

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and black leggings, is leaning forward on a black barbell in a gym. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The gym has a grey brick wall with yellow and black horizontal stripes. There are large windows in the background showing a building outside. In the foreground, there is a rowing machine and a barbell with weights. The floor is covered with green artificial turf.

**CLUB INDUSTRY
TRENDS
THAT WILL
AFFECT THE
FITNESS
INDUSTRY
IN 2019**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 EDITOR'S LETTER: DEFINING TRENDS IS A PERILOUS BUT WORTHWHILE PURSUIT

By Pamela Kufahl, director of content, Club Industry

6 WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY TOPS ACSM'S 2019 TRENDS SURVEY

By Anthony Dominic, content producer, Club Industry

7 FROM OUR SPONSOR: HERE TO STAY: FITNESS WEARABLES AREN'T JUST A FAD

By Gemma Bonnett-Kolakowska, global marketing director at Myzone

9 FROM OUR SPONSOR: WEIGHTLIFTING PERFORMANCE TRAINING FOR INDIVIDUALS IS A TREND FOR 2019

By Kerri O'Brien, vice president, marketing, product development and education, Eleiko

11 FOUR TRENDS THAT WILL CHANGE THE HEALTH CLUB INDUSTRY IN 2019

By Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson, co-founders and principals at ClubIntel

12 TO ADAPT TO 2019 TRENDS, OPEN YOUR MIND TO LEARNING, INNOVATING AND CHANGING

By Eddie Tock, CEO of REX Roundtables

14 SURVIVAL IN 2019 REQUIRES THE ABILITY TO ADAPT TO HEALTH CLUB TRENDS

By Tim Rhode, CEO of Rhode Management Company

15 HEALTH CLUB TRENDS IN 2019 WILL REVOLVE AROUND COMPETITION, THE MEMBER EXPERIENCE AND EMPLOYEES

By Bill McBride, co-founder, president and CEO of Active Wellness, and founder, president and CEO of BMC3 Consulting

16 FROM OUR SPONSOR: IN 2019, HEALTH CLUB OPERATORS NEED TO FOCUS ON RETENTION

By Eric Claman, senior health and racquet club consultant at Twin Oaks Software

18 MEDICAL AND CORPORATE WELLNESS TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2019

By David L. Evans, vice president of Cooper Wellness Strategies
By Bill McBride, co-founder, president and CEO of Active Wellness, and founder, president and CEO of BMC3 Consulting
By Kevin Steele, president of PTA Global and PTONtheNet
By Christopher Breuleux, president of The Medical Wellness Association

20 FROM OUR SPONSOR: PUT GREEN ON DISPLAY: GYM MEMBERS EXPECT A HEALTHY AND SAFE PLACE TO WORK OUT IN 2019

By Ivo Grossi, CEO of SportsArt America

22 THE TOP STUDIO TREND FOR 2019 IS FRANCHISING

By Anthony Dominic, content producer, Club Industry

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT.)

-
- 23** **2019 STUDIO TRENDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THREE STUDIO EXPERTS**
By Michelle Blakely, founder of See Jake and Jane Train
By Julia Sutton, COO of exhale
By Maria Parella-Turco, found of Honor Yoga
-
- 25** **FROM OUR SPONSOR: TAKE A CUE FROM THE BIGGEST 2019 FITNESS TRENDS BEING DRIVEN BY MILLENNIALS**
By Katie Dobbs, content marketing expert at Precor
-
- 27** **STATE LEGISLATIVE TRENDS WILL AFFECT THE FITNESS INDUSTRY IN 2019**
By Helen Durkin, executive vice president of public policy at IHRSA
-
- 29** **TEAM TRAINING IS A TREND AT THE END OF ITS S-CURVE**
By Thomas Plummer, founder of the National Fitness Business Alliance
-
- 31** **FROM OUR SPONSOR: 5 FITNESS TRENDS YOU'LL SEE IN 2019**
By Chris Frankel, head of human performance at TRX
-
- 33** **SIX TECHNOLOGY TRENDS TO WATCH FOR IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY IN 2019**
By Mike Rucker, vice president of technology, Active Wellness
-
- 35** **TECH TRENDS IN 2019 AREN'T JUST ABOUT TECHNOLOGY**
By Bryan O'Rourke, president of the Fitness Industry Technology Council
-
- 36** **THE USE OF BIOMETRICS, VIRTUAL COACHING AND WEARABLES WILL CONTINUE TO GROW IN 2019**
By Candace Sweatt, director of member services at Crunch Fitness
-
- 37** **FROM OUR SPONSOR: GREAT USER INTERFACES: TECHNOLOGY TO WATCH IN 2019**
By Kelly Card, senior vice president of partner relations for ABC Financial
-
- 39** **GOOD HEALTH CLUB DESIGN HELPS DRIVE FINANCIAL WELL-BEING IN 2019**
By Rudy Fabiano, founder, Fabiano Designs
-
- 41** **HEALTH CLUB DESIGN IN 2019 MUST BE A PERSONALIZED AND INVITING EXPERIENCE**
By Bruce Carter, owner of Optimal Design Systems International
-
- 43** **FOUR MARKETING TRENDS TO KEEP IN MIND IN 2019**
By Leslie Nolen, president of Radial Group
-
- 44** **GOOGLE MY BUSINESS IS A KEY TO SUCCESSFUL MARKETING IN 2019**
By Merrill Richmond, senior marketing executive at Spotter Marketing
-
- 45** **6 NUTRITION TRENDS YOU WILL SEE IN 2019**
By Kat Barefield, registered dietitian
-

EDITOR'S LETTER

DEFINING TRENDS IS A PERILOUS BUT WORTHWHILE PURSUIT

If you had made a list in early 2018 of the fitness trends you thought would take hold for that year, how do you think you would look back on that list today? Would you declare yourself as this century's Nostradamus, or would you deny you ever made those predictions?

We asked health and wellness veterans to weigh in on the trends they believe will affect the industry this year. The bravest among them took up our challenge. And, lucky you, you get the benefit of their bravery (and wisdom) throughout the pages of this report.

If you are expecting a consensus on every trend, then you will be disappointed. Because no scientific method exists for determining trends, these trends are based on some statistics, some anecdotal evidence and a lot of gut instinct.

Some of the trends noted in this report contradict each other. For example, ACSM notes that group training is one of its top three trends to watch in 2019. However, Thomas Plummer, a longtime industry consultant and educator, says that team training has become commoditized and is waning in popularity. So who should you believe? You will have to check back in 2020 to see because only time will tell.

In other areas, a greater consensus exists. Technology is here to stay in the fitness industry—and its expansion seems inevitable, according to many of the experts. Wellness, recovery and the influence of millennials also appeared on many lists.

