

The Business of Prevention, Recovery & Longevity



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EDITORIAL

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A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white tank top and black shorts, is performing a yoga pose on a grey mat. She is on a concrete ledge overlooking a body of water. Her right arm is extended upwards, and her left hand is on the mat. She is looking upwards and to the right.

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.

athletechnews.com



A Letter From Our Editor

For Athletech's second-ever Wellness Report, we take a deep dive into three vital pillars of modern wellness: Prevention, Recovery and Longevity. We identify, profile and analyze some of the biggest brands driving the \$5.6 trillion global economy to new heights, and speak with the executives, founders and medical professionals driving change.

From sauna and cold plunge studios giving consumers a new way to relax and recharge to manufacturers bringing new-age products to the masses to traditional fitness companies pushing into the world of wellness, this report will cover the most influential movements of the modern wellness landscape. We also speak with doctors, nutritionists and entrepreneurs to get a better understanding of the science behind longevity and the increasingly interwoven nature of healthcare, food and fitness.

As wellness increasingly pervades modern society – especially the business of fitness – we hope this report leaves you with a better understanding of how our industry is evolving to meet the needs of today's consumers based on the latest scientific, medical and technological advancements.

Enjoy the content,
Josh Liberatore

The Gym as a Clinic: Fitness Facilities Embrace Health & Longevity

by Courtney Rehfeldt

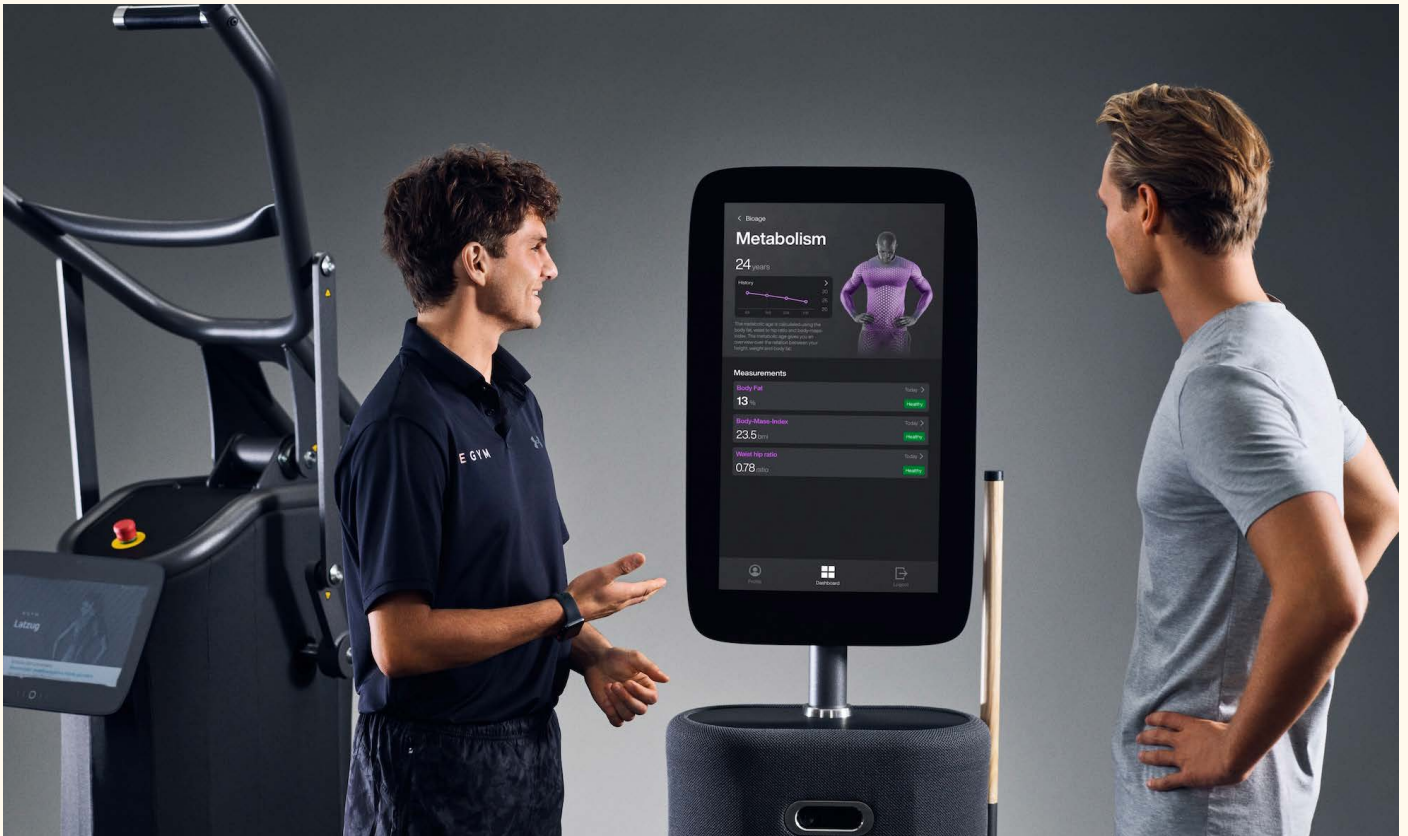


Photo courtesy of Mystic River Cold Tubs

The growing interest in longevity, combined with the failures of the current American healthcare system, has created space for gyms and wellness facilities to meet the needs of disenchanted patients (70% of whom believe the healthcare system fails to meet their needs in at least one way, according to Harris Poll data) and wellness seekers looking to live life to the fullest.

Barriers to healthcare — such as insufficient insurance coverage, staffing shortages and long waits for appointments — have thrust fitness facilities into the spotlight as an accessible solution to preventative health and wellness.

With innovations like longevity-centered memberships, high-tech health tools, the embracing of recovery zones in high-value, low-priced gyms and smart gym equipment that delivers a customized and movement-based prescription, the fitness industry is quickly transforming into a viable and valuable supplement to traditional healthcare.

Here is what some of those at the forefront of fitness are doing in the name of health and longevity.

Longevity-Centered Memberships & Programming

Unsurprisingly, luxury lifestyle and fitness brand Equinox is among the leaders in the growing longevity space, as seen with its new Optimize by Equinox program, a membership program that integrates biomarker testing from Function Health with a personalized health regimen. Each Optimize member is assigned a dedicated team of health and wellness experts covering fitness, nutrition, sleep and massage.

The celeb-loved Equinox has made no secret of its intentions to tap into the health landscape, even adding a Health Advisory Board of top medical and wellness experts and academics to inform its programming for 2024 and beyond.

“We really are a way of living brand more than we are a fitness brand,” Klim said, noting Equinox’s four pillars — movement, nutrition, regeneration and community,” said Julia Klim, vice president of strategic partnerships and business development at Equinox, “We’re innovating to getting closer to healthcare and doing more personalization.”

Fitness SF, a group of eight health clubs in the Bay Area, is also breaking ground in longevity memberships. The fitness operator is working with health tech startup InsideTracker to roll out biomarker testing as part of a “reimagined membership” that includes a one-time DNA analysis (for baseline measurement purposes) and biannual blood biomarker testing to track progress. The results are intended to guide Fitness SF’s training services, hyper-personalizing the experience for its members.

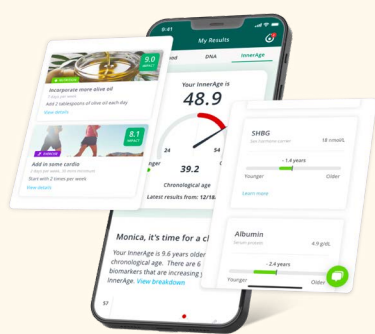


Photo courtesy of InsideTracker

“Our dedication to an emerging future is shown through our commitment to personalized diagnostics that produce significant results,” Fitness SF president Zsolt Jackovics said.

24 Hour Fitness is taking a different approach, launching new fitness formats in partnership with SH1FT Fitness —Modus Move and Modus Mobility—that are focused on recovery training and longevity.

Both programs offer members a “prehab” approach to stability and neuromuscular activation (Move) and active recovery and range of motion (Mobility), delivered within a small group setting.

“These classes have been meticulously designed around the latest scientific research to deliver real change to our members,” said Mike Heim, head of programming and education for 24 Hour Fitness. “Longevity training or ‘fitness for life,’ is an area that is far too underserved in group exercise - but it’s incredibly important to us at 24 Hour Fitness. Having both of these programs helps our members get the sort of fitness benefits they can enjoy today and for the rest of their lives.”

Body Scanning & Personalized Health Tech

Australian tech company Evolt exists at a pivotal time when consumers are desiring a true “behind the scenes” look at their health and weight loss medication promises to be a transformative measure.

“

We really are a way of living brand more than we are a fitness brand. We’re innovating to get closer to healthcare and doing more personalization.”



Julia Klim
VP/Strategic Partnerships & Business Development, Equinox

Evolt uses advanced body scanning technology to deliver a comprehensive view of an individual’s body composition, with the ability to distinguish between muscle and fat. The brand delivers that data on an app so users can track progress.

“The Evolt 360 bridges the gap between health aspirations and tangible results, transforming data into actionable strategies that enhance long-term engagement and success in wellness,” Evolt co-founder and CEO Ed Zouroudis said of the model, adding that it’s ideal for gyms looking to increase membership numbers.

Evolt also offers individualized macronutrient profiles so members can understand the protein, carbs and fat they require on a daily basis — particularly important for those using GLP-1 medications.

Seca TRU, also committed to giving consumers a clear picture of their health, offers a full-body test with its Body Composition Solution, a system that analyzes health and wellness using key metrics while boosting engagement for gyms and fitness facilities and sparking motivation for members.

The Seca TRU Body Composition Solution takes into account a user’s age, gender and ethnicity while assessing muscle mass, fat mass, energy expenditure and recovery levels.

“Traditional metrics like weight do not fully capture the internal changes occurring in their bodies,” Seca executive vice president of Sales and Marketing Duane Jones explained. “The TRU Body Composition Solution provides a more comprehensive view by setting baselines, which then allows gym goes to establish goals that more accurately reflect their overall health status.”

InBody, a pioneer in medical body scanning with machines found at countless facilities, including Dr. Frank Lipman’s well-known clinic in New York City and Fitness SF gyms, has made its state-of-the-art body composition devices available to wellness facilities of all sizes with a leasing program.

Not only does the leasing program help fitness and wellness-related businesses attract and retain members with the latest devices, it also helps users receive comprehensive insights into their muscle and fat distribution, hydration, cellular health, water retention levels and more.

Photo courtesy of Evolt



“This program makes technological obsolescence itself obsolete,” said InBody’s vice president of sales Daniel Park. “Instead of buying a product that will eventually go out of date, you pay for a service that includes ongoing maintenance and get new upgrades as needed.”

In yet another endeavor to empower consumers with rich health insights, BellSant turns a smartphone into a personal health advisor, with users undergoing blood, physical and mental tests every three to six months. The digital wellness platform also tracks biological age while providing feedback on exercise, nutrition and daily habits.

“The tools most people are using today are very piecemeal, a wearable device trying to tell you it can score your health based on an optical sensor on your wrist, a CGM telling you glucose spikes should be your obsession, or a supplement telling you that they’ve solved the root cause of aging,” BellSant co-founder and head of product Rick Bowman said. “We create a deeper way to track health regularly.”

“We avoided day-to-day recovery scores to focus on your long-term health and wellbeing,” Bowman added. “By measuring your actual body and your functional capabilities, we give you a true sense over time of how your body and mind are evolving and how you can prioritize where you intervene.”

HVLP Gyms Embrace Recovery

High-value, low-price (HVLP) fitness operators may be budget-friendly, but they sure aren’t skimping on recovery and relaxation offerings for their members.

Crunch Fitness is not only rapidly growing its footprint but is also steadily focused on recovery, with plans

to build upon its “Relax & Recovery” offerings. The “No Judgments” fitness franchise currently offers HydroMassage, saunas and steam rooms at select locations.

“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,” Crunch president Chequan Lewis said. “For many fitness enthusiasts, recovery will become a fundamental component of their fitness regimen.”

Planet Fitness, the current leader in the HVLP space with almost 20 million members, is also enhancing its recovery offerings. Currently, the PF Black Card membership includes recovery amenities like access to massage chairs and HydroMassage loungers from WellnessSpace Brands. Additionally, some Planet Fitness locations also offer CryoLounge+ chairs and RelaxSpace Wellness Pods, also from WellnessSpace Brands, to help members recover and relax before or after a workout.

Chuze Fitness is also keen on recovery, offering its members access to HydroMassage, infrared and traditional saunas, CryoLounge chairs and RelaxSpace Wellness Pods at select locations.

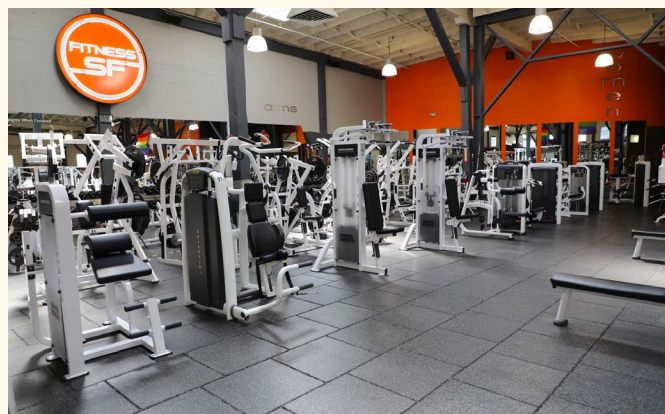
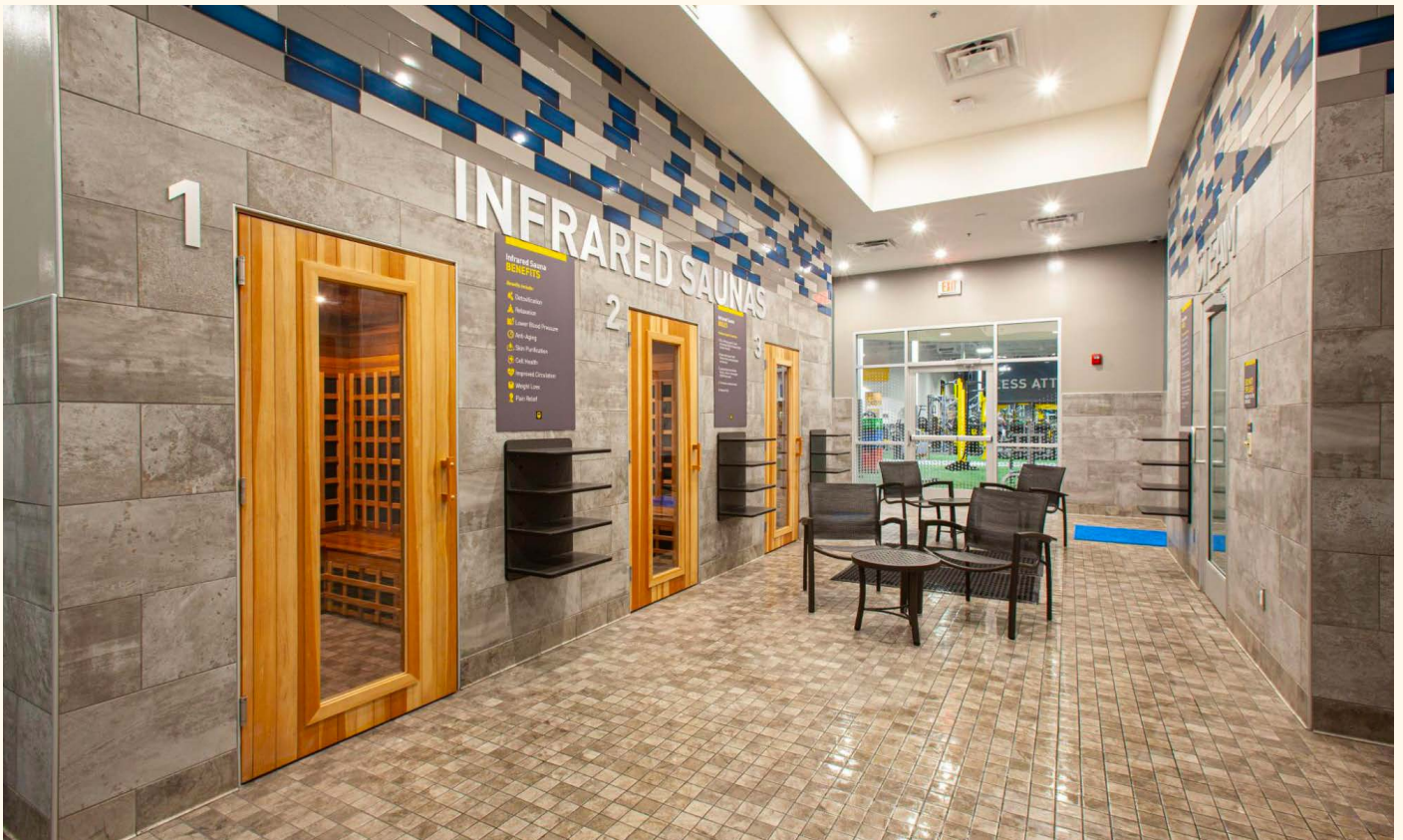


Photo courtesy of Fitness SF

The recovery focus has spilled over into Chuze Fitness classes, with the fitness operator taking note that consumers have become interested in modalities that promote mental well-being in a post-COVID setting.

“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,” Chuze Fitness co-founder and CEO Cory Brightwell said.

EoS Fitness is undergoing a multi-million dollar reinvestment in its gyms this year, seemingly sparing no expense on recovery offerings. Some new facilities boast “The Tank,” a place for EoS premium membership holders to enjoy recovery products such as Hypervolt Percussion Massagers and Normatec Compression Boots from Hyperice, and the Evolt 360 body composition scanner. At select locations, some EoS Fitness gyms offer assisted stretch services.



“When we say we are the (high-value, low-price) gym, we are speaking to our culture of constant innovation and drive to bring our members the most value for the investment they are making in themselves when they come to EoS Fitness,” EoS Fitness chief operating officer Richard Idgar said.

Smart Equipment Gets Personal

Personalized health insights are also being realized through innovative smart equipment found in leading gyms and fitness facilities, with EGYM and Technogym leading the charge with technology that appeals to a wide range of users and keeps them engaged with their gym provider.

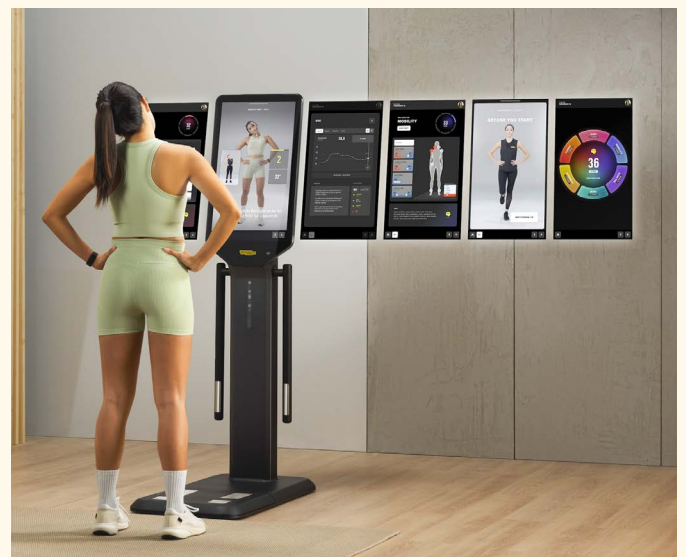
EGYM’s new BioAge system gives users a measurable approach to the state of their fitness and wellness, accounting for strength, cardio, flexibility and metabolism. It offers users immediate and valuable feedback, determining their BioAge and informing users of areas in need of improvement.

The system keeps users engaged by its ability to detect progress faster than a scale, ensuring fitness enthusiasts remain motivated.

“Unfortunately in our industry, usually it’s all about what a member sees on the scale,” said Dana Milkie, EGYM’s General Manager for North America. “It can be a little demotivating, particularly in the first three or four weeks when you’re starting to exercise, trying to change your body, and you don’t see anything on the scale. From a BioAge perspective, you begin to see changes very quickly as whatever biological age you started at begins to go down.”

