even smoother climbing experience and consistency from machine to machine.

“

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Jim Siegrist
CRO, VersaClimber

Operators Save Space & Time

VersaClimber's non-impact nature is not the only thing that separates it from the pack. The convenience the equipment brings from a storage and timing standpoint also makes it a value-add for any gym operator.

The brand recently added a battery power option to its machines as well as a moveable and stackable base. This allows operators to place the machines essentially anywhere they want.

"We can help any gym or health club convert rooms like yoga or stretching rooms into revenue generating-climbing studios," Siegrist said. "They wheel the VersaClimbers out during peak hours before and after work for climbing classes and then wheel them out of the way and stack them at the back of the room when they're offering yoga classes."

Convenience on the clock comes from the equipment's ability to burn calories at an exponential rate. VersaClimber classes are far shorter than most other group exercise modalities. They typically run from 20-30 minutes because that's all the time it takes to burn the same amount of calories someone would after running 45 to 60 minutes on a treadmill, for example, and they are getting a full-body workout.

"More classes means more revenue for the owners," said Siegrist. "This is a great way for health clubs to monetize spaces in their clubs that are currently not generating extra revenue."

Spreading the Gospel of Climbing

Spreading the news on the benefits of climbing is

VersaClimber's top priority going forward. For all it has accomplished thus far, there are still more mountains to climb.

"The main goal we have is to educate the fitness community on what the new VersaClimber is and to let people who haven't used it before know how to use it," said Siegrist. "A lot of people have mistakenly thought the VersaClimber was only for elite athletes and that's just not accurate. Yes, it's a challenging workout, but you're the motor on it and you make it as easy or as difficult as you want it to be."

To combat this, the brand added a custom health club screen to the built-in tablets on its machines. Those feature "How to Climb" videos explaining the exercise in a more in-depth manner. They also include classes taught by instructors. VersaClimber even uses artificial intelligence (AI) to translate those videos into any language.



Photo courtesy of VersaClimber

But the brand's call for more education extends to operators as well.

"We sat in on a panel discussion at IHRSA and heard some club owners commenting on the fact that their members aren't using the cardio floor the way they have in the past," said Siegrist. "I think it's because people are looking for something new and some people have just taken a beating on their joints after years of running, for example, and they want something different."

"It's really all about getting an audience with decision-makers at the various health clubs, boutique studios, etc., and showing them how we can help," he added. "One of the disadvantages of being around for so long is that people tend to put you in a box and we're working hard to get out of that. We feel very good about the changes we've made and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Now it's about getting the word out."

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LifeFitness

Tech CEOs Talk Trends in Fitness & Wellness

by Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of fizkes/shutterstock.com

As fitness and wellness settles into its new normal post-pandemic, some interesting data points are starting to emerge, most of which are encouraging for the overall health of the industry.

Athletech News spoke with the CEOs of ABC Fitness and Mindbody/ClassPass, two of the largest software firms in fitness and wellness, to pick their brains on the key trends they've seen over the past 12 months, and what they could mean for the industry moving forward.

In-Person Fitness Returns, Especially at Boutiques

It's been said that in-person experiences are surging post-pandemic, and the data backs this up.

"In-person fitness and wellness is exploding again and formats that are hard to replicate at home are on the rise," says Fritz Lanman, CEO of Mindbody and ClassPass.

Lanman noted that, for the first time ever, Pilates was the number one workout on ClassPass in 2023. The popularity of Pilates studios over other fitness modalities is likely due in part to the difficulties of recreating the Reformer experience at home.

"Hot yoga bookings were also popular in 2023 as people can't replicate this form of yoga at home," Lanman added.

Another notable trend is the emergence of what Lanman calls "sports as wellness."

"ClassPass found sports and recreation bookings were up 92% from 2022, and 33% of consumers note that they prioritize fun and play specifically with a goal of supporting their well-being," Lanman adds. "These unique, in-person experiences will continue to bounce back strongly over the next few years."

Consumers Are More Experimental Than Ever

Not only are fitness and wellness consumers returning to in-person experiences, they're eager to try new things.

"Our findings show that the average active consumer has a high 'wellness IQ' and is interested in new modalities," says Bill Davis, CEO of ABC Fitness, citing data from the company's January 2024 Innovation Report.

This was "reinforced by the increase in January new joins in global studios and boutiques, up 22% year-over-year," Davis adds, citing ABC data.

Consumers are increasingly coming to expect more than just fitness from their gym or studio experience.

"We expect to see a new phase of growth in the fitness industry that incorporates nutrition, recovery and mental health as key parts of the average member's fitness journey," Davis shares. "Whether dedicated recovery studios or adding cold plunge facilities to your club, we are seeing the focus shift to overall well-being. The studio, gym or personal trainer is the gateway to more holistic health opportunities for members."

Gyms and studios should also consider being active in philanthropy and community outreach.

“Our data also shows that 58% of active consumers find it important for their fitness club to embrace social causes,” Davis notes.