So if positing trends is such a perilous undertaking (a folly to some), then why create a whole report around it? Because ascertaining what is trending is a continual pursuit in most industries, and being privy to the conclusions of experts about what is trending helps you to determine if the trends you have identified correspond with those of the experts. When you find yourself in agreement with someone you respect, it gives you the confidence to move forward or hold back.

And what do you do once you have defined a trend? You determine its effects on your industry and on your company, and then you decide whether it's in the best interest of your business to act on this trend or to let it pass.

We encourage you to be brave and share with us the trends you are watching in 2019 and the actions you are taking to ensure these trends benefit your business.



Sincerely,

Pamela Kufahl
Content Director
Club Industry
www.clubindustry.com
www.clubindustryshow.com

CLUB INDUSTRY

5541 CENTRAL AVE, BOULDER, CO 80301

DIRECTOR OF CONTENT
Pamela Kufahl

CONTENT PRODUCER
Anthony Dominic

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Marty McCallen

INTEGRATED SALES REP
Crystal Wheeler

MARKETING MANAGER
Tina Beebe

ART DIRECTOR
Paul Weber

www.clubindustry.com

informa

THIS REPORT IS
SPONSORED BY



ELEIKO



myzone

PRECOR

Sports/Art



AIM HIGHER

WITH JONAS FITNESS

Discover why thousands of health & fitness clubs trust our comprehensive, enterprise club management software to help take their business to new heights.

TEXT

HIGHER

TO 52236

FOR A FREE SOFTWARE DEMO

Going to IHRSA?
Come see us in Booth #3015





WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY TOPS ACSM'S 2019 TRENDS SURVEY

The top 10 fitness trends as determined by an American College of Sports Medicine survey includes some new and repeat trends.



BY ANTHONY DOMINIC,
CONTENT PRODUCER,
CLUB INDUSTRY

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recently asked 2,000 fitness professionals to rank 39 trends by importance and popularity as part of its 13th annual [“Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends.”](#)

The results showed that wearable technology edged its competition to become the top-ranked trend for 2019. It ranked third in 2018’s list, only behind group exercise and high-intensity interval training (HIIT), and was previously the top-ranked trend in 2016.

“Technology is a must-have in our daily lives, and wearable tech can be an invaluable tool for those looking to get and stay physically active,” Walter R. Thompson, the lead author of the survey and associate dean in the College of Education and Human Development at Georgia State University in Atlanta, said in a media release. “We can easily monitor heart rate, count steps, track calories and create plans. The data collected by wearable technology can be used to inform the user and their health care team about important daily health metrics like physical activity, and it encourages healthier lifestyle choices.”

Below is a list of the top 10 trends accompanied with insight for each item. To view this year’s full survey, [click here](#). To recap last year’s trends, [click here](#).

1. Wearable technology. Wearable technology includes all fitness trackers, smart watches, heart-rate monitors and GPS tracking devices, according to the survey.

2. Group training. Group training seems ubiquitous today, but it only first ranked as one of ACSM top-20 trends in 2017 (No. 6), and then again in 2018 (No. 2).

3. HIIT. HIIT has appeared on the ACSM top-20 list every year since 2014. It ranked No. 1 in both 2014 and 2018.

4. Fitness programs for older adults. Health club operators should not miss out on the opportunity to engage with the local senior population. The survey states: “These individuals in general have more discretionary money than

their younger counterparts, and fitness clubs may capitalize on this growing market. People are living longer, working longer and remaining healthy and active much longer.”

5. Bodyweight training. Bodyweight training uses minimal equipment and is an inexpensive and functional way in which to exercise effectively, according to the survey. It has appeared intermittently on ACSM’s top-20 lists since 2013.

6. Employ certified fitness professionals. Employing certified fitness professionals was a new survey item for ACSM’s 2019 survey. It replaced “educated, certified and experienced fitness professionals,” which was determined to be too broadly defined as a survey item.

7. Yoga. Yoga is one of the longest-standing trends on ACSM’s annual lists, first appearing in the top 10 in 2008.

Since then, its popularity has ebbed and flowed. In the health club space, yoga has gradually splintered into a variety of forms (power yoga, hot yoga, Yogilates, etc.).

8. Personal training. Personal training has largely evolved since first appearing on ACSM’s top trends list in 2006. It is now more accessible online, at home, in health clubs and in worksites that have fitness facilities.

9. Functional training. Functional training exercises utilize various strength and aerobic practices to replicate actual physical activities someone may perform as part of their daily routine. The primary aim is to improve strength, balance, coordination and movement. Functional training is scalable to a wide array of groups.

10. Exercise is medicine. This trend has ranked in ACSM’s annual lists since 2017 and can be defined as a global health initiative focused on encouraging primary care physicians and other health care providers to include physical activity assessment and associated treatment recommendations as part of every patient visit, according to the report. 📌

“Wearable technology edged its competition to become the top-ranked trend for 2019.”

SPONSOR: MYZONE

HERE TO STAY: FITNESS WEARABLES AREN'T JUST A FAD

Successful health club operators will ensure they have a wearable strategy to make wearables a part of their members' mindsets and not something they set aside after a few months of use.



BY GEMMA BONNETT-KOLAKOWSKA,
GLOBAL MARKETING DIRECTOR AT
MYZONE

At the end of 2018, ACSM's Health and Fitness journal released its top fitness trends for 2019. It wasn't a surprise when wearables trumped other trends for the top spot for 2019, with group training and high-intensity interval training (HIIT) following in second and third place. In 2016 and 2017, wearable technology took the top spot for trends, but before then, it hadn't ever ranked on the report. This just shows that technology is helping to drive the enthusiasm of users within facilities, and more operators should be in tune with this offering.

From fitness trackers, smart watches, heart rate monitors and GPS tracking devices to apps downloadable on smartphones, tablets, watches, etc., the way in which users work out is constantly evolving. Are wearables a fad or are they here to stay?

Technology is a must-have today, and it surrounds people in all aspects of their daily lives. More and more people are using wearables, whether that be for everyday use to help monitor heart rate and other daily health metrics, to motivate their physical activity, or to help deliver faster, more measurable results.

Regardless of why people use wearables, the fact is that this type of technology has become a dominant factor within the fitness industry.

The biggest challenge the industry faces with wearables is how to continually engage members using the wearable so that the wearable does not end up sitting on a shelf after a few months of use never to be dusted off until the next January. Wearable technology, such as Apple Health, has helped break down barriers by allowing wearables to be accessible rather than just having a high-ticket price. But how do operators capitalize on this to help make potential or existing users take that step to regular activity?

