

Athletech NEWS

2025

# STATE OF THE INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

PIVOTAL TRENDS IN FITNESS & WELLNESS

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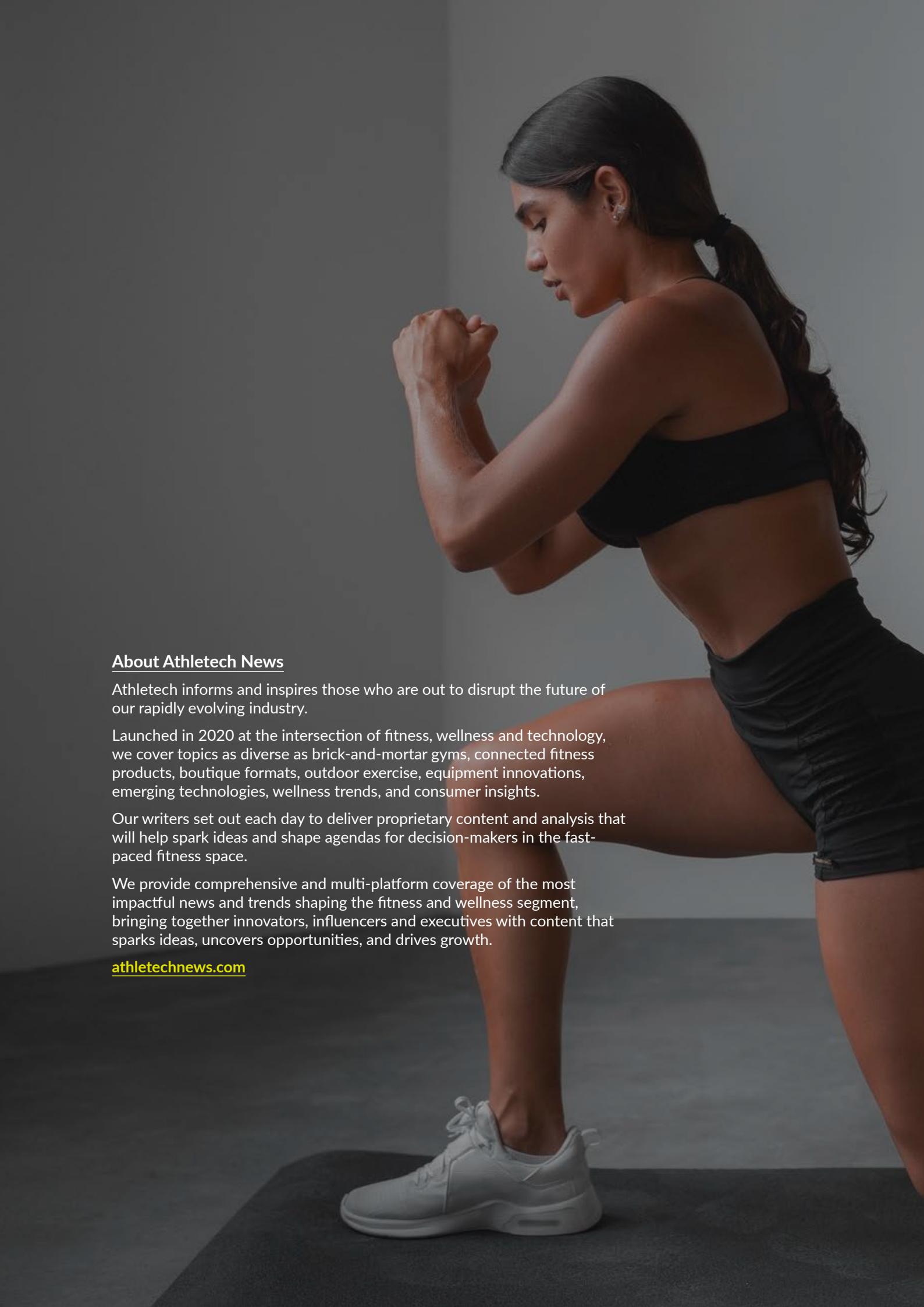
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## **About Athletech News**

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

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

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

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

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# Letter from the Editor

Remember the last time you felt (or led) a workout was truly transformative — not just physically, but mentally? Maybe it was the rush of confidence after lifting heavier weights, the camaraderie of a shared challenge, or the satisfaction of tracking measurable progress. These moments aren't fleeting; they're the result of intentional innovation, science-backed programming, and a deep understanding of what today's fitness enthusiasts crave.

In this report, we explore the intersection of strength, strategy and sustainability. From progressive overload techniques redefining traditional modalities to AI-driven personalization reshaping at-home and in-studio experiences, the fitness and wellness industry is meeting demands for accessibility, inclusivity and results.

One standout story details how a program's integration of resistance training sparked remarkable member transformations and includes stories of regained bone density, postpartum strength and newfound confidence. Another highlights equipment innovations that push functional fitness forward, proving that even the most classic tools can be reimaged.

This report also dives into the rise of hybrid workouts, recovery tech democratizing self-care, and billing systems that streamline member journeys. Behind these advancements lies a common thread: the brands thriving today are those blending data-driven decisions with human-centric design. Success hinges on balancing tradition with reinvention.

More than trends, these insights are backed by member testimonials, utilization metrics and real-world results. The takeaway? The future of fitness and wellness belongs to those who listen to their communities, emerging science, and to the quiet yet powerful stories of everyday progress.

At Athletech News, we're committed to spotlighting the ideas and innovators shaping this dynamic industry. As you explore these pages, we hope you find inspiration to challenge conventions, refine your strategies, and empower those who walk through your doors — or log in from home.

Warm regards,

**Joy Keller**

VP of Content & Strategy  
Athletech News



Photo courtesy of VASA Fitness

# OPERATOR'S OUTLOOK, PART 1: HVLP GYMS RACE TO EXPAND AMID HIGH DEMAND

ATN speaks with the CEOs of some of America's top HVLP gym brands – Planet Fitness, Crunch, EōS and Vasa – to see how they plan to drive growth in the years ahead

By Josh Liberatore

In-person fitness continues to thrive as we move further from the pandemic. High-value, low-price (HVLP) gyms are undoubtedly leading the way, with HVLP brands expanding across the country and globe and members spending more time in these gyms than ever before, according to industry data.

Over the last few years, high-value, low-price gyms have increasingly embraced the “high value” part of their name, offering an ever-more premium set of amenities, equipment and build-outs that make it hard to distinguish between a gym that costs \$15/month and one that charges \$150.

Increasingly, these HVLP brands aren’t competing with higher-priced gyms and studios; they’re competing with each other, racing to see who can separate from the competition with new modalities, expansion into new markets and clever branding.

Athletech News spoke with the CEOs of some of America’s biggest HVLP gym brands to see how they plan to drive growth in the years ahead and adapt to industry trends. These CEOs also share their takes on the general health of the fitness and wellness industry in 2025.

## Planet Fitness Gets Serious About Strength Amid Brand Evolution

Planet Fitness is America’s biggest gym brand by some

distance, counting over 2,700 gyms and nearly 20 million members. But the “Judgement Free” fitness franchise isn’t resting on its laurels in a rapidly evolving industry.

Under new CEO Colleen Keating, Planet Fitness is on a mission to reinvent itself. This past year, the brand unveiled what Keating calls a new “framework for our next chapter of growth.”

“Strategic imperatives include redefining our brand, enhancing member experience, refining our product and optimizing our format,” Keating tells ATN.

As part of its redefined brand strategy, Planet Fitness is placing a bigger emphasis on strength training and functional spaces, in line with industry trends.

“Based on industry trends and consumer data, we observed that Planet Fitness members and other consumers were seeking a greater complement of strength and functional training in their workout regimens,” Keating shares. “Our team identified this trend, developed a plan to introduce more strength equipment into our mix, and executed on these findings by adding new strength equipment in over 1,700 Planet Fitness clubs nationwide in 2024.”

“On top of that, we recognized our ability to further meet members’ changing preferences through optimizing our club format and opening up more space on the club floor for functional training,” she adds.

Planet Fitness has also evolved its marketing message to align with its new focus on strength. A recent ad campaign featured members working out on strength training equipment, a departure from the gym brand's historically light-hearted campaigns.

"People are becoming more fitness aware than ever, with a focus on health, wellbeing, aging well, self-care and the mental health benefits of fitness," Keating says of the new strategy.

Led by Keating and a spate of other new C-suite hires and promotions, Planet Fitness is confident it can increase memberships, enhance unit economics and accelerate new club growth in the years ahead, fighting off competition from HVLP upstarts.

"Our goal at Planet Fitness is to continue to offer anyone, whether an avid fitness enthusiast or someone beginning their fitness journey, a place to get a great workout," Keating says.

**Based on industry trends and consumer data, we observed that Planet Fitness members and other consumers were seeking a greater complement of strength and functional training in their workout regimens. Our team identified this trend, developed a plan to introduce more strength equipment into our mix, and executed on these findings by adding new strength equipment in over 1,700 Planet Fitness clubs nationwide in 2024."**



**Colleen Keating**  
CEO  
Planet Fitness

## Crunch Enters Full Growth Mode in US, Abroad

Crunch Fitness has emerged as one of the biggest gym brands in the U.S. with over 500 locations and three million members.

Eyeing more expansion, Crunch is aiming to open two gyms per week in 2025, its CEO Jim Rowley tells ATN. That includes plenty of new gyms in America, but also abroad.

Crunch already has a presence in countries including

Australia, Canada and Spain, among others. It just announced an agreement to bring at least 75 gyms to India, which Rowley calls "a pivotal moment in our growth strategy."



Photo courtesy of CR Fitness

In another growth move, the 'No Judgments' gym brand recently unveiled "Crunch 3.0," a redesign template that will see new Crunch locations get premium touches including a redesigned reception area, optional heated fitness studio, new recovery modalities and enhanced strength training equipment and turf areas.

"The main trends that are shaping the fitness and wellness industry are an emphasis on strength training, recovery, group fitness classes, and best-in-class amenities at an affordable price," Rowley says, noting that Crunch 3.0 checks all those boxes.

Crunch is also planning new tech innovations this year.

"Without giving too much away, Crunch has also been developing significant tech components over the past two years, which will launch in 2025," Rowley shares.

As Crunch continues to chase franchise expansion (the brand ranked #1 out of all health, fitness and wellness brands on Entrepreneur magazine's recent "Franchise 500" list), it will have to contend with real estate challenges.

"One of our main challenges is securing suitable fitness spaces," Rowley says. "To overcome this, we remain highly flexible and open to spaces of all sizes. Crunch locations range from 12,000 to 60,000 square feet, and our goal is to be adaptable enough to fit into a variety of spaces."

Despite that challenge, Rowley is understandably bullish on Crunch's future – and the future of the fitness and wellness industry as a whole.

"I share this with many of our fitness peers continually – and it's one thing I appreciate about the industry – that despite competition we generally all want each other to perform," he says. "This sentiment leads to a better positive experience for the members and the industry as a whole. Nothing about our business is easy, everyone is working hard to deliver, and I believe there is respect and admiration for each of us."

**I share this with many of our fitness peers continually – and it's one thing I appreciate about the industry – that despite competition we generally all want each other to perform. This sentiment leads to a better positive experience for the members and the industry as a whole."**



**Jim Rowley**  
CEO  
Crunch Fitness

## **EoS Is Expanding Rapidly but Responsibly**

Planet Fitness and Crunch might be leading the HVLP gym race at the moment, but competitors are lurking. And they're not to be taken lightly.

One such competitor is EōS Fitness, a brand that's quickly making a name for itself in states like Texas, Florida, California and throughout the Southwest. EōS recently celebrated its 100th gym, 21 of which were opened in 2024 alone.

EōS is pursuing aggressive expansion in the years ahead, but it won't be reckless, CEO Rich Drengberg tells ATN.

"In 2025, we're aiming to open 28 new gyms, with a long-term goal of reaching 250 locations by 2030," Drengberg says. "But expansion isn't just about numbers – it's about making smart, strategic moves. We're disciplined in choosing the best real estate and locking in terms that set us up for success today and years down the line."

In terms of industry trends, Drengberg notes that strength training is obviously leading the way. But he believes group fitness could make a comeback.

"Strength training is at an all-time high, and there's strong data to back that up," he says. "But looking ahead, I wouldn't be surprised to see group fitness and small-group training make a big comeback over the next five years."

Drengberg is generally bullish on the health of the fitness and wellness industry, although he notes that for big-box gym brands like EōS, real estate is a major concern.

"Rising costs are a reality across every category, and operators are being forced to either raise prices or find creative ways to offset expenses," he says. "The real opportunity lies in enhancing both technology and in-person member interactions. The fitness industry needs to double down on delivering an experience that's not

just about access to a gym – but about engagement, community and personalization that aligns with each brand's unique vision."

**Rising costs are a reality across every category, and operators are being forced to either raise prices or find creative ways to offset expenses. The real opportunity lies in enhancing both technology and in-person member interactions. The fitness industry needs to double down on delivering an experience that's not just about access to a gym – but about engagement, community and personalization that aligns with each brand's unique vision."**



**Rich Drengberg**  
CEO  
EōS Fitness

## **Vasa Brings High-End Group Fitness to Low-Price Gyms**

Vasa Fitness, a fast-growing HVLP gym chain based in the Midwest, is also all in on the power of group fitness.

The brand recently launched Studio, which offers boutique fitness-style group fitness classes inside Vasa's larger big-box gym footprint. In January, Vasa added a strength training class, Studio LFT, to its lineup, joining existing HIIT and yoga class options.

"Boutique-style classes, which emphasize specialized formats and personalized attention, continue to be popular," Vasa CEO Rich Nelsen tells ATN. "This trend is driving innovation and creating opportunities for businesses to differentiate themselves and cater to specific niches."

Nelsen believes that by offering boutique-style classes as part of an entire gym offering, HVLP gyms like Vasa can effectively price out boutique fitness studios that only offer one modality.

"Vasa members now have access to everything they'll need to achieve their goals without having to spend hundreds of dollars each month across multiple gyms and memberships," he says. "By offering high-quality, boutique-style experiences at an affordable price point (\$45/month for a premium-level membership), Vasa is making premium fitness accessible to a wider audience."

Vasa currently has over 60 locations in states across the West and Midwest, all of which are corporate-owned. According to Nelsen, Vasa is just getting started on its expansion journey.

"The main goals for Vasa over the next few years are focused on positioning the company for growth," he says. "This includes becoming a member-centric organization using data, hiring a chief technology and information officer, building a development team focused on scalable expansion, and establishing an operating model that works across geographies while maintaining consistency in products and experiences across clubs."

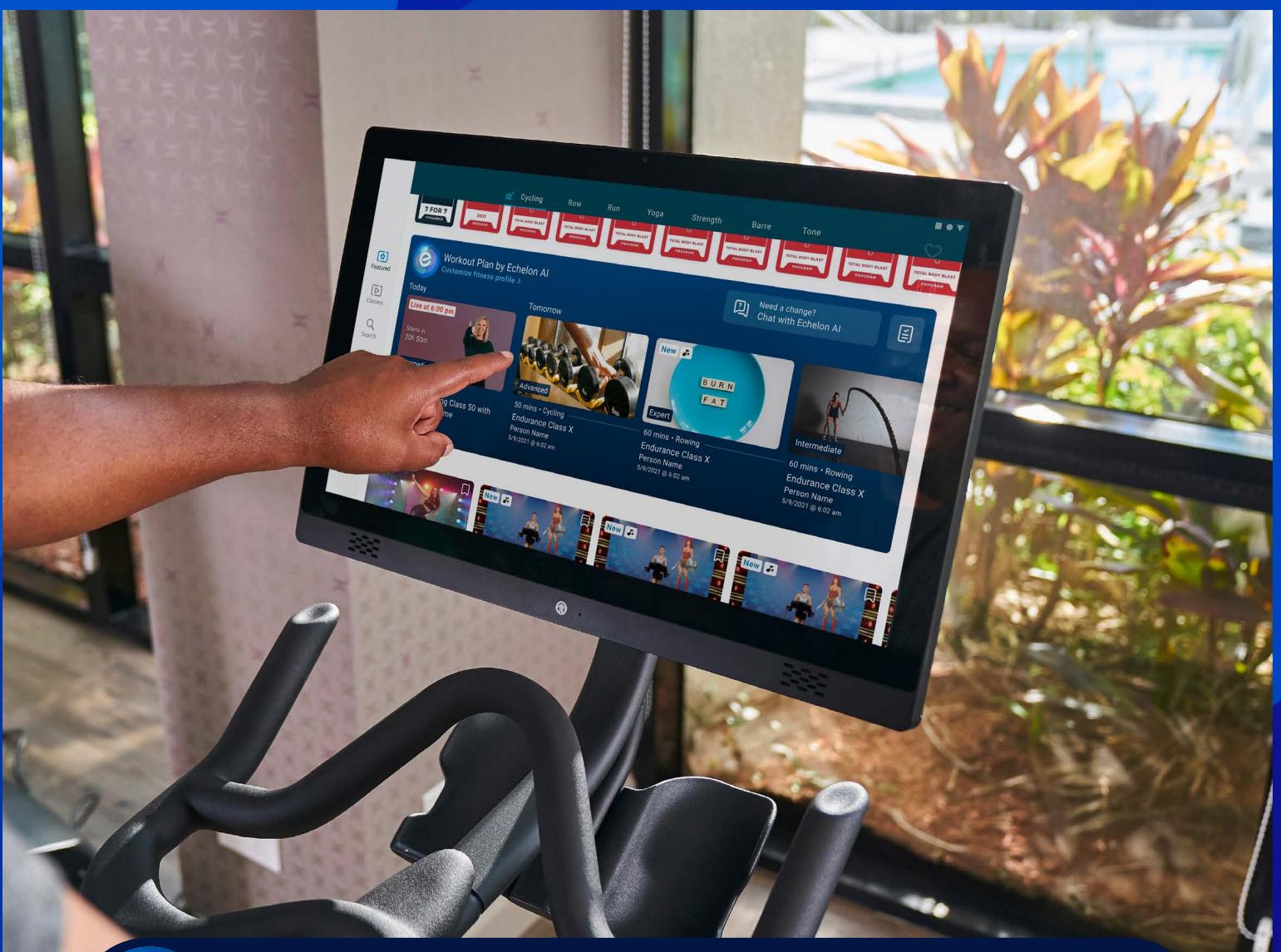
**II Boutique-style classes, which emphasize specialized formats and personalized attention, continue to be popular. This trend is driving innovation and creating opportunities for businesses to differentiate themselves and cater to specific niches."**



Rich Nelsen  
CEO  
Vasa Fitness



Photo courtesy of VASA Fitness



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Photo courtesy of Xponential

# STRONGER MOVES, STRONGER MEMBERS: THE RISE OF PURE BARRE DEFINE

*With progressive overload and resistance training, Define isn't just changing workouts – it's transforming lives.*

By Athletech Studios

When Pure Barre introduced Define, member Sydney was facing one of the toughest physical challenges of her life. Due to a chronic illness, she was going through chemically-induced menopause, leading to bone density loss and decreased muscle mass. The fear of injuries and fractures had become a daily reality. But with Define, that began to change.

"My bone density has increased, and I feel stronger and less scared of constant injuries," says Sydney. "In addition to the physical changes, taking Define regularly has helped my mental health greatly, especially while coping with chronic illness. I've seen increased confidence, energy and strength."

Sydney's experience isn't a one-off, nor is it purely anecdotal.

Pure Barre's strong following has centered on clients experiencing Pure Barre's signature low-impact, high-intensity barre workouts that enhance flexibility, endurance and muscle tone. This has been a winning programming formula, with the brand celebrating its 24th anniversary this year.

Taking its commitment to remaining nimble and innovative seriously, the brand identified the growing demand for more strength-based workouts, and, rather than moving away from its core identity, Pure Barre integrated resistance training in an organic and on-brand manner – leading to the creation of Pure Barre Define.



Photo courtesy of Xponential

## The Science Behind the Formula

Pure Barre's decision to introduce Define aligns with well-established research on the benefits of strength training and progressive overload. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends resistance training for all major muscle groups at least 2-3 times per week, incorporating 8-10 multi-joint exercises that challenge the body while maintaining proper form. The final repetition should be difficult to complete, ensuring continual adaptation and strength gains.

At Pure Barre, the FITT Principle of Training (frequency, intensity, time, type) has long been used to structure classes. Traditionally, tempo has been the constant variable, while intensity has varied slightly with class format and equipment. The addition of Define's heavier weights allows for greater variation in both intensity and time, offering benefits such as:

- Helping existing clients progress in their training
- Attracting new members with added variety
- Allowing for more individualized pacing, easing accessibility for those new to Pure Barre

The concept of progressive overload – gradually increasing weight, reps, or intensity over time – is crucial in avoiding plateaus and achieving sustainable results. Research supports its benefits in multiple areas, including muscle strength, endurance and power. It also reduces the risk of osteoporosis and fractures, helps with injury prevention, heart health and glucose regulation – where it was shown to be more effective than aerobic exercise for managing blood sugar levels.

By incorporating Define, Pure Barre leveraged these scientific principles to enhance its members' health, offering a class that aligns with fitness trends while also supporting long-term well-being.

## The Concept + Member Impact

Launched as a strong addition to Pure Barre's programming, Define was designed to cater to members desiring a more strength-building focused workout. The class combines low-impact barre techniques with heavier dumbbell exercises and functional strength movements, offering a 50-minute session that builds muscular strength, enhances definition and improves form confidence. Unlike traditional barre programming, which often emphasizes high repetitions with lighter resistance, Pure Barre Define introduces progressive overload to encourage muscle adaptation.

Pure Barre Define was initially met with enthusiasm as members sought ways to enhance their routines with more resistance-based training. Within its first year, Define quickly became a favorite among members, with utilization rates reaching 77% in Q1 2024 and peaking at 80% in March – an all-time high for the format at that point.

The class has also contributed to a 15% increase in same-store sales for North American franchise owners in 2023. Now, with a longer track record, new data provides deeper insight into Define's sustained performance, member adoption trends, and its role in Pure Barre's evolving class offerings.

To meet the growing demand, Pure Barre Define class offerings have increased 130% year-over-year, making it the second most offered class in the brand's class mix. This continued expansion highlights Define's strong adoption and its integral role in shaping the future of Pure Barre programming.

Members are responding with glowing reviews and stories of personal transformation. Member Lisa found Define to be a game-changer for her fitness routine:

*"I was also going to another gym for strength training, but with the addition of Define, I can get that workout here and don't need multiple memberships. It's never boring, and it's still always challenging. The staff is wonderful, and I have made lasting friendships through this studio."*

Member Laura M. echoed the impact Define has had on both her physical and mental well-being. "My confidence and more positive outlook are a direct result of the time I've spent at Pure Barre," she said. "Define took the benefits of this time to the next level. It's a powerful thing to be a 56-year-old woman enjoying a renaissance of physical and mental health."

Another member, Annie, described Define as "a turbo boost for positive change," while another Annie shared: "I love Define – I love that the class gets updated every few weeks and I love that you can modify it so it can be as intense as you need it to be. This class has helped me regain my strength postpartum which has made me feel so much more confident. It's my favorite!"

Photo courtesy of Xponential



Member Mary Beth K. shared: "I enjoy taking the Pure Barre Define Class as it is fast paced keeping my heart rate up to burn calories and challenges me to select weights heavy enough to tone and strengthen my muscles. This is very important at my age (80 years) for maintaining good health, flexibility, balance and good bone density."

As utilization continues to rise and more members share their success stories, Define is solidifying its place as a core offering that meets demand and enhances the Pure Barre experience.

## The Future of Strength at Pure Barre

Pure Barre's parent company, Xponential Fitness, continues to lean into the increase in awareness for building strength and lean muscle mass and support franchisees in delivering on this.

"Innovation within the brand and the technique overall is

a cornerstone of what sets Pure Barre apart in the fitness space," says Michelle Ditto, VP of Training & Technique.

"By looking at both industry trends and the science-backed needs of our key demographics over time, Pure Barre will continue to let data drive our decisions around class offerings and brand development. Pure Barre has a long history of innovation with a focus on how we can serve our community better. Through the use of data, boots-on-the-ground development, prioritizing science-backed protocols, and genuine knowledge of who our consumers are, Pure Barre will continue to build on the brand offerings to remain the leader in barre fitness."

Pure Barre Define represents more than just an additional class on the schedule — it's a success story in identifying and meeting a growing demand for strength training while maintaining brand integrity. By integrating scientific principles, listening to member feedback, and leveraging data-driven decisions, Pure Barre continues to shape the future of boutique fitness.



Photo courtesy of Xponential



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# FITNESS INDUSTRY BY THE NUMBERS: KEY DATA POINTS SHAPING GYMS & STUDIOS

ATN breaks down key numbers shaping the fitness industry, including data on memberships, equipment trends and foot traffic.

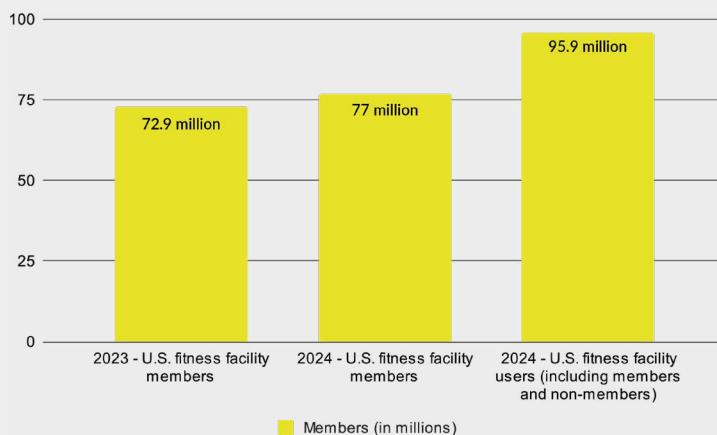
By ATN Staff



## 77 million

The number of Americans who had memberships at U.S. fitness facilities in 2024, representing **25% of the population aged six or older**, according to the most recent data from the Health & Fitness Association (HFA). That number represents an all-time high, up 5.6% year-over-year from 2023. In total, **95.9 million** people used fitness facilities in 2023, including members and non-members, per HFA.