“

We expect to see a new phase of growth in the fitness industry that incorporates nutrition, recovery and mental health as key parts of the average member’s fitness journey. Whether dedicated recovery studios or adding cold plunge facilities to your club, we are seeing the focus shift to overall well-being. The studio, gym or personal trainer is the gateway to more holistic health opportunities for members.”



Bill Davis
CEO, ABC Fitness

AI Should Be a Priority – Software Can Help

It should come as no surprise that artificial intelligence (AI) is top of mind in 2024. Fitness and wellness brands have begun to experiment with AI in areas like personal training, motivation and program design, but that’s just the beginning.

“We will continue to see the rise of AI in more fitness and wellness experiences,” Lanman predicts. “Personalized fitness is becoming more and more important for consumers as all individuals have different goals and needs, and we are seeing companies and studios incorporate the unique advantages of AI into their programming already – whether that’s through smart hardware or bespoke plans.”

On the business side, fitness and wellness software providers are putting AI to work in creative ways to help gyms acquire, engage and retain members.

Mindbody is adding AI features like ‘Clients at Risk,’ which leverages data to predict when a client is losing their motivation to continue booking, and ‘Big Spenders,’ which uses machine learning to predict early on if a particular customer will become a “big spender” over their lifetime at a studio.

ABC Fitness is leveraging AI in a new number of ways, including using it to help predict member churn.

“While the increased demand for technology options and personalization can seem like a challenge in our industry, our aim at ABC Fitness is to help redefine what a club operator’s growth can look like by helping seamlessly integrate new technologies into their arsenal of tools and decision-making support,” Davis says.

Fitness & Wellness Spending Stays High

Despite a fraught economic climate including high inflation, consumers are still willing to pay for fitness and wellness services.

Household spending on fitness is up 3% compared to January 2023, according to data from ABC Fitness.

“The data also shows that the industry has seen a nearly 90% increase in check-ins since pre-pandemic, demonstrating the increased demand for access to healthy activities and the importance of physical fitness in the average consumer’s life,” Davis adds.

Data from Mindbody and ClassPass tell a similar story.

“Fortunately, we have found wellness spending is still a priority with 64% of consumers saying wellness is more important than other leisure expenses,” Lanman says. However, he notes that brands shouldn’t be lulled into a false sense of security.

“It’s more important than ever for the industry to provide tremendous quality of experience and provide spaces for consumers to want to spend their time and money and maybe put those daily struggles out of their mind for a few hours of the day,” he says.

“

We will continue to see the rise of AI in more fitness and wellness experiences. Personalized fitness is becoming more and more important for consumers as all individuals have different goals and needs, and we are seeing companies and studios incorporate the unique advantages of AI into their programming already – whether that’s through smart hardware or bespoke plans.”



Fritz Lanman
CEO, Mindbody & ClassPass



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¹Civic Science, ²Mindbody Classpass Lookback Report (2022)

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The 'Golden Era' of Wellness Is Here, CEOs Say