Operators need to look at their strategy, and if wearables are not part of that, then they may get left behind. Wearables are extremely accessible and workable for clubs, and with key industry designed wearable solutions, operators can certainly take full advantage. A lot of operators tend to find barriers from their teams when looking to implement a wearable strategy, but the key is to ensure the solution fits the facility, the ethos and the overall community. Work out what you want wearables to do for your club. However, implementing a system just to fill a gap

is not a long-term strategy, but rather it is simply a reactive response, which as we know is usually short lived.

The key to success behind wearables in the facility is to create attention around them. It is one thing for club owners to implement the strategy of wearables into their facility, and it is another thing for owners to change the dynamic of their club to be centered around the wearable. For example, offering group classes, teaching trainers to instruct around the device, or hosting facility-wide competitions to see who can earn the best metrics, encourages motivation and requires members to physically engage with the product, highlighting the idea that the wearable is more than just a simple product.

It is important to incorporate wearables into the whole structure of the club so that they eventually become a mindset for members that they can't work out without. It is up to club owners to see the potential that lies within wearables and help change their club for the better. Wearables are not going away, so embrace them and invest in time to find the best solution as you move through 2019.

“Technology is a must-have today, and it surrounds people in all aspects of their daily lives.”

BIO

Gemma Bonnett-Kolakowska is global marketing director at Myzone. She has nearly 20 years of experience in the fitness industry having worked both as an operator and for the past six years in the commercial supplier market. Bonnett-Kolakowska previously worked for Matrix Fitness as the director of strategic marketing EMEA and in 2017 moved to Myzone where she has led the company's rebrand. She forms part of the senior team developing the product offering and positioning Myzone as the go-to wearable heart rate solution for the industry. For more information visit <https://myzone.org>, or email sales@myzone.org. 



Gamify your club

Your customers will love you for it!

Myzone is a leading wearable and technology solution designed and built for the fitness industry. Myzone amplifies the group exercise experience and provides valuable data for clubs with built-in challenges, personal goals, gamification, and an online social community.



SPONSOR: ELEIKO

WEIGHTLIFTING PERFORMANCE TRAINING FOR INDIVIDUALS IS A TREND FOR 2019

Creating safe and effective strength-training programs helps your beginners and well-trained athletes meet their performance needs.



BY KERRI O'BRIEN,
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING,
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND
EDUCATION, ELEIKO

Time continues to be the commodity that we cannot just manufacture more of and is often the reason why people give up on new goals or habits they are trying to adopt. Practically speaking, it's not that a new goal or a new habit consumes a tremendous amount of time; instead, it is the perception as to whether the investment is worth the commitment.

Member commitment, better known as retention, has been a challenge as fitness trends have come and gone over the years.

Several simple trends have stood the test of time. Often, those trends are ones that work with minimal amount of commitment to get started. Some have immediate success that breed more success and a habit, creating a commitment. One such trend over the years has been strength training. Past and present strength training trends have been delivered with many modalities, with technology used for programming, with tracking mechanisms, with increased accessibility, and with programs that can be performed anywhere at any time.

A trend for 2019 is not just strength training to get stronger but strength training that demands an increase in self-daily-performance. It is an "I" world. Our audience has inspired "iPerformance" while continuing to demand that training be accessible, safe, effective and have immediate return on the time investment.

Performance training using weightlifting (or the Big 5 moves: squat, deadlift, bench, clean and jerk and snatch) is an efficient way to increase performance in minimal training time. Programming for weightlifting satisfies individual performance needs, from fat loss to active aging to recreational sports.

This is great news for health club operators, who can see increased use in their strength-training areas. Facility free-weight areas may need some slight modifications to include some weightlifting spaces that are inviting to both the beginner and the well-trained athlete. These are low-cost investments that tend to outlast cardio equipment. Due to its efficiency, performance training using weightlifting advances members through the weight room more quickly for each training session. This gives the member more time to socialize in the café, participate in other recreation programs and engage in all the ways that help to increase retention.

For trainers, performance training using weightlifting is a great way to approach a more dynamic small group training session in minimal time. There is nothing boring or mundane about weightlifting performance programming. Your clients will engage wholly at each training session. That engagement will result in them achieving their personal performance goals regardless of their training experience, age, fitness level and strength/power goals.


Safety is of utmost importance for our members and participants. Injuries within the sport of weightlifting

reportedly equal those of other sports but are less numerous for more serious injuries. The serious injury rate of weightlifters has been reported as low as 0.0018 injuries to every 100 hours of training, with less serious injuries reported as 0.3 injuries every 100 hours, which are typically overuse injuries that have not jeopardized joint integrity.

It's evident that the benefits far outweigh the risk when it comes to weightlifting, and as long as participants follow professional guidance and use equipment in the appropriate condition, they should reduce any potential of injury from weightlifting activities. In fact, evidence suggests weightlifting activities actually reduce injury potential across all sports.

The fitness industry has long been prepared for this trend of weightlifting for performance now sweeping the globe. All facilities and all members getting the most out of the free weight area in 2019 is something to encourage and celebrate.

BIO

Kerri O'Brien is vice president of marketing, product development and education for [Eleiko](#). She has more than 30 years of experience in the health and fitness industry. O'Brien has served in many roles including as COO for large multipurpose wellness facilities with medical and dental clinics, executive vice president for a certifying body, global director of education for the largest fitness equipment manufacturer, executive vice president for evidence-based weight-loss clinics and state president of the AZ Fitness Therapy Network. Eleiko offers complete strength solutions and helps club operators capitalize on the opportunities presented by the growing demand for strength and performance training. 

"A trend for 2019 is not just strength training to get stronger but strength training that demands an increase in self-daily-performance."



ARE YOU GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR FREE WEIGHT AREA?

RAISE THE BAR WITH ELEIKO

- ✓ Free Weight Equipment
- ✓ Sound and Vibration Solutions
- ✓ Strength Programs
- ✓ Staff Training
- ✓ Operational Support
- ✓ Marketing Support

FOLLOW THE FUTURE OF STRENGTH AT ELEIKO.COM

ELEIKO

RAISE THE BAR



FOUR TRENDS THAT WILL CHANGE THE HEALTH CLUB INDUSTRY IN 2019

Things are getting real in 2019 in more than one way, as members demand what they want in fitness.



BY STEPHEN THARRETT AND MARK WILLIAMSON, CO-FOUNDERS AND PRINCIPALS AT CLUBINTEL

It's never easy to predict the future, but the recent past seems to be pointing the industry into a few areas that we see as trends in 2019. Four we highlight here are:

1. Budget club saturation. Budget clubs are headed for a showdown with the forces of supply and demand. It may be time, as investors say, to "Sell short unless you are one of the top five." Consumer data and Census data, combined with research ClubIntel has conducted on budget club trends, show this segment has reached a point of saturation whereby the supply is outpacing the demand. For this segment, the number of members and consumers is getting to the point where making a profit operating a budget club will be challenging unless you are one of the big boys. Even then, continued expansion may be difficult without some significant acquisitions and closings.