### U.S. Fitness Membership Numbers

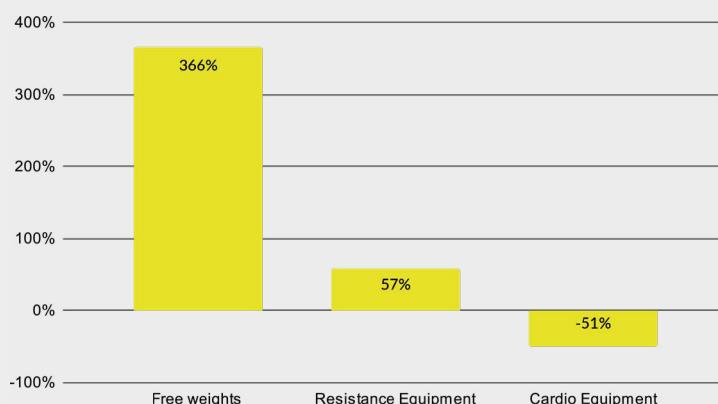


Source: Data courtesy of Health & Fitness Association (HFA)

## 366%

The increase in time consumers spent using free weights between 2010 and 2022, according to data from Track My Gym cited by investment bank Harrison Co. Consumers spent **57% more time on resistance equipment** over the same period, per Track My Gym. Conversely, people spent **51% less time on cardio equipment** over the same period. Given this data, it's no surprise that gyms around the country are stocking up on strength training equipment and hallowing out their cardio offerings.

### Changes in Consumer Equipment Use (from 2010 to 2022)

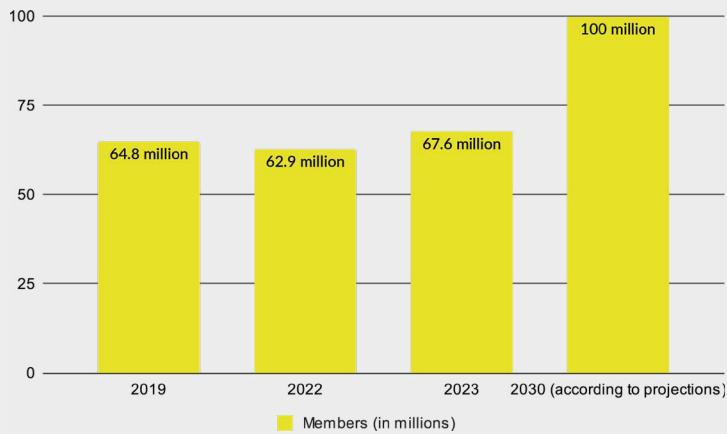


Source: Data courtesy of Track My Gym via Harrison Co.

## 100 million

The projected number of health and fitness center memberships in Europe by 2030, according to a joint report from EuropeActive and Deloitte. In 2023, there were **67.6 million health and fitness memberships in Europe**, up 7.5% from **62.9 million** in 2022. In 2023, Europe's membership total surpassed 2019's pre-pandemic level of 64.8 million for the first time.

Europe Health & Fitness Center Membership Numbers



Source: Data courtesy of EuropeActive/Deloitte

## 6.6%

The **percentage increase in quarterly visits to fitness facilities** between Q3 2024 and Q3 2023, according to location intelligence firm Placer.ai. This might not seem like a lot, but it blew away other industries such as discount and dollar stores (+2.0%), superstores (+2.0%) and apparel (-0.08%). Placer.ai's head of analytical research R.J. Hottovy called it a "real paradigm shift" for the fitness industry compared to other sectors.

Change in Quarterly Visits By Retail Category (Q3 of 2024)

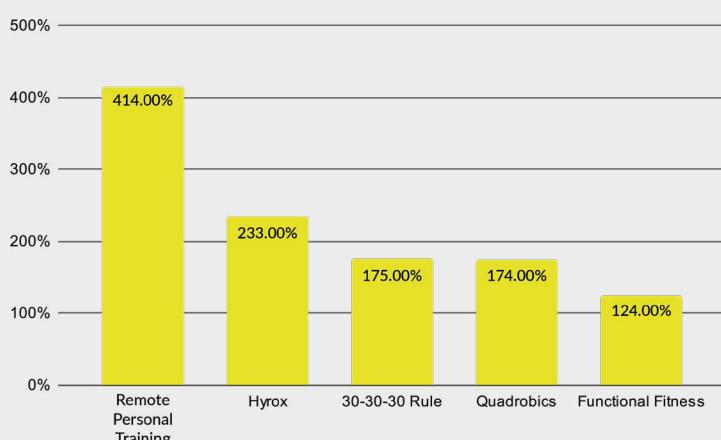


Source: Data courtesy of Placer.Ai

## 414%

The percentage increase in Google searches for the term "remote personal training," between 2023 and 2024, according to PureGym's annual fitness report. The data suggests that remote and virtual personal training will continue to be a trend to watch in 2025. Rounding out the top five in search increases were "Hrox" (+233%), the TikTok-famous "30-30-30 rule" (+175%), primal-style workout regime "quadrobics" (+174%) and "functional fitness" (+124%).

Fitness terms by Google search increases (2023 to 2024)



Source: Data courtesy of PureGym



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

# OPERATOR'S OUTLOOK, PART 2: BOUTIQUE BRANDS THINK BEYOND FITNESS

ATN spoke with CEOs of some the top companies in boutique fitness – Xponential Fitness, FIT House of Brands (F45), barre 3 and Purpose Brands (Orangetheory) – to get their thoughts on the state of the industry in 2025, and where it's heading in the years ahead

By Josh Liberatore

The boutique fitness sector is at a crossroads – in-person fitness is more popular than ever as people seek community but increasing competition from low-price gyms and a vast array of options means many brands are struggling to gain market share.

Despite these challenges, boutique fitness executives are bullish on the industry's future, pointing to the human power of group fitness – and the rising demand for fitness experiences in general. They also believe boutique fitness brands must think outside the four walls of the studio, embracing trends like longevity, recovery and holistic health to appeal to more sophisticated and knowledgeable consumers.

Athletech News spoke with the CEOs of four of the top companies in boutique fitness to get their thoughts on the state of the industry in 2025, and where it's heading in the years ahead.

## Xponential Eyes International Expansion

Xponential Fitness is the world's largest boutique fitness and wellness franchisor, operating well over 2,000 studios across its eight brands, 470 of which are outside of the United States. In 2025, Xponential is looking to become even more well-known across the globe.

"Looking back at 2024, what stands out most among many milestones are the range of brand-level wins we saw across our portfolio, especially in the area of international expansion – a key strategic pillar for this next phase of our business," Xponential Fitness CEO Mark King tells ATN.

Xponential brands including Rumble Boxing, Pure Barre, YogaSix, Club Pilates and Body Fit Training (BFT) all made big international expansion moves this past year. In 2024, Xponential's various brands entered or strengthened their presence in countries including Japan, Mexico and Germany, along with additional expansion moves across the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

Beyond international expansion, Xponential is focused on supporting its franchisees with best-in-class resources, including leveraging technology and analytics to gain data-driven insights into consumers at scale.

King believes Xponential is well-positioned to thrive in a new era for boutique fitness as consumers seek holistic experiences that extend beyond just working out.

"Boutique fitness is evolving to offer a more holistic approach to health, moving beyond just workouts to include stretching, metabolic health and structured recovery programs," he says. "Consumers are looking for fitness solutions that support their well-being in a more comprehensive way, which is why concepts like StretchLab and Lindora have seen such strong demand."

"Recovery, in particular, is becoming a key part of the fitness journey, with people seeking guided solutions that help them move better, reduce injury risk and optimize performance," King adds.

While King is a relative newcomer to the fitness and wellness industry, the former Taco Bell CEO is bullish on the long-term future of boutique fitness, pointing to its ability to bring people together for human connection.

“While economic pressures persist, the boutique fitness and wellness sector has proven its resilience by offering more than just workouts – it provides community, accountability and a sense of belonging,” King says. “Boutique fitness is not just a passing trend – it is a movement that fosters deep connections and long-term engagement.”



Photo courtesy of FIT House of Brands/F45 Training

**While economic pressures persist, the boutique fitness and wellness sector has proven its resilience by offering more than just workouts – it provides community, accountability and a sense of belonging. Boutique fitness is not just a passing trend – it is a movement that fosters deep connections and long-term engagement.”**



**Mark King**  
CEO  
Xponential Fitness

## FIT House of Brands Brings It All Under One Roof

On March 12, F45 Training unveiled FIT House of Brands, a new name for the umbrella entity that operates F45 (HIIT-focused); FS8 (Pilates, yoga and tone); and Vaura Pilates (athletic-style Pilates).

It's the latest step in CEO Tom Dowd's mission to turn FIT into the ultimate brand – one that marries traditional boutique fitness workouts with the latest trends in health, wellness, recovery and longevity.

“The future of fitness is about more than just workouts; it's about total wellness, community, and data-driven training,” Dowd tells ATN. “FIT House of Brands has evolved beyond HIIT, leading the way with multi-modality fitness across our brands, recovery solutions, smart technology and experiential community-led integrations.”

In recent months, FIT has struck partnerships with brands including Hyrox, Red Bull and telehealth platform Dr. B. According to the company, it achieved all-time highs in average studio revenue globally in 2024, with F45 Training increasing by 12.4%, FS8 by 23.9%, and Vaura by 51.1%. FIT opened 75 new studios and signed an additional 87 franchise agreements across its brands in 2024.

FIT's strategic priorities for 2025 include strategic global expansion, building awareness through more partnerships and supporting franchisees through optimized studio operations, technology and additional revenue streams such as recovery services (F45 recently unveiled “Recovery by F45 Training,” and FS8 and Vaura are exploring similar concepts).

Dowd points to the rise of “functional training for longevity,” as one of the biggest trends in the industry – and an opportunity for operators.

“There is a massive opportunity in the above-50s market, and we are uniquely positioned to serve this demographic,” he says. “People are living longer, staying active, and looking for the fitness solutions that we offer to help them move well, stay strong, and maintain their quality of life well into later years.”

Challenges include a “shortage of skilled trainers,” standing out in a crowded boutique fitness marketplace and thoughtfully integrating technology like AI, wearables and virtual training into the in-person fitness experience, Dowd says.

“We're in a crazy strong position because we've been anticipating these changes and integrating them into our business strategy,” Dowd says. “The demand for high-quality, results-driven fitness is only increasing, and we're committed to staying ahead of the curve and expanding our FIT brand offerings and market dominance.”

**There is a massive opportunity in the above-50s market, and we are uniquely positioned to serve this demographic. People are living longer, staying active, and looking for the fitness solutions that we offer to help them move well, stay strong, and maintain their quality of life well into later years.”**



**Tom Dowd**  
CEO  
FIT House of Brands  
(F45, FS8, Vaura Pilates)

## Barre3 Trusts the Science

Barre3 is one of the biggest brands in boutique fitness, now counting over 200 locations open or in development.

Co-Founded by CEO Sadie Lincoln and her husband Chris back in 2008, the Portland, Oregon-based barre brand has become a success thanks to the power of its barre-oriented workouts, by supporting franchisees and by acquiring smaller barre brands, especially in recent months.

Looking ahead, Lincoln tells ATN that barre3 intends to continue integrating technology like wearables into its workouts and following the science wherever it leads, especially in the area of women's health.

"One thing that makes barre3 different is our ability to evolve our workouts based on science and the changing needs of our clients," Lincoln says. "We are not tied to a strict methodology or heritage nor equipment that limits the variety of our movement. Instead, we focus on evolving our workouts and empowering our clients with our mindful approach so they can leverage the body wisdom they are bringing in that day."

Photo courtesy of FIT House of barre3



Lincoln encourages her industry peers to get on board with this science-first approach, believing this will help fitness and wellness brands earn a better reputation in the eyes of the public and with lawmakers in Washington, D.C.

"It is safe to say that all of us in fitness would like to be considered an essential business should another health epidemic hit," Lincoln says. "Related to this, a greater emphasis on connecting fitness and wellness products and services as proven preventative health care is still needed."

"We are noticing some improvement with more physicians referring their patients to barre3 as a preventative measure for anything from preventing bone loss to building strength or as a way to support patients pre and post-surgery," she notes.

In general, Lincoln is bullish on the industry's growth potential and its ability to move beyond old ways of doing business in the hopes of finally getting through to the infamous "80%" of Americans who don't regularly exercise.

"For so long the fitness industry was stuck with a narrow, one-size-fits-all business model based on legacy and what used to work," Lincoln says. "Because of this, we were all trying to reach the same customer who churned in and out of trends. Today, I am seeing more and more innovative brands tackle unique problems that serve a more diverse audience. I am thrilled barre3 is a part of this new era of revolutionizing our industry."

**It is safe to say that all of us in fitness would like to be considered an essential business should another health epidemic hit. Related to this, a greater emphasis on connecting fitness and wellness products and services as proven preventative health care is still needed."**



**Sadie Lincoln**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
barre3

## Under Purpose Brands, Orangetheory Is Primed for the Future

Already one of the world's largest boutique fitness brands, Orangetheory Fitness got even bigger in 2024 when it merged with Anytime Fitness parent Self Esteem Brands to create Purpose Brands, a holding company that controls nearly 8,000 locations on all seven continents.

Orangetheory itself has over 1,5000 studios worldwide, and under Purpose Brands, the boutique fitness giant is eyeing even more growth, including in international markets like Canada, Latin America and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

"We are singularly focused on growing our footprint, while helping our franchise owners deliver better health outcomes for members and achieve stronger financial growth," Purpose Brands CEO Tom Leverton tells ATN. "Our targets are to reach 10 million members and 10,000 combined locations worldwide by 2030."

Leverton points to personalization as a key trend shaping the industry. Tech tools like AI-driven coaching will help brands personalize fitness, but so will taking a human approach.

"Inclusivity and accessibility remain major trends shaping the industry," Leverton says. "Today's fitness consumers are more diverse and informed than ever before, seeking solutions that cater to individual needs – whether through adaptive workouts, mental wellness programs or culturally relevant offerings. As a global leader, we are dedicated to ensuring fitness is not only accessible to all but also offers a meaningful, personalized experience for each member."

As people become increasingly tuned into their own health and longevity, fitness brands must fight to gain favorable status among political and business leaders, Leverton believes.

"We must remain vigilant as an advocate for regulations and policies that can positively affect consumers' options to manage their health and longevity, including essential status for fitness and wellness services, insurance mandates for services memberships and more," he says. "And we must closely follow geopolitical dynamics to anticipate any supply chain impacts that we will need to navigate as we continue to expand and modernize our existing footprint."

**II We must remain vigilant as an advocate for regulations and policies that can positively affect consumers' options to manage their health and longevity, including essential status for fitness and wellness services, insurance mandates for services memberships and more."**



**Tom Leverton**  
CEO  
Purpose Brands



Photo courtesy of Photo courtesy of Purpose Brands/Orangetheory Fitness

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Photo courtesy of Torque Fitness

# TORQUE FITNESS INNOVATES PUSH SLEDS FROM ALL DIRECTIONS FOR ALL KINDS OF USERS

*The TANK series by Torque Fitness elevates push sled exercise on multiple fronts for multiple kinds of fitness consumers*

By Athletech Studios

For years, conventional thinking has made it just as difficult for push sleds to move forward as friction and gravity have. Rudimentary in nature, the strength and cardio training tool spent years as a popular piece of fitness equipment, but in dire need of an upgrade.

That was until Torque Fitness provided one. With its TANK Series, headlined by the TANK M3, Torque Fitness slingshotted the push sled's evolution forward, making a handful of safe, flexible and practical pieces of equipment available to consumers.

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**“We don’t necessarily believe traditional sleds need to be obsolete, but we do think there’s a better way to train. Gym owners who switch to TANK solve multiple pain points at once – greater versatility, increased member engagement and less maintenance. Our goal isn’t just to replace sleds – it’s to evolve sled training altogether.”**



**Jaime Bugge**  
Director  
Torque Fitness

## Where It All Starts

Unlike traditional sleds, those in the TANK line hinder motion and invite force with magnetic resistance. This makes the sleds applicable to any surface, such as rubber, turf, concrete and even asphalt without risking damage. It also removes the need to tediously add and remove weights between sets.

“Gym owners constantly deal with turf wear and tear, floor damage and the hassle of loading and unloading plates just to adjust resistance,” said Bugge. “Instead of manually adjusting weights, TANK features progressive resistance, meaning the harder you push, the greater the challenge.”



Photo courtesy of Torque Fitness

But the M3 and its swivel system take this versatility and singularity a step further. The equipment's center wheel allows this newest sled from Torque Fitness to turn freely in any direction, bringing a more spontaneous and fun vibe to any workout, ultimately leading to increased engagement and retention for operators.

"The biggest innovation is 360-degree movement — you're no longer limited to pushing and pulling in a straight line," said Bugge. "Now, users can incorporate lateral movement, agility drills, and dynamic exercises that mimic real-world movement patterns. This added freedom makes workouts more engaging and keeps members coming back."

The M3 also includes an integrated data readout screen that tracks resistance levels, speed and progress. This adds a level of gamification that only furthers that engagement and retention.

## A Collective Approach

But the TANK series and its commitment to innovation runs deeper than one product. The line's other sleds, including the M1, M4 and MX, help the brand supply different fitness consumers with offsetting needs — establishing a comprehensive approach to upgrading the exercise format.

The M1 caters to home users and personal trainers with its compact and portable nature. It also comes at a lower price than the aforementioned M3. The M4, equipped with two sets of handles, is ideal for group training and high-traffic commercial use. The MX primarily serves elite athletes with its enhanced levels of magnetic resistance.

"We didn't create multiple models just for the sake of variety — we did it to solve real training challenges," said Bugge. "A high-performance training facility has different needs than a boutique gym, and a franchise chain has its own considerations. By designing a diverse lineup, we ensure that no matter what type of facility you operate, there's a TANK that integrates seamlessly into your programming and keeps members engaged."

The TANK series also extends out to cover the margins. Accessories such as straps, ropes, harnesses, bars, wheel attachments, handles and more to round out the line to fully elevate sled-based exercise.

"For gyms looking to maximize programming options, TANK accessories are a game-changer," said Bugge. "With the tow strap and harness, you can integrate sprint resistance, rotational drills, and sled drags — without needing extra machines. The group training attachments also transform individual workouts into interactive, team-based experiences. Pairing the TANK with battle ropes or group handles allows for partner and group training, boosting engagement and keeping members excited."

## Future Innovations

While Torque Fitness is pleased with the reception of the M3's launch, the brand is by no means taking victory laps. Instead, it's moving forward, already looking at new ways to elevate its offerings in the future.

"We're constantly innovating and a big part of that comes from listening to customer feedback and integrating it into our product development," said Bugge. "The M3 was a significant leap forward with its maneuverability and digital tracking and we're already exploring ways to incorporate even more smart technology into the training experience."

But beyond tech, the brand also aims to get more involved as a supplier for group fitness activities and contests. It already does so for organizations like CrossFit, the Granite Games, Syndicate and more.

"Another focus is expanding how TANK fits into group training and competitive environments," said Bugge. "We've seen an increase in gyms using TANKs for small-group sessions, HIIT circuits, and sports-specific training, so we're looking at ways to optimize for these settings."

"Whatever comes next, the mission remains the same: to push the boundaries of sled training and make it more engaging, versatile, and effective than ever before," he added.



Photo courtesy of Torque Fitness

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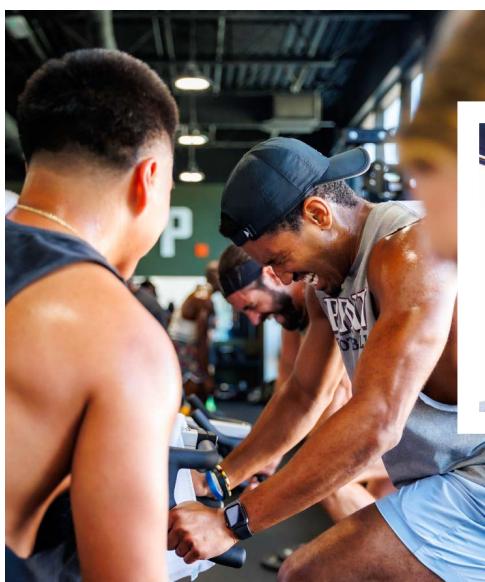
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Photo courtesy of Life Fitness / Hammer Strength

# EQUIPMENT & FIT TECH OUTLOOK: STRENGTH TRAINING, PREVENTIVE HEALTH TAKE CENTER STAGE

ATN surveys executives from leading fitness equipment and hardware-focused technology brands, diving into their perspectives on the innovations driving the industry and what's next

By Courtney Rehfeldt

Staying ahead of the curve is essential in any industry, but perhaps even more so in the fitness equipment sector – a category often constrained by traditional, straightforward designs that can stifle innovation.

Still, top fitness equipment and fit tech brands are pushing boundaries, making strides and daring to reimagine what's possible.

To gain insight into the future of fitness, Athletech News reached out to executives from leading fitness equipment and hardware-focused fitness technology brands, diving into their perspectives on the innovations driving the industry and what's next.

## Life Fitness / Hammer Strength Enters a New Era

Life Fitness, now officially known as Life Fitness / Hammer Strength, has entered 2025 with a new name and brand strategy.

"It brings together the legacy of Life Fitness for its groundbreaking cardio, strength and fitness equipment and Hammer Strength as the undisputed champion in strength and conditioning equipment," Life Fitness / Hammer Strength CEO Jim Pisani tells ATN. "The dual-

brand stands for innovation, quality and co-creation with customers to design the best workout experiences globally."

The fitness equipment leader had a solid 2024, launching Symbio, an eye-catching and premium cardio series that includes the SymbioRunner (treadmill), Symbio SwitchCycle, Symbio Incline Elliptical and Symbio Recumbent Cycle. Life Fitness / Hammer Strength also debuted product innovations at the HFA 2025 Show in Las Vegas in March, including three new plate-loaded pieces, extending the Hammer Strength performance collection.

"I am proud of what our team has achieved in the past year; this is the result of our continued focus on delivering world-class customer experiences," Pisani says. "One of our company's core values is that we think customer first. This singular mindset goes beyond our sales team – it's about every touchpoint the customer has with Life Fitness / Hammer Strength."

The equipment leader plans to further invest in products that support strength workouts to meet demand, including the expansion of the Hammer Strength plate-loaded collection, with a particular focus on lower body movements.

The fitness equipment leader says it's also focused on initiatives that are designed to improve overall customer experience, including a wider implementation of a 3D product configurator on its website, which allows site visitors to customize a specific product for their facility, featuring augmented reality to visualize and drop their design directly into their facility. Visitors will be able to use the configurator on more than 100 products in the coming months.

As fitness consumers continue to seek ways to enhance their performance by tracking workouts with apps and wearable devices, the company launched the Life Fitness Connect System to digitize traditionally offline strength equipment, providing benefits for exercisers and facility operators alike.

"We anticipate continued improvement in the health of the fitness industry over the year," Pisani says. "We've seen consistent industry growth, individuals continue to recognize the importance and the impact of physical activity on their overall well-being. Facility operators are working to meet the progressive level of demand, offering spaces that attract exercisers to their brand."

**It brings together the legacy of Life Fitness for its groundbreaking cardio, strength and fitness equipment and Hammer Strength as the undisputed champion in strength and conditioning equipment. The dual-brand stands for innovation, quality and co-creation with customers to design the best workout experiences globally."**



**Jim Pisani**  
CEO  
Life Fitness / Hammer Strength

## Technogym Views Fitness as the Key to Preventive Health

Technogym, the Italian fitness equipment and tech brand known for its premium offerings, has long relied on innovation as the driving force behind its growth.

The company is now embarking on a new era "Healthness" – a vision of prevention and personalized, prescriptive plans that supports health and longevity.

"Technogym was born 40 years ago with the dream of putting the world back in motion...we started as a product company, then we added software, then digital, then on-demand video and today, with AI, we can

personalize people's experience anytime and anywhere," Technogym founder and CEO Nerio Alessandri tells ATN.

"In 2024 we launched the new Technogym Checkup, a fundamental element of our ecosystem to test people's physical and cognitive condition, prescribe a personalized program and deliver it through our Technogym Ecosystem seamlessly on cardio, strength and functional equipment," Nerio notes.



Photo courtesy of Technogym

As Alessandri sees it, the ability to predict disease before it occurs will be the greatest revolution of our time – which is where Healthness comes in.

"Leveraging Technogym's years of investments in cutting-edge technologies and AI, we have just introduced the new vision of Healthness," he explains. "Healthness leverages wellness and takes this vision even further by making health prevention programs tangible thanks to data and AI."

Alessandri says the fitness and wellness industry can improve in terms of quality and welcoming new participants. He offers some advice for operators looking to scale.

"There is a huge potential for the industry to grow and to attract different population clusters: fitness, sport and health," he says. "In order to grow, industry operators will need to manage different people with different needs, goals and aspirations...so being able to personalize programs and services will be key."

Overall, though, he's positive about the future of the industry.

"Scientific evidence has never been so clear on the benefit of exercise, and consumer awareness on the importance of health and prevention has never been so high," Alessandri says. "Longevity is becoming a dominant consumer trend, and as an industry, we play a crucial role in this huge opportunity."

**There is a huge potential for the industry to grow and to attract different population clusters: fitness, sport and health. In order to grow, industry operators will need to manage different needs, goals and aspirations so being able to personalize programs and services will be key."**



**Neri Alessandri**  
Founder and CEO  
Technogym

## EGYM Aims to Change Global Healthcare

EGYM had a banner 2024, raising approximately \$200 million of growth capital at a valuation of over \$1 billion.

The capital will support the fitness technology and equipment company's ongoing expansion of the EGYM Wellpass corporate network, along with the continued development of innovative digital solutions, smart strength equipment and tech-enabled products for data-driven, personalized training — enabling fitness club operators to deliver a differentiated experience to their members.

"The ultimate vision for EGYM, and a focus for the next 5 years, is to shift healthcare from repair to prevention by building a bridge connecting corporate fitness (through Wellpass), fitness technology (via EGYM), and the healthcare market, aiming at a potential total addressable market exceeding \$600B globally in the upcoming years," EGYM co-founder and CEO Philipp Roesch-Schlanderer tells ATN.

In 2024, EGYM unveiled Genius, an AI software connecting the gym floor that analyzes over 8 billion workout data points and 500 million assessment data points.