by Josh Liberatore

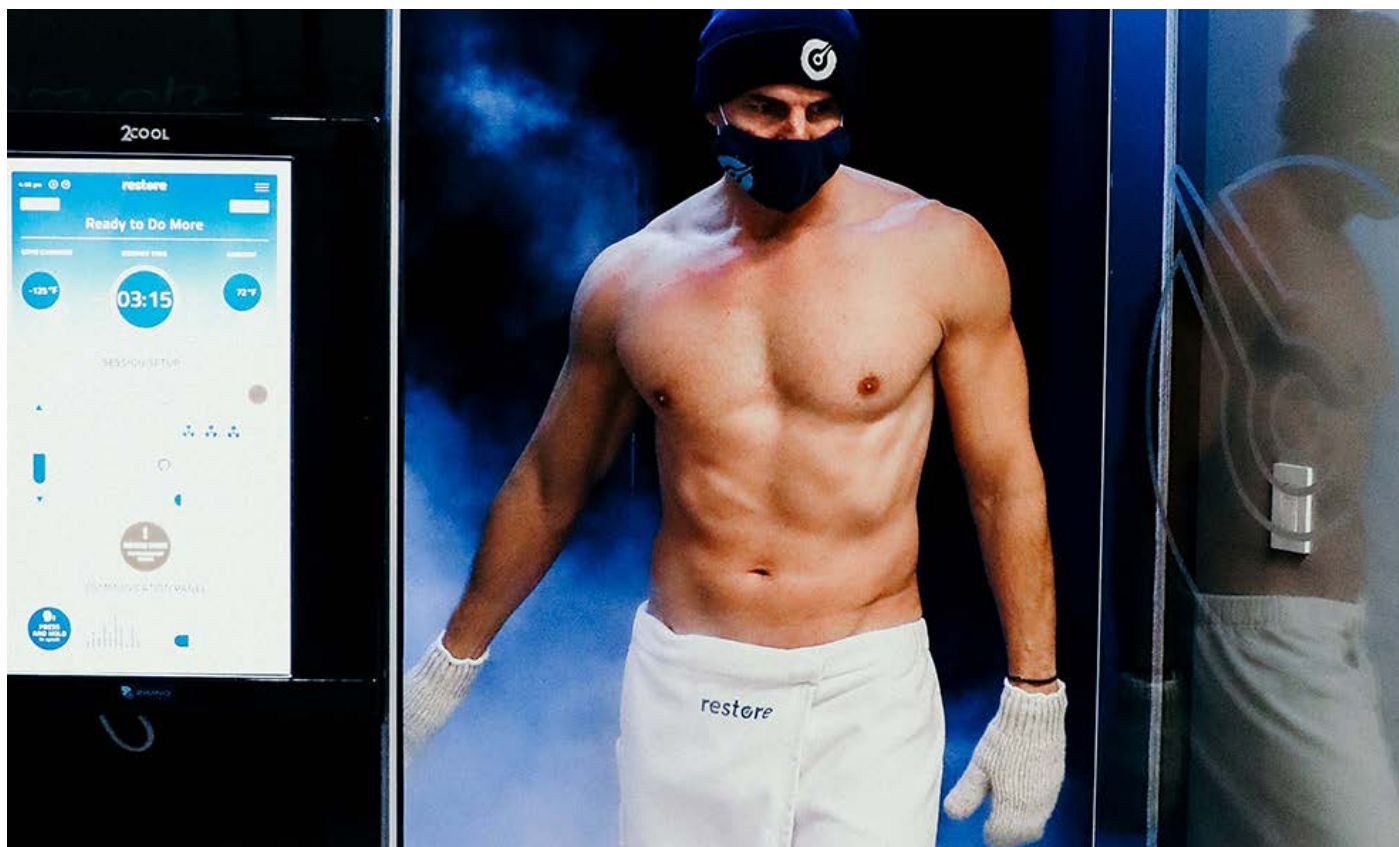


Photo courtesy of Restore Hyper Wellness

Wellness has emerged as big business post-pandemic as consumers from all age groups and demographics feel empowered to take better care of their mental and physical health.

From the rise of wellness centers offering services like cryo, infrared and IV drip therapy to high-tech, at-home recovery tools, it's never been easier for consumers to get healthier.

Still, wellness is a relatively nascent category. With that come growing pains, which recently have been exacerbated by macroeconomic challenges.

Athletech News spoke with three leaders in the burgeoning wellness and recovery space to get their perspectives on where the industry is at in 2024 and where it may be headed amid rapid technological advancements and growing consumer awareness.

Fighting Against America's Sick-Care Model

Restore Hyper Wellness has set the standard when it comes to democratizing access to wellness therapies. In 2023, the wellness franchise opened 64 new locations, giving it 230 centers across the U.S. Restore provided over 2.7 million therapies in the last calendar year alone, helping Americans improve their health with services like cryotherapy, infrared saunas, IV drips and weight management.

Steve Welch, Co-Founder and CEO of Restore, tells ATN that the brand's mission is to help Americans optimize their health before they wind up in the doctor's office or a hospital.

"In America, 83 cents of every dollar gets spent once someone is sick," Welch notes. "At Restore, we

fundamentally believe this equation is upside down. We are helping our members invest in their health while they are healthy in order to allow them to do more of what they love in life. To help our members we are working more closely with them to understand their health goals and build personalized wellness plans to help them achieve these goals.”

While the wellness market is growing as more Americans embrace preventive care, it still has a ways to go. Welch believes education is the key to getting even more people on board with holistic wellness services.

“

In the wellness space there is simply too much BS out there. Trends are being mistaken for therapies that work. We need to bring more evidence and more personalization to the consumer. “



Steve Welch

Co-Founder and CEO, Restore Hyper Wellness

“At Restore, we are focused on data and education,” he says. “Data to show the consumer how investing in their health while healthy will prolong the years they can do more of what they love, and education to help them use this data to make better decisions.”

Data and education are especially important for wellness brands, who have to work extra hard to distance themselves from companies in the space that tout unproven products or make over-the-top marketing claims.

Overall, Welch is bullish on the future of wellness, although he points to some near-term concerns for brands.

“We have seen a huge growth in demand. However, the growth in supply has probably exceeded the growth in demand, putting significant pricing pressures in the market,” he says. This coupled with changes in the regulatory environment is leading to a significant increase in costs.”

“In the wellness space there is simply too much BS out there,” Welch says. “Trends are being mistaken for therapies that work. We need to bring more evidence and more personalization to the consumer. “

**Wellness Will
Keep Growing**

Jim Huether, CEO of wellness tech brand Hyperice, makers of popular at-home recovery products like the Hypervolt massage gun and Normatec compression boots, believes the wellness boom is just getting started. However, he does warn that some brands, particularly startups, may face short-term challenges due to the current economic climate.

“The wellness industry has never been more active, and that’s a good thing and a signal for the overall and continued growth of the vertical,” Huether tells ATN. “Now more than ever, consumers are investing in their fitness, wellness and longevity in a way previous generations did not. This has been spurred by more access to information helping individuals understand the benefits of different modalities, whether it be sleep, recovery, or mobility.”

While demand for wellness and recovery modalities is rising, Huether points to macroeconomic factors that may limit funding for young wellness brands.