2. Engagement. 2019 will be the year that clubs and studios disciplined enough to offer a highly engaging and dynamic app will have a distinct competitive advantage. Research shows that consumers demand to engage with their world via mobile, and more importantly, they spend approximately 80 percent of their time on mobile using one of their five favorite apps. Data from "[ClubIntel's 2018 International Fitness Industry Trend Study – What's All the Rage](#)" shows that in some parts of the world operators are strongly embracing mobile technology to address the consumer need.

3. On-demand. 24/7 on-demand and streaming content will continue to make its presence known with significantly more operators adopting this technology, bringing it to the forefront as a critical programming element for clubs and studios that want to remain relevant to their members

and the market going forward. Research conducted by Cardlytics in 2017 showed that first-time users of on-demand and streaming fitness content spent 37 percent of their fitness spend on on-demand/streaming content and 40 percent on gyms. We've seen some operators embrace the trend. According to our "2018 International Fitness Industry Trend Report," 18 percent of U.S. operators offer their own on-demand fitness instruction and 6 percent offer on-demand group exercise content.

4. Getting real. Mixed realities (MR) along with artificial intelligence (AI) foster continued disruption in respect to the club-consumer interaction. According to data from the "2018 International Fitness Industry Trend Report," 16 percent of European operators embrace AI, with Australia and Russia not far behind. AR and virtual reality (VR) have had lower adoption with upwards of merely 5 percent. Although the percentages are not overwhelming, don't be fooled as these technologies have been heartily embraced by many other industries, including hospitality and entertainment. In January 2019, Black Box opened the first 100 percent VR-driven boutique studio in the United States.

These forecasts and others are fleshed out in detail in ClubIntel's January 2019 whitepaper, "[A Year of Significant Disruption](#)."

BIO

Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson are the co-founders and principals of [ClubIntel](#), a brand insights and strategic consulting firm serving the global health, fitness and private club industries. ☎

"2019 will be the year that clubs and studios disciplined enough to offer a highly engaging and dynamic app will have a distinct competitive advantage."



TO ADAPT TO 2019 TRENDS, OPEN YOUR MIND TO LEARNING, INNOVATING AND CHANGING

The health club industry has experienced exciting changes in the past few years, and those changes will continue throughout 2019.



BY EDDIE TOOK,
CEO OF REX ROUNDTABLES.

We have seen a lot of excitement and growth recently in the fitness industry. It happened with boutique brands exploding, good club operators expanding to more locations, franchises opening in smaller towns where they never would have gone years ago and many options with streaming classes and home fitness.

“In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future,” Eric Hoffer, author of books on social and political philosophy, wrote in his book [“Reflections on the Human Condition.”](#)

To stay ahead of the curve or to create your own trend, you have to have an open mind to learning, innovating and changing. At the heart of every successful business is differentiation. To compete with all the new trends, you have to ask yourself how different your business is. The best way to do this is to ask 10 front line employees what they think makes your brand different. Then ask 10 members the same question. Do you get real difference reported? Do employees and customers agree? Or are you just another gym slowly dying?

To succeed in 2019 and beyond, watch for trends in these areas:

1. Changing consumers. Consumers have changed. They are more focused on value with an overall shift in consumer sentiment toward a healthy and active lifestyle. If a member is coming in using equipment for 30 minutes and leaving with no staff interaction, they are getting a budget-club experience. The clubs that learn to give amazing service can see their retention rates climb. For fitness-only models, this means retention rates that exceed 55 percent, and for multipurpose clubs, retention rates that exceed 70 percent. We will see the growing impact of millennials (who currently spend \$600 billion and are expected to more than double that by 2020) who value experiences over goods and products.

2. Results. Results will be taken even more seriously. We will see more consumer behavior that says if I pay you, tell me specifically what I get type of programs outperform membership sales. Personal training is great but usually costly. Small group and team training classes will continue to be the winner, both in the big box clubs as well as the studios. Most clubs will use heart rate monitoring to add to the value perception and overall experience of the member. More than 33 percent of club members are involved in

some sort of group exercise or small group training. It is winning with dozens of new, small micro gyms such as Orangetheory Fitness, Barry's Bootcamp, etc.

3. HVLP and high-priced clubs. High-volume, low-price (HVLP) clubs and higher priced high-service clubs will continue to do well, but there may be some slowdown in numbers as many larger HVLP companies compete head-to-head.

4. Studios. Boutiques have done a good job of developing a sense of community using events, fitness challenges, weight-loss challenges and promotional events. They tend to be results focused. The monthly spend on boutiques is double that of club memberships. However, only 40 percent of boutique owners are making money or know how to handle objections. As a result, we will start to see many boutiques close. Hot yoga, both in clubs or in a studio, will continue its steady growth and become more mainstream. Some new boutiques will merge treadmills and boxing.

5. Club opportunities. The closing of studios opens a new opportunity for health club owners. Many will open a studio within their club as more than 50 percent of boutique members also belong to a gym. They will be designed with better finishes and better instructors than they were in the past.

6. Nutrition. Cleaner, healthier eating with third-party companies will provide food through clubs, particularly with millennials expanding their diets with more natural and fresh foods. Currently, 52 percent of organic consumers are millennials. Complementary channels such as healthy vending machines are poised to become more widespread. Chicago-based Farmer's Fridge, which has raised more than \$40 million to date, is already in airports, universities and other underserved areas. The brand appeals to consumers who want to make an impulse purchase without derailing their commitment to healthy eating.

7. Memberships. You will see tiered memberships, not just in low-priced clubs but all clubs as customers want what they want when they want it.

8. Recovery. Recovery is a big trend. Years ago, only low-priced clubs would add recovery to raise the revenue per member average, but today even clubs charging more than \$100 per month are adding it, some included in the membership, some charging extra. Meditation will continue to grow. As float tanks, nap pods and mind/body fitness hybrid classes have managed to show, the key to enticing consumers to take a break from their busy lives rests on communicating the many mental and physical health benefits that their products/services offer, wrapped up in a quick and convenient format.

9. Technology. The fitness technology available to consumers is increasing, but consumer use of devices such as Fitbit is decreasing if they use these devices on their own. Virtual streaming classes from companies such as Les Mills and Wexer will become more common and mainstream inside our clubs. Connected fitness, such as

Peloton, Mirror, Crew & Tonal and others – have raised millions of dollars. Overall, private-equity firms are investing more into all types of fitness companies than ever before.

10. Data. Within the next few years, all successful clubs will use more data and have better business analytics on all their members, and perhaps on their guests. If you don't have this, you will struggle to compete. Net promoter scores (NPS) and customer experience scores are changing and improving how we service and retain the members.