Technogym’s new AI-based assessment station, Technogym Checkup, captures a user’s true state by scanning their body composition and analyzing their strength, balance, mobility and cognitive abilities and provides a “Wellness Age” that is more valuable than a biological age. Users then receive a personalized prescription of training protocols that evolve with the assistance of artificial intelligence. As users make progress with Technogym’s results-driven technology, they will discover their Wellness Age decreases.

“Our AI-based assessment station ... represents the access point to the ecosystem in order to measure physical and cognitive parameters and to a fully personalized program for every single individual that evolves over time thanks to AI,” said Nerio Alessandri, Technogym founder and CEO.

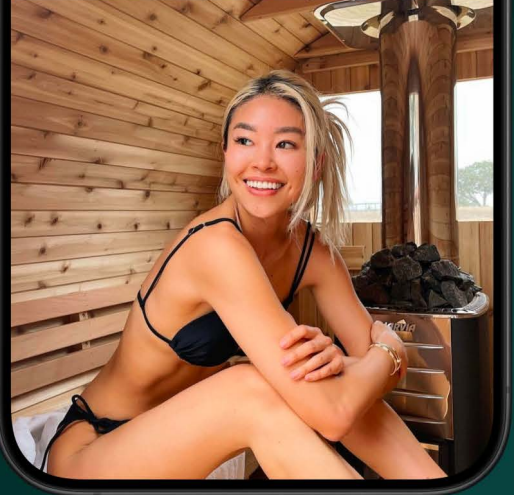




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For Pvolve, Functional Fitness Is the Ultimate Anti-Aging Tool

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of Pvolve

As a functional fitness brand committed to helping its members live younger for longer, Pvolve has had longevity baked into its DNA since its inception in 2017. But even with that head start on the now-popular anti-aging movement, the brand refuses to slow down, pumping out new offerings and new locations to meet the increased demand.

“We’re always looking to evolve,” said Antonietta Vicario, Chief Training Officer at Pvolve. “Pvolve stands for personal evolution. We’re always looking at different class concepts, pieces of equipment and ways to innovate.”

The brand has been on a steady growth trajectory since launch, but the recent consumer focus on longevity has catapulted the brand’s expansion digitally and in brick-and-mortar locations.

Strength Training as a Longevity Booster

While strength training’s increased popularity makes it a worthwhile pursuit for any fitness brand, Pvolve’s findings linking the exercise modality to longevity made it a necessary addition. The brand’s signature method addresses strength, mobility, and stability, all crucial elements for keeping the body moving long-term.

“The functional movements, combined with weight-training and short cardio-circuit style exercise is the

perfect recipe to offset some of the body’s natural aging processes,” Vicario says. “We used to think in order to have a healthy body, you have to do cardio, cardio and more cardio. What we’re finding now is that strength training and weight lifting is really important in terms of movement longevity.”

“As we age, our body starts to lose muscle mass and strength,” she explained. “It’s a process called Sarcopenia and it’s really important that we mitigate that natural decline. I was shocked to learn we actually start to lose muscle mass beginning in our late 30s. It’s much earlier than most people realize. That means that we need to get ahead of the clock.”

Pvolve is giving users that jumpstart with all its class offerings. Class sessions range from 20-60 minutes and feature resistance-based equipment all aimed to deeply activate every major muscle group and build strength. The mobility training within the method takes the joints of the body through their full ranges of motion to keep the body supple and helps to prevent musculoskeletal issues down the road. Stability work fires the deep core musculature to help prevent falls, which can be debilitating especially among the aging population. The addition of weight training helps to offset Sarcopenia by building muscle, it increases one’s resting metabolic rate for maintaining a healthy body composition as well as maintains and improves bone density.

“There are so many things we can do from a movement intervention standpoint to maintain, build and ultimately delay the onset of Sarcopenia,” said Vicario. “Whenever anybody asks me what’s the most important thing they can do to future-proof their body and move well as they age, I say the number one thing you can start to incorporate is strength training, but not all strength training is created equally! It’s important to be training functionally, improving mobility and stability, so that you can really maximize the benefits of the movements.”

Photo courtesy of Pvolve



Following the Science Wherever It Leads

While Pvolve is for “every body,” the brand notes that women, specifically ages 35+, represent its largest target demographic. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the scientific community; the brand reports that of all exercise science or sports-related research, only 6% of it is conducted on women.

But Pvolve is doing what it can to make a dent in that deficiency.

The brand recently conducted a clinical study at the University of Exeter to compare the effects of its programs, including Progressive Weight Training, to general exercise recommendations on women aged 40-60 years. Those following the Pvolve program experienced a 19% increase in hip function and lower body strength, a 21% increase in full body flexibility, a 10% increase in balance, mobility and stability and a 23% increase in lower fatigue.

“It’s important to consider that this study was conducted against the CDC’s recommendation for exercise, which is 150 minutes per week of moderate cardio and strength training, which is significant,” said Vicario. “Our program is that much more effective compared to other forms of exercise.”

While Pvolve continues to view strength training as a key point of emphasis, the brand has its eye on cardiovascular health as well. Its Sculpt & Burn classes also address longevity, tackling heart disease, which remains the leading cause of death for women.

“It’s still the same functional movements within our unique and specific movement vocabulary, but with more cardiovascular bursts, because heart health is very important,” said Vicario. “Even with all the cancers combined, heart disease is number one in terms of mortality, so it’s critical that we offer classes that address heart health.”

“

As we age, our body starts to lose muscle mass and strength. It’s a process called Sarcopenia and it’s really important that we mitigate that natural decline. I was shocked to learn we actually start to lose muscle mass beginning in our late 30s. It’s much earlier than most people realize. That means that we need to get ahead of the clock.”



Antonietta Vicario
Chief Training Officer, Pvolve

Reaching the Masses

For Pvolve, it’s now about spreading the word about these recent findings and the brand’s ability to make an impact through fitness.

Pvolve just announced its locations in Atlanta and San Francisco. The brand opened its first franchise site just last year in San Diego but already has more than 45 locations sold and within various stages of development as of June. The franchise has seen rapid expansion as consumer interest in low-impact, longevity-focused workouts has risen. The brand also announced a partnership with world-renowned actress, producer, and director Jennifer Aniston, who experienced her own transformation through the workout.

“The most important thing that we’re focused on right now is just getting this amazing, magical method out into the community,” said Vicario. “We’re laser-focused on our franchise expansion because we believe that in-studio is the best way to get introduced to Pvolve. Our expert trainers can hold you accountable, make sure your form is correct, and you can feel the amazing energy of the Pvolve community.”

The 12-week clinical trial conducted by the University of Exeter and Pvolve included 72 women ages 40-60 years old, comparing 4 Pvolve workouts per week of 30-55 minutes in length to standard physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes per week.



Photo courtesy of Pvolve

SWTHZ Partners With Hot & Cold Expert in Science-Backed Approach to Wellness

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of SWTHZ

SWTHZ, the premium-experience contrast therapy studio, knows that to be the best, you need to work with the best. That's why the brand is partnering with acclaimed cold and heat scientist and author Dr. Susanna Sørberg.

"We have been closely following Dr. Sørberg's work for the past year and her reputation is truly remarkable," said SWTHZ Stefani Rizzi, Director of Marketing at SWTHZ. "She's a pioneer in the field of deliberate exposure to heat and cold therapies, particularly through sauna and cold plunge. Her research and efforts align seamlessly with SWTHZ's mission to enhance the global adoption of contrast therapy."

Under the partnership, Sørberg will serve as SWTHZ's Advisor of Science and Education on its medical advisory board.

Staying on the Cutting Edge of Wellness

While SWTHZ is already well-educated in contrast therapies, having featured infrared sauna, cold plunge and Vitamin C showers since its launch in 2019, the brand is always eager to learn more. Like she will with new members, Sørberg will help SWTHZ executives

better understand the science behind the brand's wellness modalities, presenting them with her Thermalist Education program and collaborating to determine the ideal path for the brand's certification and staff enrollment.

"Dr. Sørberg's Thermalist Education is a game-changer," said Rizzi. "It provides our executives and staff with comprehensive, scientifically-backed training in contrast therapy, which is at the core of what we do. By acquiring this education, we're not just investing in the professional development of our team, we're also demonstrating our commitment to staying at the forefront of the wellness industry."

The program focuses on cold, heat and breathwork therapies, touching on a decade of research and experience.

SWTHZ sees the addition of Dr. Sørberg as a serious competitive advantage in the increasingly crowded wellness market.

"With the knowledge and skills gained from Thermalist Education, our staff will be better equipped to deliver exceptional experiences to our members," Rizzi said.



Photo courtesy of SWTHZ

“They’ll be able to provide informed guidance, support and engagement that truly sets SWTHZ apart. In a competitive market, this level of expertise is invaluable.”

“

Dr. Søberg’s Thermalist Education is a game-changer. It provides our executives and staff with comprehensive, scientifically-backed training in contrast therapy, which is at the core of what we do. By acquiring this education, we’re not just investing in the professional development of our team, we’re also demonstrating our commitment to staying at the forefront of the wellness industry.”



Stefani Rizzi
Director of Marketing, SWTHZ

A Well-Timed Alliance

SWTHZ expects to open 70 new locations by the end of the year; the brand knew it was imperative to greet the new wave of members now coming through their doors with top-notch expertise.

“By partnering with Dr. Søberg now, SWTHZ is reinforcing its position at the forefront of the wellness market,” added Rizzi. “We’re not responding to trends; we’re helping to shape existing ones. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our growth strategy and our mission to make cutting-edge wellness accessible to everyone.”

Franchisees Get More With SWTHZ

SWTHZ franchisees stand to benefit from this collaboration with Søberg as well as the brand’s members and executives. The brand already maintains a uniquely close relationship with its franchise partners. This collaboration promises to elevate that to a new level.

“Imagine the impact of having Dr. Søberg’s expertise at your fingertips as a franchisee,” said Rizzi. “You’ll be able to attract more members, deliver unparalleled experiences, and establish your location as the go-to destination for cutting-edge wellness. This partnership isn’t just about sharing knowledge; it’s about fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration across our entire franchise network.”

SWTHZ currently operates studios across six states but with sites under construction that will eventually extend that to 25 by 2025. The brand is also eyeing an international launch with a waitlist expected to drop soon.

“We can’t wait to share this knowledge with our community,” added Rizzi. “It’s like giving our members a secret weapon for their health journey. Plus, it just feels great to know we’re at the cutting edge of wellness science. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

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Doctors Weigh In on the Longevity Boom

by Josh Liberatore



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People in the United States are more unhealthy than ever. Over 100 million Americans suffer from preventable chronic illness, and around 70 percent are overweight or obese, according to data from the U.S. government.

Against this grim landscape, there's some hope that things are beginning to change. Longevity – the science of aging gracefully, or slowing down the aging process altogether – has emerged as a popular movement, driven in part by people's collective health awakening following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Longevity-focused podcasts and social media clips have become exceedingly popular, while wellness centers offering everything from GLP-1 weight loss drugs to IV drips to cold plunge tubs have sprung up across the country.

Medical professionals, though, have varying opinions on the longevity movement – some are all-in, some praise the end goal while questioning the methods that proponents of the movement claim will unlock the key to a long, healthy life, and other physicians view the movement with downright skepticism, dubious of entrepreneurs and marketers they see as out to make a quick buck rather than promote healthy living.

Athletech News spoke with three doctors whose work is

helping to shape the field of longevity and healthspan, either directly or indirectly, to get their perspectives on what it takes to live a long, healthy life in our modern world.

Note: The following information is based on the perspectives and expertise of three medical professionals. Other medical professionals may have different views on the opinions and statements expressed below.

Dr. Frank Lipman Embraces Longevity But Preaches the Fundamentals

Dr. Frank Lipman, a pioneer of the functional medicine movement and a New York Times Bestselling author on aging, is all-in on longevity.

Dr. Lipman has effectively shifted the concentration of his decades-old practice at Eleven Eleven Wellness Center in New York City to focus specifically on longevity medicine, which he describes as a “subspecialty” of functional medicine. The Eleven Eleven Wellness Center now offers a comprehensive, membership-based program designed to help patients optimize their health, slow down the aging process and increase their healthspan.

For an annual fee, members receive genetic testing, biological age testing and an extensive set of blood biomarker tests, including a lipid and heart panel, hormones, nutrients, inflammatory markers, cellular senescence markers, metabolic markers, plasmalogens, phospholipids and intracellular NAD levels. These are all analyzed by Dr. Lipman and his team of practitioners, who then provide personalized supplement, nutrition, exercise, hormone and peptide recommendations. Members also get unlimited access to Dr. Lipman and his team for support, recommendations and check-ups, along with access to InBody machines, Shiftwave masks and One Mind brain-mapping tech.



Photo courtesy of Eleven Eleven Wellness Center

Despite his practice's hands-on approach, Dr. Lipman is quick to point out that when it comes to longevity, the basics are still the most important.

"The foundation to me is always how you eat, when you eat, your sleep, your exercise – not only just aerobic, you also need to start strength training – and stress reduction," Dr. Lipman told Athletech News. "I'm a big fan of time-restricted eating, especially as you get into your 40s."

Dr. Lipman isn't against tools like infrared sauna and cold plunge, but he views them as supplementary pieces to add on top of an already solid health and wellness routine rather than foundational pieces by themselves.

"Cold plunges and saunas are great, but they're not as important as the aspects we need to pay a lot of attention to as we get older, which are heart disease and preventing plaque buildup, preventing insulin and glucose from going up, and preventing cognitive problems," he explained. "I'm all for biohacks, but if you ignore the more important issues of what's going on in your body, you're sort of missing the point. I see people who pay more attention to getting their cold plunge every day than getting a proper check-up."

Overall, despite chronic disease running rampant in America, Dr. Lipman is excited and encouraged by

society's increased interest in longevity.

"People come into my office now knowing much more than they did even a few years ago," he noted. "One thing that's probably changed the most is people, mainly men – women have always been more aware of their health – in their 40s and 50s coming in to optimize their health, which wasn't happening before."

Dr. Casey Means Thinks We've Got It All Backwards

Dr. Casey Means, a Stanford-trained physician and co-founder of metabolic health company Levels, says most people are "missing the forest for the trees" when it comes to health and longevity, mainly due to the wellness industry's focus on profit and products over foundational solutions.

"The most disruptive truth that needs to be brought to the forefront is that it's actually very simple and very straightforward to be healthy," Dr. Means told ATN.

"Most of the chronic diseases and chronic symptoms facing the U.S. — essentially, all the top killers of Americans today – are rooted in the same thing, which is metabolic dysfunction," she explained. "The reason we're becoming very metabolically dysfunctional in this country is because the world we're living in today, the environment that our bodies exist in, is almost universally damaging to our mitochondria, which make energy in ourselves."

Dr. Means points out that while more Americans are participating in fitness than ever before, obesity rates have increased over the last two and a half decades.

"50% of Americans go on a diet every year, gym memberships doubled since the year 2000, and during that rate, obesity has gone up 10%," she noted.

Dr. Means emphasizes eating unprocessed, clean food, walking more, lifting weights, managing emotional health and stress, and getting sufficient sleep and sunshine, as well as reducing exposure to blue light late at night, and removing synthetic, chemical-laden cleaning products as key actions people can take. Tracking basic biomarkers, such as fasting glucose, can also be helpful.

Interestingly, Dr. Means views the trend of GLP-1 weight loss drugs as alarming, not because the drugs don't work, but because they're essentially putting a band-aid over the real problem, which is many Americans' unhealthy lifestyles and living environments.

"It's a very dark trend that is essentially trying to gaslight Americans to believe that health is found in a weekly injection for life and not from changing the environment that is so obviously crushing our ability to be healthy," she said. "If you had a sick fish in a fish tank filled with dirty polluted water, you obviously would not inject that fish every week for the rest of its life. You would change out the water."



Photo courtesy of Studio Da Antipina/shutterstock.com

For Dr. Michael Greger, a Plant-Based Diet Is the Key

Dr. Michael Greger, a physician, New York Times Bestselling author on nutrition and founder of NutritionFacts.org, advocates for a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables and legumes as the key to longevity.

While Dr. Greger notes that there are certain things people should add to their diets as they get older, such as foods rich in spermidine or other age-fighting nutrients, the basics apply at any age.

“If there were just three things I could add to people’s diet it would be berries, the healthiest fruits; cruciferous, dark and green leafy vegetables, the healthiest vegetables; and legumes – beans, split peas, chickpeas or lentils,” Dr. Greger said. “If there were just three things I could remove, it would be trans fats, which are partially hydrogenated vegetable oils; processed meat, bacon, ham, hot dogs, lunch meat and sausage, which cause colorectal cancer, the number one cancer killer among non-smokers; and ‘liquid candy,’ or soda. We shouldn’t be drinking sugar water.”

Dr. Greger also believes that when it comes to nutrition, extreme personalization isn’t necessary, despite what some high-priced brands would have you believe.

“Personalized nutrition, personalized medicine, most of it is just scammy nonsense,” he said, noting that, except for some individual genetic differences like allergies and intolerances, the ideal human diet is mostly the same for everyone.

“There are certain small individual differences – some people digest lactose better than others, some people metabolize caffeine better than others, but it’s not like some foods are good for some people and bad for others,” he explained. “When you go to the zoo, there’s

the baboon diet. It’s not like, ‘Fred the baboon has one diet and Sally the baboon (has another). There’s (an ideal) diet for that species that tends to be better for them. And it’s the same thing with the human species.’”

While other fundamentals like proper sleep, exercise and stress reduction are obviously important, Dr. Greger believes what we eat is the most important factor in determining how long we live, and our quality of life as we age.

“The single most important thing for the health and wellbeing of yourself and your family is what you eat,” Dr. Greger said, adding that abstaining from smoking and exercise come second and third on that list, respectively.