“In general, I believe the macro environment has negatively impacted access to capital for young and emerging startups within the wellness space,” he says. “As a result, I expect to see much more consolidation in 2024.”

Huether points to the advancement of wearable technologies and real-time data tracking as important advancements for the wellness industry.

“Being able to correlate the effectiveness of interventions and technologies with outcomes around movement, health and recovery will only improve our ability to develop products and protocols that improve and impact human performance,” Huether says.

“I also love the emergence of recovery and restorative centers, such as Pause, Restore, and (SWTHZ),” he adds. “Hyperice has strategic partnerships with these centers to advance recovery and wellness outcomes.”

“

The wellness industry has never been more active, and that’s a good thing and a signal for the overall and continued growth of the vertical. Now more than ever, consumers are investing in their fitness, wellness and longevity in a way previous generations did not.



Jim Huether

CEO, Hyperice



The 'Golden Era' of Wellness

As wellness brands fight to gain mainstream media attention and more widespread acceptance among consumers, it helps to have an effective PR strategy.

Jon Bier, founder and CEO of Jack Taylor, a leading health and wellness PR firm, says brands should focus on telling a captivating story that shows people the tangible benefits they stand to gain by using a particular product.

"Be specific and tell me why this brand is valuable. Paint the picture and tell me a story," Bier advises. "If I tell someone they will live to be 120, it sounds cool, but what does that actually look like? Tell me I'll dance at my great-grandchildren's wedding, tell me I'll celebrate my 50th wedding anniversary with my partner atop the Eiffel Tower."

Wellness brands should also take care to avoid making marketing claims that are over-the-top or untrue.

"There is a lot of bullshit," Bier says. "Everyone has a voice and opinion, and those loudest are often the most fraudulent. This has always been true, but people pushing one-size-fits-all solutions have large platforms offering things that don't work or won't work for most people."

Overall, Bier is highly bullish on wellness and recovery, which he believes is just entering its golden years.

"The wellness industry is experiencing a golden era, catalyzed by the pandemic which prompted a widespread reevaluation of life priorities," he says. "People are waking up and the movement is growing with no signs of slowing down. Wellness is teaching people how to live their best life and with each day that road is getting smoother. What a time to be alive."



The wellness industry is experiencing a golden era, catalyzed by the pandemic which prompted a widespread reevaluation of life priorities. People are waking up and the movement is growing with no signs of slowing down."



Jon Bier
Founder and CEO, Jack Taylor PR

ClubReady Is the Ultimate Companion for Fitness Brands Looking To Expand

by Athletech Studios

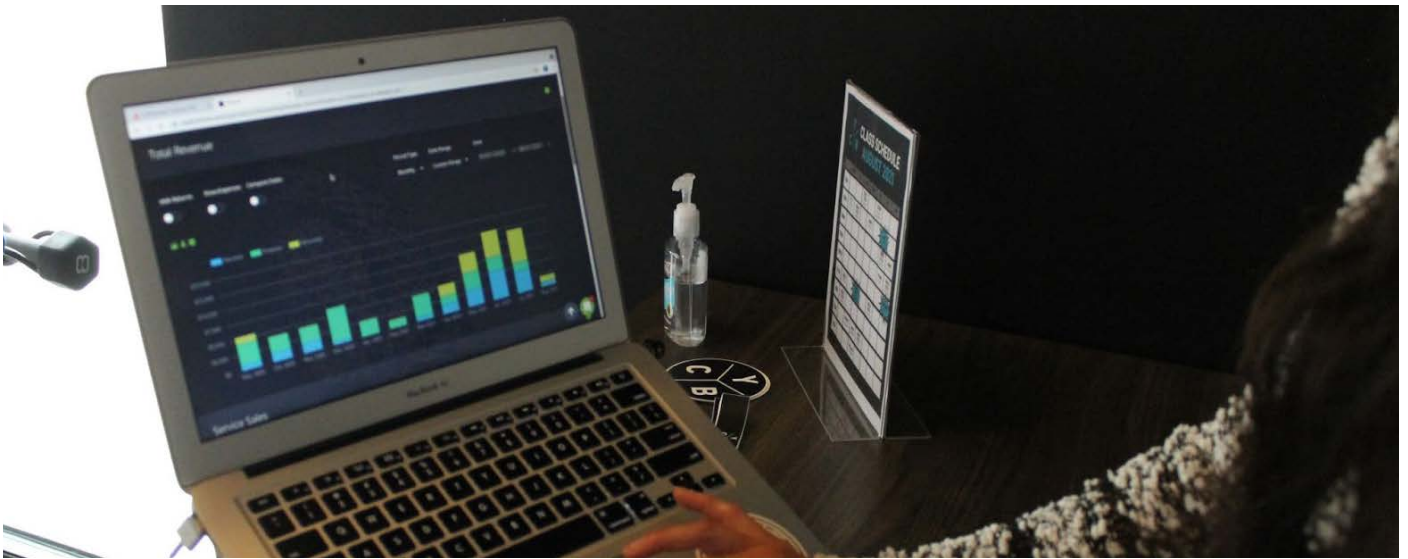


Photo courtesy of ClubReady

There's no "must be this tall to ride" sign outside ClubReady's doors. The web-based fitness management platform, founded in 2009, helps grow all gyms of the future, whether that's as an already established franchise or a boutique studio looking to take off.