11. Wellness. The popularity of the program Exercise Is Medicine is growing and will become more mainstream. We have a high cost of healthcare, and the insurance companies are realizing it's more profitable to keep us healthy than to pay for the care of those with chronic conditions and diseases.

12. Payment. Health clubs will need to accept different forms of payment as we'll see the growth of digital wallets/payments such as Apple Pay, Google Pay Skrill and others.


13. Work and community. Shared work spaces, such as WeWork, are starting to appear in clubs in an effort to become more of a community.

To keep up with the new trends and see if they fit your market, you should take rifle shots, as defined in the book

[“Great By Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos and Luck—Why Some Thrive Despite Them All”](#) by Jim Collins. They should be low cost, low risk, low disruption. You should launch two to four rifle shots each quarter. Remember that innovation is the core of success in today's hyper competitive world. What will you do this year to be innovative? Remember that ideas do not make you successful; action does.

“To compete with all the new trends, you have to ask yourself how different your business is.”

BIO

Eddie Tock is the CEO of [REX Roundtables](#), a global organization that runs Executive Mastermind roundtables for club owners, executives and general managers. The organization has 12 REX groups in the United States, with two new REX groups starting within the next few months. There are also eight REX Roundtables in Europe and Australia. More than 200 successful club owners and executives belong to REX, sharing best practices. Tock also is a speaker for the IHRSA Conventions, Club Industry Shows and has been a faculty member for IHRSA's Institute for Professional Club Management. He has worked with more than 1,500 clubs worldwide including 148 pre-sales since 1983. Tock was a partner in Sales Makers for 21 years, being recognized as IHRSA Associate Member of the Year. He can be reached at eddie@rexroundtables.com or (845) 736-0307. 



SURVIVAL IN 2019 REQUIRES THE ABILITY TO ADAPT TO HEALTH CLUB TRENDS

To succeed in 2019, health club operators will need to heed the words of Charles Darwin.



BY TIM RHODE,
CEO OF RHODE MANAGEMENT
COMPANY

Trends in leadership and management in 2019 are being driven by trends in technology, consumer preference and changing market demographics.

Here is what to watch for in 2019:

1. Advances in technology coupled with increasing health consciousness (who doesn't wish they were a little lighter, leaner, stronger, more energetic or flexible?) are driving the "fitness anywhere" movement. Apps, wearables, class streaming, fitness on demand, digital communities, online coaching and healthy meal delivery are just a few examples. All bode well for consumers in an environment of increasingly accessible resources for healthy lifestyle options. But these options do not bode so well for health clubs if they are not somehow part of that supply chain.

2. Consumers, pressured by competing priorities and a dizzying array of choices, are craving ease, convenience and success.

3. Changes in demographics are forcing us to reconcile the evolving needs and wants of baby boomers with the preferences and tendencies of millennials. Millennials, aged 23-38 years old in 2019, are expected to overtake baby boomers in population in 2019 as their numbers swell to 73 million and boomers decline to 72 million.

Leadership and management will evolve into one of two tracks: those who embrace and adapt to these market trends and those who don't.

Those who do adapt will develop changes in strategy and tactics for positioning, marketing, programming, hiring, training and pricing that enhance the consumer experience. Those who don't adapt will struggle and perhaps even fail.

Consumer preferences range from "leave me alone" to "show me the way." Savvy leaders will tailor their service models to suit the needs and preferences of consumers using new technologies to improve members' health on their terms and beyond the four walls of the club. Managers will learn to attract and retain millennials independent from or successfully alongside of boomers and other generations.

Charles Darwin didn't say that only the strong survive. What he said was that those who survive are the ones who most accurately perceive their environment and successfully adapt to it. Nimble, open-minded leaders and managers will acknowledge the inevitability of these changes and adapt, shaping the customer experience to offer increasing ease, convenience and success.

"Leadership and management will evolve into one of two tracks: those who embrace and adapt to these market trends and those who don't."

BIO

Tim Rhode, founder of [Rhode Management Company](#), is a fitness industry veteran with more than 30 years of experience, managing, developing, owning, growing and consulting in the health club industry. As an owner and manager beginning in 1986, he has operated health, wellness and racquet sports clubs from 8,000 to 120,000 square feet with teams of 20 to more than 300 people and more than 100 personal trainers. He has served on IHRSA's Board of Directors, chairing the Strategic Planning Committee, and is the current director of the annual Club Industry CEO Summit. As an industry innovator and consultant, Rhode helps small, large and multi-club operators to improve their businesses with strategy, systems, training and motivation. You can reach him at tim@RMCmail.net, or at (443) 324-0580. 📞

HEALTH CLUB TRENDS IN 2019 WILL REVOLVE AROUND COMPETITION, THE MEMBER EXPERIENCE AND EMPLOYEES

The fitness industry will see a multitude of trends in 2019, but these three areas of focus stand out for a variety of reasons.



BY BILL MCBRIDE,
CO-FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND
CEO OF ACTIVE WELLNESS, AND
FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF
BMC3 CONSULTING

The growth of competition has been a constant for many years in the fitness industry, but the sources of that competition have been changing, which makes ensuring that you have a clear picture of your product and the experience you provide even more important. And with all of this comes competition of another sort—competition for employees.

Find out more about why competition, experience and employees will be three areas to watch in 2019:

1. Competition. In 2019 competition will continue to rise. There will be more product entering the space with considerable expansion at the higher levels. This will be at a high rate. Over time, we should see some consolidation and elimination of certain offerings, but there will be more growth before any contraction.

In the area of competition, we will see:

- Competition and variety will increase
- Focused offerings will increase
- Brand expansion into hotels, work space and lifestyle activities (golf, tennis, aquatics, sports, etc.) will continue to increase
- Former athletes will continue looking at the space as personal brand extensions (think car dealerships of years past)
- Professional teams are increasing their marketing/brand extensions in certain markets already, and if this proves successful, we will see a lot more of this type of branded/co-branded facility

2. The product/experience. Being clear about what your product is and isn't and who you serve and who you don't serve will be more important than ever before for operators. Members that only use certain features of your club and feel no connection will leave. And in 2019, more of these people will leave than in 2018. Where is your current wheelhouse? Is it as one of these:

- Market leader – prestige membership. At facilities like this, people join because it's the place to belong.
- Like-minded individuals. People join these facilities because like-minded people like them are there. These facilities often include those focused on cycling, Zumba, Pilates/barre, boxing, obstacle courses, aquatics, tennis, basketball, racquetball/squash, etc.

- Lifestyle. These facilities often are family focused, female focused, child friendly and appealing to males.
- Convenience. These facilities are nice, clean, convenient and inexpensive with a lot of equipment. There are other variations, but this gives a sense of the issues we must address. Consumers are more demanding than ever before.