"Leveraging new technologies like AI, EGYM will continue to be the leader in delivering motivating, hyper-personalized, and gamified fitness experiences to drive the ultimate operator success and member health results," Philipp Roesch-Schlanderer says. "EGYM is on a pathway to becoming transformative, creating a future where everyone has seamless access to EGYM-equipped gyms that help them achieve their fitness goals and cultivate long-lasting healthy habits."

Roesch-Schlanderer is also focused on a broader vision — one that positions employers as key players in encouraging healthy lifestyles and making fitness more accessible for their employees.

"We envision a future where these employees have seamless access to EGYM-equipped gyms, helping them achieve their fitness goals and cultivate long-lasting healthy habits," he says. "This scenario would have multiple positive ripple effects, from reducing healthcare costs for governments and employers to enhancing productivity and employee satisfaction and ensuring fitness clubs provide valuable tools and technology for their members."

**The ultimate vision for EGYM, and a focus for the next 5 years, is to shift healthcare from repair to prevention by building a bridge connecting corporate fitness (through Wellpass), fitness technology (via EGYM), and the healthcare market, aiming at a potential total addressable market exceeding \$600B globally in the upcoming years."**



**Philipp Roesch-Schlanderer**  
Co-Founder and Co-CEO  
EGYM

## REP Fitness Focuses on the Fundamentals – Like Strength

REP Fitness, a provider of commercial and at-home fitness equipment, kicked off the new year after surpassing all of its 2024 targets. The company has expanded its global team to over 200 employees and is reinvesting in new opportunities, including Purist Nutrition, its new line of protein powders and bars.

Over the next few years, the fitness equipment company plans to prioritize global expansion, focus on innovative equipment releases and expand its new supplement and apparel lines.

Existing at a time when interest in strength training is at an all-time high has positioned REP for strong short-term and long-term success.

"There's been a cultural realization that strength training is important for all age groups, genders and demographics, and we anticipate this will continue to grow," REP Fitness co-founder Shane McGrotty tells ATN. "Commercial gyms have already jumped on the trend by actively reconfiguring their existing footprints to accommodate more strength training classes and equipment."

One of the challenges he sees in the fitness and wellness industry may be surprising—he believes an area for improvement lies in integrating technology into fitness without distracting people.

"You see a lot of people on their phones already — and we want to add more technology," McGrotty says. "The other day, I was driving a golf cart with a dashboard screen that played full video ads with audio. I just wanted to enjoy being outside and unplugging for a moment without a side of commercials. I would like to see technology being additive to a user's experience, not as a way to advertise, harvest data to resell or turn fitness into a subscription model."

As for the industry as a whole, McGrotty sees improvement from 2024 and supports its shift toward a more holistic approach to health, although he notes that some current disruptions related to tariffs are a concern.

"A lot of the fads that appear aren't surviving as long because of the amount of information at our fingertips," he says. "However, a lot of fitness equipment is made internationally and our greatest concern is having to raise prices because of tariffs. Greater upfront costs mean heftier price tags on equipment and gym memberships, which ultimately hurts the consumer."

**II You see a lot of people on their phones already — and we want to add more technology. The other day, I was driving a golf cart with a dashboard screen that played full video ads with audio. I just wanted to enjoy being outside and unplugging for a moment without a side of commercials. I would like to see technology being additive to a user's experience, not as a way to advertise, harvest data to resell or turn fitness into a subscription model."**



**Shane McGrotty**  
Co-Founder  
REP Fitness

## Skelcore Shakes Up the Industry With Strength Innovations

Skelcore, a Miami-based equipment brand founded in 2020, has quickly become a go-to source for commercial operators and consumers looking for strength, weights, cardio and recovery solutions, as well as apparel. Its

unique name is derived from its mission to protect the skeleton while strengthening the core.

Last year, Skelcore hit a major milestone, expanding the brand to an additional 30 countries (and now being present in 45) and becoming an approved USA vendor to several leading U.S. gym groups, Skelcore CEO Marc Ackermann tells Athletech News.

Over the next few years, Skelcore has several key objectives, including plans to launch an integrated wearable that can be used across all its equipment.

The equipment leader also points to a major opportunity in the age of weight loss medications.

"The DNA of Skelcore is founded in strength training, which is now being talked about due to muscle loss as a result of the misuse of GLP-1 weight loss drugs and consumers realizing they need muscle to protect their skeletons after losing weight," Ackermann says. "Skelcore continues to develop new bio-mechanically sound machines that will drive performance and results as consumers turn to strength training."

The brand does see an area where the fitness industry can improve, including better educating consumers on "new, untested technologies, solutions and supplements" that tend to proliferate on social media, Skelcore's product manager for Pilates and recovery Mia Bustamante tells ATN.

Ultimately, though, Skelcore is excited by the opportunities it sees in the fitness industry and its collective power to put people on a healthier path.

"Collaboration drives growth, and Skelcore is all about collaborative opportunities to drive growth and transform people's lives," Ackermann says.

**II Strength training is now being talked about due to muscle loss as a result of the misuse of GLP-1 weight loss drugs and consumers realizing they need muscle to protect their skeletons after losing weight. Skelcore continues to develop new bio-mechanically sound machines that will drive performance and results as consumers turn to strength training."**



**Marc Ackermann**  
CEO  
Skelcore

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# SWTHZ ON THE RISE OF PERSONALIZED RECOVERY & THE FUTURE OF SELF-CARE

*SWTHZ knows there's more than one layer to wellness and how to address them all extensively*

By Athletech Studios

As SWTHZ changes temperatures, humidity levels, lighting and more, it's also changing our overarching perception of what health and fitness can be. With its infrared saunas, cold plunge tubs and vitamin C showers, the contrast therapy franchise is weaving self-care, mental health and more into the wellness web on top of helping individuals live better and longer.

**When I think about whole person wellness, it's sleep, it's nutrition, it's mental health, it's weight lifting, it's Zone 2 cardio, it's VO<sub>2</sub> Max cardio, it's all these things combined into one, said Jamie Weeks, SWTHZ founder and CEO. I think gym owners and trainers are starting to realize that whole person wellness is really what we're trying to strive for."**



**Jamie Weeks**  
Founder  
SWTHZ

## Improving Life from Multiple Angles

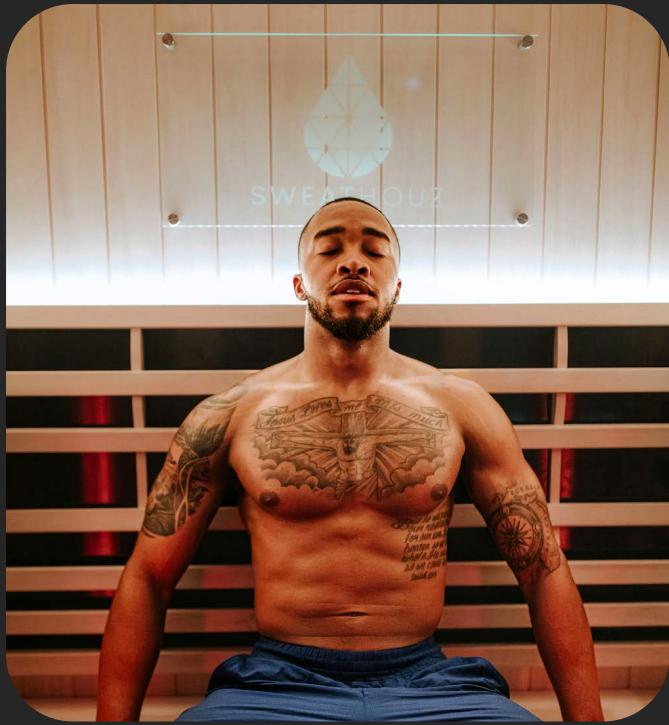
While we're often quick to relate recovery with the body, in actuality, it goes well beyond that. To view mental health and self-care as separate concepts from recovery has long been a common misconception — and an important one to recognize as such.

"It's funny, recovery for so many years had a connotation of just physical recovery," said Weeks. "But mental recovery, taking a minute for yourself, putting your phone away, not looking at text messages, emails and all that stuff, that's a big deal. That's mental recovery."

Helping members disconnect, whether from screens or life's other stressors, leads to a better quality of life.

"It's going to improve your sleep," Weeks added. "It's going to improve your endorphins and dopamine. You're going to feel happier."

But while SWTHZ prioritizes mental recovery, the body is by no means forgotten. Helping individuals sweat out toxins, lower inflammation and more still lie at the forefront of the brand's offerings. It's this blend of mental and bodily recovery that makes the brand a unique hub for holistic health.



"The science is there," said Weeks. "It proves that you're lowering your stress and lowering your inflammation as well. You combine that with a cold plunge and a vitamin C shower for your skin, what it's doing for your skin health, what it's doing for your body to lower inflammation, you're getting the best of both worlds — lowering stress and inflammation holistically, while also working on your mental health in a private space to yourself. That's really what we're providing here."

### Establishing a "Third Space"

SWTHZ's ability to create this private space that blends physical recovery, mental recovery and more makes it a foundation for wellness in its most comprehensive sense. It's also meeting the demand for a place to spend time between work and home.

"SWTHZ is increasingly becoming people's third space," said Weeks. "Prior to SWTHZ, where can you go be alone for an hour in a confined space that isn't your office, house or your car, where you can meditate, do breath work, sleep, read a book or watch TV? You don't have it. It's providing something we haven't had before."

The demand for such a space, or essentially any with wellness offerings, is so substantial that SWTHZ invites other brands to join them in their efforts to meet it.

"I'm all for more saunas and more plunges everywhere — more competition," said Weeks. "This total addressable market is massive. It is not just fitness. Remember, 25% of our members are coming for physical recovery from fitness, the other 75% of our members are coming for different reasons. So, even if there are 70 million people in America that have a gym membership and a lot are coming to SWTHZ, think about the other 280 million people that also need SWTHZ for mental health or from sitting at a desk all day and want to do something different."

"I'm all for fitness and gyms and everybody having a sauna and a plunge at home, wherever it is," Weeks went on. "This is a big market, and it's big enough for everybody."

### Built to Last

SWTHZ doesn't expect that market to begin shrinking anytime soon — or even decades down the line. If anything, the brand anticipates growth alongside the fitness industry's most promising age group.

"What we're finding is that the younger generation, Gen Z, is all about health and wellness," said Weeks. "You can see the stats. They're drinking less alcohol, they're doing drugs less, they are much cleaner."



That established interest from younger crowds positions wellness, and SWTHZ by extension, to remain popular regardless of what Father Time throws their way.

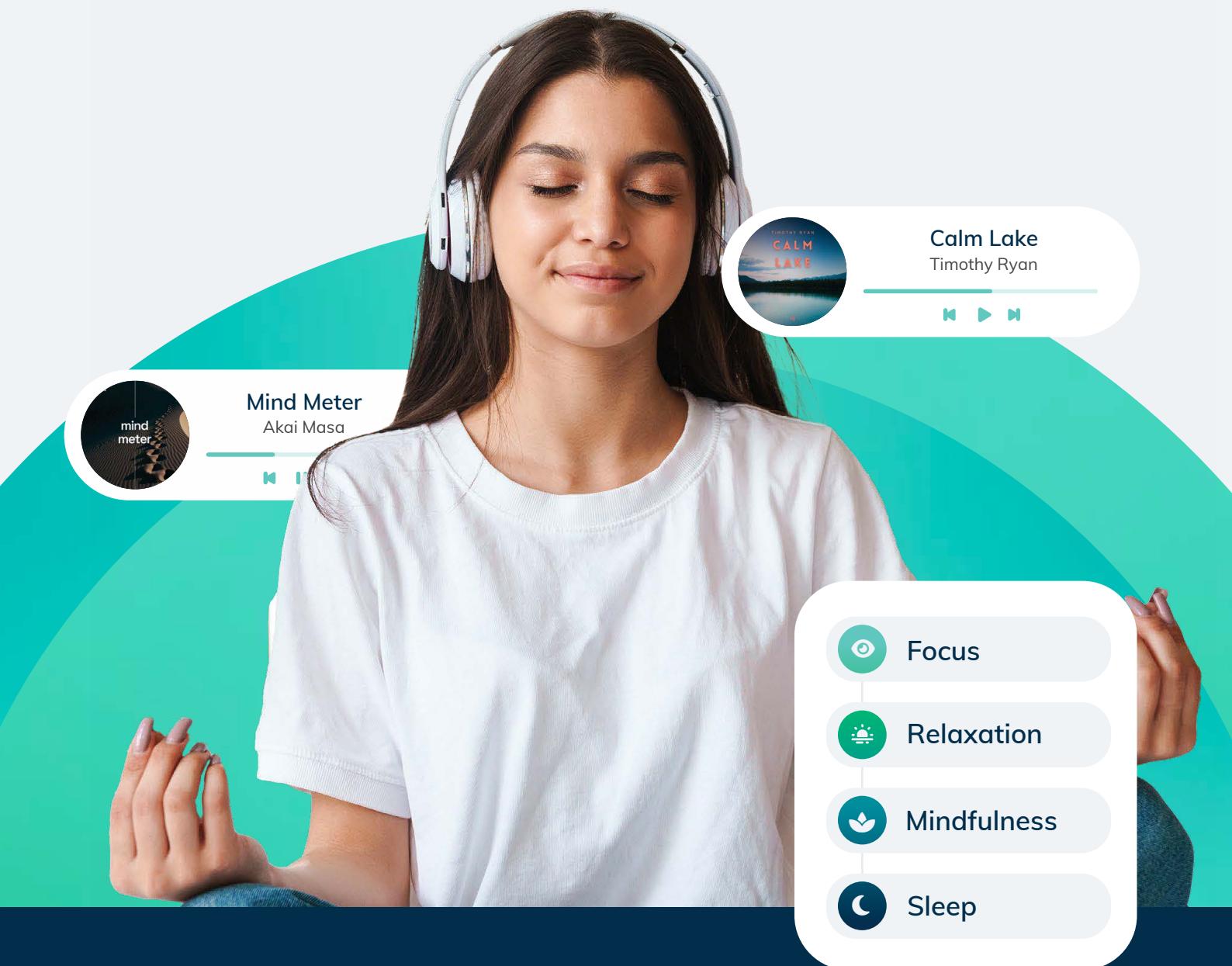
"When you're all-in on health and wellness at 18 years old, you're all-in on health and wellness at 40 as well," said Weeks. "You don't pivot at some point and say you want to go the other way. That doesn't happen. We're truly a lifestyle brand — so this is going to be around for a while."

"We're not even in the first inning of this game," Weeks added. "You can't get what you get from a cold plunge or a sauna in a pill, so this isn't going anywhere. This thing's got a lot of upside, a lot of legs. It's gonna be around for a long time."



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Photo courtesy of Peloton

# CONNECTED FITNESS OUTLOOK: BRANDS GO ALL-IN ON STRENGTH, AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION

*CEOs and other C-suite executives from the world's top connected and at-home fitness brands give their takes on the future of this promising but turbulent sector*

By Courtney Rehfeldt

The connected fitness industry isn't without its struggles, but there's no denying that consumers are still embracing at-home fitness even as many people return to gyms and studios in the post-pandemic era.

Athletech News speaks with CEOs and other C-suite executives from the world's top connected and at-home fitness brands to get their takes on the future of this promising but turbulent sector, and see how they're preparing to win consumers in 2025 and the years ahead.

## iFIT Leans Into Personalized Fitness, AI

Utah-based iFIT has built a strong reputation in the connected fitness space with its extensive library of digital fitness content — and now, the company is preparing to bring its more than six million members together with their on-screen trainers through in-person, experiential events.

In reflecting on the last year, however, iFIT has celebrated several significant milestones, such as the launch of iFIT AI Coach in early 2024, making the company one of the first fitness brands to complement real trainers with AI support.

"One year since the launch of AI Coach, we're seeing 15-20% of our users engaging with iFIT AI Coach daily, demonstrating strong adoption," iFIT CEO Kevin Duffy says. "Our iFIT athletes can now create personalized workouts with Google Maps as well as stream video and music from third-party apps."

"We're investing heavily in AI-powered training experiences that adapt to our users' progress and goals," Duffy adds. "Building on the success of our AI Coach, we'll continue developing personalized fitness solutions that consider the whole person, not just their workout performance."

For its FY25 launch, iFIT refreshed its product assortment offered across NordicTrack and ProForm, including the recently unveiled NordicTrack Ultra 1 luxury treadmill.

Over the next few years, iFIT plans to expand its subscription business with its newly appointed Chief Subscription Officer Jeremy McCarty who will lead the initiative.

There are also plans to scale into new markets globally, including China and Europe.

While Duffy says the fitness industry has "mostly stabilized" after years of volatility, he acknowledges that several challenges remain, such as meeting consumers where they are in their fitness journey.

"Many people feel overwhelmed when starting, especially when navigating extensive content libraries," he says. "Our approach with AI Coach helps address this by guiding members through our 10,000+ courses based on their specific goals and preferences. The industry also must improve accessibility by offering quality fitness experiences at various price points. Our strategy of multiple entry points across different channels addresses this challenge directly."

**Many people feel overwhelmed when starting, especially when navigating extensive content libraries. The industry also must improve accessibility by offering quality fitness experiences at various price points. Our strategy of multiple entry points across different channels addresses this challenge directly."**



**Kevin Duffy**  
CEO  
iFIT

## **Peloton Embraces Strength Training & (Responsible) AI**

Peloton – a leading brand synonymous with connected fitness and at-home fitness – has entered a new chapter, expanding beyond its roots as an indoor cycling company. It's maintained its edge over the years, driven by a devoted member base, engaging instructors, premium experience and engaging workouts.

In the past year, however, Peloton has evolved to focus on strength training, personalization and community engagement.

The connected fitness company has launched Strength+, a strength-focused app designed for gym-goers to engage with the brand and complement cardio routines, personalized plans to offer tailored weekly workout programs and Pace Targets, allowing users to customize class difficulty. To strengthen its community, Peloton unveiled Teams, a social feature that encourages connection and accountability.

"This is only the beginning," Peloton chief product officer Nick Caldwell tells ATN. "We're excited about the momentum we've built and remain committed to developing our offerings based on member feedback."

"Today, strength is Peloton's second most popular fitness modality among members," Caldwell adds. "Our mission is to empower our members to live fit, strong, long and happy lives by delivering engaging and personalized fitness experiences."

Caldwell notes several key trends shaping the future of fitness and wellness, such as in the areas of personalization, digital technology integration, community, longevity and strength training.

"We're focused on deepening integrations with wearables and finding more ways to leverage AI to provide smarter, more adaptive training experiences,

ensuring our members have access to real-time feedback and actionable insights to optimize their performance," he says. "By merging AI with human coaching and dynamically personalized content offerings, we ensure every member gets a tailored fitness experience."

However, Caldwell notes that one significant challenge facing the fitness and wellness industry is trust.

"The industry has been inundated with self-proclaimed 'experts' on social media, which has confused consumers about what is deemed credible," he says. "Amid so much misinformation, people are in desperate need of trusted guidance to support their health goals. At Peloton, our instructors are recognized and trusted fitness professionals, but we recognize that in addition to expert instruction, members require personalization to reach their unique fitness goals."



Photo courtesy of Peloton

**The industry has been inundated with self-proclaimed 'experts' on social media, which has confused consumers about what is deemed credible. Amid so much misinformation, people are in desperate need of trusted guidance to support their health goals."**



**Nick Caldwell**  
Chief Product Officer  
Peloton

## Tonal Believes in the Future of At-Home Strength

Smart home gym maker Tonal is off to a strong start this year, beginning with the release of Tonal 2, its next-gen strength training at-home system that allows members to lift up to 250lbs and offers new innovations like Aero HIIT and drop-sets.

The company prides itself on having built the world's largest strength training dataset, with over 175,000 members lifting more than 235 billion pounds.

In addition to an exciting new equipment launch, Tonal has also unveiled its first-ever studio fitness experience at the Tonal Training Lab in New York City.

Looking forward, Tonal will remain laser-focused on advancements in technology that support the pursuit of long-term health.

"We feel like we've developed far and away the best strength product in the market and believe there is so much we can do to unlock software and hardware to help our members attain the strength goals they seek," Tonal CEO Darren MacDonald tells ATN. "We're focused on expanding our distribution through key partnerships, releasing incredible software that enhances value for our members, and entering some new and exciting markets."

"For instance, we've already begun pilots with physical therapy operators who can leverage Tonal's platform to help improve patient outcomes."

As MacDonald points out, strength training is "finally having its moment in the sun."

"Across disciplines, thought leaders have recognized that cardio alone is insufficient as a means of "exercise" and that resistance training is equally, if not more important than cardio alone," he says. "As the leader in strength training, we see an enormous opportunity in helping democratize strength training and easing the mental load of working out in order to maximize your results."



Photo courtesy of Tonal

With the steadily increasing interest in strength training modalities and focus on longevity, MacDonald notes that 2025 will continue to showcase new thinking and innovation around tools to improve metabolism and longevity.

"Fitness and wellness brands in 2025 need to make it easy to highly customize workouts and fitness plans based on a person's personal needs and requirements – e.g. peri-menopausal women, active aging, etc. – and schedule," he says. "Tonal continues to lead the pack in terms of optimizing strength training solutions that make it easy for all populations to start lifting."

**II Fitness and wellness brands in 2025 need to make it easy to highly customize workouts and fitness plans based on a person's personal needs and requirements – e.g. Perimenopausal women, active aging, etc. – and schedule."**



**Darren MacDonald**  
CEO  
Tonal

## Hydrow, A Rowing Powerhouse, Joins the Strength Training Party

Hydrow, a leader in at-home connected rowing experiences, made waves last year after acquiring a majority stake in Speede Fitness, another fitness industry leader in the high-tech strength training equipment and analytics space.

It was a significant milestone for the company, says Hydrow CEO John Stellato.

"The combination of Hydrow and Speede really lays the groundwork for us to unlock the future of strength and cardio training," Stellato tells ATN. "Consumers are increasingly seeking fitness experiences that extend beyond single-modality workouts, driving demand for a broader range of home-based connected fitness solutions."

The overarching goal, Stellato says, is to reshape the perception of Hydrow into something far beyond a connected rowing company.

"Physical wellness is so much more than just cardiovascular health: it's about strength, flexibility and mental health," he says. "I want our members to view Hydrow as a source of truth in their whole-body fitness journey...we will motivate, teach, and inspire them."

In terms of the connected fitness space, balancing personal fitness with a sense of community is a challenge for brands, Stellato believes.

"People want the convenience and solitude of at-home workouts, yet they also crave interpersonal connection and a shared experience," he points out. "The challenge for brands is finding the right mix to deliver high-quality, independent workouts while fostering engagement and community in a meaningful way. The old 'seesaw' model, where the consumer was viewed as being either an in-home fitness participant or a gym-goer, but not both, doesn't reflect our current reality."

Overall, Stellato says the fitness and wellness industry is in a stronger position than last year.

"Industry players are smarter, having gone through the demand pull-forward that occurred during COVID and its aftermath," he says. "As time passes, companies in our space are getting better at balancing growth and profitability, and this is a key to overall industry health. By combining this fiscal discipline with cutting-edge technology utilizing the rapid advancements in AI, the industry has an exciting opportunity to push boundaries and redefine what's possible."

**II People want the convenience and solitude of at-home workouts, yet they also crave interpersonal connection and a shared experience. The old 'seesaw' model, where the consumer was viewed as being either an in-home fitness participant or a gym-goer, but not both, doesn't reflect our current reality."**



**John Stellato**  
CEO  
Hydrow



Photo courtesy of Hydrow

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Photo courtesy of Les Mills

# LES MILLS ESTABLISHES A PLACE FOR STRENGTH, CARDIO & COMMUNITY WITH CEREMONY

*Les Mills' latest initiative puts a new twist on the cardio and strength training combination*

By Athletech Studios

While there's usually a divide between strength training and cardio in the gym, Les Mills is building a bridge between the two modalities with its Ceremony campaign.

The global fitness leader launched this boutique-style, full-body circuit class — which includes stops at both strength and cardio equipment stations — only a few months ago, but it's already picking up steam and relaying impressive metrics.

"The response has been incredible," he added. "Gyms running Ceremony have seen it bring in a younger and more competitive crowd."

**II Les Mills Ceremony takes everything great about circuit training — intensity, variety and results — and removes the barriers that can make it intimidating. It's designed to feel immersive, welcoming, and high-energy while remaining accessible to everyone."**



**Sean Turner**  
CEO  
Les Mills

## Unique Movement & Motivators

Ceremony whips users through several resistance-based workouts featuring SkiErgs, rowers and air bikes to boost strength and endurance, all while shooting vibrant music through its speakers to help everyone pull, push and pump a bit harder. Ceremony Studios also include weight plates and benches.

"We've carefully structured work-to-rest ratios so participants hit the right training intensity throughout," said Turner. "Instead of just pushing through random exercises, members move through the class in a way that keeps them progressing and feeling strong."

"And of course, the music plays a huge role," he went on. "We don't just throw on a playlist; we design the music to match the workout. It sets the tone in the beginning, lifts the energy when people start to fatigue and builds up to an epic finish that leaves everyone feeling accomplished."



Photo courtesy of Les Mills



Photo courtesy of Les Mills

Les Mills' support through Ceremony goes beyond timing and tunes as well. The brand also deploys a crew of coaches to each station who provide instruction and support on multiple fronts.

"The coaching is another game-changer," Turner said. "Unlike traditional circuit workouts where you might feel like you're on your own, our coaches are hands-on, adapting the intensity to each individual and keeping everyone motivated. It creates a strong sense of camaraderie — like you're all in it together, pushing each other forward."

## Camaraderie Effect

That togetherness extends past Les Mills' trainers into something shared among all participating fitness consumers as well. Even though everyone progresses at different speeds and chases different goals in the gym, the uplifting culture encourages everyone to rally around each other.

"In the workout, members move through strength, cardio and power movements at their own pace but still feel connected to the group," said Turner. "Everyone meets up at the end for core work and stretching, and of course, the classic high-fives! It creates an environment where people push themselves while feeling supported. People love working out together, it's why running clubs, group training and fitness communities are thriving."

This opportunity to better oneself blended with social motivation has also allowed the brand to reel in new members from the most difficult demographics to tap when it comes to group fitness.