For ClubReady, helping fitness brands of all sizes scale is the name of the game.

"At ClubReady, we come equipped with solid experience, knowledge, and know-how with regards to operations, franchising, CRM playbook design, data migration and a variety of other key variables," said Chris Gallo, ClubReady VP of Sales. "We have learned a lot from incredibly sharp clients over the past 15-plus years. At the end of the day, we are best at helping with centralized brand control and scaling. That is our forte and always will be."

Understand Activity at a Deeper Level

ClubReady's "All in One" solution is the brand's most integral tool in assisting clients of all shapes and sizes. With a born-in CRM, all key metrics are captured without having to toggle between different solutions. This allows for key and critical KPI's like LASER

(Leads Appointments Shows Enrollments Referrals) to be tracked and assessed daily.

"LASER allows for the C-level team to drill down to the store level operators with visuals and easy-to-surmise stats that measure the entire customer pipeline from 'interested' to 'show rates' to conversion metrics," explained Gallo. "This goes full circle to assess exactly what 'referral types' are driving numbers."

The report essentially breaks down who's coming into facilities and how they got there, whether from digital marketing, organic website draws, referrals from the mobile app or just plain word of mouth.

"Assessing your marketing performance is something every operator is hyper-focused on, and our (business intelligence) tools continue to improve and evolve to allow this to happen," said Gallo. "This is the perfect example of using ClubReady to effectively assist in decision-making from the HQ to the store level. Everyone is engaged and has a vested interest in these numbers."

Shared Vision From the Start

ClubReady also features an enterprise-level corporate portal that dictates small-to-large brand operations from the top down. This control makes expansions simple and swift, as it ensures consistency across entire studio networks.

“I sincerely believe ClubReady’s hands-on consultative approach to setup and onboarding allows each brand the ability to productize our All-In-One Solution suite for their exact HQ to store level business model; no matter what vertical or business type, corporation or franchise,” said Gallo.

Keeping all aspects of the business on the same page is vital to success and consequently represents a common trap fitness brands without ClubReady often fall into when looking to expand.

“If businesses try to scale before these factors are considered and mastered, it can lead to a murky future that sometimes leads to a wild-west-type environment and the brand may be sacrificed,” said Gallo. You have to have insights into all of the activities and consistency across the board.”

“

Bottom line is, get the best instructors, train them on your processes and make them feel a part of your core philosophy. The members will feel this and will keep coming back. To do that at scale you need to document each step and expectation, and you need a platform that supports your playbook.”



Chris Gallo
VP of Sales, ClubReady

Scaling the Right Way in 2024 – With the End in Mind

Organic growth is a complicated process that rarely occurs on a straight, upward path. Bumps in the road are inevitable for any business, but ClubReady helps clients avoid potholes and major accidents. Gallo listed “in-store programming and experience” as his top priority in that regard.

“Bottom line is, get the best instructors, train them on your processes and make them feel a part of your core philosophy. The members will feel this and will keep coming back,” said Gallo. “To do that at scale you need to document each step and expectation, and you need a platform that supports your playbook. Great marketing cannot fix poorly trained or non-passionate

staff. The coaches drive the business more than anyone.”

Keeping a keen eye on successful businesses helped Gallo come to this realization.

“I look at Club Pilates as a fine example of this,” Gallo continued. “Their best-in-class, consistent, professional in-store coaching experience has driven their incredible expansion maybe more than any other factor in my opinion. I personally admire that type of model. They know what works, they’ve documented it, and they can replicate it anywhere. So I guess I am saying to focus on the inside-out first.”

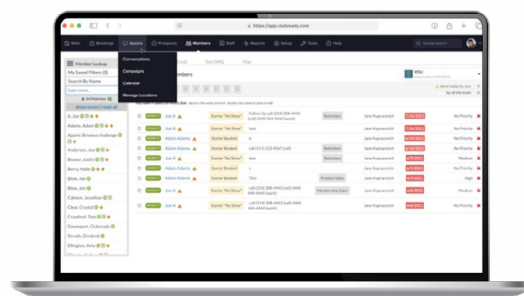


Photo courtesy of ClubReady

With the business processes locked down and critical automations in place, studio operators and staff are free for other activities directly engaging members — establishing a greater sense of community alongside members.

“This is a trait all great brands execute on,” said Gallo. “Events, workshops, speaking engagements, using organic outreach in social media to become the local fitness experts are all examples of this. That’s tough to do if you’re buried in the day-to-day operations and constantly trying to figure out what’s next.”

As 2024 progresses, ClubReady plans to deploy an in-app Badges and Milestones feature for members. This will add an element of gamification to the workout experience for members and a reward system that promises to enhance customer engagement.

ClubReady also looks forward to continuing its partnership with Innovatise, which created the platform’s custom-designed mobile app via MyFitApp.