“

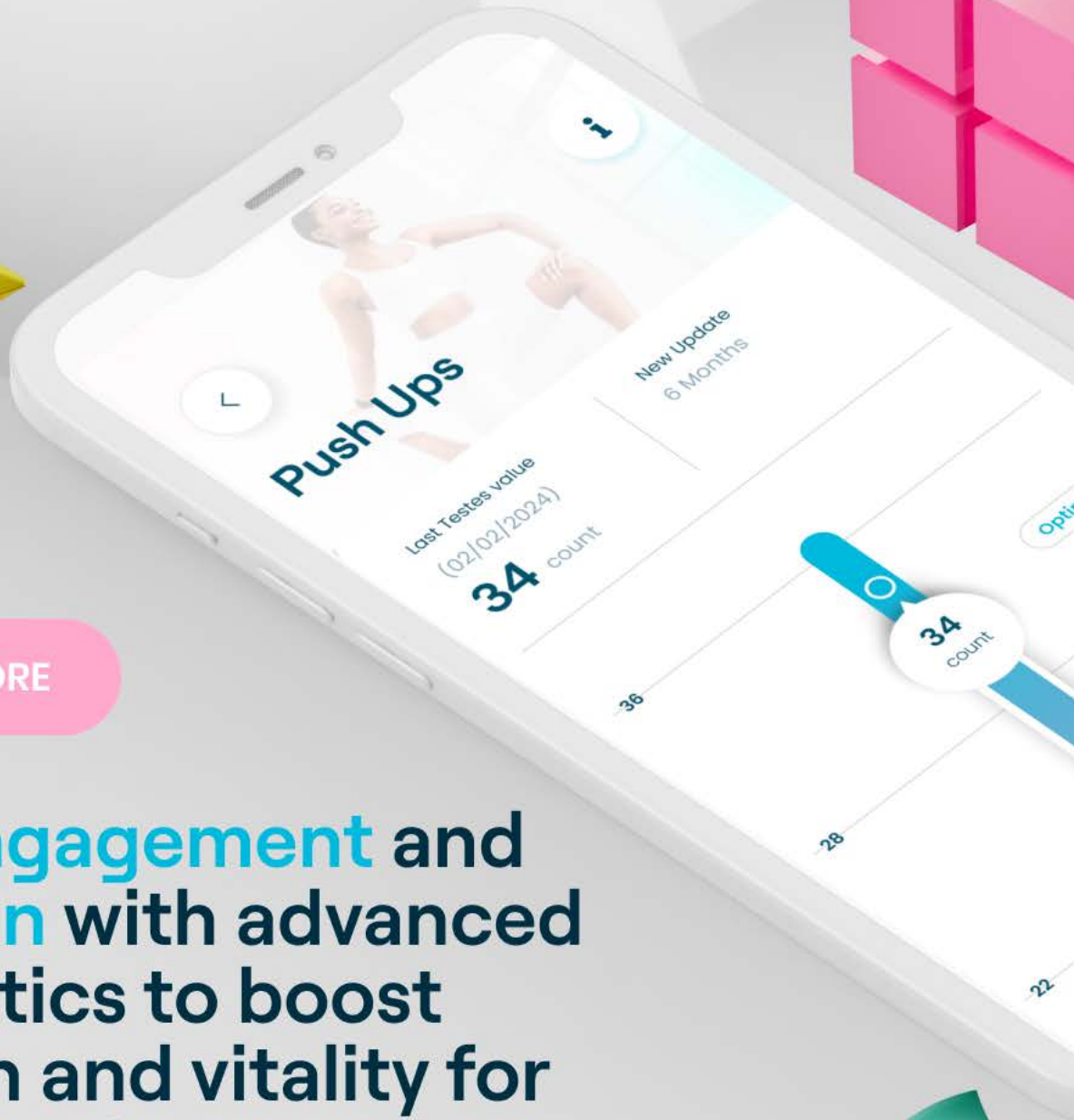
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Dr. Casey Means
MD & Founder, Levels

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Preventive Care Meets Hospitality at Perspire Sauna Studio

by Athletech Studios

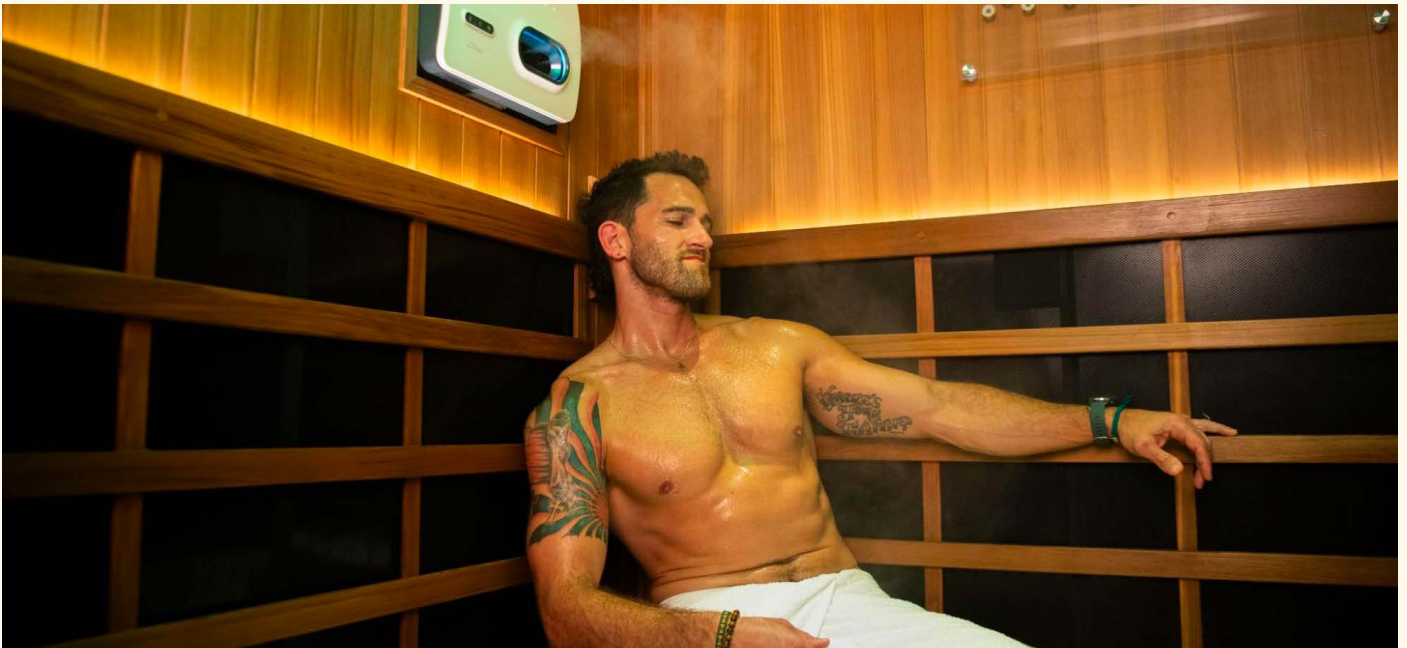


Photo courtesy of Perspire Sauna Studio

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Americans spend 90% of their time indoors, where they fail to benefit from sunlight and where the concentrations of some pollutants are often two to five times higher than outside.

Light allows most creatures to live – including humans. At a cellular level, people need light to thrive. And, to remain resilient, healthy and disease-free, we also need to flush the toxins and pollutants that invade our bodies in our daily lives.

Enter Perspire Sauna Studio.

Combining the centuries-old healing practice of a traditional sauna with the science-backed technology of infrared (IR) and red light therapy (RLT), Perspire Sauna aims to optimize health and wellness with a spa-like experience. With 57 locations and another 35 coming soon, Perspire is bringing Infrared Sauna and Red Light Therapy into communities across the country.

“It is our mission to help everyone ignite the wellness within,” said Jackie Mendes, Vice President of Franchise Sales. “Perspire is a place where people can unplug and restore mentally and physically in a way that’s accessible and easily fits into busy lifestyles.”

And, unplugging is non-negotiable as cell phones do not like the 170-degree sauna.

“It’s an elevated and completely restorative experience at the intersection of preventative care and hospitality,” said Mendes.

Why Red Light Therapy Versus Other Recovery Tools?

With recovery leading the pack when it comes to wellness and fitness trends, the market is full of products and modalities that help facilitate it. So why should someone choose infrared light?

“There are many tools that are beneficial to recovery, but none restore health at a cellular level like this,” said Mendes. “Our modern lifestyle is an assault on our cells, and Infrared Light helps repair them. That’s a total game-changer. When our cells are healthier virtually every component of the body performs better so we can heal faster, experience more energy, ward off pain, be more immune to sickness and disease ... the list goes on.”

Why Red Light Plus Infrared Sauna?

While red light promotes cellular regeneration, the infrared heat from the sauna stresses the body and



shocks the proteins in the blood, essentially creating a false fever, which ignites and improves the body's immune system.

"I liken it to lifting heavy weights," Mendes said. "During strength training, we create small tears in our muscles, which the body then repairs, and that makes us stronger. The heat in an infrared sauna works the same way."

Mendes says this combination is what sets Perspire apart.

"I would argue that of all modalities on the market in the preventative and longevity space, the combination of red light therapy and infrared sauna is the most effective and biggest bang for your buck," she said. "In sessions lasting less than an hour, you can improve your physical and mental health, which then results in countless benefits on a daily basis."

“

An infrared sauna session is akin to a passive cardio conditioning workout. You'll feel your heart rate climb similarly to that of a power walk. My Garmin recognizes it as a workout."



Jackie Mendes

Vice President of Franchise Sales,
Perspire Sauna Studio

The Many Health Benefits of Infrared

One such benefit is the potential for weight loss. The heat that stresses the body simultaneously works the heart, which burns calories.

"An infrared sauna session is akin to a passive cardio conditioning workout," Mendes explained. "You'll feel your heart rate climb similarly to that of a power walk. My Garmin recognizes it as a workout."

She adds that there is impressive data suggesting regular sauna use increases cardio health, blood pressure, and fitness levels, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

It's also great for your skin. Sweating helps the body purge dirt, oil, and other particulate matter that deposits on the skin and acts as a cleanser.

"Red Light Therapy also boosts the production of collagen and proteins that help keep the skin youthful," said Mendes.

Infrared saunas fall into the category of "low-level light therapy," which is sometimes used to treat acne, psoriasis, and eczema.

Red light also promotes relaxation by balancing the body's level of cortisol (your primary stress hormone) and helping to regulate the nervous system, which translates to better sleep.

Overall, Mendes points out that many of the benefits are similar to sticking to a regular fitness routine but Perspire is a great option for people looking to boost their health, immune system and longevity even more, or for those who can't exercise due to pain or restrictions.

Perspire Eyes New Modalities

Looking ahead, Mendes says Perspire continues to add value through additional and varied offerings. The company recently added Halotherapy to its offering, which is a micronized salt that mists into the sauna during sessions.

It's a great way to combat allergies or find relief from lung or breathing issues, or you can use it when fighting off a common cold. It also has immunity and anti-inflammatory benefits."

Contrast therapy will be available this summer, delivering an ice-cold rainfall experience through their showers.

In the end, Mendes says Perspire opens the door for anyone who wants to improve their health on a cellular level, ward off disease, and live healthier.

"The goal is to facilitate health and wellness for as many people as we possibly can," she said.

The Booming Business of Hot & Cold

by Kim Kisner



Photo courtesy of Othership

With the sweeping industry shift to wellness, centuries-old practices like saunas, cold plunges and bathhouses are making a rousing resurgence.

These practices have been infused and enriched with innovation and tech and are being reintroduced. Products, technology and modalities are being combined for new and heightened experiences. Even the shapes and sizes of the equipment are being reimaged.

Here, Athletech dives into the cold tubs that are making a splash and the saunas that are turning up the heat and leading the industry in innovation.

Sauna Studios Proliferate

The sauna - an ancient solution that's been rediscovered and redefined - is contributing to the wellness market in a formidable way.

SWTHZ - a premium experience contrast therapy studio

that offers infrared sauna, cold plunge and Vitamin-C showers - launched roughly twenty months ago and now boasts 25 studios and plans to open 100 additional locations over the next 12 months, which would give it a presence in 30 states. The brand is soon to set sights on an international launch, where a waitlist is expected.

SWTHZ's founder Jamie Weeks, the leading Orangetheory Fitness franchise operator with around 10% of the nation's studios, sees a huge market for contrast therapy (alternating between hot and cold modalities), which prompted him to create SWTHZ, formerly known as SweatHouz.

"The growth is not going to slow down any time soon, because it's more than just recovery." Weeks says of hot and cold therapy. "For some people, it's recovery from working out. For others, it's just being able to go into a sauna and meditate for 30 minutes after a long day, or cold plunging and feeling the endorphins and the dopamine rush. It's all those things."



Photo courtesy of SWTHZ

Another innovator – Perspire Sauna Studio – has combined the centuries-old healing practice of a traditional sauna with the science-backed technology of infrared (IR) and red light therapy (RLT). With 50-plus locations and another 30-plus coming soon, Perspire is bringing infrared sauna and red light therapy into communities across the country.

“I would argue that of all modalities on the market in the preventative and longevity space, the combination of red light therapy and infrared sauna is the most effective and biggest bang for your buck,” said Jackie Mendes, Vice President of Franchise Development. “In sessions lasting less than an hour, you can make your body healthier, which then results in countless benefits daily.”

Old-School Bathhouses Get Redefined

Centered on the communal aspect of a traditional sauna, bathhouses are experiencing a renaissance and could very well become the next hottest franchise opportunity.

One such concept, Sauna House, is promoting a “digital detox” within the walls of its growing communal bathing franchise. Sauna House has sold ten locations in markets such as North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida and Colorado, with plans to close an additional twelve locations by the end of the year.

What Sauna House offers isn’t merely a place but a movement, said CEO and founder Andrew Lachlan.

“We are committed to building healing sanctuaries that transcend generations, promoting well-being in both body and spirit,” Lachlan said of Sauna House, which announced upcoming bathhouse studios in Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina.

The franchise features a ‘Hot-Cold-Relax’ circuit that is device-free and touts a whole-body contrast therapy within an environment engulfed in sleek architecture. Sauna House offers guests a hot sauna session, followed by a cold shower and plunge, and then a chance to return to the warmth of a sauna to deepen into

relaxation. Drinks such as tea, adaptogenic sparkling water or kombucha are also available to complement the wellness experience.

Branching out from Ontario, Canada, another bathhouse brand Othership, launched in New York City’s Flatiron neighborhood recently.

While Othership offers a traditional circuit, the concept provides a variety of sessions based on needs and moods for its “journeymen.” A free-flow session allows guests to do their own thing with a chance to socialize with others, while a quieter free-flow offers minimal interaction and a relaxing playlist. An evening social session offers a two-hour sober-curious gathering, allowing guests to connect with friends, both new and old.

Its Co-Founder and CEO Robbie Bent sees massive potential for the brand and intends to open Othership locations in every city in North America.

“

The growth is not going to slow down any time soon, because it’s more than just recovery. For some people, it’s recovery from working out. For others, it’s just being able to go into a sauna and meditate for 30 minutes after a long day, or cold plunging and feeling the endorphins and the dopamine rush. It’s all those things.”



Jamie Weeks
Founder, SWTHZ

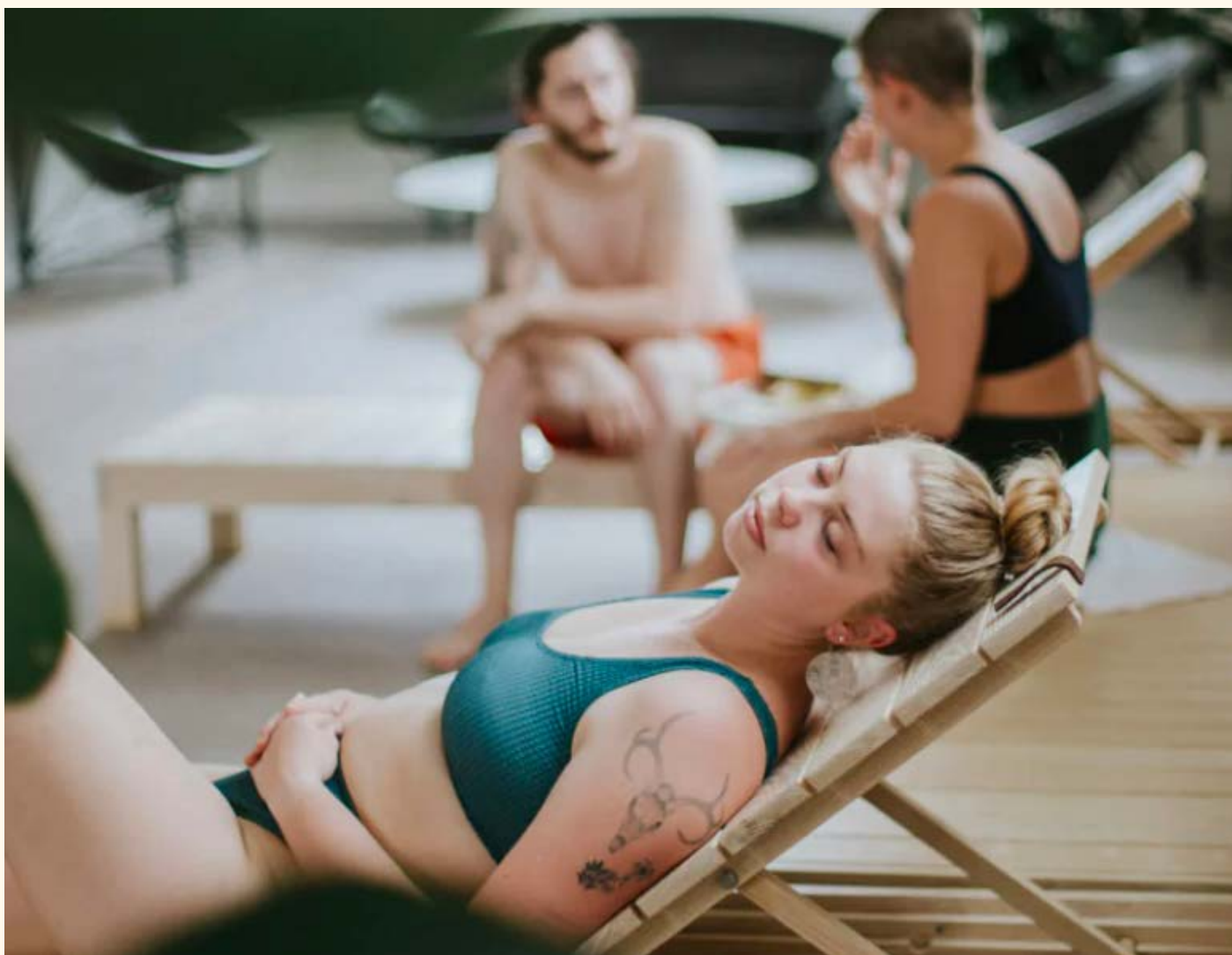


Photo courtesy of Sauna House

Cold Water Therapy Becomes Mainstream

Turning down the heat, let's talk cold plunges.

Earlier this year, direct-to-consumer manufacturer Plunge launched four new products in a bid to make cold water immersion therapy more accessible. The Evolve Series offerings include an inflatable, portable cold plunge tub, a pop-up offering, and technological improvements on Plunge's core offerings.

With the new products, Plunge looks to tap into a different segment of the market that may want an introduction to cold plunging at an even lower price before investing in a larger model.

This is on the heels of the Plunge All-In launch, which has several features for at-home wellness enthusiasts. Its new design is easy to access, allowing users to change their filter quickly. The Plunge app notifies users when it's time to change the filter, which can be done in seconds. The tub can also be controlled from anywhere through a mobile app, ensuring it's ready on demand.

A year ago, Ice Barrel was named the official cold partner of the CrossFit Games. Shortly after, Solidcore founder Anne Mahlum invested \$265,000 in the company and extended a line of credit worth \$1.5 million.

Ice Barrel, led by founder and CEO Wyatt Ewing, takes a slightly different approach to cold plunges, focusing on an upright position versus a lounging, the impetus being that the body's instinct when in a cold environment is to lean in and engage, and the upright posture allows the participant to fully experience that response.

When it comes to cold tubs, Mystic River Cold Plunge takes engineering ingenuity, aesthetics and craftsmanship to another level.

One way this plays out is the addition of a water agitator (think soothing wave that pushes and pulls across the body, not splashy or noisy) that keeps the body in the desired "Cold Shock Mode" throughout the plunge.

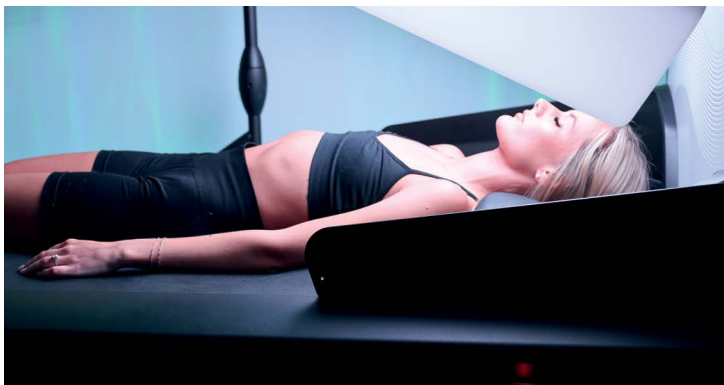
"There is a 'thermal barrier' that's created by the body if the user is sitting still in still water," Founder Daniel Schmitt explained to Athletech News. "It comforts the body and can take it out of the fight or flight mode. The agitator keeps this from happening, so the user gets the utmost benefit from the plunge."

The company's attention to detail encompasses every aspect of the tub's performance and durability to create a high-end experience. With 1.5 horsepower and 11,500 BTUs it maintains the water temperature even if the user goes from hot to cold.

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Inside Red Light Method's Trifecta Approach to Recovery & Prevention

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of Red Light Method

It's clear that methods and treatments designed to facilitate prevention, recovery and longevity are in high demand, but with the plethora of options available, it can be difficult to cut through the clutter and determine what works – until you experience a winning solution first-hand.

Two years ago, Allison Beardsley found herself feeling unusually fatigued. She didn't have her usual energy and drive. And then she discovered light. Red, and near-Infrared Light. It completely renewed and rejuvenated her, and after experiencing it, she instantly wanted to take this traditionally expensive and out-of-reach methodology to the masses.

As the founder of Club Pilates, she had done it before by bringing Reformer classes to market and making them wholly accessible and affordable.

So she set out to do it again with her unique Red Light Method, which in just 18 months has seen more per-unit

customer growth than Club Pilates did in its first seven years, and driven her to begin franchising.

"I felt almost a calling to make this treatment affordable and available so that millions could benefit from it versus a few," Beardsley says. "I combined it with other scientifically proven tools to create the most effective wellness offering possible."