"This format also makes group training more approachable," Turner added. "Some gym-goers, especially men, might not have considered studio workouts before, but Ceremony gives them a workout

that feels familiar yet fresh, helping gyms attract a broader audience."

Les Mills reports that in some classes 65% of the participants are males. That's far above the average for group fitness programs.

## Gen Z Wants it All

Like many of Les Mills' initiatives, Ceremony tailors to Gen Z fitness consumers. Ceremony's pace and pliability puts the training circuit in this tight, in-between spot that young adults have zeroed in on while aiming to satisfy their fitness demands.

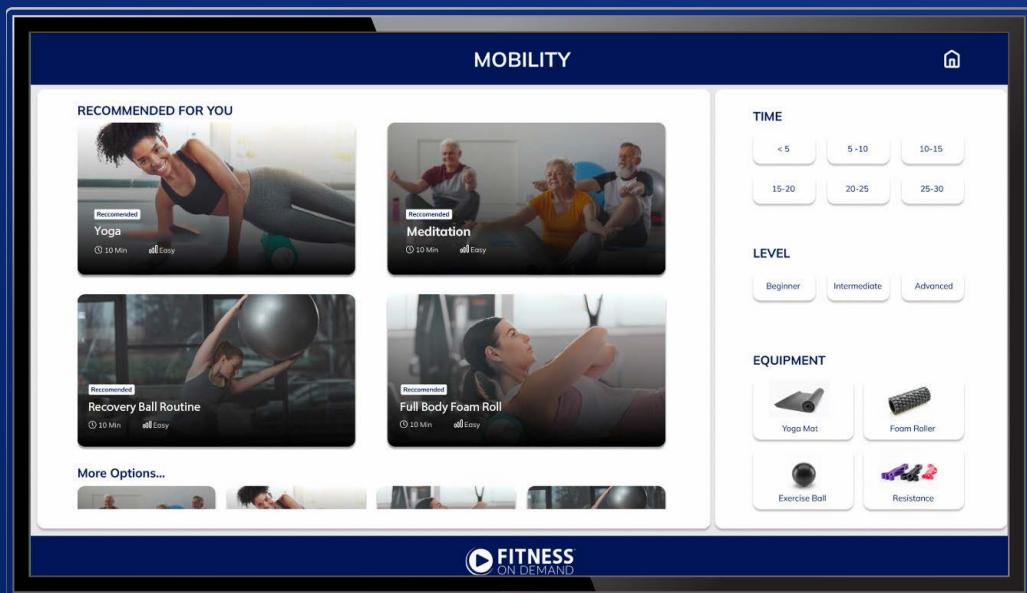
"Strength training is here to stay, but today's fitness consumer, especially Gen Z, wants variety," said Turner. "They're smart about their training and know they need both strength and cardio, but they don't want to spend hours in the gym. By combining both in a circuit format, Ceremony makes it easy for members to get a complete workout in a way that feels fun, effective and time-efficient."

There's no shortage of evidence arguing that strategy's effectiveness either. Les Mills reports one of its partners saw a 25% increase in people new to group training since the Ceremony debut. In its Les Mills New Zealand clubs, the circuit launch also lowered the average age of group training participants by 10 years, per the brand.

"It's proving that when you combine science-backed training with an engaging, high-energy format, people will show up, work hard, and keep coming back," Turner said. "We don't just follow training trends — we elevate them. With Ceremony, we've redefined full-body circuit training to make it more engaging, results-driven and widely accessible, all while making life easier for club operators."



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# POLITICAL & ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: EXPERTS ON THE STATE OF FITNESS & WELLNESS IN 2025

*Top political, economic and financial experts offer their takes on the state of the fitness and wellness industry in 2025, and share their predictions for the years ahead*

By Josh Liberatore

Fitness and wellness is emerging as an increasingly powerful, professional and lucrative industry as more consumers recognize the benefits of living healthy and as big-name brands continue to expand their offerings.

The industry even seems to be in favor at the White House thanks to the Make America Healthy Again movement's promises of foundational health reform.

That's not to say the industry isn't confronting challenges – global political instability, macroeconomic concerns and the ever-present lure of lying on the couch all present potential pitfalls. But generally speaking, fitness and wellness seems to be doing better than ever before.

Amid this landscape, Athletech News surveys key political, economic and financial experts to get their takes on the state of the fitness and wellness industry in 2025, as well as their predictions for the years ahead.

## HFA Sees 'Significant Opportunity' for Fitness Industry

According to Liz Clark, president and CEO of the Health & Fitness Association (HFA), the fitness industry entered 2025 with plenty of positive momentum.

"Our consumer reports have shown steady increases in the number of consumers joining and regularly visiting fitness facilities year-over-year for the last three years,

and we know that fitness consumers are committed because they know intellectually and empirically that exercise benefits physical and mental health," Clark tells ATN.

While the current political situation in the United States is fraught, to say the least, HFA leaders see an opportunity for the fitness industry to establish itself as a bigger player in Washington D.C. given the healthcare-reform promises of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

"This environment presents a significant opportunity to position the fitness industry as a key player in preventive health," Clark says. "With rising healthcare costs and a growing focus on chronic disease prevention, there is bipartisan support for policies that encourage Americans to be more physically active."

In 2025, HFA is focusing much of its attention on legislation like the PHIT Act, securing recognition of the fitness industry's role in military readiness, and fighting for beneficial legislation and regulation at the state level, Clark tells ATN.

As the fitness industry fights for a bigger voice in Washington and statehouses around the country, HFA is calling on major stakeholders to come together.

"The saying, 'If you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu,' remains as true as ever," Clark says.

"Policymakers are making decisions that impact the future of our industry every day, and if we aren't actively involved – advocating for pro-fitness policies, defending against harmful regulations, and positioning physical activity as essential to public health – then others will shape the landscape without us. HFA is leading these fights, but we can only be as strong as the industry behind us."

**II This environment presents a significant opportunity to position the fitness industry as a key player in preventive health. With rising healthcare costs and a growing focus on chronic-disease prevention, there is bipartisan support for policies that encourage Americans to be more physically active."**



**Liz Clark**  
CEO  
Health & Fitness Association (HFA)

## More Consolidation Is Coming, McKinsey Predicts

The fitness and wellness industry is growing fast, and traditional players are noticing. McKinsey & Company, one of the world's leading consulting firms, has made a serious push into fitness and wellness in recent years.

Eric Falardeau, a partner in McKinsey's Montreal office who leads the firm's global fitness and wellness practice, believes the industry is growing thanks to heightened consumer demand and increasingly sophisticated operators.

"Some of this growth rides on consumer tailwinds which are quite positive for the sector – fitness and wellness is very important to an increasing amount of people, but a lot of it is thanks to capabilities companies have invested in over the past five years or so, from revenue management to digital and analytics," Falardeau tells ATN. "This is helping the overall sector grow."

Falardeau expects to see more dealmaking activity in fitness and wellness in 2025, with consolidation continuing to emerge as a key theme. Just last year, Anytime Fitness and Orangetheory Fitness completed an industry-changing merger, forming Purpose Brands. Similar deals could be on the horizon in the years to come.

"The sector is entering its next chapter of consolidation, one that is particularly important to get right for leaders

who want to thrive in five years," Falardeau says. "The sector can inspire itself from many analogous sectors that have gone through this before. A lot of the discussions we've had with clients recently are centered around this."

**II The (fitness and wellness) sector is entering its next chapter of consolidation, one that is particularly important to get right for leaders who want to thrive in five years. The sector can inspire itself from many analogous sectors that have gone through this before."**



**Eric Falardeau**  
Partner and Global Fitness & Wellness Practice Lead  
McKinsey & Company

## HVLP 2.0 Gyms Drive the Industry's Post-Pandemic Resurgence

Jon Canarick, a managing partner at private equity firm North Castle Partners, is generally bullish on the fitness and wellness industry's financial and economic health in 2025.

"For the most part, the industry is in increasingly better shape, but there are pockets where that is less true," Canarick tells ATN. "2025 will see a continuation of strong growth for (high-value, low-price) HVLP fitness clubs, particularly HVLP 2.0+, which has more capital being allocated (to it) than any other sector in four-wall fitness, as far as I can tell."

A leader in the HVLP 2.0 category, Crunch Fitness could be sold by owner TPG in a deal worth more than \$1.5 billion, including debt, Reuters has reported. Other top HVLP gym brands are said to be exploring sales as well.

While economic and political uncertainties under the Trump administration could give some investors pause, Canarick expects to see more dealmaking activity in 2025 as the industry continues to distance itself from the pandemic period.

"COVID was so disruptive that there are many long-hold periods for private-equity backed companies," Canarick says. "Shareholders, lenders and management teams are growing less patient."

"Lenders own some assets in fitness due to COVID that they don't want to own forever," he adds. "PE firms are generally behind in their deployment schedules, particularly in consumer."

As for what could be coming next in the booming wellness category, Canarick believes robotic massage is a modality to watch. Aescape just secured an additional \$83 million in funding for its robotic, AI-powered massage machines that are being rolled out in Equinox clubs across the country and in upscale hotel chains like Four Seasons.

"Keep a close eye on that as a concept," Canarick says. "If robotic massage gets better and better, prices will drop and massage may become more widely available for less money over time."

**For the most part, the industry is in increasingly better shape, but there are pockets where that is less true. 2025 will see a continuation of strong growth for (high-value, low-price) HVLP fitness clubs, particularly HVLP 2.0+"**



**Jon Canarick**  
Managing Partner  
North Castle Partners

amenitized (and expensive) pricing tiers."

Like other analysts, Hirsch is cooling on the at-home and connected fitness space as consumers gravitate toward in-person fitness experiences post-pandemic.

"It's a nice-to-have, but I think it's becoming more of a convenience item rather than a routine item," Hirsch says of at-home, connected fitness products. "That's not to say that there aren't people who don't use them regularly, but (most) people want to go to the gym; they want to be around other people."

**2025 is poised to be the biggest year of activity ever in the fitness category. There will also be a number of other smaller trades happening within the franchising space.**



**Jeremy Hirsch**  
Head of Franchise & Multi-Unit Services  
Houlahan Lokey

## Fitness Industry Primed for 'Biggest Year of Activity Ever'

For Jeremy Hirsch, head of franchise and multi-unit services at investment bank Houlahan Lokey, there's never been a better time to be involved in fitness and wellness.

"2025 is poised to be the biggest year of activity ever in the fitness category," Hirsch tells ATN, pointing to massive potential deals like TPG's rumored sale of Crunch along with other major gym brands that are said to be exploring sales.

"There will also be a number of other smaller trades happening within the franchising space," Hirsch adds.

Like Canarick, Hirsch believes HVLP 2.0 concepts (brands like Crunch, Chuze Fitness and EōS Fitness) are poised to keep growing in the years ahead. HVLP 2.0 gyms typically offer premium amenities and equipment like infrared saunas, Olympic weightlifting platforms and more, all for a monthly price that's anywhere from \$10 to \$35/month depending on the membership package.

"We're seeing average tickets (consumer spending) increase across the board, which is a function of the value that's being delivered to gym members," Hirsch notes. "We're seeing folks upgrade from HVLP 1 to HVLP 2.0 concepts. And they're willing to pay more to get more – within those concepts, when there's pricing tiers, we're seeing a lot of people trade up to the more



Photo courtesy of FOTO Eak/shutterstock.com

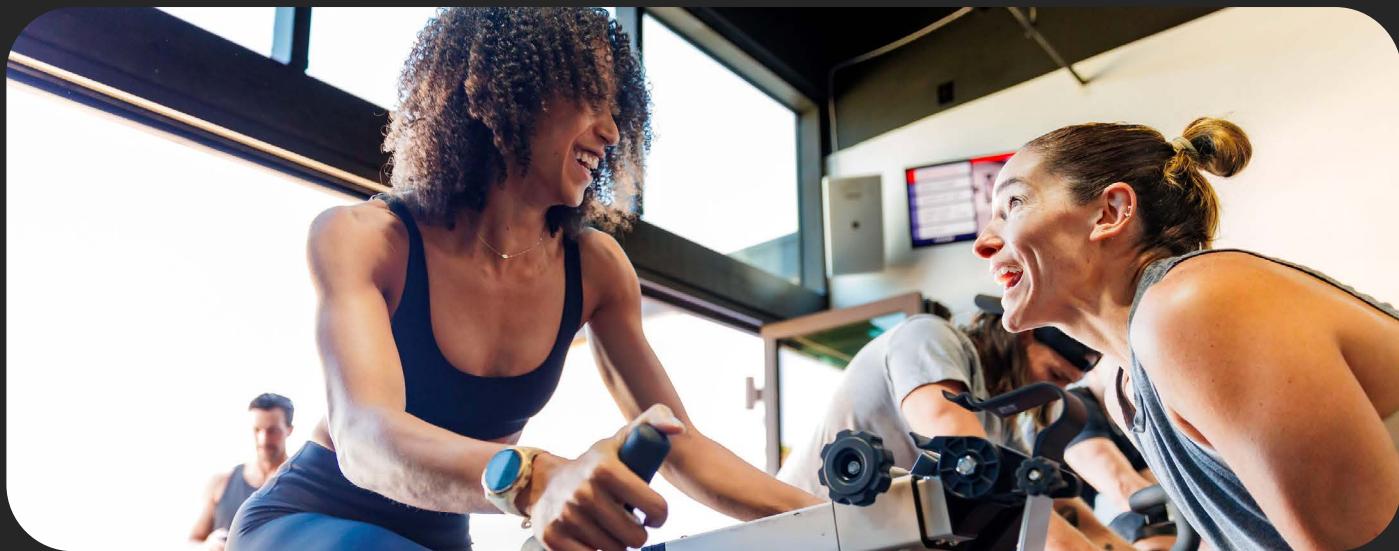


Photo courtesy of Fitstop

# HOW FITSTOP REDEFINES THE FITNESS EXPERIENCE AND BRINGS IT TO THE MASSES

*From a garage gym to a global fitness powerhouse, Fitstop has built a movement around strength and community*

By Athletech Studios

Having grown to over 160 locations, Australia-based Fitstop isn't slowing down — in fact, it's just getting started. As the functional fitness franchise sets its sights on expansion into the United States, it's ready to introduce more consumers to its unique blend of structured strength training and social connection.

Leading the charge is Founder and CEO Peter Hull, a former professional motocross athlete who turned a career-ending injury into an opportunity. During recovery, he discovered the power of functional training to rebuild both body and community. Seeing a gap in the market for performance-driven, community-focused fitness, Hull has since scaled Fitstop into new markets worldwide, establishing the brand as a frontrunner in the fitness industry.

*The following conversation has been lightly edited for clarity and length*

**Athletech News (ATN): How does Fitstop facilitate strength training differently than others?**

**Peter Hull (PH):** Fitstop isn't just another workout — we've built a culture around strength training supported by a tight-knit community. Unlike many group fitness classes that pack 30+ people into a room with little interaction, Fitstop is all about training together. Every session, you work in teams of 2-4, spotting each other, pushing each other and celebrating wins — building real accountability and friendships along the way.

Our program stands out with its structured 12-week progressive training blocks. Each block is carefully programmed to help you build strength, speed and endurance over time, ensuring consistent progress. Whether you're just starting out or you're an experienced athlete, you'll see measurable improvements every 12 weeks.

**ATN: Was merging strength training with social wellness something you always planned to do as a brand, or did you find your way there over time?**

**PH:** From day one, Fitstop was built on the belief that lifting weights is better with your mates. In Australia, fitness is naturally social and we wanted to bring that energy into a structured strength program people could stick with.

For me, that belief started from my own sporting background. I originally dreamt of going pro in motocross, but after two serious accidents, I had to retire. Rehab was tough, but it introduced me to the power of strength training — not just for physical recovery but for mental resilience and connection. A trainer helped me through it purely out of passion, and that experience shaped how I saw fitness and its positive impact on all aspects of life. It wasn't just about training — it was about support, connection and growing stronger together.



Photo courtesy of Fitstop

When I started training athletes out of my parents' garage, I wasn't just focused on programming — I wanted to build something bigger. A place where people didn't just train alongside each other but for each other. Of course, we've evolved — our programming has become more refined, and we've deepened our focus on progression — but the social aspect has always been at our core.

**ATN: What is it about strength training that makes it such a community-building brand of exercise?**

**PH:** There's something about pushing through a tough set of reps and knowing the person next to you is doing the same that creates a real bond. Our strength training isn't just about sweating — it's about chasing your 1% better. When you train alongside people hitting PRs, showing up consistently and improving every week, that energy is contagious. It creates a shared sense of commitment and accountability. There's this unspoken support system where members encourage each other and celebrate progress together.

It's not about who lifts the most — it's about showing up, improving and having people around you who genuinely want to see you succeed — and it's easier to stay motivated when you know your friends are in it with you. That's what runs deep throughout our community — we're unstoppable together!

**ATN: How does Fitstop curate this ultimate blend of structured strength training and social connection?**

**PH:** It all starts with our team-based training sessions. Each workout is programmed to ensure you build strength and feel the burn while moving through it as a group. That creates a natural motivation — you're pushing yourself, but you're also feeding off the energy of the people around you. Even the fit-outs of our gyms are thoughtfully built to cultivate this sense of "coming together" with multiple rig setups and free weight stations grouped together.

Beyond the workouts, we've built an environment where people feel connected outside the gym, too. Whether it's through events, challenges or everyday encouragement from coaches and members, Fitstop isn't just a place to train — it's where people feel part of something bigger.

**ATN: Where do you think this demand for social wellness through strength training came from? Why will it remain popular?**



Photo courtesy of Fitstop

**PH:** People are craving real connections more than ever. In a world where so much of our interaction is digital, we're connecting less in meaningful ways — and that makes us crave it even more. That's why run clubs, group hikes and community-driven training programs are booming. People don't just want to work out — they want to belong.

Strength training has been around for generations and isn't going anywhere. But what's changing is how we train. Strength training used to be an individual pursuit — something you did alone in a weight room. Now, team-based training is bringing us back to the "good old days" of playing sports, where camaraderie, competition and shared goals fuel motivation.

**ATN: What are you most excited about with your United States expansion?**

**PH:** The U.S. fitness market is primed for something fresh. People are getting smarter about their training — they're looking for more than just high-intensity sweat sessions or traditional strength programs that lack community.

That's where Fitstop comes in. It's a balanced, results-driven, community-focused model that proves fitness can deliver both real results and connections.

My wife and I have just moved to the U.S. to focus on our locations and drive growth here. We're genuinely invested in making Fitstop a staple in the U.S. fitness

scene and building communities that reflect our vision. It's an exciting time, and we're fully committed to working alongside our team and partners to make it happen!

**ATN: What's next for Fitstop beyond your expansion?**

**PH:** We're always evolving to keep our members engaged — training with purpose not just inside the gym but for life's challenges and adventures.

One of the most exciting developments is our event-specific programming, designed to help members train with the intention of fitness racing competitions, marathons and endurance events. It's about coming together, tackling challenges as a team, and building camaraderie. Our franchised locations will be able to offer specialized programs that cater to local interests and help members reach their performance-based goals.

We're also doubling down on personalization because we feel the future of fitness is about meeting people where they are. That means integrating in-app personalized nutrition support to help members align their eating habits with their training, along with real-time performance and progress tracking to visualize strength gains and conditioning improvements.

What sets Fitstop apart is our commitment to social strength training. We know people push harder and go further when they're part of something bigger.



Photo courtesy of Fitstop

ATN

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# FITNESS PROFESSIONAL OUTLOOK: ADAPTABILITY IS THE NAME OF THE GAME IN 2025

ATN sat down with six leading brands and organizations that are shaping the industry to get their insights on what's next – and how fit pros can react, prepare and thrive in this new era

By Kim Kisner

With the first quarter of 2025 already behind us and the HFA Show fresh in our minds, the biggest forces driving the industry forward are becoming crystal clear.

Recovery, wellness and longevity have become core pillars of the industry. AI is moving fast, infiltrating every aspect of fitness, and personalization remains the key to retention. Wearables are multiplying, evolving into data-driven ecosystems that feed into comprehensive health platforms. GLP-1 medications are reshaping the fitness conversation, and hybrid experiences – inside and outside the gym – are booming, as is the continued demand for community and connectivity.

So, what does this mean for fit pros? How is the landscape shifting for personal trainers and group fitness instructors? What skills, specializations and strategies will they need to stay ahead, and how can they future-proof their careers in an industry that's evolving at breakneck speed?

Athletech News sat down with six leading brands and organizations that are shaping the industry to get their insights on what's next – and how fit pros can react, prepare and thrive in this new era.

## ISSA Works To Create Well-Rounded Trainers

In addition to mental health and wellness, tech advancements and GLP-1's, ISSA CEO Warren Heffelfinger says specialized programming for active aging populations and learning the business aspects of personal training are key areas where fit pros should focus their attention.

"Today's fitness professionals need more than just technical knowledge - they must master behavioral coaching, data-driven programming, business skills and digital marketing," Heffelfinger tells ATN. "Specialized expertise in areas like corrective exercise and medical weight management is in demand, while emotional intelligence and communication are essential for client success. Those who can blend these skills will not only thrive but also build sustainable, adaptable careers in a rapidly evolving industry."

Recognizing these evolving demands, ISSA has expanded its offerings with programs like the Health Coach Institute's Pathway Program, a Business of Personal Training course, specialized nutritional programming and more.

To operate effectively in today's environment, Heffelfinger says fit pros must maintain adaptability, focus on continuous education in areas where human expertise adds the most value and dedicate equal attention to developing both technical expertise and interpersonal skills.

**Today's fitness professionals need more than just technical knowledge - they must master behavioral coaching, data-driven programming, business skills and digital marketing. Specialized expertise in areas like corrective exercise and medical weight management is in demand, while emotional intelligence and communication are essential for client success."**



**Warren Heffelfinger**  
CEO  
ISSA

## NASM Embraces the 'Wellness Evolution'

NASM CEO Mehul Patel notes that fitness and wellness are becoming intertwined.

"The personal training landscape is being reshaped by the wellness evolution, which has become an indispensable aspect of the fitness industry," Patel tells ATN.

To that end, a recent NASM study found that trainers are most interested in expanding their knowledge in anti-aging and longevity, recovery and mental performance.

But with so much emerging information, trainers are feeling the pressure. That same NASM study found that information overload is the biggest challenge they face today.

"It's a reality we take seriously, which is why our commitment is to distill the wide array of fitness information into clear, science-backed and applicable knowledge through our certifications," says NASM chief commercial officer Kristin Carrico. "Our goal is to provide trainers with the precise information they need, without the excess that can lead to confusion and overwhelm."

"It's clear that in this rapidly growing field, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicting a 14% increase in demand for fitness professionals by 2032, the ability to specialize is more important than ever," Mehul adds.

"Trainers have the opportunity to hone their skills in specific areas they're passionate about and position themselves as authorities in their chosen fields."

**Our commitment is to distill the wide array of fitness information into clear, science-backed and applicable knowledge through our certifications. Our goal is to provide trainers with the precise information they need, without the excess that can lead to confusion and overwhelm."**



**Kristin Carrico**  
Chief Commercial Officer  
NASM

## ACE Sees the Opportunity in AI, GLP-1s

Lauren Shroyer, MS, vice president of product innovation at the American Council on Exercise (ACE), points to anti-obesity medication, also known as AOMs, and AI as two of the top trends shaping personal training and group fitness - and opening doors.

"While AOMs are shifting the landscape of weight management, long-term success still hinges on sustainable lifestyle changes," Shroyer says. "This creates a major opportunity for fitness professionals to become the center point of lasting health by offering behavior change coaching."

"Trainers and facilities that leverage AI-driven insights will be able to deliver more responsive coaching, ensuring workouts adjust dynamically based on recovery, effort and progress," she adds.

ACE is working to balance these tech advancements with a commitment to delivering high-quality, immediately applicable education.

"We leverage AI for efficiency while ensuring that subject matter experts - who are active practitioners - shape our content to maintain credibility and industry relevance," Shroyer explains.

Her advice for fit pros? In addition to finding the balance between tech and personalization, Shroyer says expanding expertise beyond exercise to include sleep, stress management and recovery is critical.

"As clients seek a more holistic approach, those who embrace these changes in the landscape will come out ahead," Shroyer believes.

**While AOMs (anti-obesity medications) are shifting the landscape of weight management, long-term success still hinges on sustainable lifestyle changes. This creates a major opportunity for fitness professionals to become the center point of lasting health by offering behavior change coaching."**



**Lauren Shroyer, MS**  
Vice President/Product Innovation  
ACE

## Les Mills Brings AI, Gamification to Group Fitness

Les Mills is seeing a major shift in what gym-goers expect from their workouts, and according to Sean Turner, CEO of Les Mills U.S., younger generations are leading the charge toward more immersive, experience-driven fitness.

"Millennials and Gen Z now make up over 80% of gym-goers, and they want more than just a workout - they want a full experience," Turner tells ATN.

That experience goes beyond movement. Today's fitness consumers are drawn to high-energy, community-driven classes with digital integration.

"AI-driven fitness, gamification and real-time data tracking are changing how people train, and the next frontier is personalization - ensuring members get workouts tailored to their goals and performance levels, when they want, where they want," Turner explains.



Photo courtesy of Les Mills

To meet this demand, Les Mills recently launched Ceremony, designed to deliver results while maintaining the energy and motivation of a live class. They've also expanded their strength training lineup with Les Mills Strength Development.

"We're pushing the boundaries of group fitness with cutting-edge sound and visual technology, making workouts more immersive and interactive," he explains. "Programs like The Trip, our immersive cycling experience, along with Les Mills Bodycombat VR and Les Mills Dance VR on Meta Quest headsets, are attracting the next generation of members."

**AI-driven fitness, gamification and real-time data tracking are changing how people train, and the next frontier is personalization - ensuring members get workouts tailored to their goals and performance levels, when they want, where they want."**



**Sean Turner**  
CEO  
Les Mills U.S.

## Zumba Makes the Case for Fun, Accessible Fitness

Zumba chief marketing officer Carolina Moraes also emphasizes the importance of specialized programming in meeting the evolving demands of the industry.

"We are always exploring how to evolve our specialty offerings so people who are already in the Zumba ecosystem can have all their fitness needs addressed," Moraes tells ATN.



Photo courtesy of Zumba

While AI, wearable tech, and anti-obesity medications are shaping industry trends, she is particularly encouraged by the increased focus on women's health and fitness needs, which are now at the forefront of critical conversations.