“I have fallen in love with our partnership with Innovatise and their MyFitApp product,” said Gallo. “It is truly your app. The total app design flexibility combined with all of the communication tools that come with the app, helps make brands using it so much more sticky. The brand controls the back-end of their mobile world and can efficiently communicate with their members utilizing tools like marketing automation and push notifications while also having access to all of the key mobile KPI metrics as it relates to member usage and referrals. Nothing is more an extension of a brand than a company’s mobile app.”

As Fitness Gets Functional, BeaverFit Equipment Shines

by Athletech Studios

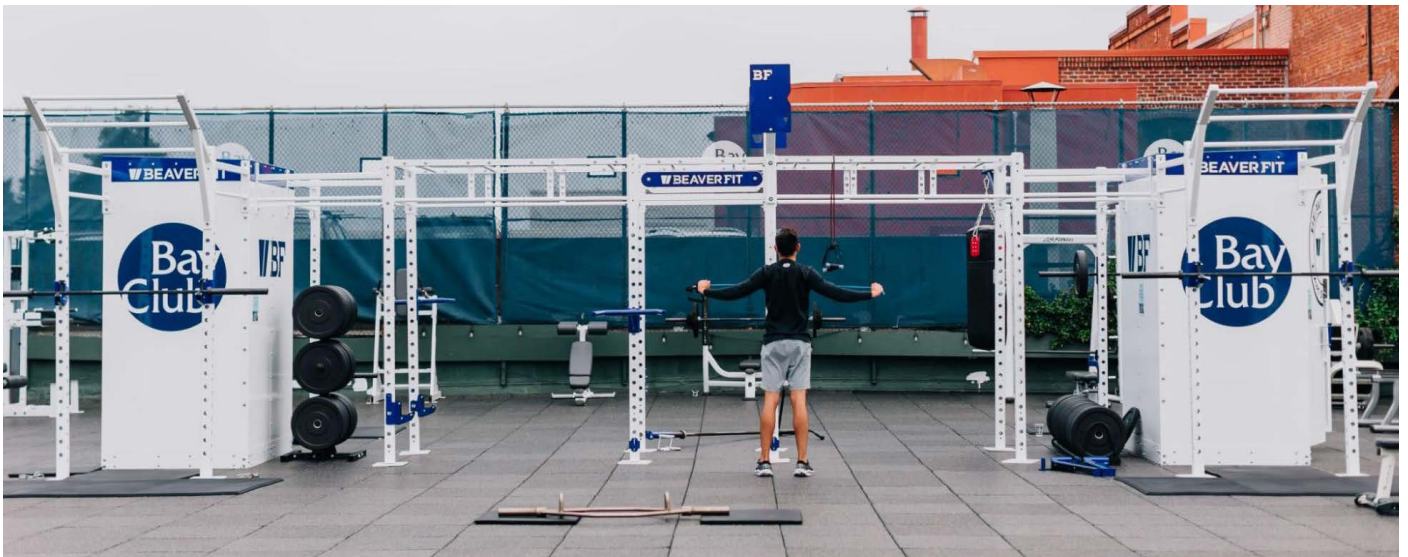


Photo courtesy of BeaverFit

BeaverFit is extraordinarily busy this year developing highly customized fitness solutions for gyms, the military, and just about everyone in between. They're also getting extremely creative when it comes to the spaces they utilize to do so.

Finding ways to engineer training environments that help the customer win is BeaverFit's edict, and they're doing it from roots seeded in fabrication, manufacturing and military service. They're also doing it with American-made products and a gritty, can-do attitude.

Now the largest supplier of fitness equipment to the U.S. Armed Forces, BeaverFit North America launched in 2014.

As time went on, a natural pull to enter new markets and environments occurred.

Entering the Commercial Fitness Market

"With the focus on military fitness, BeaverFit did not think of itself as a commercial business, but as the company and products developed, interest from the commercial space did too, so we grew the business and now thrive in this sector," says Nick Vay, VP of Commercial Sales, BeaverFit.

BeaverFit cut its teeth in outdoor fitness and has the lion's share of the business there, but again, over time, a new interest surfaced from the marketplace.

"Our customers who loved our outdoor solutions began asking us to bring what we do indoors and when a customer asks for something, we have a hard time saying no," Vay says with a smile. "So here we are."

Where they are is at the top of the market, creating highly tailored indoor, outdoor and mobile environments for gyms, boutique fitness studios, universities, first responders, multi-family housing and hotels.

Maximizing Space by Getting 'Dam Creative'

One of the biggest challenges that operators face is not having enough real estate, especially now that functional training is exploding.

Vay says BeaverFit systems are inherently designed to maximize space - and where they identify usable space is a big part of the equation.

"Operators typically think expansion means construction, which translates to big expenditures, but

we look at things through a different lens,” notes Vay. “We are turning rooftops, terraces, parking lots, old tennis courts, unused basketball courts and more into state-of-the-art training environments because our products are designed to let us do so.”

Vay says BeaverFit’s “made-to-order” approach helps customers completely reimagine their spaces.

“We can reverse engineer any environment to meet our customer’s needs and that adds massive value,” he notes.