3. Employees. Regardless of how you measure unemployment, the 3.7 percent unemployment rate in September 2018 was the lowest since 1969, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The rate remained low through the end of 2018, finishing at 3.9 percent in

December 2018. If that low rate continues, it means that hiring talented individuals will be harder in 2019, not easier.

Why should someone work for you? How do you attract managers, salespeople and fitness professionals? Do you pay for CECs? Do you invest in team member education? Do you recruit retired people? What is your strategy on recruitment and retention of staff

Hiring and retaining key staff will be a challenge in 2019 and will require you to spend time on strategy and culture building.

BIO

Bill McBride is co-founder, president and CEO of [Active Sports Clubs/Active Wellness](#). He also is founder, president and CEO of [BMC3 Consulting](#). He has served as the chairman of the board of directors for IHRSA and MACMA (Mid-Atlantic Club Management Association). He is an international presenter on topics such as sales, sales management, marketing, retention, club operations, customer service, member experience and leadership. ④

“Over time, we should see some consolidation and elimination of certain offerings, but there will be more growth before any contraction.”

SPONSOR: TWIN OAKS

IN 2019, HEALTH CLUB OPERATORS NEED TO FOCUS ON RETENTION

Too many gym operators are focused on chasing after new members, but retaining existing members is a cheaper way to bigger revenue in 2019.



BY ERIC CLAMAN,
SENIOR HEALTH AND RACQUET
CLUB CONSULTANT AT TWIN OAKS
SOFTWARE

Depending on which study you believe or who you listen to, the cost of acquiring a new member is anywhere from five to 20 times more expensive than retaining an existing member. No matter which number is correct, the premise is undeniable and indisputable: it's expensive to gain new members. But you don't have to spend time and resources finding a new member – you just have to keep the ones you have happy.

Even more impressive is the effect that retention has on your bottom line. According to Bain & Company, increasing your retention rate by only five percent can increase profits more than 25 percent. Gartner research statistics tell us that 80 percent of your future earnings will come from 20 percent of your current members. And if you are still skeptical, member retention is cited as the biggest and most significant revenue driver for your club's future earnings, according to KPMG.

So if we all know and understand this, why do statistics still show that investment in obtaining new members has increased, while investment in member retention has not? Clubs still focus on gaining new members and fail to effectively address the need to retain the members they already have.

There are two main reasons why owners and managers miss this great opportunity. One is the misconception of how retention happens. Management falls in love with the shiny new joins and believes that retention is a byproduct of offering the lowest-priced memberships and/or having the best, newest or prettiest facility. But once again, research shows a majority of club members leave because they believe the club doesn't care about them. In fact, four times as many members leave a club for a competitor due to service-based issues, as opposed to price-related issues. The second reason clubs don't focus on retention as much as they should is because their software either isn't equipped with retention technology or the software has the tools but the club simply chooses not to take advantage of it.

The best part of retention management is it is all about one word: relationships. The relationship the club and the staff have with each member is what is going to drive your retention statistics, and invariably your profits up, up and away.


A properly managed retention program should look at prospects, new members and members at risk of quitting the club as three separate relationships that all need different and distinctive forms of communication to achieve their desired goals. Club operators want prospects to become members and need to stay connected with them to make sure they close the sale. New members need to get integrated into the club with information about events, programs and offers they can take advantage of. Finally, current members who are at risk of quitting first need to be identified and then communicated with, all in an effort to get them re-integrated into the club.

In the end, a club should not focus just on their new member acquisition rate or just on their retention rate. They should pay attention to both because they both are statistical indications of not only how well the club is doing, but also what areas a club needs to improve on.

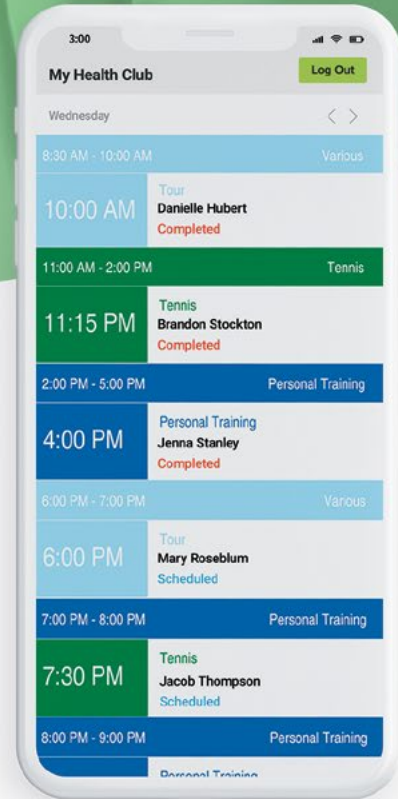
To be successful in 2019, make sure you are doing both.

“Clubs still focus on gaining new members and fail to effectively address the need to retain the members they already have.”

BIO

Eric Claman is a senior health and racquet club consultant at Twin Oaks Software. He owned two clubs in Torrington, Connecticut (Pinewoods Health and Racquet Club for 23 years and Energy Fitness for four years) before selling both and accepting a consulting job at Twin Oaks Software Development in 2011. He also serves as a selectman in his hometown in Connecticut. He can be reached at (866) 278-6750, eclaman@tosd.com or visit healthclubsoftware.com. 

100 ways to generate more revenue with Twin Oaks



20%

more recurring transactions with credit card account updater

11%

savings on credit card processing fees

35%

more delinquent accounts recovered with returns management



TWIN OAKS

SOFTWARE - BILLING - RETURNS MANAGEMENT

Schedule Your Free Demo

866.278.6750 or HealthClubSoftware.com

MEDICAL AND CORPORATE WELLNESS TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2019

Four wellness experts share the trends that will make a difference in the health and wellness industry in 2019.



BY DAVID L. EVANS,
VICE PRESIDENT OF COOPER WELLNESS
STRATEGIES

Wellness is a vital part of business for many health and wellness companies in this industry. Here are four trends to pay attention to in 2019:

1. Continuum of care and special population programming. The medical fitness industry started in the late 1970s to address the needs of patients transitioning out of cardiac rehab and physical therapy. Today, with more than 1,400 facilities in the United States and Canada, many medical fitness facilities are considered an integral component of the overall continuum of care. This requires an ever-growing need to provide special population fitness and wellness programming for a larger variety of health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, obesity, neuromuscular disorders (such as Parkinson's) and others. Additionally, some commercial fitness facilities are beginning to offer these types of programs as a way to positively affect the overall health of their community, expand their market reach and increase membership.