For Zumba, inclusivity remains a driving force.

"We know over 70% of Americans don't work out and intimidation is a big factor," she says. "Facilities should offer programs like Zumba that welcome all levels while also providing ongoing support to members and celebrating their achievements, big and small."

**■ ■ We know over 70% of Americans don't work out and intimidation is a big factor. Facilities should offer programs like Zumba that welcome all levels while also providing ongoing support to members and celebrating their achievements, big and small."**



**Carolina Moraes**  
Chief Marketing Officer  
Zumba

## Wellhub: Bridging the Gap with Hybrid Fitness

In terms of inclusivity and meeting people where they are, Pietro Carmignani, executive vice president of partnerships at Wellhub says, "People want fitness to seamlessly integrate into their daily lives, making accessibility a key priority. That's why the hybrid fitness model - blending virtual and in-person training - is so important."

Wellhub's integration of wellness apps, gyms, and studios also allows trainers to easily create this hybrid fitness experience, combining virtual coaching with in-person resources. Within the platform, trainers and clients can leverage a range of in-app tools - including video, text, and voice messaging, structured workout schedules, and real-time health metric tracking - to create a personalized, effective, and sustainable fitness experience.

"The key to retention isn't just access - it's creating a support system that keeps clients motivated and accountable well beyond their initial sign-up, said Carmignani.

**■ ■ People want fitness to seamlessly integrate into their daily lives, making accessibility a key priority. That's why the hybrid fitness model - blending virtual and in-person training - is so important."**



**Pietro Carmignani**  
EVP of Partnerships  
Wellhub

Fitness pros face an exciting but challenging future. It's becoming clear that the most successful trainers won't just adopt new tech - they'll blend it thoughtfully with genuine human connection. The winners will be those who can harness AI and wearables while still delivering the personal touch that keeps clients coming back. Personal trainers are expanding beyond traditional exercise into recovery, longevity and mental wellness, creating community spaces where everyone feels welcome. Staying curious and continuously learning isn't optional in today's fitness industry - it's essential.



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Photo courtesy of Fitness On Demand

# FUTURE-FORWARD FITNESS: HYBRID WORKOUTS, RECOVERY & PERSONALIZATION

*Fitness engagement is no longer just about gym attendance—it's about creating a connected, hybrid experience that meets members wherever they are*

By Athletech Studios

For years, gyms measured success by how often members walked through the doors. But today, engagement is something far greater. It's about connection, experience and how seamlessly fitness weaves into a person's life. With 40% of gym-goers wanting access to fitness experiences outside of their club, delivering hybrid solutions has never been more important.

Fitness has changed from simply attending workouts to something far more immersive and multidimensional. This transformation is supported by a surge in digital fitness options and the need for community and recovery. The global virtual fitness market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26.72% from 2023 to 2030. Consumers also have shown a preference for hybrid workouts, mirroring their embrace of hybrid workplaces. However, they still crave connection and need to recover, and there has been an increase in social-setting exercise, such as running clubs and other group activities, like pickleball or relaxing in the sauna.

Andy Peat, CEO of Fitness On Demand, summarizes the "why" behind these trends: "Members want more

than just gym access; they want a fully integrated fitness ecosystem that meets them wherever they are."

For gym operators looking to stay relevant, success depends on meeting members in their daily lives — on their devices, at home and in the gym. Social media interactions, brand advocacy, personalization and referrals have also become key indicators of engagement, demonstrating that a well-connected fitness experience extends far beyond physical attendance



Photo courtesy of Fitness On Demand

## The Fitness Ecosystem – Engagement Beyond Gym Walls

Member engagement is no longer just about gym attendance, it's about the entire exercise experience, from the first brand interaction to ongoing participation both inside and outside the facility. People want seamless connectivity.

"As expectations evolve, members seek more than just gym access — they want a connected fitness ecosystem that fits their lifestyle," he says. "This includes on-demand digital solutions, gamified experiences, and personalized programming that extends beyond traditional gym walls."

That expansion includes activating every screen, whether it's a member's smartphone, a large in-club display, a kiosk or a recovery station, creating a fully connected and interactive environment. This is good news for motivating people toward better health. A Digital Health study found that fitness technology use is positively associated with increased physical activity.

"Unlike platforms that focus solely on digital content or in-gym solutions, we provide both in a way that's seamless for the member," Peat says. "We cover everything from high-intensity interval training and heart rate tracking to guided recovery sessions inside and outside the gym."

This translates to a vast library of over 1,500 live and on-demand workouts, ensuring members remain active at home, while traveling, or even at work. The platform also provides exclusive retail discounts, further enhancing value for members and encouraging long-term engagement.

**II We surveyed over 100,000 gym members and found that 40% want access to fitness solutions both at home and in the gym."**



**Andy Peat**  
CEO  
Fitness On Demand

## Personalization – The Demand for Customized Fitness Experiences

Personalization is key to modern fitness engagement, with data-driven approaches helping to tailor experiences to individual goals.

"Our Flex App personalizes workout recommendations based on user goals, while features like heart rate tracking and gamification create a more customized fitness journey using personal data," says Peat.

Real-time data tracking and heart rate zone training enhance motivation and accountability, while gamification elements encourage members to challenge themselves, making workouts more engaging and rewarding.

Another advantage? Offering premium digital content allows gyms to introduce tiered membership models, add-on services and loyalty incentives that drive retention and secondary revenue.

Through strategic partnerships, Fitness On Demand is also introducing innovative features such as an in-app body scanner and AI-driven coaching, offering 24/7 personalized support. Looking ahead, the platform plans to introduce individual wellness scores, giving users a comprehensive overview of their overall health and fitness progress.



Photo courtesy of Fitness On Demand

## Hybrid Fitness Solutions - Breaking Down Barriers

For many people, traditional gym settings can feel intimidating or inconvenient. Social anxiety ticked upward after the pandemic. As a result, hybrid fitness solutions have become essential, allowing members to engage with fitness on their own terms — whether at home, in the gym or on the go.

"We surveyed over 100,000 gym members and found that 40% want access to fitness solutions both at home and in the gym," says Peat. "Additionally, research from industry leaders like Les Mills suggests that individuals who first experience group fitness digitally are more likely to participate in live classes later."

Unlike platforms that focus solely on digital content or in-gym solutions, Fitness On Demand offers a seamless omnifitness experience, integrating both into a fully connected environment.

Rather than focusing solely on digital content or in-gym solutions, today's leading platforms are integrating both. Peat explains: "We activate every screen in the gym — whether it's a member's smartphone, a large in-club display, or a recovery station — creating a connected and interactive environment."

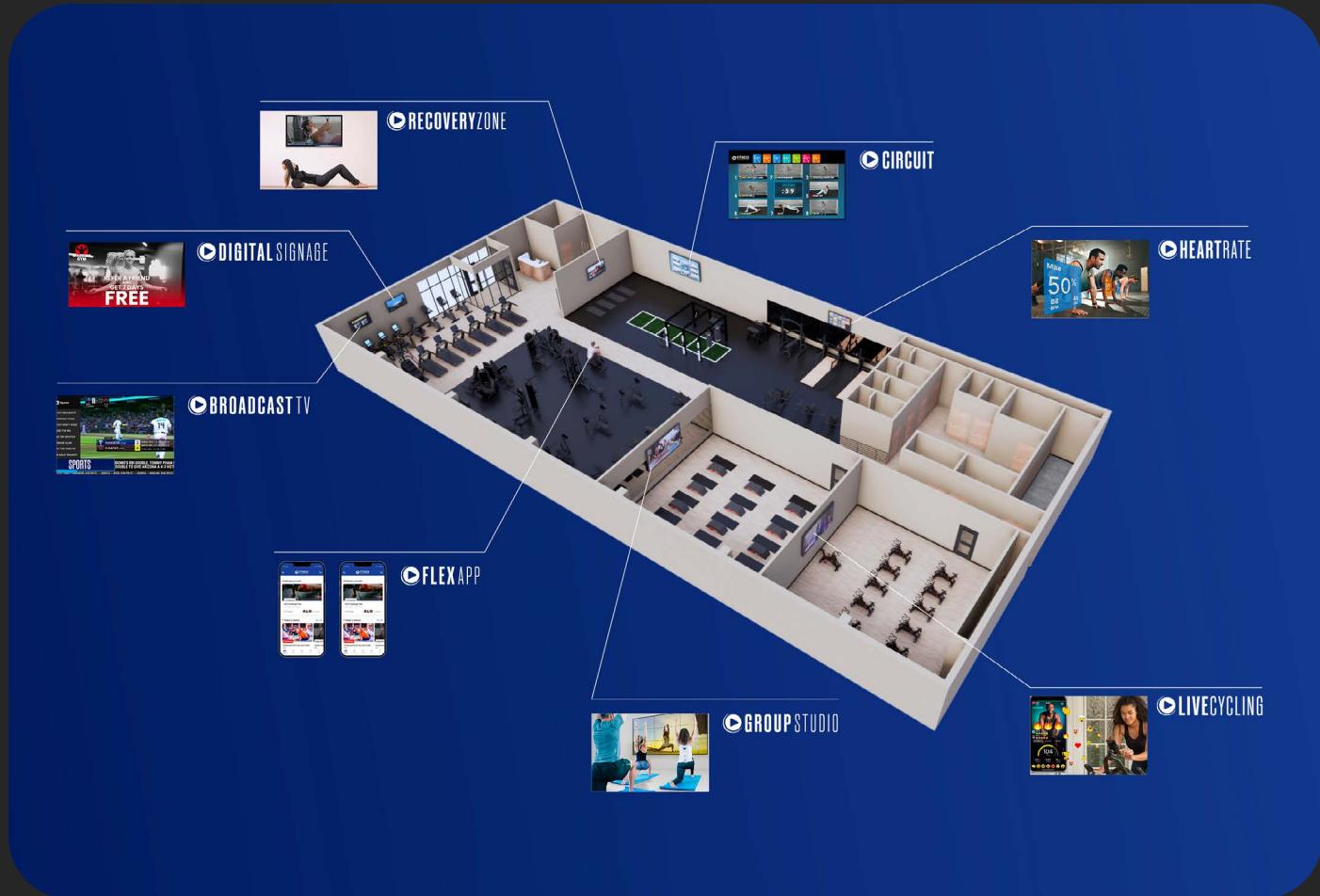


Photo courtesy of Fitness On Demand

Research also suggests that digital integration plays a key role in success. Fitness On Demand's digital offerings have been linked to a 17% increase in member retention. Facilities that implement an omnichannel approach have seen increased member engagement and long-term commitment, reinforcing the value of hybrid fitness experiences.

## The Rise of Recovery as a Core Offering

Another trend on the radar is recovery, which is no longer an afterthought, becoming a fundamental pillar of fitness programming. As members place greater emphasis on mobility, injury prevention and overall well-being, gyms and studios must integrate structured recovery solutions to meet these expectations.

Fitness On Demand's solution? A fully robust **Recovery Station** offering a 42-inch touchscreen hub designed to help members warm up, cool down and improve mobility with expert-led guidance. It delivers a cost-effective, space-saving solution that enhances the member experience while requiring minimal upkeep.

### Key Benefits:

- **Optimizing Underutilized Spaces** – Recovery Stations transform unused areas into high-value member resources, maximizing a club's footprint without major renovations.

- **Low-Maintenance & Scalable** – Unlike adding new equipment or hiring additional staff, the Recovery Station provides guided, on-demand recovery programming without ongoing labor costs.

- **Enhancing Member Experience & Retention** – Many gym-goers lack knowledge of proper recovery techniques. The Recovery Station bridges this gap, offering virtually-guided sessions that support members throughout their fitness journey.

By integrating dedicated recovery offerings, clubs can differentiate themselves, drive engagement, and increase long-term member retention – cementing recovery as a core part of their value proposition.

The fitness and wellness industry is fast-moving and full of opportunity, and operators who embrace hybrid engagement, recovery integration and personalization will be the leaders.

Through 24/7 AI-powered workout builders and personal coaching, guided recovery sessions that enhance mobility and reduce injury risk, and gamification and loyalty incentives to drive engagement, Fitness On Demand ensures that fitness experiences are dynamic and adaptable.

In the end, Peat says, "By embracing and leveraging industry trends and consumer demands, we're ensuring that our partner gyms remain competitive and deliver unparalleled value to their members."



Photo courtesy of PeopleImages.com - Yuri A/shutterstock.com

# FITNESS & HEALTHCARE OUTLOOK: THESE BRANDS ARE TURNING THE GYM INTO A CLINIC

ATN surveys the CEOs and founders of top telehealth, wellness and tech brands to see how they're powering the convergence of fitness and healthcare.

By Courtney Rehfeldt

The intersection of health and fitness knows no bounds in 2025 as it continues evolving, reshaped by weight loss drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy and supported by health-conscious consumers. As more individuals turn to GLP-1s, gyms, trainers and health brands are not just adjusting their approach – they're expanding their offerings.

At the same time, the surge in biomarker testing and AI-driven health insights is fueling a new era of precision wellness. Meanwhile, telehealth platforms are streamlining access to care, making it easier than ever for consumers to use their Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) and Health Savings Accounts (HSA) for a broader range of wellness services.

Here's how industry leaders are adapting, reshaping their offerings and embracing innovation as they empower individuals on the journey to optimal health.

## Recess Fitness Embraces GLP-1s

Down in Dallas, Texas, Recess Fitness co-founders

Evan Duncan and Taylor Metzger are redefining the gym experience with sleek aesthetics, a gold slide and members so dedicated to their workouts they're willing to sign a \$50 re-racking fee agreement.

It's no surprise Recess Fitness was named the "Best Gym in Dallas" by The Dallas Observer—but its new frontier could bring it to new heights. The gym recently launched Recess Rx, a medically supervised arm that offers weight loss medications for those qualified, hormone replacement therapies and peptides.

"The world has seen the huge weight loss advantages that tirzepatide and semaglutide can provide, but that's weight loss -- weight loss being the key word," Metzger tells ATN. "The downside is the lean mass loss that can come along with these popular drugs if they are not prescribed, monitored and implemented properly. RecessRX is a program we started alongside our 'resident' physician Dr. Ellis. Members who decide can book a free consultation with our physician, who works hand in hand with our personal training department."



As for the state of the fitness and wellness industry, when compared to 2024, Metzger notes that the scales are balanced based on the first quarter of 2025.

"I do see these scales tipping toward advancement as this year continues and so on," he predicts. "There's more technology becoming available through the robust amount of data from body composition machines, wearables and resistance machines that literally adjust for you based on height, weight, etc. I think we are also starting to see more holistic approaches become available, especially with biohacking, which has become a big buzzword in the industry. These new advances broaden the customer base dramatically."

**|| The world has seen the huge weight loss advantages that tirzepatide and semaglutide can provide, but that's weight loss –weight loss being the key word. The downside is the lean mass loss that can come along with these popular drugs if they are not prescribed, monitored and implemented properly."**



**Taylor Metzger**  
Co-Founder  
Recess Fitness

## Evolt Turns Your Gym Into a Body Composition Lab

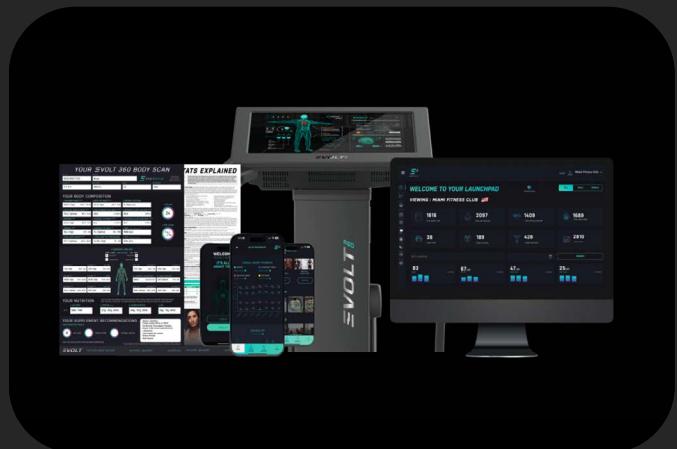
At a time when consumers are health-conscious and eager for a high-tech, behind-the-scenes look into the state of their health, Evolt, makers of an advanced body composition scanner and health ecosystem, is perfectly poised for continued growth.

"The past 12 months have been transformative for Evolt," Evolt co-founder and CEO Ed Zouroudis tells ATN. "One of our biggest milestones has been expanding our global footprint, with a significant increase in installations across leading fitness franchises, corporate wellness programs and healthcare facilities. Our technology has been integrated into some of the most well-respected brands in the industry, further solidifying our reputation as a leader in body composition analysis."

Evolt has the ability to integrate with existing fitness apps, wearables, and CRM systems, ensuring businesses can provide a more seamless health-tracking experience. The brand currently has partnerships that place its advanced body-composition scanners inside Anytime Fitness and Snap Fitness locations, among other top brands.

As Zouroudis points out, personalized health data is becoming the norm.

"Consumers expect deeper insights into their health beyond weight and BMI," he adds. "Evolt is leading this shift by providing highly detailed, science-backed body composition analysis, giving users a more accurate picture of their health. Preventative health and longevity-focused fitness are on the rise. More people are investing in long-term wellness rather than short-term fitness goals. Evolt's technology aligns perfectly with this trend by tracking key markers like visceral fat, metabolic rate and lean muscle mass."



**|| Consumers expect deeper insights into their health beyond weight and BMI. Preventative health and longevity-focused fitness are on the rise. More people are investing in long-term wellness rather than short-term fitness goals."**



**Ed Zouroudis**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
Evolt

## Dr. B Takes Fitness Brands Into the HFA/FSA Era

Dr. B is changing the game when it comes to accessible medical care and even assisting individuals in directing their tax-free health savings account (HSA) and flexible savings account (FSA) funds to fitness memberships, classes and equipment.

"The program includes a Letter of Medical Necessity, allowing patients to use their HSA and FSA funds not only for their treatment and medication but also for their workouts," Dr. B founder and CEO Cyrus Massoumi explains to ATN.

"Our goal is to become the fitness industry's go-to telehealth partner by collaborating with brands on treatments that align with their members' health goals," Massoumi adds.

The platform has leaned heavily into the trend of consumers using their HSA/FSA funds for fitness and other preventative health services and expects to see a growing focus on preventative and more personalized care, with a shift toward integrating medical and prescription treatments, such as GLP-1s and preventative testing, into existing fitness and nutrition programs to support overall health.

"One of the biggest challenges we see within the industry is adapting to the growing demand for more integrated healthcare solutions," Massoumi says. "Customers increasingly expect their gyms and studios to quickly roll out programs they see at other facilities, making the space more competitive for those who can move the fastest. That said, the healthcare industry's complex regulatory landscape means fitness brands need to be careful when choosing providers."

**One of the biggest challenges we see within the industry is adapting to the growing demand for more integrated healthcare solutions. Customers increasingly expect their gyms and studios to quickly roll out programs they see at other facilities, making the space more competitive for those who can move the fastest."**



**Cyrus Massoumi**  
Founder and CEO  
Dr. B

## Echelon Brings Connected Equipment Into the World of Wellness

Connected fitness equipment leader Echelon recently made waves with the launch of ActiveMD, expanding into the holistic wellness space by providing members and gyms access to GLP-1s—a first in the fitness equipment industry.

Echelon founder and CEO Lou Lentine outlined several goals for the next few years.

"We aim to be recognized as an industry-leading wellness brand and expand our offerings beyond fitness, optimize Echelon AI for deeper engagement, strengthen international partnerships and retail expansion, improve the customer experience with seamless digital and hardware integration, develop next-gen connected fitness and recovery solutions, and continue acquisitions to help bolster experience for commercial operators," Lentine says.

**|| We aim to be recognized as an industry-leading wellness brand and expand our offerings beyond fitness."**



**Lou Lentine**  
Founder and CEO  
Echelon

## Function Health Gets Personal – For Your Own Good

Personal health platform Function is on a mission to empower everyone to live 100 healthy years, leveraging technology to be able to do so affordably.

"Over the past 12 months, Function has grown in ways I could have only dreamed of when we first launched," Function co-founder and CEO Jonathan Swerdrin tells ATN. "Since our beta in April 2023, we've welcomed over 150,000 members—people who, like us, believe in taking control of their health before problems arise."

For \$499 a year, Function offers access to more than 100 biomarkers – five times the number of tests typically run in traditional healthcare settings, Swerdrin notes. This gives individuals the ability to detect potential health issues before they escalate.

As Function continues to grow – it closed a \$53 million Series A round in 2024 – Swerdrin says the company is focused on expanding access to its testing. It also partnered with Equinox to make its biomarker tests available to the luxury fitness chain's members through a special longevity-focused membership program.

"We are giving millions the power to truly own their health – equipping them with a science-backed, personalized platform that keeps them ahead of disease," he says. "By making this vision a reality, we'll help shift the industry away from reactive treatments and toward proactive health. We're building a new standard – one where fitness, nutrition and real health insights are seamlessly integrated into everyday life, leading to a healthier, more informed society."

**II We are giving millions the power to truly own their health – equipping them with a science-backed, personalized platform that keeps them ahead of disease. We're building a new standard – one where fitness, nutrition and real health insights are seamlessly integrated into everyday life, leading to a healthier, more informed society."**



**Jonathan Swerdlin**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
Function Health

## Viome Aims To Personalize Nutrition, Gut Health

Viome, a health and wellness company that provides personalized microbiome testing and nutritional recommendations, is led by CEO and founder Naveen Jain, who is 65 years old, but proud to say that his biological age is decades younger.

"By the end of 2025, personalized nutrition and biomarker testing will transition from niche innovations to essential tools in mainstream healthcare and fitness," Jain tells ATN. "As insurers and employers recognize the economic benefits of precision nutrition in preventing chronic disease and enhancing workforce performance, these solutions will become standard practice."

"However, one of the biggest challenges in this transformation is not a lack of data but an overload of fragmented, unstructured health information," he notes. "Consumers are flooded with metrics from wearables, genetic tests, and basic, unactionable health tests, yet most solutions fail to provide clear, actionable next steps. Viome is solving this problem beyond static test results—bridging the gap between health insights and personalized solutions."

The platform offers consumers an integrated action plan with precision-targeted food, supplements and biotic recommendations – adapting dynamically as a person's biology evolves.

"As fitness, longevity and preventative health intersect, a deeper understanding of how internal biological processes shape performance and recovery will become essential," Jain says. "AI will no longer be just a diagnostic tool – it will drive personalized interventions that predict, prevent, and reverse health conditions before they manifest."

**II One of the biggest challenges in this transformation is not a lack of data but an overload of fragmented, unstructured health information. Consumers are flooded with metrics from wearables, genetic tests, and basic, unactionable health tests, yet most solutions fail to provide clear, actionable next steps."**



**Naveen Jain**  
Founder and CEO  
Viome

## InsideTracker Expands Access to Biomarker Testing

At InsideTracker, science is at the forefront. Founded in 2009 by experts in aging, genetics and biometric data from MIT and Tufts, the personalized health platform is on a mission to make preventative health more accessible by significantly reducing costs.

It's a tall order, but one that InsideTracker is accomplishing, reducing costs and adding new analytics tools that provide insights that combine blood, DNA and wearable device data.

Looking ahead, InsideTracker plans to grow by making preventative health more actionable and widely available. In 2024, the platform partnered with Fitness SF to make biomarker testing available for the Bay Area health club chain's members and staff. Sellam notes that the increasing number of people becoming interested in preventative health is a positive for the industry.

"This creates a real opportunity for serious fitness and wellness players to meet a large and growing appetite," InsideTracker CEO Rony Sellam tells ATN.

"AI has been a powerful force for engagement and growth here, and we see this with our own customers," Sellam adds. "When built credibly, AI models are extremely sticky. The progress in this area gives us all reason to be optimistic about the industry. But we will see a shakeout between the companies that know what to do with AI and those that don't."

**When built credibly, AI models are extremely sticky. The progress in this area gives us all reason to be optimistic about the industry. But we will see a shakeout between the companies that know what to do with AI and those that don't."**



**Rony Sellam**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
InsideTracker

## Lifesum Connects Biomarkers & Nutrition for Next-Level Insights

Global healthy eating platform Lifesum is redefining how the world approaches nutrition – and the numbers speak for themselves. With more than 65 million users worldwide, the company has become a powerhouse in the wellness and nutrition space. Its corporate wellness arm serves major employers like Amazon and GE, while strategic partnerships with health-focused brands like Oura and its acquisition of German biomarker testing company Lykon, further expand its reach.

Over the last year, Lifesum has advanced its hyper-personalized nutrition approach, introducing an AI-powered Multimodal Tracker so users can effortlessly log meals with photo, voice, text or barcode, while its Lykon deal bolstered its wellness ecosystem by empowering users with more comprehensive insights into health and dietary needs.

"As an AI-first organization, Lifesum is driving strategic acquisitions and expanding its wellness ecosystem to deliver hyper-personalized nutrition at scale," Lifesum CEO Markus Falk tells ATN. "By integrating advanced AI with biomarker-driven insights, we enhance user experience with seamless, data-driven health tracking."

Falk envisions a future centered on preventive health and longevity, driven by AI-powered innovation and personalized nutrition – an area where Lifesum is already refined and ready.

"Biomarkers are becoming increasingly vital in providing precise dietary recommendations, helping users understand their metabolic responses and nutritional

needs on a deeper level," Falk explains. "As more people prioritize extending their healthspan, AI-powered tools like Lifesum are making it easier to track, understand and optimize well-being through biomarker-driven insights. Lifesum is positioning itself at the forefront of this shift."