BeaverFit has also gone mobile with three distinct products.

“We’ve put our outdoor solutions on wheels and it’s been a game-changer for colleges and universities, and also for first responders,” says Vay. “These sectors have challenges gaining access to training, so we are taking training to them.”



Photo courtesy of BeaverFit

Doing the Hard Things

Another pitfall operators can fall into is looking for a quick fix. To that, Vay says that doing the easiest thing is not always the best solution.

“We see facilities take indoor products outside all the time, and weather always wins,” explains Vay. “A well-designed outdoor training space with products and storage specifically made for the elements will last longer, offer better training outcomes and facilitate a better member experience – every time.”

Another BeaverFit edict is producing everything in the States, which Vay says at times is one of those “hard things.”

“It might be easier to source things overseas, but for us, it comes down to quality and pride,” he says. “We are the only manufacturer who produces soup to nuts in America.”

BeaverFit products are also all fully galvanized and UV-protected.

“Galvanizing steel is a messy process, but we take the extra steps to ensure quality and it’s where we end up winning,” says Vay.

Going Above & Beyond for Customers

Vay notes that BeaverFit builds all products beyond spec, meaning they’re designed to exceed minimum quality standards instead of just meeting them.

“We are the only manufacturer creating outdoor products using the thickest, strongest, most durable materials and manufacturing processes,” he says.

This custom approach not only encompasses engineering and design, it extends to crafting fully branded products that feature customer logos and colors.

“We can color and powder coat products in-house, so we can deliver customer-branded products in a very timely manner,” says Vay.

The Dam Strong Team

Veterans make up 75% of the BeaverFit team, and the brand’s culture is rooted there.

“Our founders support the team making decisions because it’s the right thing to do, not the easiest or the least expensive or the fastest,” says Vay.

He says BeaverFit is an operations, logistics and engineering-heavy company.

“The focus is producing and selling great products for all kinds of different spaces, and we win business because of the trust our customers have in that,” affirms Vay.



Operators typically think expansion means construction, which translates to big expenditures, but we look at things through a different lens. We are turning rooftops, terraces, parking lots, old tennis courts, unused basketball courts and more into state-of-the-art training environments because our products are designed to let us do so.”