She paired FDA-Cleared Red Light Therapy Body Contouring Treatments with Group Power Plate and Pilates Reformer classes to create one-hour sessions promoting optimal fitness and wellness results.

Why Red & Near-Infrared Light?

"Red and near-Infrared light is absorbed by the mitochondria, which improves cellular energy metabolism and overall mitochondrial function," explains Beardsley. "By facilitating mitochondrial health, we support the optimal functioning of nearly every cell and

system in the body. So, you can make yourself healthier and increase your immunity by simply being subjected to the light.”

This, Beardsley says, results in immeasurable benefits.

“Beyond mitochondria health, red and near-infrared light decreases inflammation. It diminishes lines and wrinkles, acting like a facelift. It boosts collagen and helps the body to recover. It results in better sleep. It almost causes the body to age backward.”

Beardsley says she’s seen clients with diabetes, neuropathy and arthritis improve dramatically. She’s seen skin disease diminish. She’s also witnessed impressive losses in pounds and inches.

“

I felt almost a calling to make this treatment affordable and available so that millions could benefit from it versus a few. I combined it with other scientifically proven tools to create the most effective wellness offering possible.”



Allison Beardsley
Founder, Red Light Method

Why Power Plate & Pilates?

The Red Light Method is the first in the world to combine the benefits of medical-grade red light therapy treatments with guided Power Plate and Pilates sessions, which Beardsley calls the trifecta of recovery and longevity.

“The Power Plate aids in lymphatic system purification, expelling toxins released to the lymph during Red Light Therapy Treatment,” she explains. “So, clients essentially receive a Red Light Treatment on steroids, with the Power Plate accelerating all the great results.”

Further, she explains that working out on a vibrating surface like the Power Plate causes the nervous system to rapidly respond and stimulate musculoskeletal, proprioceptive, neurological, hormonal and cardiovascular systems.

“This translates to so many benefits including calorie burn, muscle development, enhanced flexibility, better balance, and so much more,” she says.

Beardsley recently added Pilates Reformer Sessions to round out and step up the results.

“The Reformer trains the body’s slow-twitch muscles, particularly those in the core, leading to a balanced and toned physique that only Pilates can produce,” she says.

Bringing It All Together

Beardsley explains that the order of the modalities is very important, with each one providing enhancements to the previous one.

The experience begins with a 25-minute red light therapy body sculpting spa treatment in a personal treatment room, where the body is wrapped in flexible Contour Light pads that are placed directly on the skin.

Next is a ten-minute guided Power Plate experience where you set the tone. You can choose a more intense workout, a relaxing experience or anything in between depending on your fitness and health level.

“Another great benefit of the Power Plate is, because the vibration activates more muscles than working out on a static surface, it gets more results in less time,” notes Beardsley.

The Power Plate session is followed by a digitally-guided Pilates Reformer class. Pilates instructors have been joining Red Light Method explaining that the digitally taught Reformer classes are the best classes that have ever experienced.

“Pilates is known for its transformative effect on the body, and combined with Red Light Therapy and Power Plate, clients get an unparalleled wellness journey,” says Beardsley.

Typically priced at \$200+ for a 25-minute session in a medical or med-spa setting, Red Light Method offers these rejuvenating treatments at affordable rates, like \$199 for monthly unlimited.

And because the Power Plate and Pilates are gentle on the body and don’t require an intense effort, Red Light Therapy is accessible to all, no matter what age or fitness level.

“It’s a beautiful thing to be able to offer wellness to those who are young, old, obese, dealing with physical issues and pain and everything in between because every one of these people achieves positive results toward better health and longevity,” Beardsley says.



Photo courtesy of Red Light Method

TRX Functional Equipment Is a Must in the Longevity Era

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of TRX

Getting fast results in the gym is no longer all the rage. Even in strength training, the ideals of recovery and prevention continue to gain steam. The long game is becoming popular — and TRX Training is an established player.

As a leading provider of functional training products, TRX produces or acquires new innovations that directly meet fitness consumer demands. Amid the increased concentration on longevity and the rise of strength training, the brand has found a sweet spot with resistance-based, low-impact tools that help users live longer and healthier lives.

“It’s been incredibly exciting for TRX to witness the simultaneous surge in popularity of both longevity and strength training,” said Brynne Elliott, Vice President of Education & Training at TRX. “This convergence aligns perfectly with our philosophy of promoting sustainable, functional fitness that supports long-term health and well-being. Seeing more people prioritize not just building strength, but also enhancing their overall longevity, validates the direction we are heading in.”

Core Strength & Functional Movement Are Key

Many of TRX’s products nurture core strength. That, along with functional movement, are two foundational principles for injury prevention and maintaining long-term health.

“TRX focuses on functional movement patterns and core stability because these elements are vital to overall fitness and long-term health,” explained Krystal Say, TRX Senior Master Instructor. “Functional movements mimic everyday activities, which helps improve strength, balance, and flexibility in ways that are directly applicable to daily life. This focus not only enhances performance in various physical activities but also reduces the risk of injuries by ensuring that the body moves efficiently and correctly.”

“Core stability is also crucial because the core muscles support almost every movement we make,” she added. “A strong core helps maintain proper posture and alignment, which can prevent strain and injuries. By emphasizing these aspects in our programs, TRX aims to build a solid foundation that promotes prolonged health and resilience against injuries.”



Products That Promote Longevity

TRX's Suspension Trainer and Rip Trainer spearhead the company's efforts to collectively address strength and longevity. Suspension Trainers leverage body weight with resistance training bands while engaging a user's core to build balance and stability.

"This constant engagement of the core helps build strength in the muscles that support your spine and improve your overall functional movement patterns, reducing the risk of injury in daily activities," said Say. "Additionally, the TRX Suspension Trainer helps optimize mobility by allowing for a full range of motion in every exercise, ensuring that your joints and muscles remain flexible and healthy."

Rip Trainers feature a similar style of resistance-based, low-impact strength training that also tests a user's core but instead with a bar attached to a bungee.

"The TRX Rip Trainer uses rotational movement and asymmetrical loads to build core strength," said Elliot. "This is particularly beneficial to golfers, tennis players, and pickleball enthusiasts, who see not only an improvement in performance, but also a reduction in pain, injury, and stiffness."

The YBell, a kettlebell-dumbbell hybrid, also grants users a safe strength training experience while dodging injury risk.

"These tools infuse mindfulness into workouts by encouraging focused, deliberate movements and body awareness," Elliot said of the YBell, Rip Trainer and Suspension Trainer. "This mindful approach not only enhances the effectiveness of each exercise but also promotes mental well-being, contributing to overall longevity."

The TRX Difference

Notably, TRX equipment doesn't require users to be perfect to avoid injuries, nor does it ask anyone to move in a way that's unnatural for the human body.

The same can't always be said for traditional equipment from competing suppliers — separating TRX from the pack.

"While traditional strength training equipment like dumbbells and barbells can be effective, they can also pose risks if not used correctly," said Say. "These tools often require precise form and technique to avoid injuries, such as strains or joint issues and do not always mimic functional movement patterns, which increases the risk of injury."

"Without proper guidance, it's easy to develop poor habits that can lead to long-term problems, especially if the equipment is used in a way that doesn't engage the core or promote functional movement patterns," she adds.

For TRX, it's all about educating gym-goers about these key differences. Their products' superior functionality is there; awareness is all that's standing in the way. With over 300,000 course graduates, TRX Training is empowering the next generation of fitness professionals to prioritize long-term health — both for themselves and for their clients. Elliot is committed to democratizing education

"Our courses are expert-led, available in many formats, and accessible to everyone," she said. "We're doing everything we can to improve member experience, one coach at a time."



“

While traditional strength training equipment like dumbbells and barbells can be effective, they can also pose risks if not used correctly. These tools often require precise form and technique to avoid injuries, such as strains or joint issues and do not always mimic functional movement patterns, which increases the risk of injury.”



Krystal Say
Senior Master Instructor, TRX

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- ✔ Red Light Therapy
- ✔ Professional Grade Chromotherapy
- ✔ Aromatherapy
- ✔ Meditation



The Business of GLP-1s: Inside the New Weight Loss Drug Ecosystem

by Courtney Rehfeldt



Photo courtesy of Alones/shutterstock.com

Weight loss medication has upended the diet industry and shows no signs of slowing down, with medication shortages only compounding the demand for GLP-1s, which can help patients lose 15% or more of their body weight.

Regardless of the various opinions on medications like Ozempic and Wegovy, the blockbuster drugs can have far-ranging impacts beyond slimming down Americans — Goldman Sachs estimates that they could raise U.S. GDP levels and, at last count, analysts forecast that weight loss medications will likely generate as much as \$100 billion in revenue by 2030.

With so much financial promise and a prediction that 9% of the U.S. population will eventually become a GLP-1 user in just six years, nearly every industry is looking to integrate weight loss medication or support its users in one aspect or another. Even food and beverage giant Nestlé is releasing a frozen food line for people on GLP-1 drugs.

As weight loss drugs continue to have a sizable impact at every turn, here is how telehealth companies and brick-and-mortar fitness giants are responding to the Ozempic era.

Diet Industry Heavyweights Embrace Weight Loss Drugs

WeightWatchers was undoubtedly ahead of the game, acquiring telehealth provider Sequence last year to become one of the first to offer weight loss drugs to consumers — a far departure from its original goal as a diet and weight loss OG.

Still, WeightWatchers CEO Sima Sistani indicated that shifting towards weight loss medication is a natural next step for the company.

“WeightWatchers is at a pivotal point where we can build new capabilities that expand our market, reinforced by our foundational strengths,” Sistani remarked regarding



the Sequence deal. “Our goal is to provide sustainable, science-backed solutions to all weight health pathways, whether medications are part of an individual’s journey or not.”

The Vitamin Shoppe, a titan in the brick-and-mortar supplement space, is also getting into the GLP-1 game, launching a telehealth service connecting eligible consumers with licensed healthcare providers to offer nutritional supplements and anti-obesity drugs such as Ozempic and Mounjaro, as well as compounded versions of semaglutide and tirzepatide, the active ingredient in Zepbound.

The Vitamin Shoppe CEO Lee Wright says the company’s Whole Health Rx service is a “meaningful evolution” in its mission to support the needs of its customers – a similar signal to that of WeightWatchers. While it will initially focus on weight management, Whole Health Rx plans to expand into other verticals.

“As a pioneer in the wellness space since 1977, The Vitamin Shoppe is uniquely positioned to offer a truly holistic approach to weight loss that unites proven pharmaceutical interventions with our unmatched expertise in nutrition support and whole-body health,” Wright added.

New Telehealth Players Emerge

Hims & Hers Health may not have rushed into the GLP-1 space, but it’s done so mindfully — and at a discounted rate. The telehealth platform, witnessing the ongoing shortages of name-brand anti-obesity drugs, will now provide compounded GLP-1s for eligible consumers. The company has partnered with a U.S. drug manufacturer to provide generic medications with the same active ingredients as the Ozempic and Wegovy, shipping them from affiliated pharmacies at a more cost-conscious price point. In time, the health and wellness platform says it will make branded options available after a consistent supply is established.

“The core of our business is to offer a truly personalized experience that customers can trust and rely on,” Hims & Hers CEO and co-founder Andrew Dudum said. “We’ve leveraged our size and scale to secure access to one of the highest-quality supplies of compounded GLP-1 injections available today. We’re passing that access and value along to our customers, who deserve the highest standard of clinical safety and efficacy to meet their goals, and we’re doing it in a safe, affordable way that others can’t deliver.”

Telehealth company Ro, which counts obesity expert Dr. Rachel Goldman as an advisor, is also transforming the way consumers access GLP-1s.

“GLP-1s are allowing individuals who have the disease of obesity to be on a level playing field,” Dr. Goldman said. “They have this extra tool that is helping them get to a place where they’re more in that category of individuals who, if they’re mindful about what they’re eating and exercising a little more, they will likely lose weight. It’s literally giving people hope who felt like they lost hope. Some people saw an option like bariatric surgery as a last resort but GLP-1s are now giving people an additional option. We are also seeing that people after bariatric surgery have weight (gain) recurrence because obesity is a chronic disease.”

Fitness Brands Cater to GLP-1 Users

Weight loss drugs have also inspired fitness operators to capitalize on consumers looking to lose.

Last year, luxury athletic country club operator Life Time entered the weight loss medication arena with Miora, a medical wellness and longevity clinic featuring GLP-1s as well as infrared saunas, red light therapy, peptides, hormone replacement therapy, IV therapy and cryotherapy chambers.

While Miora is poised to roll out nationally, the clinic is already seeing high demand, and Life Time is bolstering Miora’s staff of doctors and physician assistants to handle the traffic.



Photo courtesy of Hims & Hers

Life Time founder and CEO Bahram Akradi has been outspoken on weight loss medication, noting that the athletic country club brand has the ideal customer base within its clubs – those who seriously invested in their health – and stated that the popular drugs will 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,” Akradi said. “The exercise business is going to get a win out of it. Life Time 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. “We look at this as nothing but an upside.”

Equinox, now heavily invested in metabolic health and longevity with Function Health, hasn’t abandoned the weight loss medication space or Equinox members who opt to take the in-demand drugs. The luxury fitness and wellness brand is committed to helping its members with a personal training program designed for clients on medication like Ozempic and Wegovy or those interested in using GLP-1s.

The brand added a GLP-1 protocol to its internal education program at the Equinox Fitness Training Institute to ensure coaches learn how to create workout plans that address possible muscle loss — a side effect that can occur for those taking weight loss medication.

Digital healthcare company Noom partnered with digital health and fitness platform FitOn to launch “Muscle Defense,” a program designed to combat muscle mass loss with on-demand fitness programming geared towards weight loss medication users.

“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 explained. “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.”

“It’s critical we not leave people worse off than before they started the medication. Healthy habits have never mattered more,” Cook added.

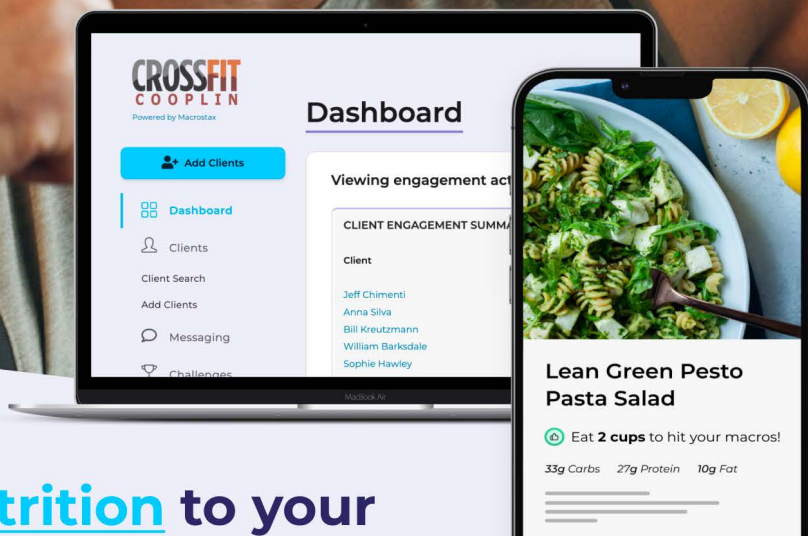
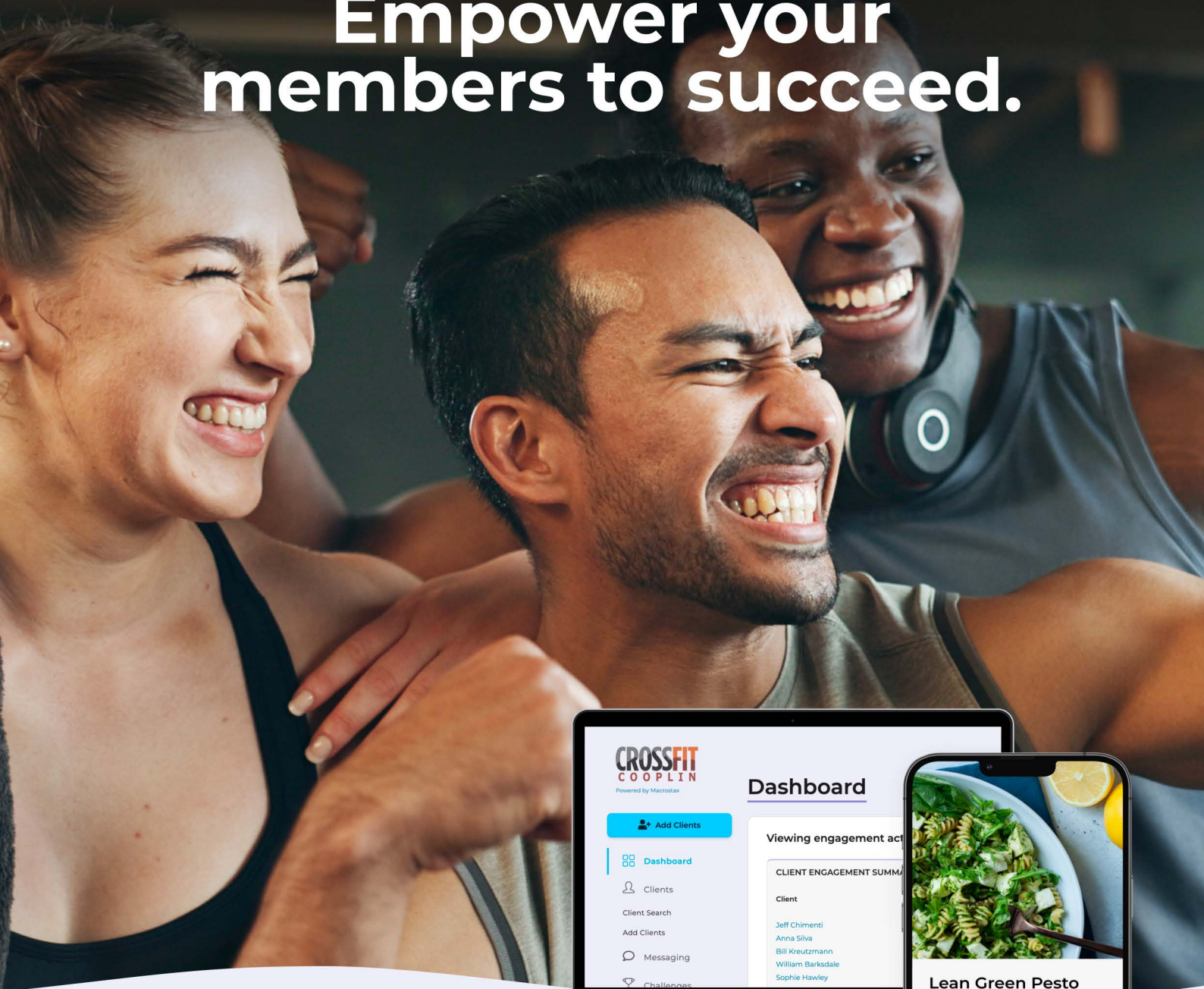
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GLP-1s are allowing individuals who have the disease of obesity to be on a level playing field. They have this extra tool that is helping them get to a place where they’re more in that category of individuals who, if they’re mindful about what they’re eating and exercising a little more, they will likely lose weight. It’s literally giving people hope who felt like they lost hope.”