**"Biomarkers are becoming increasingly vital in providing precise dietary recommendations, helping users understand their metabolic responses and nutritional needs on a deeper level. As more people prioritize extending their healthspan, AI-powered tools like Lifesum are making it easier to track, understand and optimize well-being through biomarker-driven insights."**



**Markus Falk**  
CEO  
Lifesum



Photo courtesy of Echelon

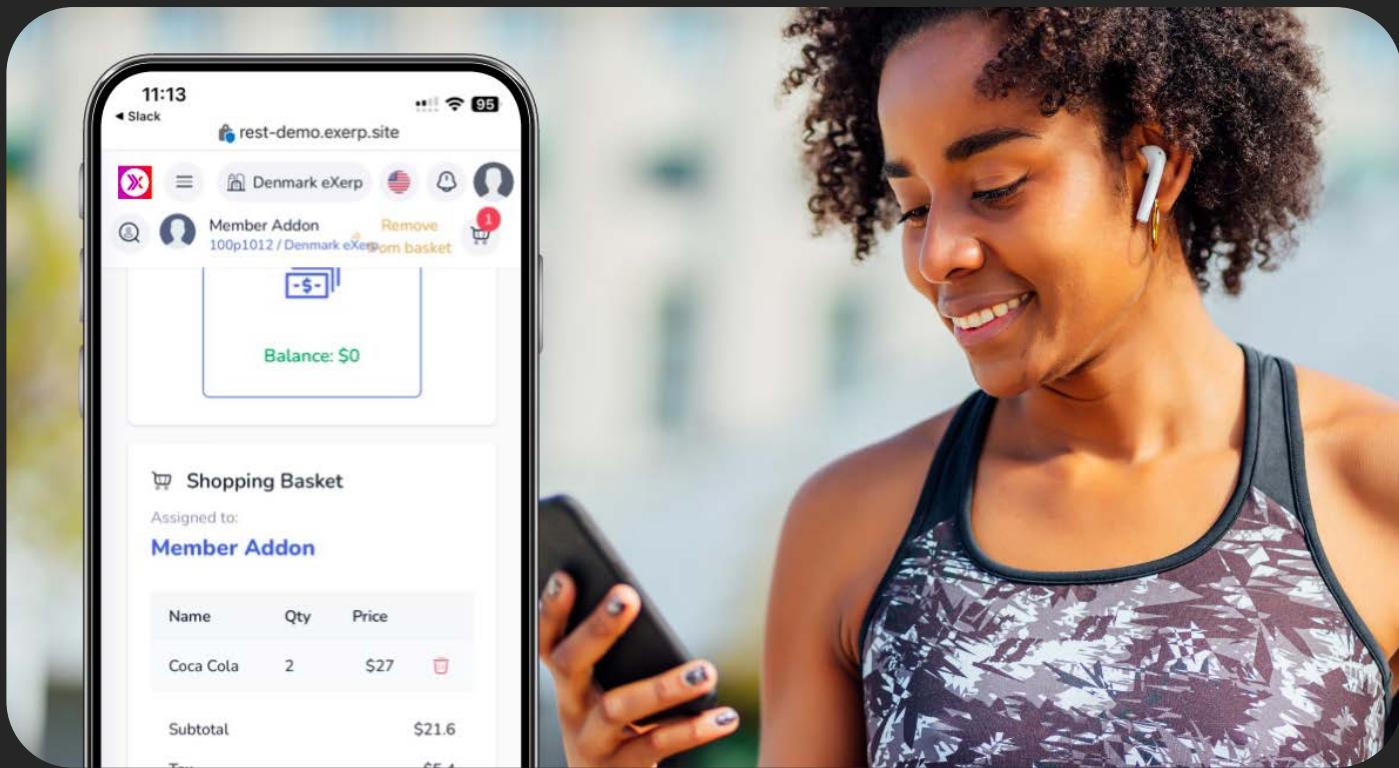


Photo courtesy of Exerp

# THE FUTURE OF GYM BILLING: TRENDS DRIVING SMARTER, SEAMLESS PAYMENTS

*A seamless, error-free payment system isn't just about transactions – it's a direct driver of retention, revenue and member satisfaction*

By Athletech Studios

Billing may not be the most exciting aspect of running a fitness business but make no mistake - it's one of the most critical. A flexible and error-free payment system isn't just a backend necessity, it's a direct driver of member satisfaction, retention and revenue. Yet, despite the rapid advancements in AI, automation and personalization, billing remains one of the most overlooked and outdated aspects of gym operations. And the consequences are costly.

Mehdi Benjelloun, President of Exerp, puts it bluntly: "One of the biggest sources of churn is incorrect billing. It's surprising that billing errors persist in the industry, but ensuring accuracy is critical to maintaining member confidence and loyalty."

If anyone understands this, it's Exerp. For over two decades, this global leader in club management software solutions has been transforming the fitness industry's approach to member management.

Founded in 2003 and headquartered in Denmark, Exerp specializes in scalable, cloud-based systems that optimize business processes, enhance the member

experience and integrate flawlessly with third-party applications. With a strong footprint in Europe, North America and Australia, the company serves some of the world's largest gym operators, helping them eliminate inefficiencies and future-proof their business.

In short, while others are still playing catch-up, Exerp has been ahead of the curve - proving that when it comes to member retention, getting billing right isn't just an operational detail - it's a non-negotiable.

**II When payments are smooth and intuitive, members are far less likely to experience frustration or disengage from their gym or fitness facility."**



**Mehdi Benjelloun**  
President  
Exerp

## The Biggest Challenges in Gym Billing

Benjelloun has seen payment challenges evolve alongside technological advancements, business growth and changing member behaviors for years, and he sees four major challenges that operators still grapple with.

First up are payment failures and declines. "Expired cards, insufficient funds or failed direct debits disrupt cash flow and lead to membership cancellations," he says. Without a system in place to manage these failures efficiently, gyms risk not only losing revenue but also frustrating their members."

Another critical pain point is the lack of payment flexibility. Consumers today expect simple transactions, whether through digital wallets, alternative billing cycles or personalized payment structures. "Operators who fail to offer multiple payment options are putting themselves at a disadvantage," Benjelloun explains. "Members want convenience, and if they don't get it, they may look elsewhere."

As with every touchpoint, member experience plays a significant role. Benjelloun says poorly designed payment systems that require excessive manual intervention or lack transparency can create unnecessary friction, leading to increased churn.

Finally, regulatory and compliance barriers add another layer of complexity. "Varying financial regulations across regions mean that fitness operators must stay on top of evolving rules while ensuring their payment systems remain efficient and compliant," he explains.

Two key factors he points to are access to payments transparency. Members should be able to view and manage their payments without needing to contact customer service, reducing frustration and enhancing convenience.

"Invoices and receipts should be easy to read and understand, as transparency builds trust and increases retention," Benjelloun emphasizes.

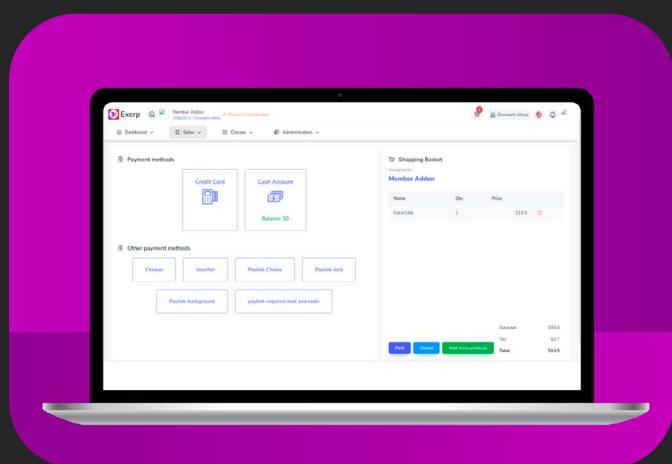
Additionally, the purchase experience must be intuitive. Whether booking a personal training session, signing up for a course or paying for a specialized class, transactions should be easy and hassle-free. To achieve this, operators can implement installment plans, allowing members to split large purchases into manageable payments, making services more accessible while reducing drop-offs.

Flexible payment processing is another game-changer, enabling transactions even when a member lacks an active payment method by using a card on file or sending a payment link for later payment.

Benjelloun says digital wallets like Apple Pay and Google Pay have also proven effective in enhancing convenience and improving conversion rates, and on-the-go payment options - such as tap-to-pay on the gym floor - expedite the purchasing process even further.

By incorporating these capabilities, fitness operators can significantly enhance the payment experience, reduce operational overhead and ultimately retain more members - turning billing from a source of frustration into a value-added service.

Photo courtesy of Exerp



## The Link Between Payments & Churn Reduction

A seamless payment experience is often the unsung hero of member retention.

"Addressing common pain points in billing can have a significant impact on retention rates," says Benjelloun. "When payments are smooth and intuitive, members are far less likely to experience frustration or disengage from their gym or fitness facility."

Photo courtesy of Exerp



## What Sets Exerp Apart

Unlike traditional gym management payment systems, Exerp is an enterprise solution designed to provide the flexibility that large fitness operators require. "We go beyond just being a software provider; we work closely with our clients to tackle their payment challenges and optimize their financial operations," Benjelloun says.

Exerp has built a comprehensive and flexible payment ecosystem that integrates seamlessly with a variety of partners. Key features include:

- **Card on File & Installment Plans** – Available for personal training packages, joining fees, debt payments and more.
- **Payment Links & Digital Wallets** – Supporting Apple Pay, Google Pay, and direct payment links for seamless transactions.
- **Regional Payment Gateway Integration** – Ensuring optimal service and compliance for different territories.

**Full Self-Service Capabilities** – Members can easily access invoices, receipts and payment options online.

With an open API that allows clients to leverage the full capabilities of Exerp's backend, the platform ensures optimal integration with preferred systems. Its robust and accurate billing engine efficiently handles high transaction volumes, making it an ideal solution for large or growing fitness businesses.

Benjelloun says optimizing payments doesn't just improve the member experience – it has a direct impact on a gym's bottom line.

"One of our clients had a high volume of unpaid debt cases that were regularly sent to a debt collection agency. By implementing our automated debt collection process, including sending direct payment links to members to make things quick and easy, they saw a significant drop in cases sent to collections and recovered revenue much faster. It was a game-changer for their cash flow and profitability."

Looking ahead, Benjelloun sees several key trends shaping the future of fitness payments.

"I believe the future of payments lies in a combination of digital wallets and tap-to-pay technology," he says. "The ability to make payments on the go, without relying on traditional terminals, will transform transactions. Tap-to-pay is set to revolutionize the payment experience, making it faster, more seamless and more accessible than ever."

As gyms, studios and independent contractors navigate an increasingly digital world alongside members and clients who demand flexibility, offering intuitive and error-free billing solutions will be a defining factor in long-term success. With Exerp at the forefront of eliminating outdated billing practices, offering a smoother, more engaging member experience is easier than ever.

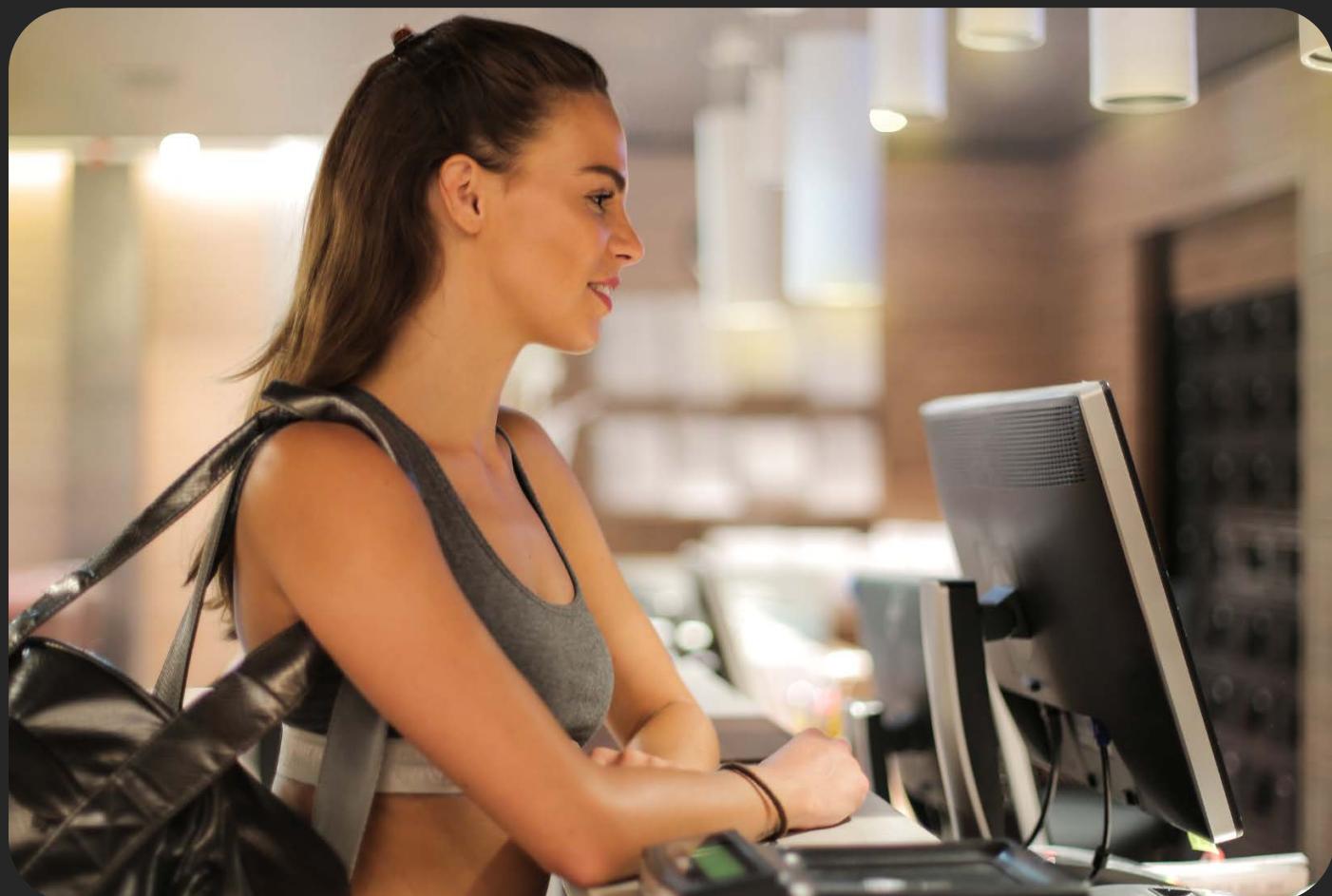


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Photo courtesy of Pvolve

# WOMEN'S HEALTH OUTLOOK: FITNESS BRANDS, WEARABLE MAKERS TACKLE THE RESEARCH GAP

*Executives, medical experts and scientists from the biggest brands in fitness, wellness and wearables share how they're working to make women's health a bigger part of the conversation – and provide meaningful solutions.*

By Elizabeth Ostertag

The women's health industry is undergoing a seismic shift. After centuries of neglect, brands are finally tackling longstanding gaps in research and care. Leveraging scientific research, AI-driven insights and tailored fitness strategies, companies are addressing women's physiological needs with data-driven solutions.

Overall, industry leaders agree that the future of women's health will be defined by personalized solutions, increased research and greater awareness.

To learn more about the evolution of the women's health space, Athletech News spoke with executives, medical experts and scientists from leading brands across fitness, wellness and wearables to uncover the key trends shaping women's health in 2025 and beyond.

## Pvolve Puts Women's Health at the Heart of Its Fitness Programming

Pvolve is clear that it's a fitness band for women first and foremost. The fast-growing functional fitness brand known for its partnership with Jennifer Aniston has been conducting clinical studies focused on women over 40 to demonstrate the Pvolve workout's effectiveness in building muscle mass and improving mobility.

"We take a women-first approach, ensuring our programming serves women throughout their lifespan," Pvolve president Julie Cartwright tells ATN. "We focus on healthy aging because we know that muscle loss accelerates in midlife. Our research ensures that our method delivers real, measurable results."

Dr. Jessica Shepherd, a popular and well-regarded OB-GYN and advisor to Pvolve, highlighted how science-backed fitness is shaping women's health and longevity.

"In 2025, we will see a stronger emphasis on exercise and resistance training as a preventative method, particularly for aging-related conditions such as osteoporosis, sarcopenia and metabolic health," Dr. Shepard says. "Maintaining muscle mass is one of the most effective ways to support healthy aging, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and improve quality of life."

Dr. Shepherd also underscored the importance of targeted exercise programs for women.

"Pvolve's method is uniquely designed to work with, rather than against, hormonal changes," she says. "Its resistance-based approach prioritizes strength, mobility, and stability, making it highly effective for women navigating menopause and perimenopause."

**■■ We take a women-first approach, ensuring our programming serves women throughout their lifespan. We focus on healthy aging because we know that muscle loss accelerates in midlife. Our research ensures that our method delivers real, measurable results."**



**Julie Cartwright**  
President  
Pvolve

**■■ In 2025, we will see a stronger emphasis on exercise and resistance training as a preventative method, particularly for aging-related conditions such as osteoporosis, sarcopenia and metabolic health. Maintaining muscle mass is one of the most effective ways to support healthy aging, reduce the risk of chronic disease and improve quality of life."**



**Dr. Jessica Shepherd**  
OB-GYN & Advisor  
Pvolve

## Oura Expands Research in Female Health

Smart ring giant Oura is addressing the gaps in women's health research through partnerships with leading institutions.

"Female health conditions receive just 1% of global healthcare research funding," notes Dr. Neta Gotlieb, senior product manager, women's health, at Oura. "We've launched a pregnancy study with Scripps Research to analyze biometric fluctuations throughout pregnancy, with the goal of identifying early warning signs for complications like postpartum depression and miscarriage."

Beyond research, Oura is advancing AI-driven health tracking for women's health.

"Our Cycle Insights feature provides detailed data on cycle phases, fertility signals and menstrual health,"

says Dr. Gotlieb. "We've enhanced our Readiness Score algorithm to account for menstrual cycle fluctuations, reducing disproportionately low scores in the luteal phase by 81%."



"The future of women's health is about integrating data, research and technology to empower women with the insights they need to thrive," she adds.

**■■ The future of women's health is about integrating data, research and technology to empower women with the insights they need to thrive."**



**Dr. Neta Gotlieb**  
Senior Product Manager,  
Women's Health  
Oura

## Whoop Eyes Data-Driven Coaching & Performance Insights

Whoop is taking a scientific approach to closing the gender gap in health research.

"We have our own playground for research at Whoop, and we have hundreds of thousands of women on our platform who are collecting and wearing data every single day," says Kristen Holmes, global head of human performance and principal scientist at Whoop. "As a result, we're able to start to really understand how women at a very basic level are responding and adapting to various types of exercise, their sleep needs and more."

Whoop has uncovered key insights into how female physiology affects performance, sleep and recovery.

"Women in perimenopause experience twice the sleep fragmentation from alcohol as men," Holmes reports.

Whoop's research with West Virginia University also found that it could detect a pre-birth physiological marker seven weeks before delivery, an insight that could potentially help predict preterm labor. Whoop is integrating such findings into AI-powered coaching that offers women personalized training and recovery recommendations based on real-time biometric data.

**“We have our own playground for research at Whoop, and we have hundreds of thousands of women on our platform who are collecting and wearing data every single day. As a result, we’re able to start to really understand how women at a very basic level are responding and adapting to various types of exercise, their sleep needs and more.”**



**Kristen Holmes**  
Global Head of Human Performance  
and Principal Scientist  
Whoop

## **Garmin Takes A Holistic Approach to Health Tracking**

Garmin has also been tailoring its industry-leading wearable technology to better support women's health.

“There is no one-size-fits-all solution to improving health and wellness, which is why our smartwatches provide insights that are tailored to each user,” says Susan Lyman, Garmin’s vice president of consumer sales and marketing. “That includes the Menstrual cycle tracking feature, personalized recovery insights, pregnancy tracking, support for menopause transition and more.”

Garmin is also leading advancements in sleep tracking for women.

“Studies show women need more sleep and are more likely to suffer from insomnia, which makes having accurate sleep data even more crucial when trying to improve physical and mental wellness,” Lyman explained. “Garmin smartwatches track different sleep stages, movement, breathing and more through the night, then provide users with a sleep score the next morning, along with recommendations for how to take on the day and prepare for even better sleep next time.”

**“Studies show women need more sleep and are more likely to suffer from insomnia, which makes having accurate sleep data even more crucial when trying to improve physical and mental wellness.”**



**Susan Lyman**  
Vice President of Consumer Sales  
& Marketing  
Garmin

## **Wild.AI Challenges the Status Quo in FemTech**

Despite advancements, some feel that wearables are still missing key elements in their women's health features.

Helene Guillaume, the founder and CEO of women's health platform Wild.AI, believes leading wearables aren't yet doing enough to empower women with meaningful insights.

“Pregnancy tracking is essentially just a countdown clock—no real-time insights or recommendations. ... Sleep tracking doesn't account for the reality that women wake up frequently during pregnancy and postpartum,” Guillaume tells ATN.

“Meanwhile, women in perimenopause get constant reminders that they 'should' have a period, and postpartum women receive period predictions that assume a 500-day cycle is normal,” she adds.

Guillaume stressed that the fundamental issue lies in the research gap, with much more medical research still being conducted on men than women.

“No research means no data, and AI-driven solutions are only as good as the data they're trained on. Right now, tech wearables are actually widening the gap rather than closing it,” she says. “Longevity is framed as a 'man's word,' but women are the original longevity champions. We live longer – so we should be studied to determine why and how those learnings can be applied to men.”



Photo courtesy of Garmin

**No research means no data, and AI-driven solutions are only as good as the data they're trained on. Longevity is framed as a 'man's word,' but women are the original longevity champions. We live longer – so we should be studied to determine why and how those learnings can be applied to men."**



**Helene Guillaume**  
Founder and CEO  
Wild.AI

## Breaking the Stigma Around Menopause

Menopause has historically been overlooked in the fitness and wellness industry, but it's starting to receive long-overdue attention.

"In October, we released our first-ever Perimenopause Report that found the perimenopausal transition

significantly disrupts restorative sleep while simultaneously increasing cardiovascular risk factors," Oura's Dr. Gotlieb notes. "We also launched a research study with Clue and UC Berkeley to better understand the impact of perimenopause on women's health."

Pvolve has also made menopause a priority in its fitness and wellness programming.

"Women deserve more resources for this life transition," Cartwright says. "We're committed to providing the education, movement and support they need."

Dr. Shepard, who Pvolve brought on in February, is playing a key role on this front.

"Pvolve integrates targeted resistance training to combat muscle and bone loss, pelvic floor exercises to support core stability, and joint-friendly movements to ease menopause-related stiffness," she says.

But Shepherd believes the fitness industry must evolve to support the full spectrum of hormonal health.

"We need to see a broader conversation around perimenopause and postmenopause—not just menopause itself," she says. "By integrating clinical insights and structured movement, we can help women feel strong, confident and in control of their health through every phase."



Photo courtesy of barre3/WHOOP



Photo courtesy of Echelon

# AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION: HOW ECHELON IS RESHAPING FITNESS

*From smart equipment to immersive experiences, here's how Echelon is reshaping fitness with hyper-personalization at its core*

By Athletech Studios

When it comes to fitness industry trends, hyper-personalization is always in the conversation. But let's be clear — it's not just a trend. Personalization has always been foundational to the industry. And now artificial intelligence (AI) is accelerating its evolution at warp speed, completely reshaping the landscape. The opportunities for customization today and in the future are colossal.

The challenge? Harnessing its immense power in a way that truly enhances member experience, drives engagement and delivers results. The potential is staggering, but so is the complexity.

That's where Echelon comes in — an industry leader that's not just dabbling in AI but fully integrating it into a connected, data-driven fitness ecosystem. Their approach? Smart fitness equipment, live and on-demand classes and AI-powered personalization that take member engagement to an entirely new level.

This is personalization on steroids — the kind that

makes gyms "stickier" than ever, driving retention and redefining the fitness experience.

## AI-Driven Personalization: A Win for Every Fitness Level

With a mission to make high-quality fitness accessible, Echelon offers a diverse ecosystem of products, including exercise bikes, rowers, treadmills, strength machines, smart mirror and cold olives, all seamlessly integrated with its Echelon Fit ecosystem.

At its core, Echelon's use of AI is about creating tailored fitness journeys for every individual. Whether it's a beginner unsure of where to start, an intermediate member looking to stay engaged, or an elite athlete fine-tuning performance, Echelon's AI integrates unique user data, such as heart rate, workout history and preferences, to craft a constantly evolving, hyper-personalized fitness experience.

For those starting out, this means eliminating guesswork.

"Many people walk into a gym with no structured plan and little idea of what exercises will help them achieve their goals," says the company's Co-Founder and Chief Product/Technology Officer, John Santo. "AI helps map out a clear path, offering a guided, progressive experience that keeps them engaged."

For advanced users, AI serves as an intelligent training partner, analyzing progress, tracking data and adjusting workouts dynamically to avoid plateaus, overtraining or stagnation.

This level of personalization is key to retention, keeping members engaged with workouts that are always challenging, motivating and tailored to their progress.

Photo courtesy of Echelon



## The Power of Data: AI Meets an Expansive Content Library

Echelon's ability to provide this level of personalization starts with data. "When paired with AI, the results customers can achieve is limitless," Santo says.

With over 20,000 pieces of on-demand content and 1,000+ live classes filmed monthly for decades, Echelon's platform doesn't just guess what works, it knows. AI processes this vast market data and overlays personal user data, to each individual's workout journey.

"AI allows us to get more granular, ensuring members are using the right equipment, engaging with the right content and getting the right experience for them,"

Santo explains. "This level of personalization is already transforming retention, with an initial studio analysis projecting a 7% increase in retention rates."

But even with AI's growing role, human expertise remains integral to Echelon's methodology.

"Our AI is built with the training expertise of human instructors and rooted in Echelon's fitness methodology," says Santo. "We're using decades of experience and input from our elite Personal Trainer team to create our proprietary content, ensuring the AI isn't just guessing – it's enhancing proven training principles."

**"AI allows us to get more granular, ensuring members are using the right equipment, engaging with the right content and getting the right experience for them."**



**John Santo**  
Co-Founder and Chief Product/  
Technology Officer  
Echelon

## A Fully Immersive Fitness Ecosystem

Unlike many AI integrations that focus on a single piece of equipment, Echelon's AI spans an entire ecosystem, creating a seamless, immersive fitness experience across multiple machines and platforms.

"Whether you're training on an Echelon bike, treadmill or rower at the gym or at home, your workout goes with you," said Santo.

Last year, the company launched FitOS, an innovative new workout platform delivering news, entertainment, social media and gaming apps through their connected equipment screens.

With the launch of FitOS also came Worlds, a captivating virtual reality gaming experience allowing users to race against themselves, friends or the computer.