2. Workplace environment. One of the historical objectives of worksite wellness programming has been to lower overall healthcare costs to the company by improving the health of employees. Although this remains an important objective for most companies, many companies consider employee fitness and wellness programming and facilities as necessary contributors to a positive and enjoyable workplace culture and environment. This translates to improved employee satisfaction and retention, and creates a competitive advantage for a company in an ever-tightening workforce environment.

3. Active aging programming. A growing percentage of today's older adults are more active, healthier and living longer than their predecessors. In fact, many of these individuals have no interest in retiring completely, if at all, and do not want to be labeled as "seniors" and certainly not as "old." Therefore, a growing trend across all components of the fitness and wellness industries (including medical and worksite wellness) is to eliminate labeling of programs and even membership categories as "senior," and instead look for ways to help individuals remain physically active as they age. The idea of offering "silver" or "senior adult" membership and programming is decreasing.

4. Emphasis on recovery. With all the emphasis during the past several years on high intensity interval training, aggressive functional exercise and competitive caloric "burn" classes, little attention has been given to how one appropriately recovers from these types of training,

or for that matter, most other forms of exercise. Today, many professional fitness instructors, personal trainers and wellness coaches include recovery programs and instruction regarding nutrition, hydration, meditation and rest/sleep as part of their clients' overall training experience.

BIO

David L. Evans is vice president of [Cooper Wellness Strategies](#), a subsidiary company of the [Cooper Aerobics Center](#) in Dallas. He has more than 34 years of experience in the development, implementation and management of sports medicine, medical fitness and preventive health facilities, programs and services. Prior to joining Cooper, Evans was a co-founder and principal at Meritage Healthcare Strategies where he provided consulting services to more than 125 organizations. Prior to Meritage, he was the senior vice president of operations for TBG Development and worked for Baylor Healthcare System in Dallas as the managing director of the Baylor-Tom Landry Sports Medicine and Research Center.



BY BILL MCBRIDE,
CO-FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF ACTIVE
WELLNESS, AND FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND
CEO OF BMC3 CONSULTING

A few different things are occurring under the banner of wellness in the health club industry. And many of these trends are easy to spot if you just follow the money. What are the pain points for the different audiences?

Corporations:

1. Corporations need to recruit and retain talent. Potential recruits and existing employees want great benefits, amenities, services, programs, etc. Fitness and wellness are very much in demand for companies in this regard.
2. Companies are still facing rising insurance premiums. Wellness helps mitigate population medical expenses and chronic disease care expenses. This holds true for self-insured companies and those not self-insured with regard to either actual costs or premiums upon renewal.

The Member:

1. The cost of fitness can be high at the top end of the industry. Wellness programs with reimbursement from health insurance companies can mitigate some or—in some cases—all of these costs.
2. Certain conditions have opportunities for 100 percent health insurance reimbursement, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program, registered dietitian services and potentially other preventative care programs.

Health Insurance Carriers:

1. Health insurance companies have been on board for



a while with senior programs – Silver Sneakers, etc. Now they are doing the Diabetes Prevention Program, registered dietitian services and others. Some also do health club or wellness activity reimbursement. Some of these are outcomes based and some are participation based.

2. They want to reduce the expense of their covered lives. Clubs should be focused on the entire individual.

Wellness now includes happiness, financial security, fulfillment in life. It is much broader than health and fitness as we have traditionally viewed it. The key for fitness facility operators is to educate themselves on all the programs covered by the insurance carriers serving their membership and prospective membership. Also, these operators must form relationships with their medical community for physician referrals.

BIO

Bill McBride is co-founder, president and CEO of [Active Sports Clubs/Active Wellness](#). He also is founder, president and CEO of [BMC3 Consulting](#). He has served as the chairman of the board of directors for IHRSA and MACMA (Mid-Atlantic Club Management Association). He is an international presenter on topics such as sales, sales management, marketing, retention, club operations, customer service, member experience and leadership.



BY KEVIN STEELE,
PRESIDENT OF PTA GLOBAL AND PTONTNET

Here are a few wellness trends that I see for 2019: To stay relevant and generate more income, fitness/wellness professionals will invest in medical fitness specialty education to address the largest demographic – the baby boomers. Two out of three baby boomers have a chronic condition or disease, and this group also has the highest disposable income of all the generations.

Employers will find creative ways to incentivize employees to participate in healthy activities that improve their overall health, reduce absenteeism and reduce their participation in the healthcare system. An example is to allow health club memberships to be paid for in flex spending accounts.

Senior/retirement communities are featuring fitness/wellness facilities and services as key components of their design and new developments.

BIO

Kevin Steele is the track chair for Club Industry's wellness track at the Club Industry Show. He also serves as president of [PTA Global](#) and [PTontheNet](#). He has been in the health and fitness industry for more than 30 years, serving in a variety of positions, including as vice president of health services/corporate sales for 24 Hour Fitness and later as vice president of sports marketing for the brand. He also served as vice president of research and business development for Life Time.




BY CHRISTOPHER BREULEUX,
PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL WELLNESS
ASSOCIATION

Wellness is growing in popularity at an alarming rate. It seems the international interest in medical wellness is even greater than in North America. We are seeing tremendous opportunities and high interest in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

These trends continue to grow around the world:

- Medical wellness tourism
 - Medical wellness and health wellness branding
 - Physicians and medical practitioners acting as one team to provide wellness programs for all their patients
 - Wellness programs and services continuing to expand in sports medicine and physical therapy
 - Hospitals, lifestyle and fitness centers, and wellness centers increasing their desire to be professionally certified
- When it comes to both companies and consumers, the most important reviewing criteria is credibility for medical wellness experts and providers.

BIO

Christopher Breuleux is president of the [Medical Wellness Association](#), a fitness and wellness consulting group. He has 35 years of experience in the industry, including work as a consultant and certified trainer for hospitals, health clubs, YMCAs and universities. 

SPONSOR: SPORTSART

PUT GREEN ON DISPLAY: GYM MEMBERS EXPECT A HEALTHY AND SAFE PLACE TO WORK OUT IN 2019

To meet the expectations that people have today, health club owners must integrate green strategies and promote their efforts to help reap the rewards.



BY IVO GROSSI,
CEO OF SPORTSART AMERICA

We, as consumers, employees, and as part of the general society, are rethinking the way we spend time and disposable income with a growing mistrust of companies that lack transparency. From car companies to companies' use of our private data, consumer demands are shifting to the need for even more information, more transparency and a better understanding of how companies impact the environment. Social awareness has become a key component of corporate responsibility throughout many companies. Sustainability, which is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the well-being of future generations, aligns well with fitness facilities and their goals with their clients. The modern gym member today expects a healthy and safe indoor environment with good air quality, lighting and comfortable temperatures while they work out. These eco-conscious members want to reduce their impact on the environment in all aspects of their lives. How might fitness facilities and those in the industry make this shift toward becoming more environmentally conscious? By integrating green strategies throughout the design and operations of facilities and putting green on display.