Dr. Rachel Goldman
Clinical Assistant Professor, NYU
Grossman School of Medicine & Advisor, Ro

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MacroStax Brings Custom Nutrition to Gyms & Studios

by Athletech Studios

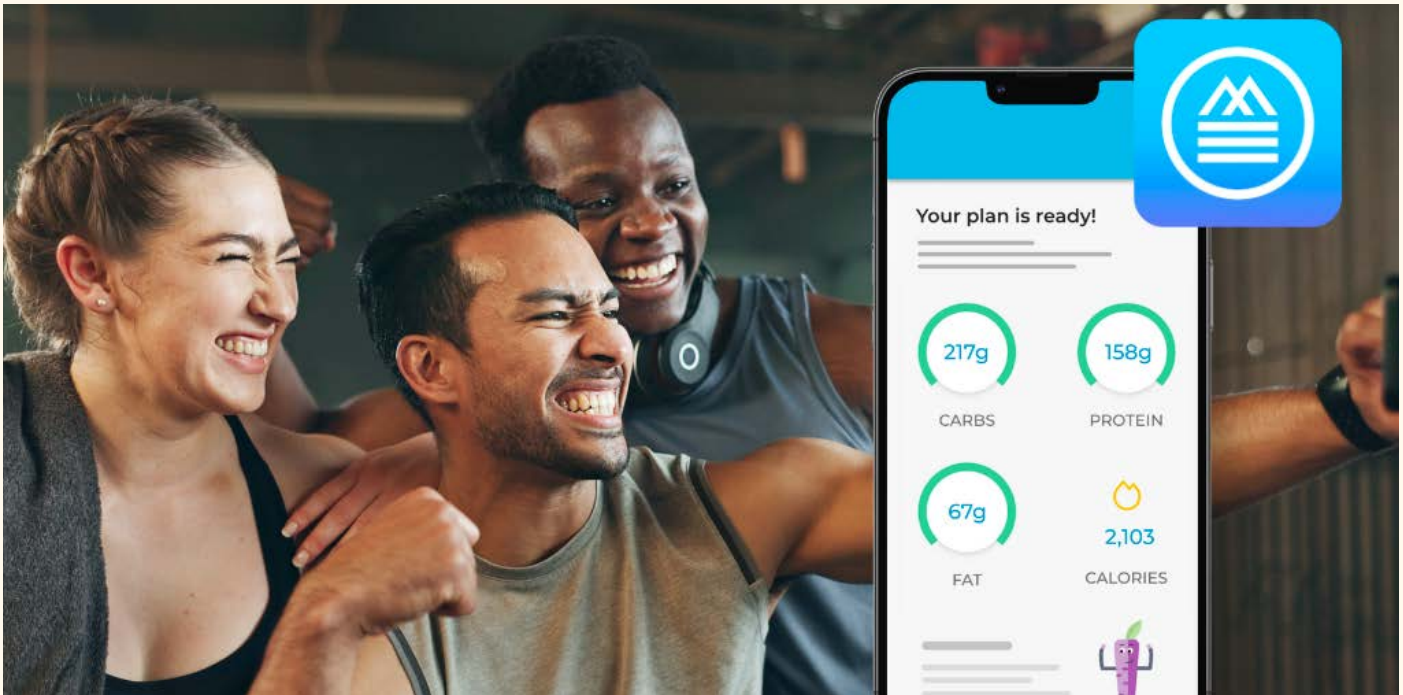


Photo courtesy of MacroStax

As a gym owner or trainer, you get the question, “How should I fuel my body to hit my goals” multiple times per week. With the consumer shift from looking to simply be fit to seeking overall health and wellness also comes an increased demand for nutritional information. But most gym personnel simply don’t have the time or resources to provide something as personal as nutrition coaching to every single member.

One option is to hire a nutritionist, but that can be costly, and staff members come and go. If you lose your nutritionist you lose this service, and you’re back to square one.

Lindsey Jenks knows this situation first-hand. Having owned two CrossFit gyms, she got nutrition-related questions daily.

“I felt like I was failing my clients because I couldn’t help support this crucial piece of my member’s fitness journeys,” she said.

As a competitive athlete herself, she struggled with finding the best ways to fuel her own body, until she applied macronutrients and it changed her life.

“I was able to get a handle on exactly what I should be eating to properly fuel my body and I got leaner and fitter, fast,” she said. “I wanted to bring this to other people, so I developed MacroStax – a simple way for people to get customized nutrition plans based on macros, as well as meal plans, direction and support.”

Jenks took MacroStax to the consumer market and has served nearly 200,000 members. For five years, she honed the app based on feedback and customer needs, and in 2022 she expanded her focus to B2B and launched MacroStax Team -- a software platform that complements the original app, but was built just for gyms and fitness franchises. They now have over 1,500 gyms across the US that have signed up including MADabolic, F45 Training, Orangetheory Fitness, Anytime Fitness and more -- and growing fast.”

“It’s a truly scalable software. The goal is to offer nutrition to members so the gym owners don’t need to do any work on that end if they don’t want to, or if they don’t feel they have the right nutrition expertise,” said Jenks.

Gyms See Real Results

With MacroStax Team, CrossFit 313 in Texas was able to achieve an extra \$27.6K in annual revenue, a 47% increase in total memberships and a 60% decrease in cancellations.

“You can’t put a price on our return on investment in MacroStax,” says the gym’s owner, Ashley Thompson. “Clients get better fitness, better performance and better everything.”

The additional value-adds for gyms are significant, as MacroStax provides a significant revenue stream while boosting acquisition and retention.

“I have a whole new source of income that has completely changed the game for me,” said Sami Aldinger, owner of boutique gym The Refinery in North Dakota.

MacroStax Team offers more features to gym owners than simply using the consumer app. With a Team subscription, they have control and flexibility over how nutrition is run in their gym including co-branding, automated nutrition challenges, instant messaging, and the ability to track individual and group usage and progress.

“In addition to helping members achieve their goals, and building community, the challenges impact acquisition and retention,” Jenks said. “We’ve seen multiple occurrences where a gym promotes the challenge on social media and it gets new members in the door.”

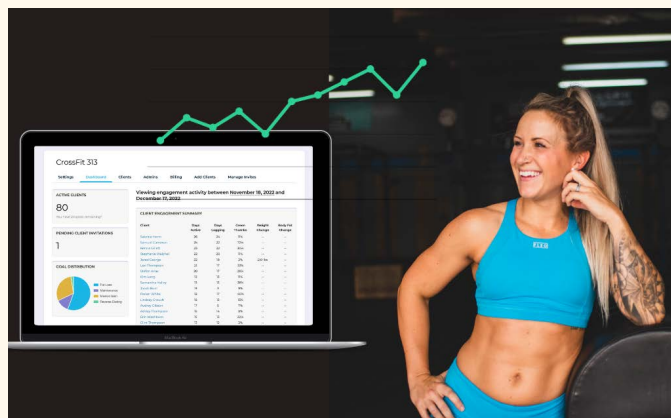


Photo courtesy of MacroStax

Easy To Onboard

How does MacroStax Team work? The answer is remarkably simple.

“The gym owner or fitness pro signs up, they are able to invite their clients, and MacroStax takes it from there, providing personal nutrition plans, recipes, plan tracking, nutrition coaching and more,” Jenks said.

To further ease any heavy lifting on the part of the gym, MacroStax offers robust marketing content including success stories with before and after content.

Gyms and trainers can also view members’ and clients’ progress and communicate with them about their

progress, a nice touchpoint opportunity that’s embedded in the app.

With a market full of health, wellness and nutrition apps, Jenks says it’s personalization and education that set MacroStax Team apart.

“

Other apps on the market are basically food trackers. MacroStax is educational. It includes coaching and support from our team of certified nutrition coaches. It includes custom meal plans based not only on the user’s macros but also their lifestyle.”



Lindsey Jenks
Founder & CEO, MacroStax

Go Beyond Simple Food Tracking

“Other apps on the market are basically food trackers,” she said. “MacroStax is educational. It includes coaching and support from our team of certified nutrition coaches. It includes custom meal plans based not only on the user’s macros but also their lifestyle. The app also has a portion feature that will take a recipe and auto portion it to hit the user’s exact macros.”

MADabolic, a fitness franchise with over 30 locations across the country, recently partnered up with MacroStax Team to incorporate custom nutrition as one of their evergreen membership offerings. Thanks to the software’s ease of use, they were able to successfully roll out the new program to their franchise locations in less than a couple of weeks

Jenks says MacroStax Team is built to scale and has the capacity to handle millions of users and thousands of gyms.

Jenks is also in talks with fitness tech companies about integrating directly with other types of software. Think gym management software plus MacroStax.

When asked about the future of MacroStax, Jenks points to consumer demand for wellness, not just fitness.

“Nutrition and fitness have always gone hand in hand, and now as consumers lean more into overall wellness, they want both from their fitness facility,” she said. “In the next five to ten years, every club around the globe will have some sort of customized nutrition for their clients, and that’s the gap we fill.”

Why Salt & Infrared Sauna Create the Ultimate Wellness Combo

by Athletech Studios

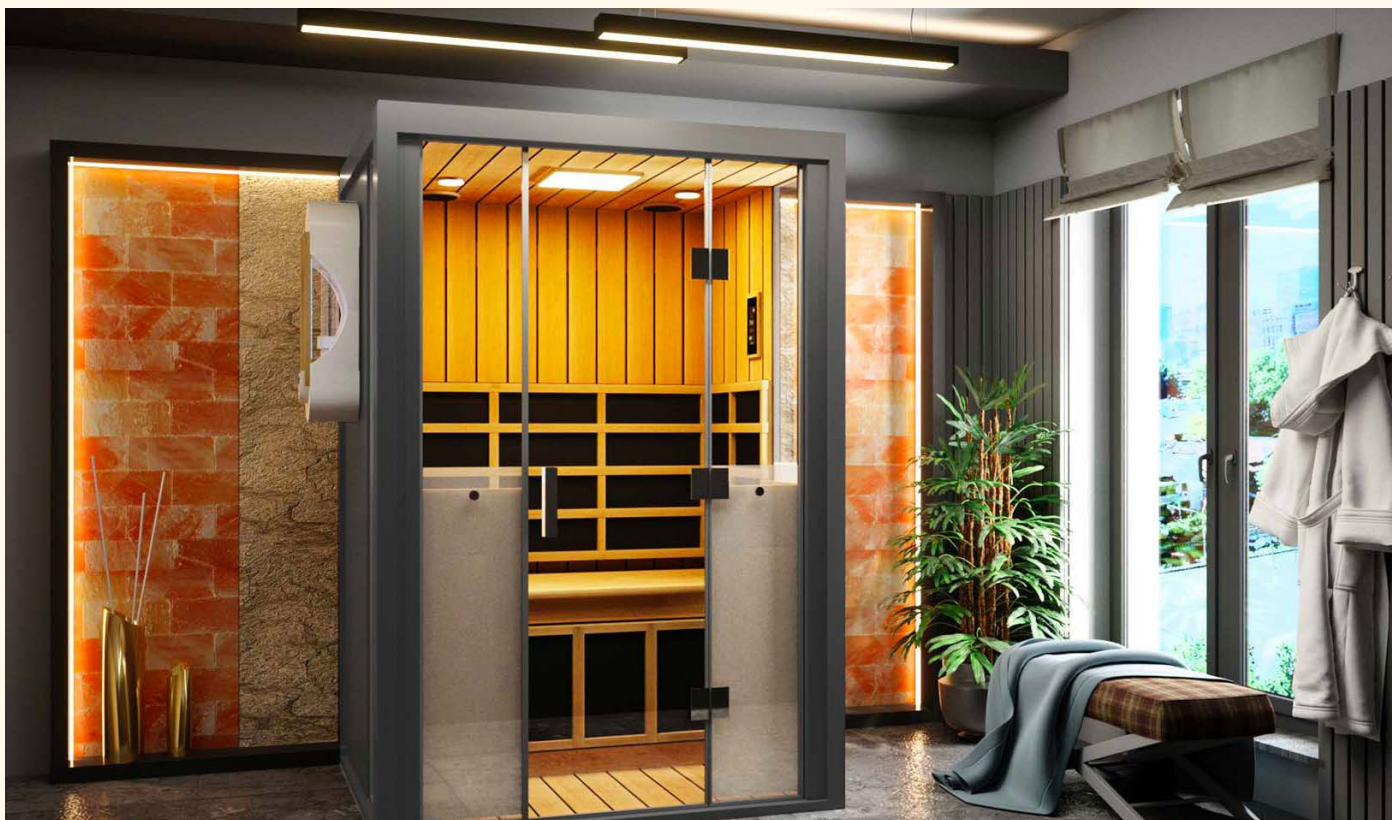


Photo courtesy of Halotherapy Solutions

Halotherapy Solutions gives users – and gyms looking to step up their recovery offerings – the best of both worlds when it comes to wellness – salt and sauna, to be exact.

Halotherapy Solutions' stand-out product in this regard, the HaloSauna, also known as the HaloIR™, is the only product on the market that integrates dry salt and infrared sauna therapy in the same unit, according to the brand.

“We spent years getting this product custom-engineered and have been selling it for four,” said Steven Spiro, CEO of Halotherapy Solutions. “It brings multiple modalities together synergistically in a relatively small footprint at a very reasonable cost.”

The HaloSauna separates itself from the pack not just with its unique combination of infrared sauna and salt therapy, but with its high-end utilization of both. The HaloSauna features far infrared light, which emits long-ranged infrared waves so no showers are required, making it the most efficient form of IR. But the full

spectrum upgrade is an option.

The HaloSauna takes you on a 5-sensory journey, with its medical-grade chromotherapy, aromatherapy, guided meditation through Bluetooth, the deep warmth of the infrared, and the subtle taste of the salt on your lips.

The Unique Benefits of Salt x Sauna

Sauna and salt therapy combine to help with breathing with skin conditions, blood circulation, muscle recovery, pain relief, stress or anxiety relief, detoxification and weight loss.

“A core benefit is to help people breathe better naturally,” said Spiro. “It’s great for those with seasonal allergies, asthma, COPD, and bronchitis. It’s also great for athletes who want to have healthier lungs to help with training, performance and recovery. Another core benefit is helping with skin conditions like psoriasis or eczema since pure pharmaceutical salt is anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial.”

Importantly, salt and sauna therapy have coefficient effects, making the HaloSauna exponentially beneficial.

“The combination of the two modalities is synergistic as the heat of the infrared causes the lungs to expand allowing the salt to penetrate and impact a larger surface area,” Spiro explained. “As the pores on the skin open up with the heat, the salt then gets deeper to help with skin inflammation.”

“

The best way to describe the growth of these modalities in the last few years is explosive. While the pandemic was obviously devastating in so many ways, the one positive result was that individuals became much more aware of the importance of self-care and preventive health. This has been especially true regarding respiratory health, hygiene and immunity — significantly contributing to the dramatic growth of salt therapy.”



Steven Spiro
CEO, Halotherapy Solutions

The Wellness ‘Explosion’

Halotherapy reports it has tripled its business since 2021. The brand credits that growth to next-gen innovative products like the HaloSauna and the patented Vitality Booth Plus (RLT & Salt), as well as a post-pandemic surge in demand for wellness.

“The best way to describe the growth of these modalities in the last few years is explosive,” said Spiro. “While the pandemic was obviously devastating in so many ways, the one positive result was that individuals became much more aware of the importance of self-care and preventive health. This has been especially true regarding respiratory health, hygiene and immunity — significantly contributing to the dramatic growth of salt therapy.”

The shockwave of this “explosion” has forced health and wellness operators to change the way they think about their business and its offerings.

“With the demand for wellness growing, ‘typical’ wellness facilities began to add more modalities like we offer,” Spiro added. “Plus, and maybe more significantly, ‘non-traditional’ facilities are evolving to become more ‘wellness centers.’ We’ve seen huge growth in a variety of verticals like spas, gyms, tanning salons, yoga

studios, wellness real estate communities, senior living, and more.”

Why Gyms Need Wellness

By giving members access to in-demand wellness amenities, gym and studio operators open the floodgates for new revenue streams. Through upgraded memberships or other points of access, operators can monetize Halotherapy products in a variety of ways, the brand says.

“If gyms are offering salt therapy, why not have it integrated with the very popular infrared sauna modality,” said Spiro. “If they are providing a sauna experience, why not add salt therapy as part of the experience? They will have happier, healthier customers and they will make more money.”

Gyms that already feature the HaloSauna and other Halotherapy devices have already seen notable results.

“Based on our participation at IRSHA earlier this year, and the many one-on-one calls from gyms of all sizes since then, we are more convinced than ever that the HaloSauna is a necessary addition for gyms in 2024 and beyond,” said Spiro. “Feedback has been incredible as facilities are telling us they have existing customers coming back more often, and they’ve seen an increase in new customers — both contributing to significant revenue growth.”



Photo courtesy of Halotherapy Solutions

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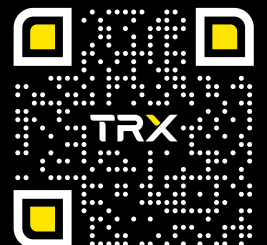
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The Rise of Wellness Franchises

by Courtney Rehfeldt



Photo courtesy of Next Health

If there's one thing that's become clear in the past three years, it's that franchises have expanded beyond fitness and show immense promise. The wellness revolution is in full swing, and the integration of artificial intelligence and advanced health technology is fueling the demand for personalized wellness solutions, setting wellness franchises apart from the rest.

Booking an appointment for an IV drip has become commonplace, and supplementing a healthy lifestyle with hormone replacement therapy or metabolic health solutions can all be found under one convenient roof.

With the global wellness economy valued at \$5.6 trillion and projected to hit \$8.5 trillion by 2027, it's no surprise that the future of wellness franchises looks bright. Numerous franchisors continue adding medical professionals to their teams in preparation for expected growth, while others have begun adding weight loss medication to their service menus. One leading fitness franchisor has branched out, adding a wellness-focused franchise to its portfolio to capitalize on the wellness revolution.

Here are some of the top contenders in the wellness franchise world, along with their vision and growth plans.

Xponential Enters the Wellness World

Boutique fitness franchisor Xponential Fitness got a head start on wellness last year when it acquired Lindora, a chain of 31 metabolic health and medically-guided weight loss clinics.

Now sitting comfortably within Xponential's vast portfolio of brands, Lindora has attracted early franchise partners of all areas of expertise, including former tech product specialists, entrepreneurs, CEOs and founders.

"Lindora has franchise agreements with owners from diverse backgrounds, including technology, software development, real estate, marketing and sales, personal training and finance," Lindora president Lou DeFrancisco shared. "This broad adoption underscores the appeal of the investment opportunity, aligning with Xponential's overarching network of owners."

DeFrancisco, who was StretchLab's president during its early growth stages, sees a similar trajectory for Lindora, considering its owner groups share a passion for health and wellness and enriching the lives of those within their communities.

"(Lindora) franchise owners see the value in the overall investment opportunity because of the increasing consumer demand for more holistic, integrated health and wellness services, the growing consumer awareness of the importance of longevity practices like improving one's metabolic health, as well as the confidence in Xponential's success in scaling boutique health and wellness brands while providing exceptional support," DeFrancisco said.

In addition to weight management programs and weight loss medications, Lindora offers hormone replacement therapy, IV hydration, laser treatments and more at its 30 clinics in Southern California and one up north in Washington. It's just the beginning for Lindora, as the metabolic health franchisor has multi-unit license agreements signed for Dallas, Boise, Idaho, Rochester, Buffalo, Atlanta, Chicago and Portland.

Xponential is also building on Lindora's offerings, currently expanding hormone replacement therapy and testosterone replacement therapy (subject to a prescription and available through recurring memberships) at its clinics.



Photo courtesy of Serotonin Centers

Anti-Aging & Longevity Franchises Emerge

Serotonin Centers, named after the feel-good hormone, is enjoying growth mode as anti-aging and longevity become a priority.

Founded by Eric Casaburi, the founder of gym franchise Retro Fitness and podcast host of "Aging Backward, Growing Forward," Serotonin Centers has burst onto the scene with a bevy of wellness and aesthetic treatments such as hormone replacement and optimization, IV drip therapy, medical weight loss, hair restoration, CoolSculpting, Botox and Hydrafacials, red light and hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

The med-spa brand, which includes licensed medical practitioners and personal health coaches to provide personalized prescriptive plans, has 100 franchises open and under development. The franchise plans to expand

to Chicago's DuPage County, New Jersey, Florida, Virginia, Missouri and North Carolina.

Most recently, Serotonin Centers announced it finalized a development deal for an upcoming center in San Diego in the Del Mar area, expected to open in early 2025. Behind the new center is an ownership group of four practicing physicians and a dentist who will operate the med-spa.

"From the start, Serotonin has been intent on helping men and women take control of their lives, optimize their health and enjoy the aging process while simultaneously looking and feeling their best," said Casaburi. "The show of support that the franchise has seen from entrepreneurs and consumers alike has only fortified that determination, and verified that ours is a mission the public has long been awaiting."

Los Angeles-based Next Health, catering to health optimization and longevity, plans to open over 150 locations by the end of 2027 and is planning to enter Dubai.

Next Health has taken wellness to the next level, offering popular services such as cryotherapy, IV and peptide therapy, vitamin shots, programs for hormone and weight optimization and aesthetics but also biomarker testing, ozone therapy, an "Executive Physical" and therapeutic plasma exchange.