"When you step into Echelon World, it's a 3D environment where users can choose avatars, interact with AI leaderboards, and join workouts with people across the globe," Santo says. "And it's not just about digital engagement – it's immersive physically, too. As you ride the bike or run on the treadmill, the terrain on the screen adjusts in real-time, syncing with resistance changes on the equipment."

This heightened immersion leads to greater workout adherence and engagement. "We're seeing significantly higher workout completion rates, with users staying on equipment longer than ever before," Santo says.

Beyond AI-driven personalization, Echelon is also pushing hardware innovation. The newly launched Stride-10s Pro and Stride Slat Pro treadmills feature an open-front design that minimizes floor space by 20%, further enhancing gym efficiency.

Also, unlike other manufacturers, whose older machines often can't be updated to accommodate AI, Echelon's entire ecosystem is designed for AI compatibility. Even legacy machines can be upgraded, ensuring long-term value for fitness facilities.

"We've built this technology to be future-proof," Santo explains. "Most companies can't retroactively integrate AI into old equipment, but our entire ecosystem is designed to evolve with members and facilities over time."

## Results & Retention: The Impact of AI on Member Engagement

The results of Echelon's AI integration speak for itself.

- 23% increase in session duration: Users are staying engaged longer, thanks to immersive workouts and AI-driven customization.
- Higher trial-to-member conversion rates: AI-powered onboarding leads to greater membership commitment.

- Projected \$6.2 million in revenue impact (small-group analysis): Reducing churn and improving retention have major financial implications for facilities.

"Fitness is addictive once people hit their goals," Santo says. "By creating personalized, immersive experiences, we're not just improving workout, we're transforming the way people engage with fitness altogether."

## The Future: What's Next for AI in Fitness?

When it comes to what's next, Echelon is seemingly just getting started.

"Our next innovation will allow facilities to white-label AI-driven workout plans, incorporating custom content and gym-specific equipment into a personalized training ecosystem," Santo reveals.

Long term, Echelon aims to integrate even more biometric data from wearables, further personalizing workouts based on real-time health metrics, stress levels, and recovery needs.

"We're thinking beyond just gym workouts," Santo explains. "We're bridging the gap between fitness, wellness, and everyday life, creating an AI-powered system that supports total health – inside and outside the gym."

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Photo courtesy of Ice Barrel

# WELLNESS & RECOVERY OUTLOOK: CEOS TALK MARKET GROWTH, MAKING SCIENCE ACCESSIBLE

ATN speaks with CEOs of some of the world's top (and up-and-coming) wellness and recovery brands – *Restore Hyper Wellness, Humanaut Heath, Perspire Sauna Studio, SWTHZ, Ice Barrel, Plunge, Hyperice and Chilly Goat Tubs*

By Kim Kisner

Wellness, recovery and longevity are no longer add-ons – they're becoming foundational to the fitness industry. The global wellness market has surged to \$6.3 trillion and shows no signs of slowing. With an increasing focus on holistic health, personalization and performance optimization, the question isn't whether to adapt – it's how to strategically evolve to meet consumer demands while driving business success.

Athletech News spoke with CEOs from leading wellness and recovery brands to get their insights on where the industry is headed, the biggest challenges and opportunities in 2025 and how they're positioning their businesses for success.

## Restore Hyper Wellness Doubles Down

Founded in 2015 in Austin, Texas, Restore Hyper Wellness has grown into one of the most recognized names in retail, wellness and recovery. With over 220 locations across the U.S. and an ever-expanding footprint, the company has positioned itself at the forefront of a sector that continues to see rapid consumer adoption. In recent months, Restore welcomed new CEO Matt Vonderahe and COO Andy Ayers to lead the brand through its next phase of growth.

In 2024, Restore surpassed 57,000 members, delivered 2.9 million therapies and generated \$200 million in annual sales. Looking ahead, the company plans to maintain its leadership by doubling down on its unit economic model, prioritizing high-demand medical

services, and engaging with clients through more channels.

"The industry is in a better position than ever," Vonderahe says. "Health and wellness have become dominant conversations, with more clients actively seeking solutions for longevity and recovery. Families and individuals are more curious about the intersection of health and lifestyles and this will propel growth across the industry for years to come."

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**Matt Vonderahe**  
CEO  
Restore Hyper Wellness

## Humanaut Health Eyes Personalized Wellness, Preventive Care

In 2023, Jim Donnelly stepped away from Restore Hyper Wellness (which he co-founded) to co-found Humanaut Health, a premium clinic focused on highly personalized health optimization and longevity medicine. Humanaut opened its first location in Austin, Texas, last year, with plans to expand significantly after receiving \$8.7 million in seed funding.

"Our goal is to get great health results for as many people as possible, so we'll be opening a lot of clinics this year," Donnelly says.

He points to some challenges that come alongside the seismic shift toward proactive health management.

"As more people embrace wellness and preventative care, there are so many one-off solutions - sleep trackers, blood panels, glucose monitors - without a clear way to integrate them," Donnelly notes. "It's also hard to know who to trust, as not everything in this industry is backed by solid data. People need a co-pilot in their health journey to help make sense of it all."

**As more people embrace wellness and preventative care, there are so many one-off solutions - sleep trackers, blood panels, glucose monitors - without a clear way to integrate them. It's also hard to know who to trust, as not everything in this industry is backed by solid data. People need a co-pilot in their health journey to help make sense of it all."**



**Jim Donnelly**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
Humanaut Health

## Perspire Sauna Studio Prioritizes Consumer Understanding

A pioneer in infrared sauna and red-light therapy, Perspire Sauna Studio has grown into a leading name in the wellness space. Now in its 15th year, the brand continues to scale rapidly, with plans to open 500 new locations across the U.S. and bring the benefits of infrared therapy to the mainstream. Last year, the brand delivered one million sauna sessions.

"One of the biggest challenges is effectively communicating the science behind wellness practices," says Perspire Sauna Studio founder and CEO Lee Braun. "Consumers are increasingly seeking credible, data-driven solutions, and as an industry, we must do a better job of educating members on the real benefits of the services we provide. The brands that prioritize science, experience, and accessibility will be the ones that stand out."

What other trends does Braun see shaping the wellness industry in 2025? Personalization and ease of access.

"Consumers increasingly seek tailored wellness experiences and convenience," he explains. "To accommodate, we offer an appointment-based model allowing members to customize their sauna sessions for optimal benefits as well as digital booking, flexible memberships and prime studio locations."

**One of the biggest challenges is effectively communicating the science behind wellness practices. Consumers are increasingly seeking credible, data-driven solutions, and as an industry, we must do a better job of educating members on the real benefits of the services we provide. The brands that prioritize science, experience, and accessibility will be the ones that stand out."**



**Lee Braun**  
Founder and CEO  
Perspire Sauna Studio

## SWTHZ Is All In on Contrast Therapy



Photo courtesy of SWTHZ/Plunge

Contrast therapy brand SWTHZ has seen rapid growth since its founding in 2019, now operating 22 locations and targeting 200-plus locations by the end of 2025 for its concept that integrates sauna, cold plunge and a vitamin-C shower in a single suite.

While demand for longevity, wellness, and recovery continues to rise, SWTHZ founder and CEO Jamie Weeks believes that when it comes to contrast therapy, awareness remains the biggest hurdle.

"People don't realize the massive impact sauna and cold plunge have on inflammation and stress," he says. "Once they do, these will become essential to weekly wellness routines."

In terms of upcoming trends, Weeks sees hyperbaric chambers and red light therapy beds as two of the most underrated wellness modalities.

"We're already adding red light beds to select studios and actively testing hyperbaric therapy as we speak," he notes.

**People don't realize the massive impact sauna and cold plunge have on inflammation and stress. Once they do, these will become essential to weekly wellness routines."**



**Jamie Weeks**  
Founder and CEO  
SWTHZ

## **Ice Barrel Expands Access Through Education & Community**

Ice Barrel, led by founder and CEO Wyatt Ewing, is on a mission to make cold therapy more accessible to the masses. With partnerships at major retailers like Costco and Best Buy, the company is expanding both nationally and globally while prioritizing education to dispel misconceptions about cold immersion.

"This is an emerging market with a lot of misinformation, and our goal is to be the voice providing education and accurate information," Ewing says.

Beyond business growth, Ice Barrel is committed to making cold therapy accessible to those who need it most. Through the Resilience Project, the company has donated over \$1.6 million in products to veterans, first responders and individuals seeking mental and physical resilience.

"This is a community that needs tending to," Ewing says, noting that Ice Barrel often steps in to help customers

understand and properly use products from defunct brands. We need to slow down a bit and take care of humans along the way," he says.

**Wellness and recovery is an emerging market with a lot of misinformation, and our goal is to be the voice providing education and accurate information."**



**Wyatt Ewing**  
Founder and CEO  
Ice Barrel

## **Plunge Aims To Humanize the Science of Wellness**

Cold therapy brand Plunge expanded its offerings in 2024, adding heat therapy with its High Heat Traditional Sauna to its namesake line of cold plunge tubs.

Plunge co-founder and CEO Ryan Duey sees technology-driven personalization shaping the future of recovery.

"Wearables like Whoop, Oura, and Apple Watch that track HRV, sleep and stress levels are fantastic, but the missing link has been actionable, real-world interventions," Duey explains. "Imagine a system where your HRV dips overnight, your blood markers indicate inflammation and your Plunge automatically adjusts your session time and temperature to restore balance."

Yet, he also warns against data overload.

"While tech is powerful, it's just as important to trust how you feel rather than relying solely on numbers," Duey notes. "This means designing smarter, more intuitive interfaces that don't just report numbers, but actually help people understand what actions to take."

**While tech is powerful, it's just as important to trust how you feel rather than relying solely on numbers. This means designing smarter, more intuitive interfaces that don't just report numbers, but actually help people understand what actions to take."**



**Ryan Duey**  
Co-Founder and Co-CEO  
Plunge

## Hyperice Sees Growth, Challenges for Recovery Space

2024 was a milestone year for recovery tech brand Hyperice, marked by game-changing innovations and high-profile collaborations. Among them, ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics, Hyperice teamed up with Nike to debut two groundbreaking products - the Nike x Hyperice Boot and Nike x Hyperice Vest - bringing performance recovery to tech-enabled footwear and apparel.

Looking ahead, Hyperice is focused on deepening its impact across wellness and performance sectors. The brand is actively partnering with gyms, wellness centers and hospitality businesses to integrate recovery technology into mainstream experiences.

"The 'Recovery Room' was once exclusive to high-end clubs but is now becoming a must-have for fitness and wellness consumers," Hyperice CEO Jim Huether explains.

One key challenge? Market confusion from unregulated, low-cost competitors.

"The rapid growth of the category has led to a flood of knockoff products that lack proper certifications," Huether believes. "I believe selling platforms need better vetting processes to ensure quality and consumer safety."

Despite these challenges, Huether thinks the future is bright.

"The industry is in better shape than ever - innovation, mass awareness and prioritization of wellness are accelerating growth," he says.

**II The 'Recovery Room' was once exclusive to high-end clubs but is now becoming a must-have for fitness and wellness consumers."**



**Jim Huether**  
CEO  
Hyperice

## Chilly Goat Tubs Enters the Cold Plunge Race With Big Ambitions

Founded in 2023 by hot tub and spa manufacturer Master Spas in collaboration with Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, Chilly Goat Tubs has hit the ground running with innovation, craftsmanship and a strong foundation in wellness.

In 2024, Chilly Goat introduced the Valaris Terrain, the first-ever hot tub and cold tub combination, marking a

major milestone in recovery technology.

"The fitness industry is booming right now, with so many individuals looking to feel better and recover better. Cold tubs and saunas are leading that charge," says Master Spas president Kevin Richards. "In many aspects, Chilly Goat is ahead of the curve due to its solid foundation with Master Spas, a company that has been trusted for 30 years in the spa industry."

But as demand for recovery tools skyrockets and social media driving trends, Richards says consumers are exposed to brands that lack durability and proper customer support.

"One of the biggest challenges we are seeing is the revolving door of low-quality products entering the market," he notes. "At Chilly Goat, we fall back on our mission of helping our customers live life better. We do this by making sure we build quality products and providing support through every step of the process."

**II The fitness industry is booming right now, with so many individuals looking to feel better and recover better. Cold tubs and saunas are leading that charge. One of the biggest challenges we are seeing is the revolving door of low-quality products entering the market."**



**Kevin Richards**  
President  
Master Spas (Chilly Goat Tubs)





Photo courtesy of Concept2

# FROM NORDIC SKIING TO HIGH PERFORMANCE GYMS, THE SKIERG IS PROVING ITS POWER

From CrossFit to HYROX, military training to rehabilitation, a unique design and data-driven approach are redefining functional fitness – one powerful pull at a time

By Athletech Studios

What if you could do more than just train athletes, but also test them? This is precisely what Concept2's SkiErg does, and more.

When Concept2 introduced the SkiErg in 2009, it was an unfamiliar sight at industry trade shows and conferences. It lacked the instantly recognizable appeal of a treadmill or stationary bike. Its founders, Dick and Peter Dreissigacker, brought extensive ties to both on-water rowing and Nordic skiing - sports largely unfamiliar to the general fitness market. Over time, as coaches and athletes put it to the test, they discovered its unique ability to build endurance, power and strength -- and any skepticism faded.

In fact, over the past 16 years, the SkiErg has gone from being a niche training tool to a widely accepted piece of

fitness equipment, embraced by professional athletes, coaches, personal trainers and boutique fitness studio owners. The reasons for this are plentiful and rooted in science.



Photo courtesy of Concept2

## Signature Technology & Scientific Approach

As with the RowErg and BikeErg, the SkiErg follows Concept2's commitment to performance-driven innovation. What started as a tool for elite skiers has now found its way into functional fitness, high-performance training centers and even rehabilitation programs. In 2016, Concept2's SkiErg also made it into the CrossFit games.

Today, it's used in places its creators never imagined — from CrossFit boxes to military training facilities to adaptive sports programs. It has also inspired competitors to develop imitations, a testament to the SkiErg's lasting effectiveness.

Concept2 has long been known for its scientific approach to equipment development, and the SkiErg is no exception. The machine incorporates the signature Flywheel resistance system, ensuring that the athlete's effort dictates the load, providing a safe and natural training experience.

"We considered using other methods of creating resistance when developing products but kept coming back to our signature Flywheel technology for its similarity to the athlete experience in the natural world," said Dreissigacker.

"The load generated by the flywheel is directly related to the effort that the athlete puts into the machine. This is important because it prevents the athlete from creating too much load or resistance which makes it safe and reduces the chance of injury, compared to other cardio equipment. After nearly three decades of innovation and modification to the rowing machine flywheel and Performance Monitoring system, the technology has become part of our identity."



Photo courtesy of Concept2

## PM5 Performance Monitor

That identity includes a defining feature -- the PM5 Performance Monitor, which delivers specific, consistent, and comparable data. This makes the SkiErg an ideal tool for:

- VO2 max testing
- Metabolic assessments
- Force curve analysis for technique improvement
- Benchmarking athlete progress

The force curve display on the PM5 allows athletes to refine their technique, providing real-time feedback on power application — a crucial component of sport-specific training.

Additionally, the SkiErg's ability to mimic real-world conditions makes it a key piece of equipment for off-season training. Cross-country skiers use it to train their double poling motion, one of the most physically demanding movements in the sport. Athletes in biathlon and Nordic skiing regularly incorporate SkiErg sessions to build endurance, improve upper-body strength, and track progress with data-driven insights.

"An underutilized aspect of the SkiErg is the force curve on the PM5 monitor," said Raleigh Goessling, Head Biathlon Coach, Craftsbury Green Racing Project.

"This data allows me to teach athletes how to apply power across a complex movement, which is a universal coaching challenge. The short, visual feedback loop provided by the force curve screen is the best tool for accomplishing this complex bit of skill development. We also use the SkiErg for VO2 metabolic testing. Its consistency allows for objective measures of progress in a sport specific moment."

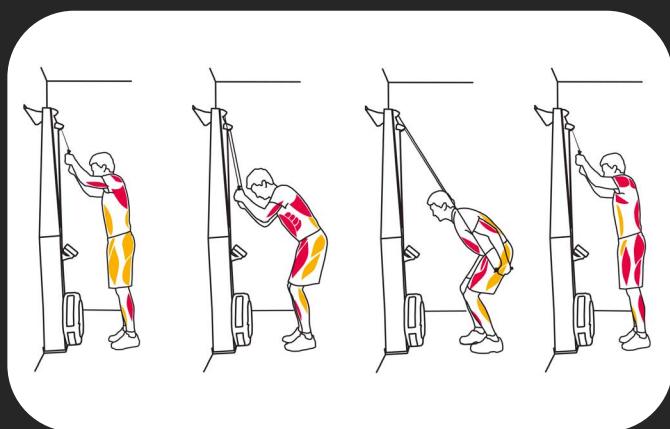


Photo courtesy of Concept2

## The SkiErg's Full-Body Benefits

At first glance, and to an untrained eye, the SkiErg may appear to solely be for an upper-body workout, but in reality, it engages the entire body. Each stroke activates the core, legs and upper body in a dynamic, coordinated movement. The drive phase involves a quarter squat, activating the quads and hamstrings, while the downward pull engages the lats, shoulders and core muscles.

Beyond strength and endurance benefits, the SkiErg is also an inclusive training tool. It provides a low-impact option for injured athletes, allowing them to maintain intensity while minimizing strain on the lower body. The long drive cords enable use from a seated position as well, making it a valuable tool for adaptive athletes and rehabilitation programs.

Goessling sums up Concept2's impact: "The SkiErg allows athletes who are differently abled or recovering from a lower-body injury to get quality aerobic, anaerobic and strength training. These qualities are unique to the SkiErg and make it an invaluable tool for our team."

The SkiErg can accommodate injured athletes with lower-leg injuries by allowing them to sit or kneel, enabling them to train at normal intensity and duration using just their upper body and core.

## Competitive & Functional Applications

The SkiErg has proven its versatility in functional fitness and athletic conditioning. It is now a staple in elite competitions, including CrossFit, HYROX, and tactical training programs.

David Magida, HYROX Global Head of Training and 2023 HYROX North American Champion, emphasizes the machine's adaptability:

"Always an avid rower, I finally took the leap, purchased my own SkiErg, and the rest is history," Magida says.

"I immediately realized the value of the machine, not just for its tremendous aerobic benefits, but because I could use the SkiErg to train both capacity and power! The SkiErg allows you to build your endurance, and even your core strength, without putting any significant load on your legs. This allows you to train hard on a SkiErg without compromising the next day's running, cycling,

rowing or lifting routine. The SkiErg has proven to be one of my most effective tools for building strength and endurance."

The SkiErg has also been widely adopted by military, law enforcement, and functional fitness training programs, where its ability to build endurance, power and cardiovascular fitness makes it a critical component of high-performance workouts.

Additionally, many functional fitness gyms and personal trainers incorporate the SkiErg into interval training circuits, endurance challenges and strength-conditioning programs. Unlike traditional cardio machines, the SkiErg offers a unique training stimulus, challenging both aerobic capacity and muscular endurance in a single workout.

## The Future of the SkiErg

The SkiErg's growth parallels that of Concept2's other ergometers, which have expanded beyond their original intended audiences. Just as the RowErg became an essential tool in gyms far beyond the rowing community, the SkiErg has found its place across numerous fitness and wellness verticals.

The SkiErg offers a full-body workout, but its real power lies in the science behind its flywheel technology and the repeatable, comparable data from the PM5 monitor—making it the perfect tool for fitness testing and evaluation.

Looking ahead, Concept2 continues to explore potential enhancements, including advancements in performance tracking and data visualization, ensuring that the SkiErg remains at the forefront of fitness technology. With Concept2's continued dedication to data-driven innovation and product refinement, the SkiErg will remain a cornerstone of training for years to come.



Photo courtesy of Concept2



Photo courtesy of Feed.fm

# HOW FEED.FM IS HELPING DIGITAL FITNESS APPS WIN THE BATTLE FOR CONSUMER ATTENTION WITH SCIENCE-BACKED WELLNESS MUSIC

*With user retention at an all-time low, fitness and wellness brands are turning to Feed.fm's new Wellness Soundtracks product – a plug-and-play solution that integrates science-backed music for focus, relaxation, and recovery.*

By Athletech Studios

Retention and engagement is a big challenge in an oversaturated market, and there's no shortage of apps vying for consumer attention. With 3.8 million apps in the Google Play Store and 2 million in the Apple App Store, standing out is tough. Every month, 36,000 new apps enter the fray, competing for limited space on users' home screens.

The fitness and wellness sector is just as competitive. Fifty-nine percent of smartphone users have at least one fitness app, and 42% have five or more. The global market for meditation and mental wellness apps is projected to surpass \$7 billion by 2029, proving that consumers crave holistic well-being solutions digitally.

Getting a new user to download your app is just the beginning — keeping them engaged is the real challenge. Within 30 days, most apps are deleted, and only 7.5% of new users are still engaging after 10 days. Brands need sticky, engaging experiences to survive.

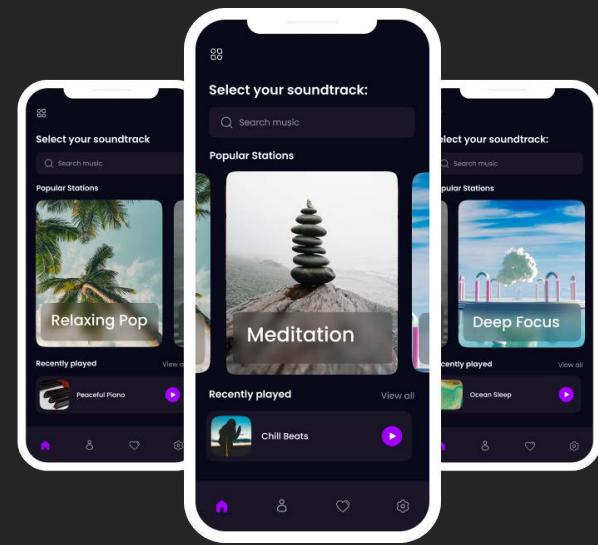


Photo courtesy of Feed.fm

## Feed.fm Wellness Soundtracks: A Solution Designed for Engagement

Music is one of the most effective tools for engagement and retention – but integrating music into a digital wellness platform has long been complicated, expensive and time-consuming.

For years, Feed.fm has simplified this process to power music for the world's leading fitness brands. But, as the wellness movement unfolded, the company identified a major gap in the market. Now, Feed.fm has launched Wellness Soundtracks, a seamless, science-backed music solution for fitness and wellness apps.

With easy app integration, built-in personalization, and real-time analytics, Feed.fm Wellness Soundtracks is set to redefine how fitness and wellness brands use music to drive engagement and results.

**Why does wellness music matter?** Millions of users are already streaming music for sleep, focus and relaxation on platforms like Spotify and YouTube. But when they turn to these platforms, your app loses their attention and valuable engagement data.

With Feed.fm Wellness Soundtracks, brands can now:

- Enhance existing apps quickly or launch new wellness features faster
- Automate streaming, reporting and compliance with low-code SDKs
- Gain valuable insights from the Feed.fm analytics dashboard, tracking how music impacts session length, engagement and retention

"If your app isn't offering functional wellness music, your users will find it elsewhere," says Lauren Pufpaf, President & Co-founder of Feed.fm.

**While some people find focus with lo-fi beats, others prefer classical piano or nature sounds. In fact, 93% of users expect apps to tailor their music experience based on their genre preferences."**



**Lauren Pufpaf**  
President & Co-founder  
Feed.fm

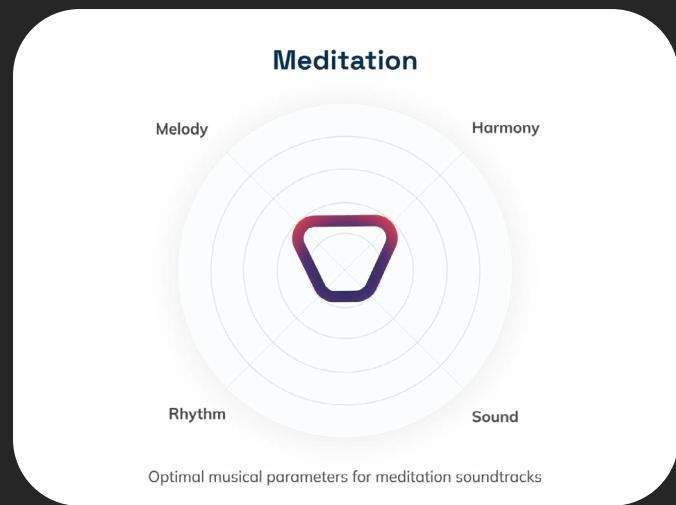


Photo courtesy of Feed.fm

## The Science Behind Feed.fm's Wellness Soundtracks

Music has proven to be a powerful tool that influences physiology and psychology. Studies show that the right music can:

- Reduce cortisol levels, lowering stress and anxiety
- Trigger dopamine, improving mood and motivation
- Enhance sleep quality by accelerating relaxation

Unlike typical wellness playlists, Feed.fm took a research-driven approach to building its music solutions. Feed.fm partnered with Stanford neuroscientist Dr. Daniel Bowling to analyze how specific musical elements – such as tempo, frequency and rhythm – impact relaxation, cognitive function and sleep.

Armed with these findings, they commissioned music from world-class musicians, ensuring that each track adheres to scientifically validated musical parameters. After testing curated stations across leading fitness and wellness apps, they refined the experience based on real user engagement data.