Nick Vay
VP of Commercial Sales, BeaverFit

Feed.fm Matches Music to an Evolving Fitness Journey

by Athletech Studios

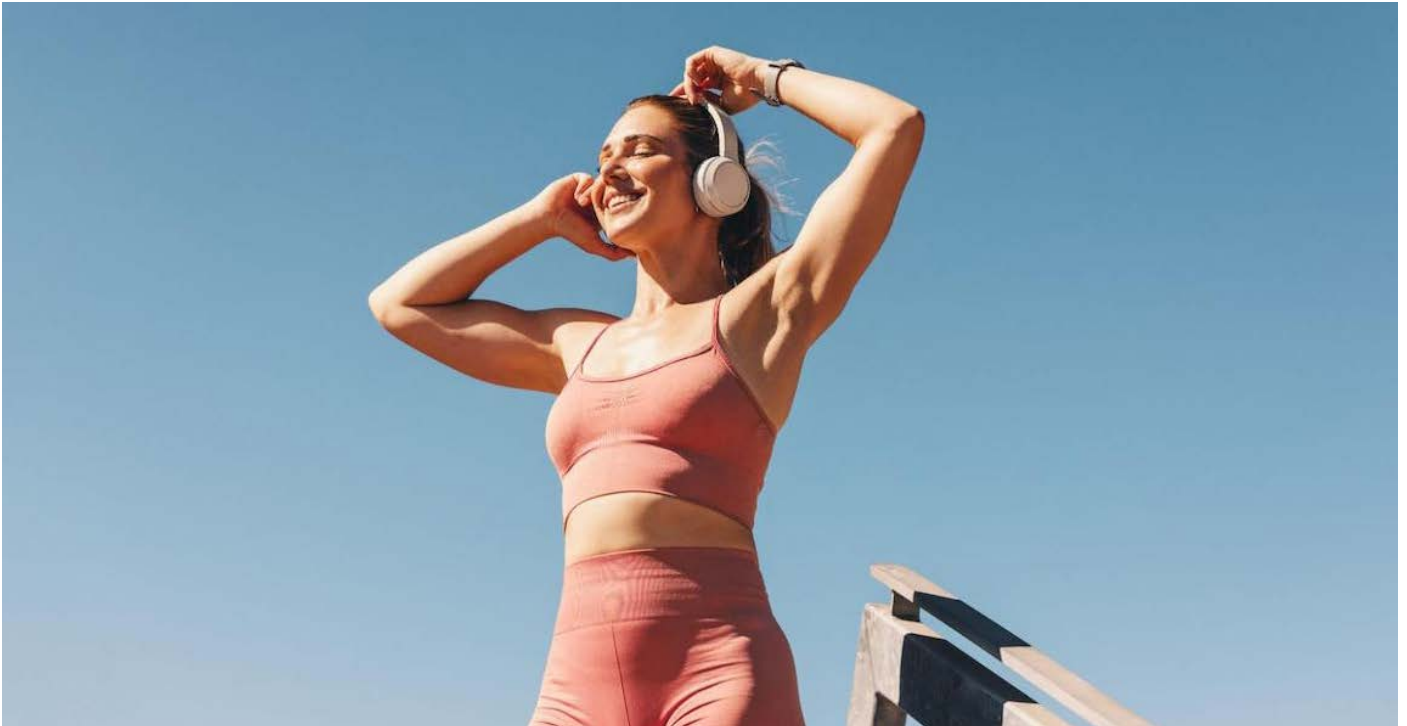


Photo courtesy of Feed.fm

In the sweat-soaked sanctuaries of modern exercise — from the humming gyms to the solitary home workout — music is as much a fixture as the equipment itself. Against this backdrop, Feed.fm, a California-based company, orchestrates the symbiosis between rhythm and workout, providing a bespoke soundtrack to the fitness industry’s evolving narrative.

Recently recognized by Fast Company as one of 2024’s Most Innovative Music Companies, Feed.fm offers a comprehensive platform for music licensing, curation, and integration through its proprietary Unified Music System (UMS). This system offers a unique blend of pre-cleared tracks—from chart-topping hits to wellness-oriented tunes—combined with sophisticated data-driven curation techniques designed to tailor music experiences to individual preferences.

The ability to stream precisely the right music to the right audience at the right moment has proven to boost user engagement and retention for a variety of clients, notably within the health and fitness sector. Furthermore, Feed.fm’s UMS ensures that all songs

are streamed in compliance with global licensing standards, accompanied by automated reporting and full indemnification, thus relieving brands of the complex legalities often associated with music licensing.

Harnessing the Power of Music Through Personalized Curation

At the heart of Feed.fm’s success is its innovative approach to music curation. Curating the perfect workout soundtrack isn’t just about understanding beats per minute or including the latest hot release. It’s a delicate balance of science, technology, data, and human insight.

The music tech company operates from a deep-seated belief in the transformative power of music—a belief championed by the company’s President, COO, and co-founder, Lauren Pufpaf. Drawing on the groundbreaking research of Costas Karageorghis, Professor of Sport & Exercise Psychology at Brunel University London, Pufpaf underscores music’s

capacity to enhance physical performance, terming it a “legal performance-enhancing drug.”

“But not all music is equal when it comes to the impact on your workout, which is why curation is such an important part of our offering,” Pufpaf noted.



While algorithms and recommendation engines play a part in curation, Feed.fm also relies heavily on user feedback to curate its clients’ music. In doing so, the brand considers the following four steps:

- Putting the customer first
- Mixing familiarity and discovery
- Selecting music without personal bias by drawing from various styles and eras
- Using the data to update and optimize the music continually

That mix of tech and human involvement ensures that mixes stay personal and fresh.

Soundtracks That Support the Full Spectrum of Health & Wellness

“More brands are trying to fulfill the health and wellness needs of the whole person—not just supporting their workouts,” Pufpaf said. “As these companies expand their offerings to be more holistic, it’s important that we continue to support them with high-quality soundtracks that achieve the desired end state.

As the fitness industry evolves towards a broader approach to wellness, the company has expanded its offerings to include soundscapes designed for recovery, focus, and relaxation. These are carefully crafted to support the full spectrum of health and wellness needs, backed by the latest scientific research on music’s benefits.

“There is an increasing amount of documentation about music’s many emotional and physiological benefits,” Pufpaf added. “All of the wellness tracks we

deliver to our business partners directly anchor into this science. We understand how musical elements like melody and rhythm affect mood, and use specialized curation parameters to drive the intended fitness, health, and wellness outcomes.”

Feed Originals: Redefining the Sound of Inspiration

2024 marks a new chapter for Feed.fm with the introduction of Feed Originals, a groundbreaking music catalog explicitly created to address the health and wellness industry’s specific content and music licensing needs.

“Health and wellness brands struggle to find the right music in large, royalty-free catalogs that don’t specialize in functional music,” Pufpaf noted. “Companies wrestle with multiple music solutions, and global music compliance is complicated. We’re in a unique position to know what works in these applications, have the experts on our team to be able to commission and curate the catalog, and can get quick user feedback on the music.”

Feed.fm worked with Dr. Daniel Bowling, an instructor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the Stanford School of Medicine, and Professor Karageorghis to create the musical parameters that make Feed Originals possible. They assembled a roster of award-winning producers and composers to create this unparalleled collection of functional music designed specifically for fitness, sports, health, and wellness.

By interweaving the science with their expertise in music, Feed.fm is not just curating soundtracks, it’s creating better tools to help health and wellness brands inspire the world to move, to sweat, to recover — and ultimately, to thrive.



There is an increasing amount of documentation about music’s many emotional and physiological benefits. All of the wellness tracks we deliver to our business partners directly anchor into this science. We understand how musical elements like melody and rhythm affect mood, and use specialized curation parameters to drive the intended fitness, health, and wellness outcomes.”



Lauren Pufpaf
Co-Founder, President & COO, Feed.fm

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