The \$14,500 Executive Physical provides a comprehensive health assessment that examines 1,000 health and longevity markers with advanced bloodwork and takes clients through a TruAge test, a full-body MRI, a chest CT and InBody analysis to detect diseases and potential health concerns. Clients then receive personalized recommendations and undergo quarterly baseline tests.

"Our brand's promise is, no matter where or how a customer engages with Next Health, they'll have access to the latest and best wellness technology and treatments available," Next Health co-founders Dr. Darshan Shah and Kevin Peake said in a joint statement. The two founded Next Health in 2016, which now has locations in the Four Seasons Resort Maui, West Hollywood, Century City, Studio City and New York City.

Earlier this year, the white glove health services franchise announced it partnered with Dr. Thomas Philips, a board-certified orthopedic surgeon, in a multi-unit area development agreement for four locations in Southern Florida. Next Health will also open in Nashville and Montecito, California.

Wellness Therapies Become Common Nationwide

Boutique wellness franchisor Restore Hyper Wellness, having expanded to over 225 locations with plans to scale to 500 locations in the next five years, began the year with the launch of a weight management program that integrates popular weight loss medications.



Photo courtesy of Restore Hyper Wellness

As Restore experiences domestic growth, the franchisor also sees overseas potential.

“The exciting thing about our business is the need states we’re addressing are universal,” Restore co-founder and CEO Steve Welch said. “This is not an American problem or a Canadian problem. This is worldwide.”

Welch is invigorated by the shift towards wellness, sharing that Restore is proactive with its expert guidance and therapies such as biomarker assessments, IV drips, intramuscular shots, mild hyperbaric oxygen therapy, whole body and localized cryotherapy, infrared sauna, red light therapy, compression, HydraFacial, Circadia and Cryoskin.

“Over the last eight years, we have provided over five million therapy services and learned that Americans want to take control of their health,” Welch said. “They are hungry to understand how to make change.”

Pause Studio, a wellness sanctuary one-stop for IV drips, infrared saunas, cryotherapy, LED light, float therapy, compression and NAD+, has a presence in California with several locations and is expanding to Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee and Iowa.

Founded by Jeff Ono and John Klein, two former Equinox executives, Pause encourages clients to take a breather and “press pause” within the calming walls of its studios.

The wellness franchise has also been tapped to add to the health-focused, mixed-use landscape in Oakland Park, Florida, along with Pure Barre and women’s boutique retailer Monkees.

“Pause Studio stands as a peaceful retreat within Oaklyn, fostering a comprehensive approach to well-being,” said Meghan Linville, a director at Newrock Partners, a real estate development community. “With a diverse array of practices, it embodies our commitment to creating a tranquil space where patrons and visitors to the campus can nurture both mind and body, promoting inner balance and rejuvenation.”

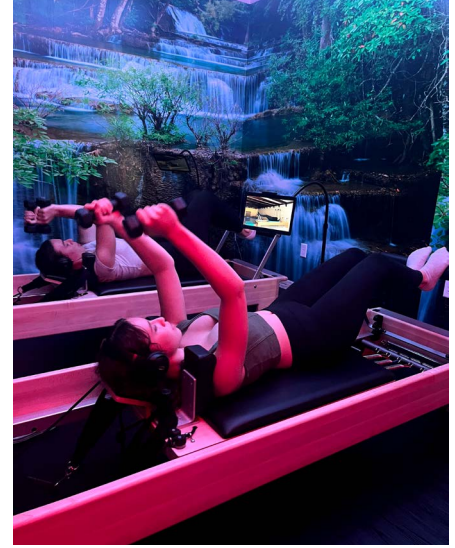
Pause expects to open 200 locations over the next four

“

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Eric Casaburi
Founder & CEO, Serotonin Centers



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Connect With Allison Beardsley Directly Allison@RedLightMethod.com

For Wellness JK, Recovery Is the New Retention

by Athletech Studios

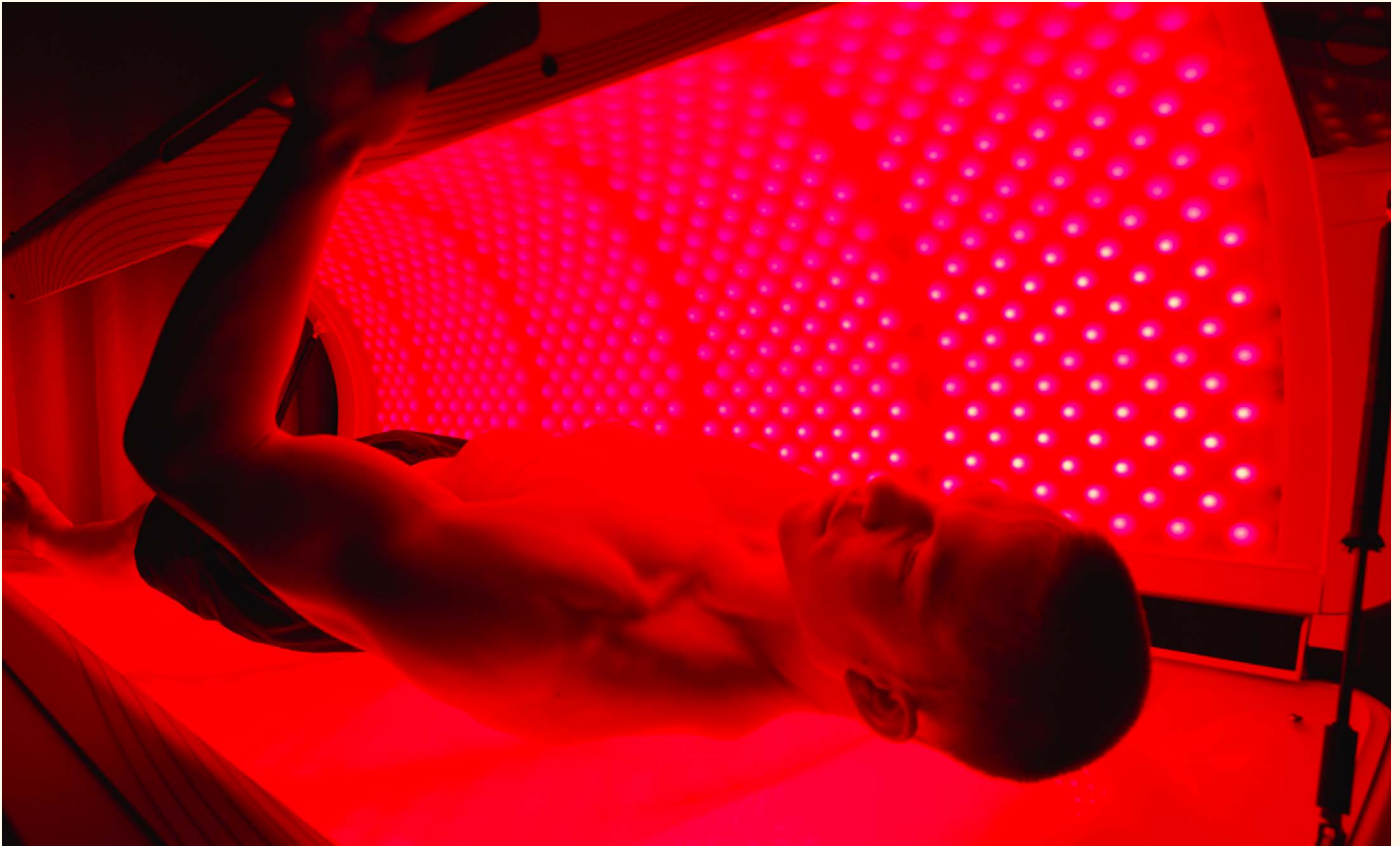


Photo courtesy of Wellness JK

Products, modalities, franchises and programming that facilitate longevity and recovery are exploding in prevalence and popularity, infiltrating the fitness industry at a robust pace.

Gyms and studios that don't offer wellness options will be overlooked. It's become a non-negotiable with members and consumers as a whole.

For a gym that's looking to build out its wellness space, several considerations must be taken into account. What will be the best fit for your members and best address lifespan, healthspan, recovery, and all the things that consumers are demanding? What equipment can be turned over fast and give you the best return? What can you offer that's 'sticky' enough to keep people coming back – even when they don't want to work out? How will you handle any operational complexities that come with running a wellness space?

With all of the new brands and products flooding the

market in this space, it can help to choose a company that has some longevity of its own. Founded in 1927, JK Products & Services has steadily expanded its influence, emerging as a national and global market leader in lifestyle, wellness and tanning.

“Our years of experience and evolution have landed us in the forefront of light spectrum technology,” said Brynn Scarborough, the company's President & Chief Executive Officer. “We have learned over time how to offer our partners solutions that require minimal operational resources and run at a high level of profitability. We also know how to create customer loyalty, and we lean into these benchmarks as we lead the way in the wellness space with our Wellness JK brand.”

Wellness JK offers smart and innovative solutions in the way of red light and near-infrared products, infrared sauna and automated massage.

Recovery Is the New Retention

“For years in the fitness space, the mentality has been no pain, no gain and go hard or go home,” Scarborough says. “Now consumers are looking to the industry to offer the juxtaposition to that - exertion followed by recovery that’s efficient and repeatable.”

This, according to Scarborough, is why Wellness JK sees and treats recovery like the new retention.

“If your space offers equipment that makes people feel rejuvenated, relaxed, less sore, and also offers anti-aging effects, this becomes the thing that gets people through the door on days they would not show up,” she says. “It is the thing causing people to hold onto their membership if they are dabbling in other facilities, and it is the thing that is helping gyms steal wallet share.”

How do Wellness JK products achieve this?

“We take great experiences and heighten them,” says Scarborough. “If you think about a standard automated massage and then heighten it to a full sensory immersion with aromatherapy, sound, and the benefits of water, it becomes something members crave. It’s also something consumers can’t purchase online or replicate at home.”

“

For years in the fitness space, the mentality has been no pain, no gain and go hard or go home. Now consumers are looking to the industry to offer the juxtaposition to that - exertion followed by recovery that’s efficient and repeatable.”



Brynn Scarborough
President & CEO, JK Products
and Services (Wellness JK)

Creating ‘Stickiness’

Scarborough explains that Wellness JK has a long history of providing quality equipment that stands the test of time and also encourages repeat use, which she says comes from the company’s background in UV tanning.

“We’ve been able to carry many best practices forward to deliver not just recovery products but premium amenities for consumers,” she says. “Our products have that level of stickiness (customer retention and loyalty) that brings people in, keeps them coming back and drives the value of a facility’s existing services up.”

She also points to the company’s history when it comes to red light therapy.

“Wellness JK was one of the first companies to come out with full body red light equipment fifteen years ago before the conversation of red light had even started,” she said. “We’ve been evolving the technology for almost two decades and the new REVIVE PRO IR laydown bed truly optimizes the delivery and efficacy of red light therapy.”

Driving ROI

For fitness facilities, a colossal factor in developing a wellness space is determining the resources it will take to run it smoothly.

This, Scarborough says, is where Wellness JK shines.

“Our equipment is designed to give operators the ability to incorporate this amenity and address the massive consumer demand for recovery without adding operational complexity of staff and overhead and maintenance that other services might,” she says.

This focus on ease of operations and quality equipment that’s easy to maintain is what drives ROI.

“The cost per session is nearly nothing, and it’s a service people are willing to commit to,” she explains. “They will get in their car and drive to your location to receive this service, and that’s what it takes in this market.”

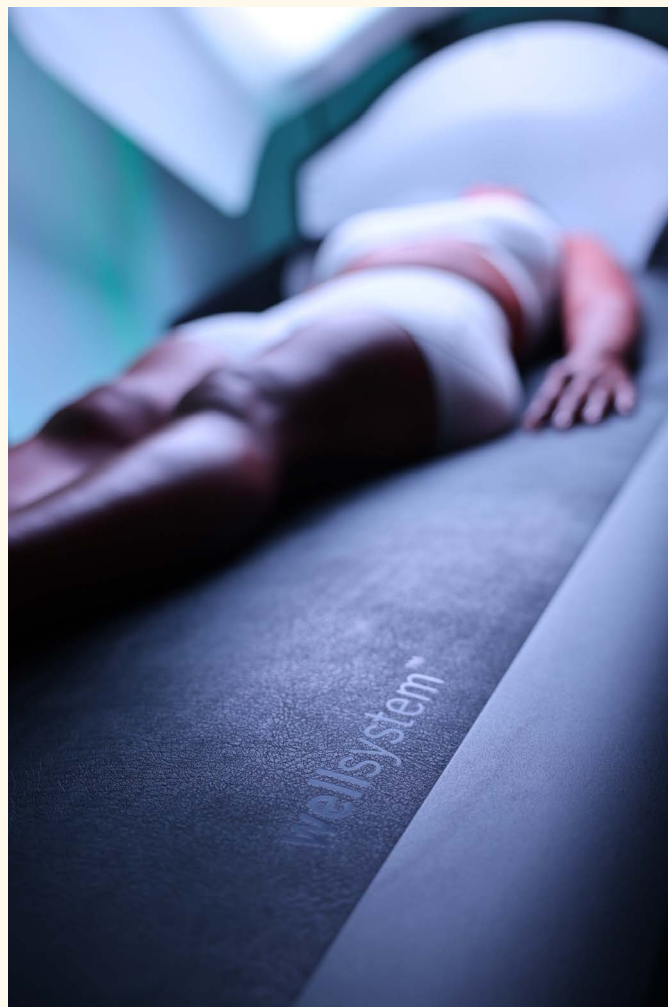


Photo courtesy of Wellness JK

Wellness Redefined: The Fitness Industry's New Focus

by Joy Keller



Photo courtesy of Ground Picture/shutterstock.com

Personal training is about much more than writing a detailed program with sets, reps and nutrition tips. Trainers learn early on in their careers that setting exercise goals with clients is the easy part. The hard part is that traditional programming only considers one dimension of wellness – physical – and optimal wellness requires a more holistic approach.

According to the National Wellness Institute, wellness is “functioning optimally within your current environment,” and the organization promotes six key dimensions: physical, emotional, spiritual, occupational, intellectual and social when considering wellness programs.

Over the years, the fitness industry has learned from its collective ineffectiveness in successfully addressing the obesity epidemic, recognizing that more needs to be done to help the “whole person.”

One thing hasn't changed – people need health guidance more than ever, and personal training brands from all corners of the sector have taken notice and are taking steps to embed wellness principles into their products and services.

The Rise of Wellness

The size of the wellness market worldwide stood at \$5.61 trillion in 2022, according to Statista. This figure was projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 8.6%, reaching an estimated \$8.47 trillion by 2027.

To put this into perspective, in 2022, the wellness market was significantly larger than the gross domestic product (GDP) of India, which was approximately \$3.17 trillion. That's like saying the wellness market is nearly 1.8 times the size of India's economy.



Photo courtesy of Snap Fitness

Consumers are expecting more than just rote exercise routines from their gym or studio experience, and they're open to trying new things. Bill Davis, CEO of ABC Fitness, told Athletech News that "the average active consumer has a high 'wellness IQ' and is interested in new modalities," citing data from the company's January 2024 Innovation Report.

"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 shared. "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."

Workplace Wellness & A New Approach to 'Fitness'

One approach that touches on more than one wellness dimension comes from corporate wellness giant Wellhub, with an indirect focus on the occupational aspect, among others. Wellhub CEO and co-founder Cesar Carvalho told Athletech News that \$55 billion of the global wellness economy is spent directly on workplace wellness.

"We're pursuing a much bigger market – not just fitness but delivering a corporate wellness platform that connects employees to the best partners across all the verticals of wellness – fitness, mindfulness, therapy, nutrition and sleep," said Carvalho.

Wellhub (which rebranded from Gympass to more fully embrace the wellness movement) has seen "tremendous growth," according to its CEO, who shared that healthy habits and mental health were two of the platform's fastest-growing categories in 2023, up 111% and 74%, respectively.

Fitness franchise Snap Fitness, founded in 2003, distinguished itself from traditional full-service gyms by offering "affordable, fast and convenient workout spaces." Since then, the company has shifted its focus to the positive effects of physical fitness on one's overall wellness by emphasizing the intrinsic benefits, such as increased energy, reduced stress, improved mood, boosted mental health and enhanced self-confidence.

In an interview for Athletech News, Snap Fitness CEO Ty Menzies said that when he repositioned the brand following the pandemic, he hired a consulting firm to help them better understand their members.

“Everything we were seeing was before-and-after photos, ‘harder, faster, stronger’ and ‘no pain, no gain,’” he said. “That’s very performance-driven language which can be quite daunting for a lot of people who are new to the gym space. We saw an opportunity ... (to focus) on exercise from the perspective of how it makes you feel, not just how it makes you look.”

From the mental/emotional dimension perspective, wellness platform Headspace launched a one-on-one text-based subscription service with a mental health coach to help users tackle the pain points of everyday life.

“The reality is that mental health is not linear; in fact, it’s quite the opposite,” Jenna Glover, Ph.D., chief clinical officer of Headspace, explained.

“One day, a person may feel like they can manage anxious thoughts with a simple breathing exercise,” she said. “The next day, they may need to unpack a mountain of emotions. Mental health coaches adeptly assist people in navigating these emotional waves, offering tailored guidance, practical strategies and curated resources to forge a path forward.”

Education Providers Offer Wellness Certs

Fitness certification providers have had wellness in their sights for a few years now, and have been developing courses and specialty certifications, among other initiatives, to keep fitness professionals up to date with key changes in the market.

The International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) offers a range of options in the wellness category, including a health coach certification, life coaching, DNA-based fitness coach and a certified transformation specialization, which teaches fitness professionals how to “effectively coach and influence behavioral patterns for improved physical, mental and emotional well-being.”

In an interview with Athletech News, ISSA CEO Warren Heffelfinger said his strategic vision for ISSA includes expanding the organization’s curriculum into new and emerging fields of wellness.

“I think we’ve learned more about wellness in the past decade than we did the previous 100 years,” Heffelfinger said. “We’ve seen a remarkable evolution in what constitutes wellness—from basic nutrition and exercise to a holistic approach that encompasses mind, body and spirit.”

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) is also looking at ways to highlight wellness. ACE President and Chief Science Officer Cedric X Bryant said that ACE “characterizes wellness by the active pursuit of lifestyle choices that lead to and support a state of holistic health.”

Bryant added that wellness is multifaceted and is something that everyone should strive for in their daily lives.

“The benefits of health coaches incorporating a holistic approach to health and fitness include the ability to create personalized programs that are tailored to the unique needs, preferences and goals of each client, improved mental health, sustainable lifestyle changes and a deeper client-trainer relationship.”

The National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) offers a comprehensive wellness educational suite to personal trainers, including the Certified Wellness Coach, Nutrition Coach and a Behavior Change specialization. Late last year, NASM introduced a mindful drinking course, which was the first continuing education course under the organization’s growing wellness portfolio.

Mallory Fox, DHSc, NASM product marketing manager and a NASM-certified wellness coach told Athletech News that the course helps her give her clients more options.

“Clients often abstain from alcohol as a means to reach their fitness goals; however, when clients feel restricted, they’re more likely to struggle on their journey,” Fox said. “Arming my clients with flexibility and choice helps them reach their goals in a holistic, sustainable way.”

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) offers many professional resources for personal trainers to explore the myriad realms of wellness, including becoming certified as a national board-certified health and well-being coach via its strategic alliance with Wellcoaches, an accredited coach training program founded in 2000.

There’s plenty of evidence that the fitness industry is embracing a more comprehensive approach to wellness, addressing not just physical fitness but also emotional, mental and social well-being. As consumers demand more holistic health solutions, fitness brands are innovating and expanding their offerings to meet people where they are and take them to where they want to be.

“

I think we’ve learned more about wellness in the past decade than we did the previous 100 years. We’ve seen a remarkable evolution in what constitutes wellness—from basic nutrition and exercise to a holistic approach that encompasses mind, body and spirit.”



Warren Heffelfinger
CEO, ISSA



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Backed by science, driven by technology, and born from ancient healing practices, Perspire Sauna Studio is the leading infrared sauna franchise in wellness. Perspire meets the modern consumer's demand for a science-backed regimen that feels incredible, promotes preventative wellness and recovery, and improves mental and physical well-being. With an intentionally simple model focused on delivering infrared sauna, red light therapy, and contrast therapy, the studios are labor-light and customer experience-focused.