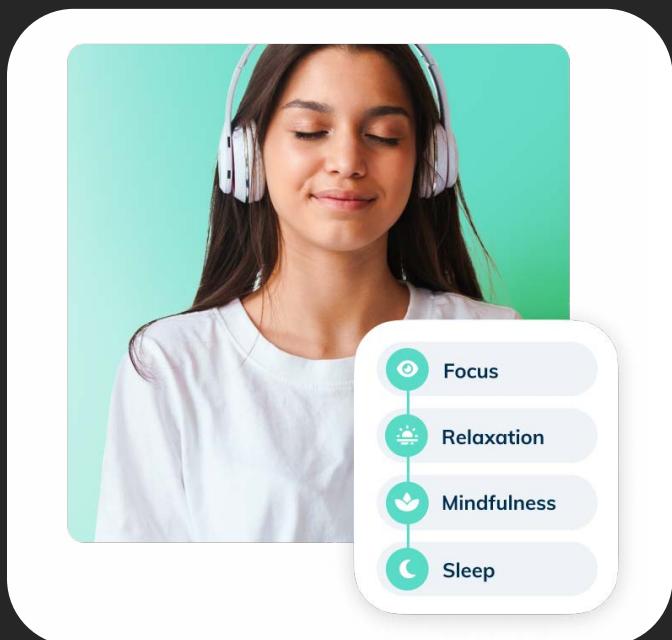


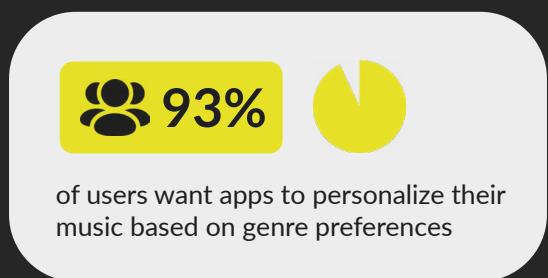
Photo courtesy of Feed.fm

The results? Feed.fm Wellness Soundtracks — a plug-and-play solution for wellness brands to provide users with a wide range of functional music right in their app. From peaceful piano to chill beats, the Feed.fm music API allows brands to map expertly curated mixes to specific content, or enable end users to choose from multiple options across the wellness music spectrum including:

- **Focus Music** – Steady rhythms and repetitive melodies that minimize distractions and sustain concentration.
- **Relaxation Music** – Minimalist soundscapes ideal for stress relief, post-workout recovery, and cool-downs.
- **Mindfulness & Meditation Soundscapes** – Ambient tones with minimal rhythm, designed to support guided meditation and mindfulness exercises.
- **Sleep Sounds** – Soothing ambient tracks that foster sleep induction and mask environmental noise to support deep sleep.

## Personalization: The Key to Engagement

Simply offering great music isn't enough — it has to be personalized.



"While some people find focus with lo-fi beats, others prefer classical piano or nature sounds," says Pufpaf. "In fact, 93% of users expect apps to tailor their music experience based on their genre preferences."

Feed.fm Wellness Soundtracks brings seamless personalization to fitness and wellness platforms, offering a variety of mixes to ensure that every user gets a music experience that enhances their journey."

## Leading brands are already leveraging this technology:

- **Aaptiv** – Allows users to select their preferred soundscapes in its meditation program, enhancing mindful engagement.
- **Aescape** – Uses music personalization to optimize AI-powered massage sessions, creating an immersive relaxation experience.

Now, any fitness or wellness brand can integrate science-backed wellness music while gaining real-time insights into user listening preferences.

## Why Music is a Must-Have for Fitness & Wellness Apps Looking for a Competitive Edge

Music isn't just a feature—it's an essential engagement tool.

"Apps that integrate personalized music see significantly higher retention rates and longer session times," says Pufpaf.

Beyond engagement, Feed.fm's analytics dashboard gives brands data-driven insights into how music influences user behavior.

"Feed.fm enables brands to track which music resonates with users, allowing them to refine their offerings for optimal engagement and retention," says Pufpaf.

The proof is in the numbers. Music's ability to enhance digital experiences isn't just anecdotal — it's proven.

- Ergatta users who listened to Feed.fm-integrated music had rowing session times 5.5 times longer than those without Feed.fm music.
- D90 retention skyrocketed — Sworkit users who listened to Feed.fm music while working out in the app were 2.5 times more likely to stay engaged for 90 days.



## The Bottom Line: Seamless Integration, Instant Impact

Music is proven to boost engagement and retention, but until now, wellness brands struggled to implement it effectively.

With Feed.fm Wellness Soundtracks, brands can now:

- Seamlessly integrate science-backed wellness music
- Stream fully licensed, major-label, indie and exclusive science-backed compositions
- Deliver a personalized, data-driven music experience

"We are helping forward-thinking fitness and wellness brands stay ahead of the curve with plug-and-play integration, built-in personalization and real-time analytics, making it effortless for brands to bring science-backed soundtracks into their digital experiences," said Pufpaf.

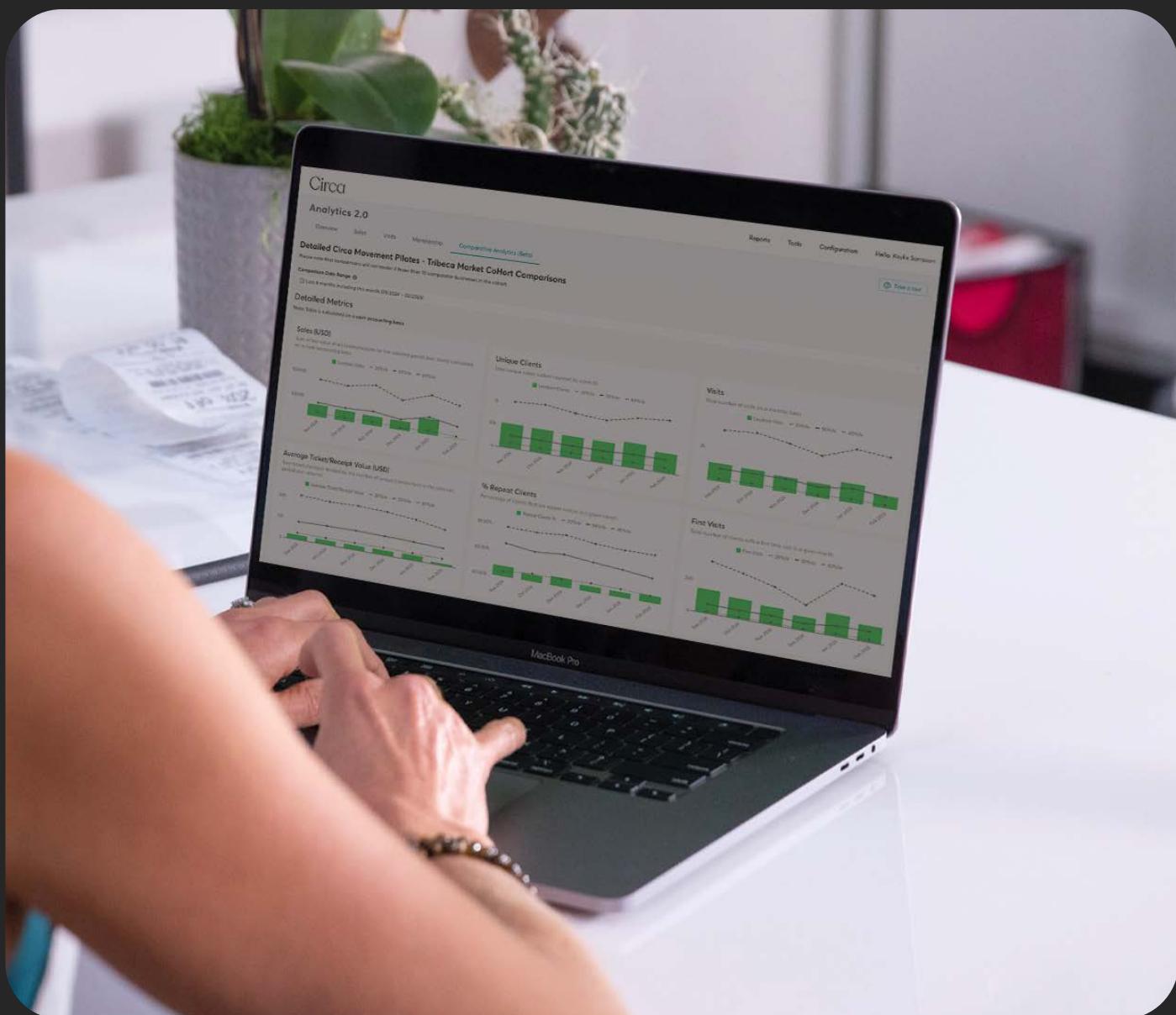


Photo courtesy of Mindbody

# MINDBODY'S ANALYTICS 2.0: A GAME-CHANGER FOR COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING IN FITNESS

By Athletech Studios

We live in a data-driven world, and with the acceleration of AI automation, the ability to harness data effectively has never been more critical. The fitness industry is no exception. For gym and studio owners, understanding business performance isn't just a competitive edge, it's a necessity. Yet, with countless software platforms available, how do fitness and wellness businesses choose the right one—one that offers real insights and actionable intelligence?

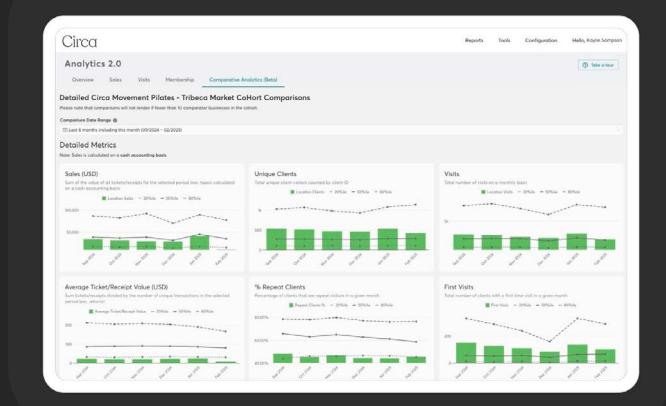
Amidst the noise, Mindbody's Analytics 2.0 is emerging as an industry disruptor.

One of the most groundbreaking aspects of Analytics 2.0 is its Comparative Analytics feature. Currently in beta, this tool enables businesses to benchmark performance against industry peers, providing gyms, studios and franchises with unprecedented insights. Mindbody's data set—one of the most comprehensive in the industry—allows businesses to compare key metrics with others in the same vertical, market or geographic area.

Jessica Huang, Senior Vice President of Product at Mindbody and ClassPass, explains why this tool is so significant:

"The Comparative Analytics tool is revolutionizing the fitness and wellness industry by transforming industry-wide data into actionable intelligence. Operators can create custom cohorts based on industry and geography, enabling them to benchmark performance against peers with anonymized and aggregated company-level data—ensuring the data integrity of our customers while providing deep, data-driven market insights."

Photo courtesy of Mindbody



## Unlocking the Power of Comparative Analytics

Traditionally, fitness businesses have operated in silos, relying on their own internal data to track progress. But without a broader view of industry benchmarks, businesses often struggle to understand if their performance is truly optimal or if they are falling behind their competitors. This is where Comparative Analytics comes in.

According to Huang, the Comparative Analytics feature leverages data from over 30,000 businesses on the Mindbody platform, providing a detailed view of industry trends. This helps business owners make data-driven decisions and compare their performance to different cohorts of interest.

To ensure customer data remains protected, Mindbody has safeguards in place for Comparative Analytics. Their approach makes it impossible to discern the performance of any single location or brand; if a genre or geographic slice is too thin, Mindbody will withhold the cohort data to protect the integrity of their customers.

"With Comparative Analytics, we're transforming how owners and operators make strategic decisions about their business performance," says Huang. "Data-driven insights like this are no longer a luxury—they're essential for growth and long-term success."

The tool will allow businesses to benchmark through filters such as Vertical (i.e. fitness), Subvertical (i.e. Barre), Metric (i.e. sales) and Country/Province State, comparing metrics such as revenue per client, class occupancy rates, membership retention, pricing strategies, seasonal trends, and more.

Huang says these insights provide an unparalleled level of granularity, helping operators refine strategies and

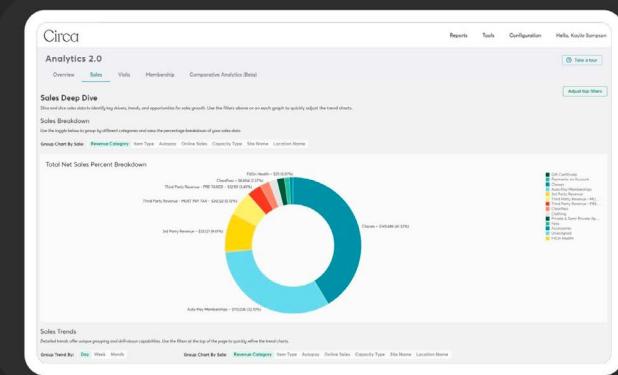
performance based on market realities.

"If you're wondering where to invest in your business—whether it's membership sales, a loyalty program, or client activation—Comparative Analytics can help. This tool lets you see your Repeat Client Rate (the percentage of clients who return each month) compared to other studios. Checking your Repeat Client Rate could help you understand how strong your business is at retaining customers; if you're lagging in this area, investing more heavily in memberships or loyalty could lead to more stable, recurring revenue streams."

**With Comparative Analytics, we're transforming how owners and operators make strategic decisions about their business performance. Data-driven insights like this are no longer a luxury—they're essential for growth and long-term success."**



**Jessica Huang**  
Senior Vice President of Product  
Mindbody and ClassPass



## The Full Story on Analytics 2.0: Smarter, Faster & More Powerful

Beyond Comparative Analytics, Mindbody's Analytics 2.0 offers enhanced accuracy and a streamlined user experience.

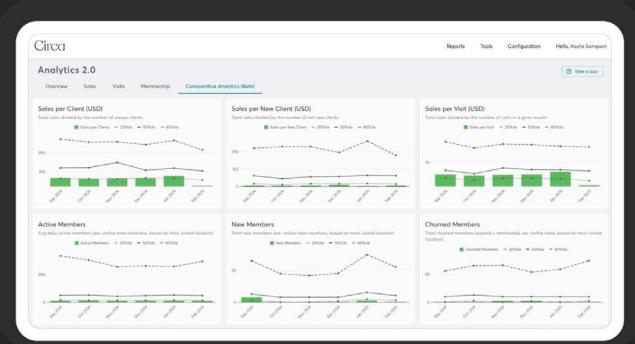
"The company's investment in Analytics 2.0 stemmed from a clear customer demand for better, more actionable data insights," says Huang. "Many businesses struggled with legacy reporting tools that lacked flexibility, visualization capabilities, and comparative data."

Analytics 2.0 addresses these challenges:

- **Centralized Data & Enhanced Accuracy** – The platform consolidates key business metrics (including sales, visits and memberships) into a single, user-friendly dashboard. Also, new data precision improvements ensure reports align with accounting best practices, such as excluding tax and tips from sales figures for a clearer net revenue picture.
- **Customizable, Visual Reporting** - The new interface features interactive charts, graphs and configurable filters that allow operators to quickly interpret complex data. Net sales breakdowns, membership tracking and category-specific insights help drive informed, strategic decisions at a glance.
- **Franchise and Multi-Location Comparisons** - For franchise owners, Analytics 2.0 makes it easy to compare performance across multiple locations. The ability to stack-rank locations against business KPIs helps operators quickly benchmark results, optimize strategies and scale efficiently.
- **Long-Term Growth Tracking** - The platform enables year-over-year comparisons, allowing businesses to set performance goals, plan for seasonal promotions, measure progress and adjust proactively.

The adoption rates speak volumes—over 90% of Mindbody's enterprise clients have embraced Analytics 2.0, recognizing its impact in driving revenue, improving efficiency and turning raw data into results.

Photo courtesy of Mindbody



## Real-World Impact

A prime example of Analytics 2.0's impact is Bishops Cuts/Color, a national salon and barbershop franchise with 40 locations. Before implementing Analytics 2.0, Bishops struggled with fragmented data collection, requiring multiple reports across different categories.

"Gathering and comparing key performance metrics was time-consuming, limiting our ability to make quick, data-driven decisions," says a Systems Administrator at Bishops.

Since adopting Analytics 2.0, Bishops has revolutionized how they use data. With all key metrics consolidated into a single dashboard, they spend less time on analysis and more on action. Franchise locations can now stack-rank their performance, benchmark against one another, and

collaborate on growth strategies more effectively.

"If you're not using Analytics 2.0, you're leaving money on the table. It saves time and enables smarter decisions at every level of our organization," says a Systems Administrator at Bishops.

Looking ahead, Huang sees the future of fitness and wellness analytics evolving to deliver even deeper insights and more advanced predictive capabilities. With Mindbody's extensive dataset, Analytics 2.0 is poised to become an increasingly valuable tool for businesses looking to gain a competitive edge.

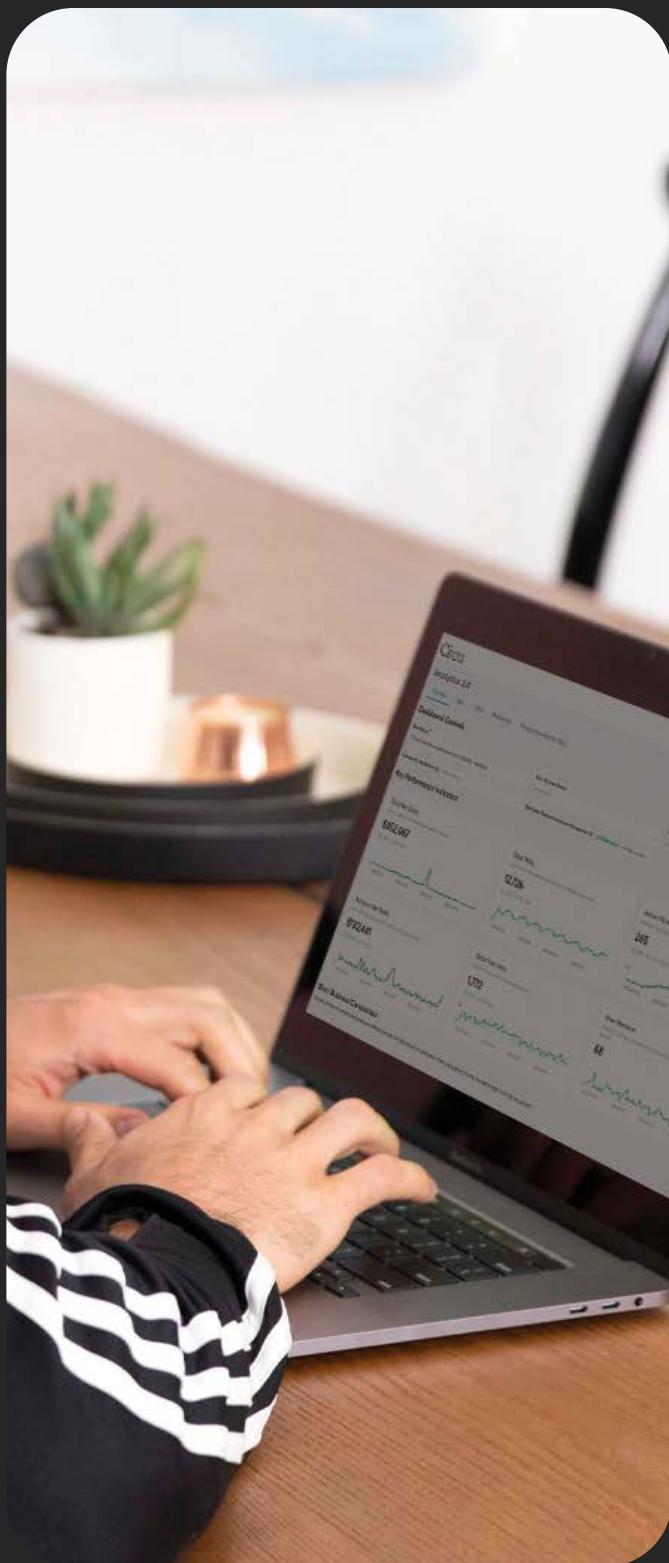




Photo courtesy of Shutterstock.com/Ground Picture

# SOCIAL FITNESS OUTLOOK: WHY COMMUNITY IS KEY TO THE INDUSTRY'S GROWTH

*The founders and C-suite executives of CrossFit, Hyrox, Strong New York and The Athletic Clubs offer their takes on the power of community and the current state of the fitness and wellness industry*

By Josh Liberatore

Nearly one in four adults across the world feel lonely, according to a recent Gallup World Poll.

Many fitness brands are doing their part to help tackle this global health challenge, creating community-centric experiences that bring people together through the shared experience of working out

Four brands – CrossFit, Hyrox, Strong New York and The Athletic Clubs – stand at the forefront of this social fitness revolution. These brands differ slightly in their approaches, but they all have a few things in common: they're in-person, they're communal and they challenge people to push past their limits through challenging exercise experiences.

ATN spoke with the founders and C-suite executives of these brands to get their takes on the power of community and the current state of the fitness and wellness industry.

## CrossFit Creates Connection Through Serious Workouts

Social fitness might be trending these days, but CrossFit has been preaching it for decades. Founded in 2000,

the popular group fitness regimen is now practiced by millions of people across the world. The brand has long been known for the power of its community, which can be seen in message boards online but also in person at thousands of CrossFit affiliate gyms across the world.

"In a world still grappling with the effects of COVID and rising loneliness, people are craving real, meaningful connections," CrossFit CEO Don Faul tells ATN. "CrossFit affiliates have provided just that for two decades – not because people come for the community, but because they build it through shared effort, accountability and consistency."



Photo courtesy of CrossFit

According to Faul, the three biggest trends shaping the industry today are longevity, in-person classes and what he calls “strength training for everyone.”

While more people are embracing fitness – including hardcore, strength-based workouts like CrossFit, lingering issues continue to stunt the entire industry’s growth prospects.

“While the fitness industry continues to expand and evolve, we face the same thematic challenge that has plagued our industry for decades: a lack of efficacy,” Faul says. “The average person looking to improve their health doesn’t know where to start.”

Unsurprisingly, Faul believes CrossFit is the ideal place for them to start. But he’s calling on the entire industry to do a better job at preaching the fundamentals over get-rich-quick schemes.

“There is a lot of noise in our industry that can ultimately disempower or confuse, where the focus is on selling products – supplements, technologies or gear,” Faul says. “But the fundamental truth of what humans need, whether seeking to stave off chronic disease or optimize their fitness, is a foundation of sound exercise and nutrition.”

**While the fitness industry continues to expand and evolve, we face the same thematic challenge that has plagued our industry for decades: a lack of efficacy. The average person looking to improve their health doesn’t know where to start.”**



**Don Faul**  
CEO  
CrossFit

## Hyrox Challenges the Industry to Think Big

Few brands in the history of fitness have risen to prominence as quickly as Hyrox, the viral fitness racing brand that hosts events from New York to London to Shanghai. Self-described as the “marathon of fitness,” Hyrox has exploded in popularity thanks in large part to the power of in-person connection and community.

“In 2025, more of people’s lives are going to become automated/driven by AI. That offers huge productivity and efficiency gains, but it also means that human interaction is even more important,” Hyrox co-founder and chief marketing officer Moritz Fürste tells ATN. “An analog approach to managing the outcomes of the digital age will be a surprising superpower.”

Over 250,000 athletes took part in Hyrox during the 2023-24 race season, and 650,000 are expected to participate during the 2024-25 season. By 2026, Hyrox is projecting one million global participants. By 2027, the brand expects to be staging 170 events, with at least 20,000 gyms and fitness studios around the world signed up as Hyrox Training Clubs.

Fürste calls on the entire fitness and wellness industry to think just as big as Hyrox when it comes to creating community – and a worldwide movement.

“We as an industry still haven’t scratched the surface of where we can be. There are more unicorns and culture-defining businesses coming out of our sector than anywhere – other than AI,” he says. “Yet we are guilty of still thinking too small at times. We now sit at the intersection of health, technology and culture, with a U.S. administration more interested in health and chronic disease, which will be reflected internationally.”



Photo courtesy of Hyrox

**We as an industry still haven’t scratched the surface of where we can be. There are more unicorns and culture-defining businesses coming out of our sector than anywhere – other than AI. Yet we are guilty of still thinking too small at times. We now sit at the intersection of health, technology and culture, with a U.S. administration more interested in health and chronic disease, which will be reflected internationally.”**



**Moritz Fürste**  
Co-Founder & Chief Marketing Officer  
Hyrox

## Kenny Santucci Wants To Change the Narrative Around Fitness

For Kenny Santucci, a trainer and fitness entrepreneur based in New York, community is the key to getting more people inside of gyms and studios.

"We need to show more people that (fitness) doesn't need to be this grueling thing," Santucci tells ATN. "I think people are still intimidated at the gym. They look at it as this space that, quite frankly, isn't welcoming and warm."

Santucci created Strong New York, an annual fitness expo in New York City that brings together consumers, industry professionals and leading brands for a day of workout sessions, expert panels and product showcases. Thousands of people attended last year's event as Strong New York continues to grow year-over-year post-pandemic.

In addition to running Strong New York, Santucci also founded The Strength Club, a community-focused strength training gym that offers private and small-group training classes.

Workouts at The Strength Club are serious, but the vibe isn't. Santucci wants to give people the same feeling of belonging he's always felt inside of the gym. For members, he wants The Strength Club to feel like the famous sitcom "Cheers," but inside of a gym setting.

"Everyone should leave the gym feeling better than when they walked in," Santucci says. "I wanted to create an environment where people could feel at home and it became a third space. They could have the (worst) day ever, their jobs could be miserable, their home life could be miserable, but when they come in, it's an hour for them to relax, grow and feel better."

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**Kenny Santucci**  
Founder  
Strong New York & The Strength Club

## The Athletic Clubs Builds a Brand Around Social Fitness

Few brands better exemplify the power of social fitness than The Athletic Clubs, which places people into small groups called "squads." At Athletic Club locations, squad members work out together twice per week, always at the same time and always together. Classes are based around classic strength and conditioning exercises including kettlebell swings and similar movements.

Dane McCarthy founded The Athletic Clubs amid the pandemic in 2021, recognizing the need for social connection in New York City, especially among Millennials and Gen-Zers. Today, the brand has several locations in the New York area, with plans to open more.

"The biggest shift we see is the rise of social fitness – people want more than just a workout, they want a shared experience," McCarthy tells ATN. "Traditional solo gym routines are being replaced by structured small-group training models that emphasize consistency and connection. Our squad training system is designed to be at the forefront of this trend, making fitness more engaging and habit-driven."

While not all gyms can replicate The Athletic Clubs' squad training format, McCarthy believes the entire industry should focus on putting people over short-term profits.

"Many gyms still operate on a transactional model, but long-term success will come from building deeper member connections and ensuring fitness becomes a sustainable habit," he says.

"The future of fitness isn't just about workouts – it's about community and habit-building," McCarthy adds. "The gyms that focus on social engagement, accountability and long-term behavior change will be the ones that define the next era of the industry."

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**Dane McCarthy**  
Founder  
The Athletic Clubs

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