HIGHLIGHTS

- \$5.6T global wellness economy
- Labor light, no special licenses required
- 59 Open Studios, 92% System Wide Multi-Unit Ownership
- Over 200 territories Awarded
- 1,400 - 1,800 sq. ft. studio
- Proprietary custom commercial infrared saunas + medical grade red light therapy (RLT)
- Proprietary custom commercial SNØ Shower, available in contrast therapy suites
- Scientifically-backed health benefits: Mental relaxation, better sleep, reduced inflammation, improved immunity, detoxification, improved skin health, passive cardiovascular conditioning

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Low ~ \$261K
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BellSant Is Revolutionizing the Way We Track Health & Longevity

by Athletech Studios

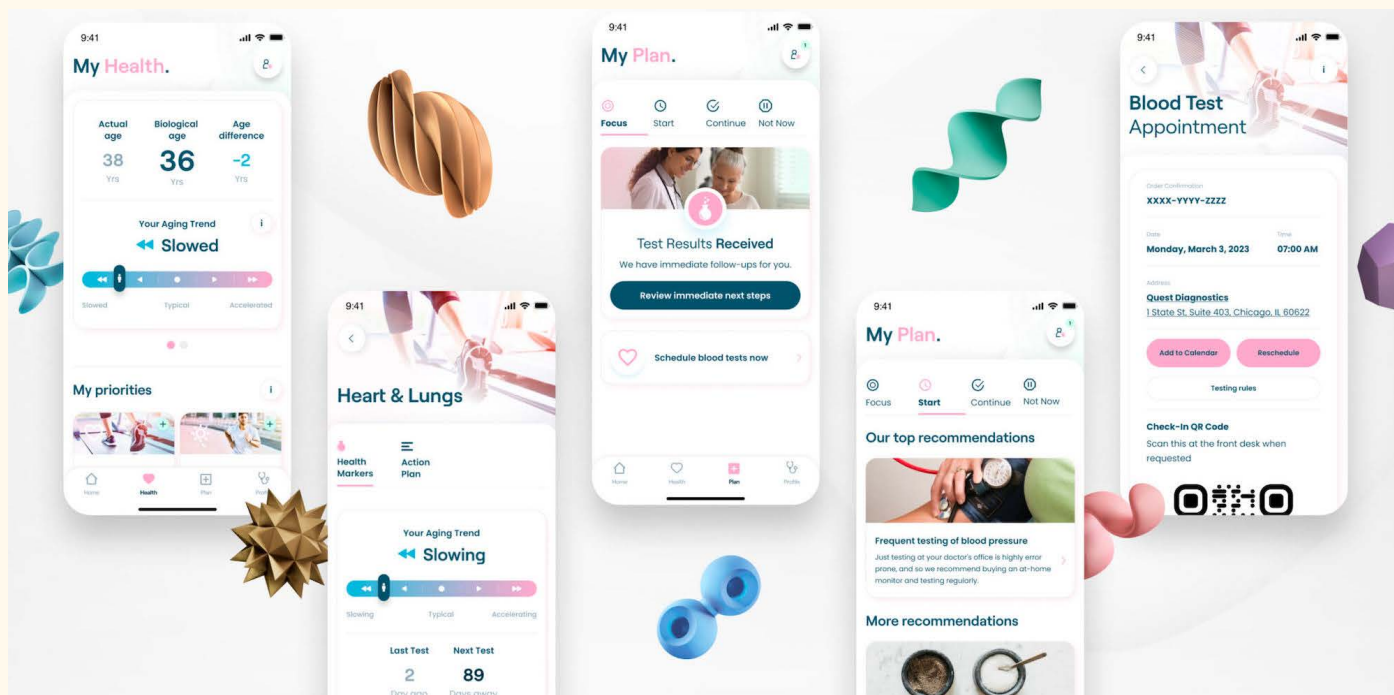


Photo courtesy of BellSant

BellSant, the comprehensive digital health service, didn't waste any time upgrading its platform after its initial launch. The brand's application debuted in November, but now after a few short months, has a more refined version out, headlined by new features such as peer comparison data and trends.

"Our launch version focused on establishing the core science for assessing how over 90 key markers of health are connected to longevity and healthspan," said Rick Bowman, BellSant co-founder and Head of Product. "Now, we're responding to member and advisor feedback. We have over 24 researchers at 17 universities that advise us on the highest quality science. We have two leading behavioral scientists on that team who have pointed to the evidence on the effectiveness of peer comparison."

BellSant helps users live healthier lives by providing science-based feedback on their exercise, nutrition and daily habits after they undergo blood, physical and mental tests every three to six months. Feedback from those tests is now being coupled with peer comparison data to provide a more instructive look at users' health and wellness.

When It Comes to Health, Ignorance Isn't Bliss

Peer comparison data points include VO2 Max, LDL Cholesterol levels and all other biomarkers. A user's results are compared to those of healthy people in their age range and then depicted on a scale that shows whether or not improvement is needed.

"We are all driven by comparison, and many times, it can be hard to understand with various health markers what a great level is," said Bowman. "Since many lab markers and other health markers are just assessed against the 'normal' levels, often broadly defined as the levels that 95% of the population across all age groups, it's hard to understand what levels you could use to truly understand if you are in optimal health."

BellSant references over 200 peer-reviewed papers to find the optimal levels of biomarkers for longevity.

"We also include peer comparisons to give you a sense of how many healthy Americans achieve these target levels," Bowman says.

This data is backed by BellSant's analysis of nutrient markers like Vitamin D and Vitamin B12, a full iron panel,

full thyroid panel, cortisol, lipids and immune system markers. The brand also guides members through full physical strength assessments.

“We help wellbeing enthusiasts wanting to understand their health through a comprehensive lens,” explained Bowman. “By starting at the top with quarterly biological age calculations based on blood testing, then going deeper into eleven key health systems spanning physical and mental health, BellSant provides a single and integrated view of your health. We will guide each user through a personal journey to improve or maintain those markers year after year.”



We help wellbeing enthusiasts wanting to understand their health through a comprehensive lens. By starting at the top with quarterly biological age calculations based on blood testing, then going deeper into eleven key health systems spanning physical and mental health, BellSant provides a single and integrated view of your health.”



Rick Bowman
Co-Founder & Head of Product, BellSant

The Ultimate Health Tool

Going the extra mile when it comes to data puts BellSant a level above other digital health services – it also drives long-term engagement.

“Platforms that rely on limited data points are a challenge. After a couple months, focusing just on heart rate or just on glucose levels, people lose interest,” Bowman said. “At BellSant, we’re pulling together all of the highest quality measurements of human health, ranging from assessing your physical strength, mental outlook, and the range of your body’s systems using high-quality in-lab blood testing, connectivity with wearable and at-home health devices, and guided self-assessments.”

Even as individuals wait for their monthly exam results to come in, BellSant provides them with additional data with which to motivate themselves. This new “dynamic scoring” illustrates BellSant’s ability to cover all healthcare gaps as a robust tool.

“Our new dynamic scoring allows you to dive into any area of your health and get assessed with early signals

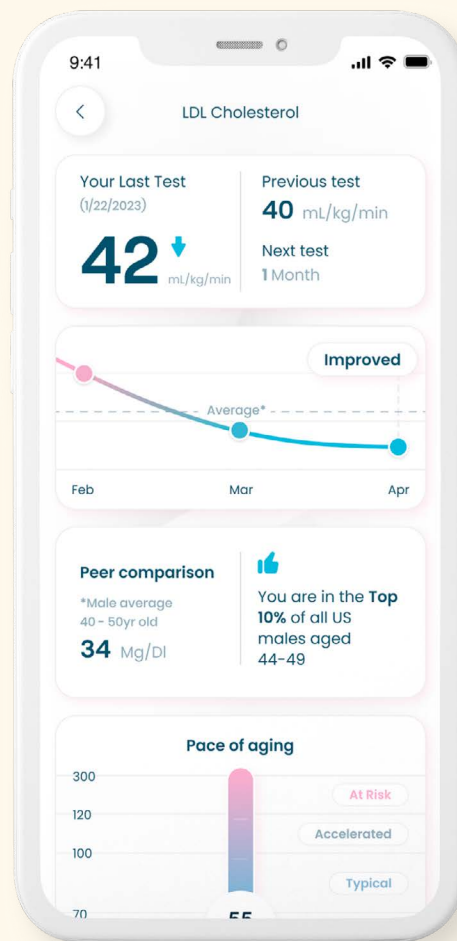
as you wait on other information like lab data,” Bowman explained. “Trend analysis allows you to see how your various markers are changing over time. We also have a new biological age detail that makes it easy to understand and track the 9 key blood markers across health systems that go into this scientifically validated test.”

These new, engaging features have already been well-received – BellSant’s app boasts a near-perfect rating.

“We’re proud of our 4.9-star rating on the Apple App Store,” said Bowman. “I think new users are really struck by the time and energy we’ve spent crafting a beautiful and compelling experience, developing bespoke content, and the richness of our analysis. For the first time, our members have a central roadmap for their health available any time in their pocket.”

BellSant plans to continue upgrading its app to better educate members on their fitness levels, tapping artificial intelligence (AI) to do so.

“In addition to implementing broader and more comprehensive screenings based on major clinical health guidelines, we’re working on a number of other exciting features,” said Bowman. “Members will soon have a secure and HIPAA-compliant AI virtual assistant that understands their personal health markers and action plan, and can help provide additional insight and guidance on how to adopt and sustain habits and goals.”



Can Personalized Nutrition Solve America's Health Crisis?

by Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of Bioniq

As the longevity movement takes hold, it's not just infrared saunas, cold plunge and cryotherapy that are making waves.

Wellness-focused Americans are placing a greater emphasis on the things they put into their bodies, whether that be food or supplements. As those in the United States continue to grow weary of the shortcomings of our modern healthcare system, more and more people are coming around to the idea that “food is medicine.”

Amid this backdrop, personalized nutrition has emerged as a new category, one that may help people live better, for longer.

Athletech News breaks down some of the key players in the personalized nutrition space, including telenutrition, healthy eating apps and new-age supplement companies.

The Rise of Telenutrition

Eating “healthy” may seem simple on the surface, but the complications and stressors of daily life, a lack of education and individual genetic differences make maintaining proper nutrition much more challenging in practice.

According to the USDA, more than 100 million Americans are suffering from preventable chronic diseases linked to poor nutrition and physical inactivity. Many Americans don't know where to start, or how to sort out the complex and oftentimes conflicting dietary advice they're fed on social media and in news articles.

Telenutrition – the practice of connecting people with registered dietitians (RDs) through virtual platforms like Zoom – has emerged as one way to help America out of its nutrition-induced health crisis. Investors are highly bullish on space, as are many health experts.

Earlier this year, Nourish raised \$35 million in a Series A funding round, bringing the company's total funding to \$44 million since its inception in 2021.

The New York-based telenutrition startup offers Americans access to RDs through their healthcare plan, drastically lowering the costs of obtaining expert nutrition advice.

“Our goal is to create a win-win-win for patients, providers, and payers,” said Sam Perkins, co-founder, president and COO of Nourish. “For patients, we unlock access to personalized nutrition care that has historically been limited to a subset that can afford to spend thousands of dollars out-of-pocket. For RDs, we remove

the barriers to accepting insurance, enabling them to focus on patients and building their practices rather than administrative tasks and paperwork. For payers, we're providing access to a high-quality dietitian network and virtual nutrition platform to measure and improve clinical outcomes."

Nourish is also developing technology to incorporate "food as medicine" into its program, essentially allowing registered dietitians to "prescribe" diets for patients.

Fay, another startup that connects Americans with RDs covered by their health insurance, raised \$20 million in a Series A round announced earlier this year, bringing its total funds raised to \$25 million.

Founded by Sammy Faycurry and Mark Stefanski in 2022, Fay currently has over 1,000 health insurance providers on its platform and is projected to exceed 2,000 by 2025. Registered dietitians on the Fay platform cover more than 30 specialties including eating disorders, diabetes, kidney disease, weight management, gut health and general preventative care.

"For too long, access to diet and nutrition care has been gate-kept by prohibitively high costs and inability to access RDs who accept insurance," said Faycurry, who serves as Fay's CEO. "Fay was born from the belief that everyone deserves access to expert care – allowing the majority of Americans to have easy and convenient access to life-changing nutrition counseling."

Faycurry, a Harvard Business School grad whose mother and sister are both registered dietitians, believes telenutrition platforms like Fay could hold the key to helping America out of its chronic-disease predicament.

"This is a critical moment for nutrition in America, as is evidenced by half of adults with one or more preventable conditions linked to eating patterns, changing consumer sentiment around better-for-you products, and increasing use of medications and invasive procedures," Faycurry told Athletech News. "Demand for help with diet and better nutrition has been surging for a while, with no realistic product in the market that was clinically proven and affordable. We're excited to be that solution in a market that has needed it for far too long."

With the funding, Fay plans to build out its platform with new features, including ones that would make it easier for Americans to obtain healthy food.

"An example of this is food service delivery integration with our platform," Faycurry says.

Making Healthy Eating Fun & Accessible

Expert advice on nutrition is important, but so too is motivation and adherence.

Lifesum, a popular healthy eating platform with over 60 million users worldwide, seeks to make it easy – even fun — for people to make smart food choices.

“

This is a critical moment for nutrition in America, as is evidenced by half of adults with one or more preventable conditions linked to eating patterns, changing consumer sentiment around better-for-you products, and increasing use of medications and invasive procedures. Demand for help with diet and better nutrition has been surging for a while, with no realistic product in the market that was clinically proven and affordable.”



Sammy Faycurry
Founder and CEO, Fay

Founded in 2013 by tech entrepreneurs with experience in online entertainment, including a former Spotify executive, the app features a slick user interface and offers tools like calorie and macronutrient tracking, meal plan templates and diet plans, and sleep and activity tracking through integrations with Apple Health, Google Fit and Oura.

"Our north star is to make it easier for people to understand what healthy eating means to them, empowering them to make better choices that allow them to live life to the fullest," explained Marcus Gners, Lifesum's co-founder and CIO.

As the longevity movement takes hold, Gners reports that many Lifesum users now view nutrition as a means to improve their overall health and performance rather than just as a way to shed pounds.

"People still want to manage their weight, but we see an increased interest in our functionality that gives more nuance to the impact nutrition has beyond the standard fueling process," Gners said. "For example, we see increased interest in the role nutrition can play in improving mental health, athletic performance and sleep."

In a longevity-focused move, Lifesum acquired Lykon, an at-home biomarker testing company, earlier this year. With the deal, Lifesum users will soon be able to track and monitor their health with at-home biomarker tests, combining those insights with nutrition for a powerful one-two punch.

Lifesum CEO Markus Falk called the move a "game-changer" for the healthy eating platform.

“Combining biomarkers with innovative technology enables personalized supplements and coaching to truly empower people to take care of their health,” added Lykon founder and CEO Tobias Teuber. “Joining forces with Lifesum allows us to provide consumers with unparalleled insights (into) their health.”

Supplement Brands Change the Narrative

Supplements often get a bad rap as overhyped or downright ineffective, but a few innovative brands are looking to alter that perception through the power of personalization.

Founded in 2017 by Eric Ji Sun Wu and Jahaan Ansari, Gainful is one of the pioneers and market leaders in the personalized supplement and nutrition space.

After an online quiz where customers are asked information about their background and health goals, Gainful recommends a monthly shipment of products tailored to a user’s unique profile, including protein powder, pre-workout, creatine, fiber, collagen, hydration and greens powder. Gainful customers also get one-on-one access to registered dietitians for further personalized support.

Dean Kelly, a former Walmart ecommerce exec who took over as Gainful’s CEO in 2023, believes providing a deeply personalized experience is what sets Gainful apart from the many other brands selling protein powders, creatine and pre-workout blends.

“I view personalization as the feeling that a customer gets at the end of their experience with Gainful that makes them feel as if ‘Gainful is for me,’” Kelly told Athletech News. “And it’s not only because of the products we’re recommending; the way that we talk to you is unique to you. We also bring in expert guidance from real RDs to help our customers with nutrition. It’s completely personalized, so it’s a real person responding to real people with real questions.”

Gainful raised \$7.5 million in a Series A round in 2021, which allowed the brand to expand beyond protein and into other supplements. In 2023, it struck a deal with Target to bring its personalized supplement blends into the retail giant’s brick-and-mortar stores.

Looking ahead, Kelly has said Gainful is looking to raise another \$20-30 million so it can make a bigger push into retail and expand its product line into new supplement categories.

“If you can imagine where we’ll go next, Gainful is all about customization,” Kelly said. “You have a base protein, and then you can start to add Boosts, which might be gut health, menopause, prenatal, postnatal, cognitive, sleep, heart health or joint health. These are all categories we can go into under the umbrella of customization.”

Bioniq, meanwhile, is looking to change the way we take multivitamins.

The London-based company takes personalization to a new level – users take a blood test and are offered a supplement blend based on those results. (Bioniq also offers users the option of completing a questionnaire instead of a blood test).

Each uniquely developed Bioniq formula can have up to 120 nutrients. The company leverages a patented algorithm based on blood test data from tens of thousands of people across millions of biochemical data points to support its supplement recommendations. Notably, Bioniq supplements come in a granule form, which the company says enhances absorption compared to traditional pills.

A testament to its approach, Bioniq just raised \$15 million in a Series B round led by HV Capital and Unbound. The funding round values the supplement brand at \$70 million.

“We’ve entered a new era in nutritional supplementation over the last six years, where it’s become clear that one-size-fits-all solutions are simply inefficient,” said Vadim Fedotov, co-founder and CEO of Bioniq. “Everyone’s health journey is unique and fluid. Customers need advanced, adaptable products that provide evolving support for personal health goals. Our AI-driven approach and extensive biochemical database allow us to create customized supplements that provide quantifiable results and cater to individuals’ specific needs.”

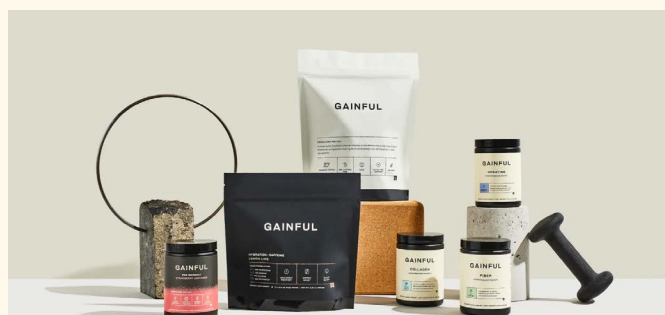


Photo courtesy of Gainful

“

People still want to manage their weight, but we see an increased interest in our functionality that gives more nuance to the impact nutrition has beyond the standard fueling process. For example, we see increased interest in the role nutrition can play in improving mental health, athletic performance and sleep.”



Marcus Gners
Co-Founder and CIO, Lifesum

CONTRAST
THERAPY
STUDIO

SWTHZ

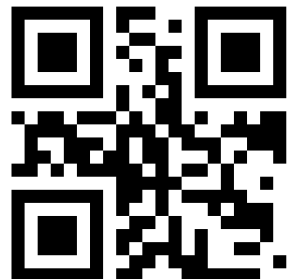
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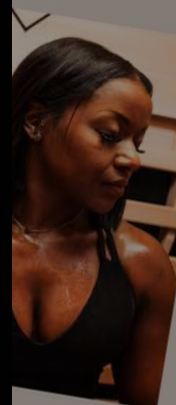


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After finding relief from tension, improved circulation, and a sense of relaxation.



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Infrared waves penetrate the skin more effectively, promoting increased circulation and a host of potential health benefits. Users often find relief from tension, improved detoxification, and the radiant warmth of an tranquil environment, offering a host of benefits but also a rejuvenation of everyday life.

...for recovery after a work
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DOPAMI
DORPHI
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As Gyms Embrace Wellness, Massage Chairs Offer Serious Benefits

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of HUMAN TOUCH

The global wellness market is valued at \$5.6 trillion and growing at a historical rate. As fitness facilities continue to adapt to the swiftness of this booming trend and determine how best to support it within their walls, one brand stands out as an evergreen leader.

HUMAN TOUCH has been helping people live better lives for 45 years. Long before wellness and recovery were buzzwords, the company set out to relieve pain and facilitate healthier living. Today, the brand's world-class recovery chairs are used by fitness professionals, pro sports teams and universities across the globe.

"It's been well documented that massage therapy can assist in improving blood circulation, reducing muscle tension, and help speed up recovery," said Dave Corley VP of Business Development. In addition, the mental relaxation and stress reduction that massage therapy provides can be a perfect complement to a health club's recovery approach "And we work daily with fitness facilities to bring this innovation into their spaces." And, Corley says, the company is uniquely positioned to do so.

"Several health clubs have recently told us that their

members are saying the HUMAN TOUCH chairs are now their new favorite thing at the club."

There are dozens of consumer massage chairs, but few companies have invested in the engineering and design necessary to support the high use of the commercial market," he said. "The internal componentry and quality of our products has allowed us to be very successful in this space."

The Best Massage Chairs for Gyms & Clubs

For the gym and club market, HUMAN TOUCH has innovated over the years to develop a few products that truly stand out and answer the commercial demand for wellness.

Corley says the company's line of NOVO XT Pro SE (stretch edition) recovery chairs is the "mothership" and the most popular amongst clubs.

"The XT Pro SE offers multiple mini modalities within the modality of recovery," noted Corley.

Facilitating massage, stretching, compression, zero

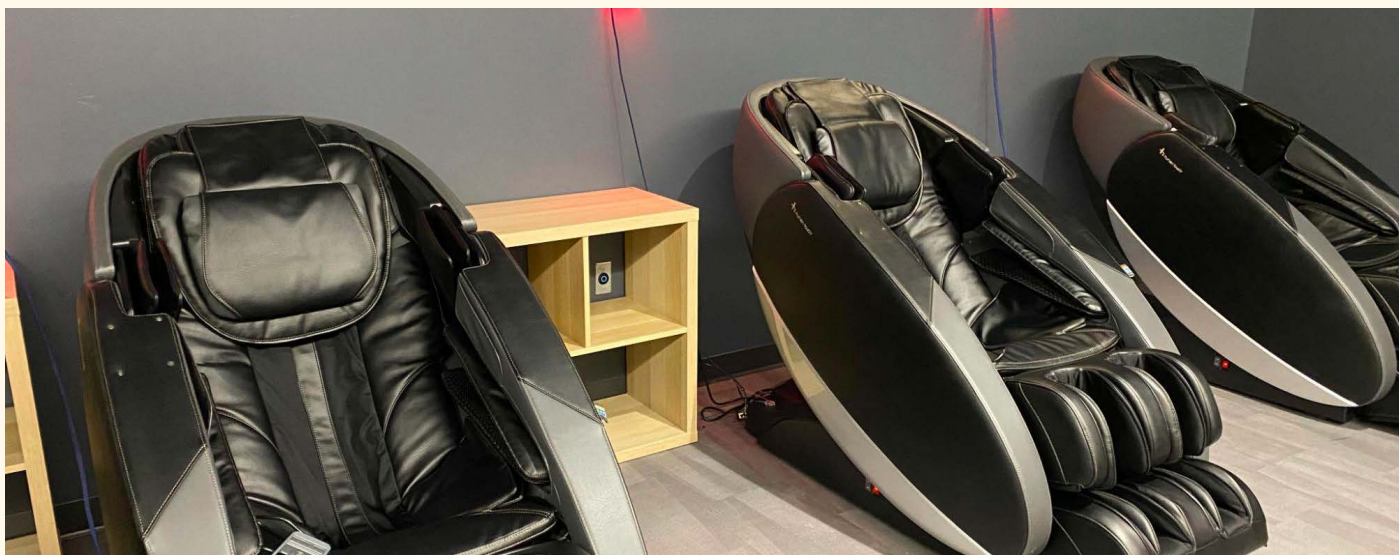


Photo courtesy of HUMAN TOUCH

gravity, sound and heat, the chair is also made with anti-microbial fabric to support cleanliness and withstand multiple users per day.

“Bringing the stretch experience into a massage chair is revolutionary and a big part of the reason it’s so popular in clubs,” said Corley. “Typically members don’t stretch long enough or they skip that part of their workout, but this allows them to sit down and have a wonderful massage while the chair facilitates the stretch work.”

Another product that clubs gravitate to is The Perfect Chair, which cradles the body in zero gravity comfort with the users’ feet above the heart, facilitating a neutral-posture position to decompress the vertebrae, increase blood flow and open the lungs to enhance breathing capabilities.

“The Perfect Chair can easily be paired with compression boots to offer an enhanced experience for the member,” said Corley.

Corley also points to the versatility of the massage chairs within a training regimen.

“The chair can be used before a workout, afterward, or on a recovery day by itself,” he said. “We see members coming into the gym strictly to use the HUMAN TOUCH chairs. The massage experience is a real motivator to come through the doors, and the more members that come in, the more the operators have the opportunity to get them involved in other areas of the club.”

Creating a Wellness Ecosystem

HUMAN TOUCH is no stranger to pairing its products with multiple pieces of equipment to create winning wellness spaces; the brand’s products can also stand out on their own.

“Sometimes we are 100% of recovery and wellness in a club as they make their foray into wellness,” said Corley. “Other times we are one of many modalities such as cold plunge, IV therapy, red light therapy and more. Massage chairs are very versatile and can be used in conjunction

with these things to further enhance the member’s experience.”

With their longevity in the industry and years of experience, HUMAN TOUCH has become a leader in wellness space consulting as well.

“A lot of facilities are not sure if they are doing enough when it comes to addressing their overall wellness ecosystem, and that’s where we come in, to help look at what they are currently doing and what they could be doing to enhance or diversify their offerings,” he explains. “We also work closely with clubs to help them build the best business model when it comes to using their wellness space to capture revenue.”

In the end, offering an effective and sought-after wellness space is the recipe for both acquisition and retention.

“Not everyone joins a health club for just the 50-pound dumbbells on the rack,” said Corley. These days, they are looking to enhance their wellbeing, and the products that clearly support that and help members truly feel their best is what they are seeking out.”



Bringing the stretch experience into a massage chair is revolutionary and a big part of the reason it’s so popular in clubs. Typically members don’t stretch long enough or they skip that part of their workout, but this allows them to sit down and have a wonderful massage while the chair facilitates the stretch work.”



Dave Corley
VP of Business Development,
HUMAN TOUCH

PVOLVE

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a brown Pvolve tank top and leggings, is holding a black and white P.ball in front of her chest. She is in a gym setting with other people in the background. The P.ball has a white cross on a black background and a small white label with 'PVOLVE' and 'P.ball' written on it. The woman's tank top also has 'PVOLVE' written on it.

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Hot & Cold: Mystic River Drives Contrast Therapy Category

by Athletech Studios



Photo courtesy of Mystic River Cold Tubs

Although ice baths date back to Ancient Greece and the sauna goes back 2,000 years, both are making a huge splash in the market today.

Together, the demand for wellness practices has brought both of them back both as individual experiences and together as contrast therapy.

The global cold plunge tub market is expected to grow from \$318.6 million in 2023 to \$552.7 million by 2034, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.2% from 2024 to 2034. The sauna and spa market is expected to reach USD 5.178 billion in 2028, with a CAGR of 4.79%.

As the demand for both continues to swell, we see all shapes, sizes and designs, but are the outcomes and experiences the same between brands and products?

Mystic River Cold Tubs says absolutely not.

“There is a place for all of these different products in the market, but the experiences they deliver are vastly different,” says Mystic River Cold Tubs Founder, Daniel Schmitt. “For gyms and spas and even homes, it’s about aligning the desired outcome with the product choice and expected usage.”

Mystic River Cold Tubs – A Masterpiece Lies Within the Details

Meticulously engineered and thoughtfully hand-crafted, Mystic River’s namesake cold plunge tubs are deliberately intended to provide an unmatched and unexpected user experience.

Fittingly, Schmitt brings an unexpected background to this marketplace himself.

Coming from a line of plumbers, electricians and craftsmen, Schmitt learned his way through the trades doing everything from remodeling to floor-covering to cabinet-making,

In 2020, Schmitt found himself doing a house remodel where the owner wanted a box built for his cold plunge. When he saw it, his instinct was to take the entire cold plunge tub and make it better – so he did. He discovered that this one product involved HVAC, design, woodworking and plumbing – all of the things he'd been doing his entire career. So he got into the business and has not looked back.

While Schmitt admits to his propensity to spend countless hours on the smallest detail of the tubs he builds, he points to three things he says are most critical.

“The three components that ultimately drive a perfect ice bath experience are first, the ability to maintain the water temperature, second, the cleanliness of the tubs and third, flow rate,” he said.

Schmitt has found solutions.

One is the addition of a water agitator that keeps the body in the desired “Cold Shock Mode” throughout the plunge, which doesn't allow the body to create a barrier around the skin/body, leading to a cold shock at higher temperatures. Schmitt is the first person to introduce this to the cold plunge experience.

And when it comes to cleanliness, Schmitt uses a robust three-filter system with nine points of filtering.



Photo courtesy of Mystic River Cold Tubs

A Fitting Duo

Alongside Schmitt as a partial owner of Mystic River Cold Tubs is industry veteran and Recovery and Longevity Product Sales Expert, Jason Stella. Having worked for Life Time Fitness, IDEA Health & Fitness Association, 24 Hour Fitness and more, Stella brings with him over thirty years of leadership on the operational and programming side. He founded Jason Stella's Path to Personal

Excellence Consulting (PPE), which leverages his years of experience in the health and wellness field.

“When I saw the work Daniel was doing, everything about his approach and intention awed me – he is the Einstein of cold plunge engineering,” said Stella.

The duo has also aligned with Dr. Susanna Søberg and the Søberg Institute Thermalist Education program, further positioning them as experts and consultants in the field and offering a robust package to clients in the fitness, spa and wellness industries.

The Rise of Contrast Therapy

Soon after Stella and Schmitt partnered, they set out to incorporate the benefits of heat and contrast therapy into their offering.

“We recognized the growing popularity and profound benefits of hot, cold, and contrast therapies for health, wellness, longevity, and recovery,” said Stella. “These therapies have gained substantial traction due to their ability to improve energy and mental focus, enhance cardiovascular health, boost immune function, promote mental well-being, and enhance recovery. Given these extensive benefits, we felt it was essential to offer a comprehensive range of thermal therapy solutions.”

In pursuit of this goal, Mystic River partnered with Salus Saunas, one of the most reputable and widely recognized online sauna companies globally.

As with their cold plunge tubs, Salus saunas are distinguished by superior craftsmanship, innovative technology, and unparalleled support.

“Each sauna is designed with the user experience in mind, offering features like advanced temperature controls, efficient heating systems, and comfortable seating arrangements,” explained Stella.

The company offers traditional, Infrared (Far-infrared and Full-Spectrum), and Hybrid options, barrel saunas, cabin saunas, and luxury saunas, all of which have indoor and outdoor options, and sizes from single-person to eight-person models. This versatility allows Mystic River to cater to the unique needs of different clubs and their members.

Stella says it's also essential to understand the type of location where the sauna will be installed. For large commercial gyms with thousands of members, he recommends custom-built saunas rather than stand-alone units. Salus Saunas has a partner to support these custom builds, ensuring they meet the demands of heavy usage.

“Most traditional saunas sold online are more suitable for home use or smaller boutiques where staff can monitor their usage,” he says. “In gyms, traditional saunas often face issues due to misuse, such as pouring water over the heaters or covering thermostats with wet towels, leading to frequent breakdowns.”



Photo courtesy of Mystic River Cold Tubs

Intention & Execution

Despite the quality of Mystic River products, Stella says that having great wellness equipment means nothing if operators and facilities don't know how to position and program it.

"We are committed to not only providing top-of-the-line (hot and cold) therapy products but also educating our clients on the best practices for using these tools effectively," he explained. "As a partial owner of Freedom Longevity and Wellness in Lake Norman, North Carolina, I have firsthand experience with the challenges that can arise in this industry."

Stella noted that the studio once faced significant setbacks "due to a corrupt business owner," which, for Mystic River Cold Tubs, has "only strengthened our resolve to meet our clients where they are, providing tailored equipment selection and understanding how certain products will not last or perform as needed in a commercial setting."

"Our team offers consultative services and ongoing support, seeing it as a long-term partnership that prioritizes their success and the well-being of their members," he added.

Stella is confident in the future of Mystic River Cold Tubs, bolstered by the brand's quality and its partnerships with key players.

"We are excited to see the positive impact that our solutions are having on clubs around the world, and

we look forward to continuing to lead the way in hot & cold therapy solutions," he said. "With our partnership with Salus Saunas, combined with our unwavering commitment to quality and customer support, we are confident that we offer the best solutions for clubs looking to enhance their wellness offerings. Additionally, our exclusive partnership with Discovery Land Company, one of the premier real estate developers and private residential communities and resorts in the world, further solidifies our position as the premier, high-end cold tub manufacturer in the industry."

“

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Jason Stella
Co-Owner, Mystic River Cold Tubs

These Wellness Tech & Recovery Products Are Driving the Market

by Kim Kisner



Photo courtesy of HigherDose

From hair masks to red light hats to salt mists, new products and franchises are hitting the market every day answering to and capitalizing on consumers' seemingly insatiable appetite for wellness, longevity and recovery.

The masses are eating it up, leading to an explosion of venture capitalists infusing money into opportunities, gyms scurrying to build out or adopt wellness spaces and everyone looking to benefit by increasing lifespan and healthspan.

This \$5.6 million global wellness market continues to swell.

According to a McKinsey report, more than 60 percent of consumers surveyed considered it "very" or "extremely" important to purchase products or services that help with healthy aging and longevity. Roughly 70 percent of consumers in the United Kingdom and the United

States and 85 percent in China indicated that they have purchased more in this category in the past year than in prior years.

Here, Athletech News takes a look at the products and services that key brands in the space are offering, and how they're shaping the market.

Wellness Tech Makes Its Way to the Masses

At the end of last year, Therabody, the wellness tech company behind the Theragun, launched an innovative LED face mask that fights aging along with a new business branch, Therabody Beauty.

The TheraFace Mask, a \$599 FDA-cleared LED light therapy mask that employs 648 medical-grade infrared LED lights to minimize the symptoms of aging while firming skin and promoting a healthy glow, includes

Therabody's signature vibration therapy for added relaxation.

Therabody also partnered with United Airlines to promote wellness travel. United customers flying via United Polaris international business class are provided a Therabody amenity kit with TheraFace eye serum, face spray, hand cream and cleansing towelette. In the United Polaris lounges, travelers will have access to Therabody products like the Lounger, Theragun and RecoveryAir JetBoots.



Photo courtesy of Therabody

Meanwhile, HigherDose, an at-home wellness tech brand, released a new Red Light Hat for hair growth.

The hat has 120 medical-grade LED bulbs emitting light at a wavelength of 650 nm, specifically selected to promote hair growth. Each session with the hat is designed to last ten minutes, with the brand recommending a daily treatment for optimal results. While there are several red light helmets on the market, HigherDose's hat stands out due to its discreet design, resembling a baseball cap. The choice allows users to incorporate hair treatments into their daily routines without drawing attention.

"The opportunity is bringing wellness technology to the masses," HigherDose co-founder Lauren Berlinger told Athletech News about her and fellow co-founder Katie Kaps's inspiration for creating the brand. "HigherDose's mission is inspired by the fact that there are more saunas than people in Finland because that country's residents are educated about well-being. The opportunity here is expanding upon that notion, making empowered self-healing and longevity accessible to the masses with efficacious products."

Global high-performance wellness brand Hyperice has been busy this year bringing new innovations and products to market.

Weighing in at just two pounds, the Hyperice X Shoulder offers on-demand hot and cold contrast therapy ranging

from 35°F to 115°F, customizable temperature control and the adaptability to target either shoulder. The product also allows users to control the device and adjust settings from their smartphone.

Next came their Normatec Elite boots, a wireless version of the brand's famous recovery boots that are portable enough to be carried in a tote bag but expand to the size of standard compression boots.

Hyperice also teamed with activewear giant Nike to introduce compression massage sneakers and a temperature-changing vest that will be available to athletes at this summer's Olympics in Paris and potentially to consumers after that.

Designed for warmups and cooldowns, the Nike x Hyperice boot is a high-top shoe that combines heat and dynamic air compression massage for athletes' feet and ankles.

The Nike x Hyperice vest offers athletes a way to precisely control their body temperature during warmups and cooldowns using thermoelectric coolers, delivering instant heating and cooling without ice or liquids.

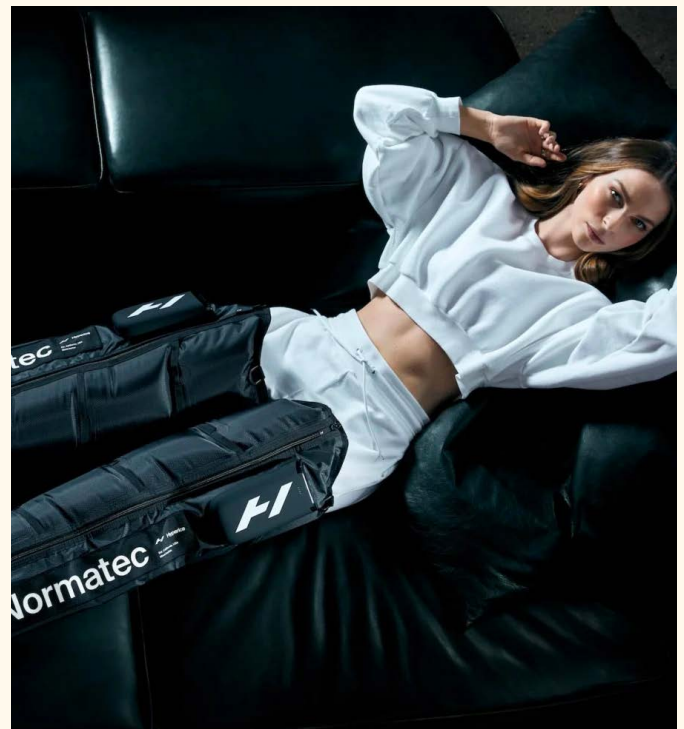


Photo courtesy of Hyperice

Mixing & Matching Modalities

Merging wellness modalities has become a popular way to distinguish and launch new products to market in different ways, and Halotherapy is doing just that.

Looking to give operators the chance to offer a more holistic approach to therapy and recovery, the company recently launched its HaloRestore & Recovery solution. It's the first and only series of programs merging salt therapy with the company's complete portfolio of Restore and Recovery equipment, including red light, cryotherapy and cold plunge.



“The industry has moved into ‘next generation’ salt therapy, stacking or layering multiple modalities together in one unit to customize the guest’s experience while at the same time maximizing the return on investment per square foot for the facility owner,” says Lisa Semerly, chief revenue officer at Halotherapy.

Another combination of modalities, Red Light Method, recently announced a franchise model with immediate success, signing 6 territories with 18 more on the way.

To create Red Light Method, Allison Beardsley, who also founded Club Pilates, paired FDA-cleared red light therapy body contouring treatments with group Power Plate and Pilates reformers.

The Red Light Method is the first in the world to combine the benefits of medical-grade red light therapy treatments with guided Power Plate and Pilates sessions, which Beardsley calls the trifecta of recovery and longevity.

Redefining Classic Wellness for the Modern Age

With all of the new brands and products flooding the market in this space, one stands alone in terms of the company’s longevity. Founded in 1927, JK Products & Services has steadily expanded its influence, emerging as a national and global market leader in lifestyle, wellness and tanning.

With a “recovery is the new retention” mentality, the company has been able to help facilities drive ROI with their smart and low-overhead equipment that delivers

immersive experiences consumers can’t replicate at home.

Through its Wellness JK arm, JK Products & Services offers products like full-body red light beds and booths, and next-gen, ultra-quiet automated massage beds that feature airless water technology.

“We take great experiences and heighten them,” says Brynn Scarborough, President and CEO. “If you think about a standard automated massage and then heighten it to a full sensory immersion with aromatherapy, sound, and the benefits of water it becomes something members crave. They will get in their car and come to your location even if they don’t want to work out.”

“

The opportunity is bringing wellness technology to the masses. HigherDose’s mission is inspired by the fact that there are more saunas than people in Finland because that country’s residents are educated about well-being.”



Lauren Berlinger
Co-Founder, HigherDose

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