In our knowledge-hungry world, why not promote actions that make fitness an integral part of going green? Many fitness clubs' goals entail pursuing eco-friendly labels, using green cleaning supplies and conserving energy and water. Third-party certification programs such as Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), FitWel, Energy Star, Living Building Challenge and the Well Building Standard provide systems to help facilities verify and validate their efforts to go green, according to the [Green Building Alliance](#).

Some simple ways to let your members know about how their gym is going green include simple signage, sharing of green information on the facility's website and sending out promotional materials. Do you have water stations that reduce the use of plastic in your facility? Add

a small informational sign that explains the environmental benefits of water stations. Do you have fitness equipment that generates electricity? Organize a monthly challenge and provide incentives for members who produce the most energy with their workout. Are you using green cleaning products that help protect indoor air quality and reduce toxins in the facility? Use an eblast to let your members know about the safe products being used around them. Did you know a simple walk-off mat at your facility's entrance helps protect indoor air quality by reducing pollutants in your facility? Let your members know why


it's there and how it benefits them. Have you selected flooring materials with high-recycled content that conserve the use of natural resources while reducing waste and have you incorporated non-toxic and low-emitting products throughout facility? Share it on your website.

The concept of sustainability also includes the use of nature within facilities. Biophilic design does just that through incorporating plants, living walls, natural textures and materials that promote positive cognitive impacts indoor. Biophilic design promotes an innovative way to reconnect people to nature and create

a healthier and more productive environment, according to [Pop Up City](#). Include information in your promotional materials about biophilic design and why you've included these natural elements in your facility.

There are many ways to showcase the positive steps you are taking to make your facility a green and healthy place for fitness. Assess what you are already doing, investigate green resources to find out what else you can do, and put green on display.

BIO

Ivo Grossi is CEO of the Americas for [SportsArt](#). Grossi has 25 years of North American and international executive experience in the fitness, health and wellness industry. 

“Sustainability, which is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the well-being of future generations, aligns well with fitness facilities and their goals with their clients.”

SportsArt

THE GREEN FITNESS COMPANY

CHANGE THE WORLD ONE WORKOUT AT A TIME // POWER A MOVEMENT



SA ECO-POWR™ *Line*

The new cardio line where awe-inspiring design doesn't just meet function, it embraces it with the revolutionary ECO-POWR™ technology that captures human exertion and turns it into usable electricity—benefitting the planet and providing a new layer of meaningfulness to breaking a sweat.



THE TOP STUDIO TREND FOR 2019 IS FRANCHISING

Franchising usurped small-group training as the Association of Fitness Studios' top studio trend for 2019, but nine other trends also made the list.



BY ANTHONY DOMINIC,
CONTENT PRODUCER,
CLUB INDUSTRY

As existing health club franchisors become more operationally sophisticated, an increasing number of entrepreneurs are flocking to the fitness industry with hopes of sharing in the financial spoils. Notably, franchising also presents many fitness professionals with a clear path toward first-time business ownership.

These reasons are precisely why franchise growth surpassed last year's small-group training as the Association of Fitness Studios' (AFS) top studio trend for 2019.

"With strong funding driving the engine and the apparent insatiable desire among the exercising public, franchise growth is the dominant trend, according to AFS sources," [AFS's Top Fitness Studio Trends of 2019 report](#) states.

"From Orangetheory, Anytime Fitness, 9Round and a host of others, the cookie-cutter approach to presenting fitness to the market place—in a positive, results-oriented fashion—will dominate the industry in 2019."

Millennial impact, studio growth, consolidation and workout specialization rank second, third, fourth and fifth, respectively, on this year's trend list. The list is compiled by AFS's executive panel, comprised of an advisory council, vendor partners and various studio operators.

Millennials continue to influence technological advancement such as online training, on-demand workouts and multi-facility memberships, the report states. This influence shows no sign of waning.

Although studio growth remains a top-five AFS trend for the second consecutive year, the authors of the report share a caveat: "While the independent buy-in [for studios] can be relatively inexpensive, the road to success is often littered with potholes."

On the topic of consolidation, the report authors suggest that competitive pressure will continue to entice independent operators to cash out or buy in. As a result, regional and market-specific groups will grow their assets.

The once hot-button trends of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) and small-group training haven't necessarily faded, according to the report. Rather, they have become aspects of the broader trend of workout specialization.

The report calls attention to several emerging services: brain training, new forms of HIIT, 30-minute workouts, hybrid and mindful workouts, sport-specific workouts, one-on-one training and recovery services.

The report states: "Knowing and marketing your core business to differentiate your business in the market will be a key ingredient to success [with workout specialization]."

The sixth trend on this year's list calls attention to the fitness industry's movement toward medically-oriented partnerships and services. The report names the adoption of disease-prevention and active-aging services as both opportunities and challenges for studio operators.

Trend No. 7 addresses the industry's influx of inexperienced trainers, whose long-term career prospects are often hindered by downward-trending compensation expectations.

Trend No. 8 centers on the challenge of stagnating studio profitability—even in the face of revenue growth, in many cases.

On profitability, the report states: "A wide variety of economic pressures will substantially impact the bottom line of fitness studios in 2019. Greater acceptance, larger client bases and enhanced revenue per client strategies will create larger revenue streams. However, they will largely be offset by greater competition from franchises, independents and big boxes, plus a possible shaky national economic climate. Bottom line: It's still a financial challenge out there."

The final two trends on the list are assessment services (No. 9) and nutrition (No. 10). The report authors said both trends are finally entering the mainstream, although their club-to-club application remains variable.

"Health is becoming the new wealth, and a better experience leads to what can be described as social currency," said Josh Leve, founder of AFS. "The future of the industry lies in the understanding that for a studio owner to truly succeed, they must run their business skill set parallel with their fitness skill set. You cannot guess anymore, you need sound business expertise to compete, especially with the big name franchise models."

Below is a recap of this year's trend list:

1. Franchise growth
2. Millennial impact
3. Studio growth
4. Consolidation
5. Workout specialization
6. Movement toward medical
7. More but inexperienced trainers
8. Revenue growth, but profitability squeeze
9. Assessment Services
10. Nutrition

To view the full AFS trends report, [click here](#).

To view Club Industry's 2018 Fitness Franchise Guide, [click here](#). ☺



2019 STUDIO TRENDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THREE STUDIO EXPERTS

These three experts with experience in three types of studios share their views about the studio trends you should watch for in 2019.



BY MICHELLE BLAKELY,
FOUNDER OF SEE JAKE AND JANE TRAIN

The following trends are worth our attention and participation in 2019 as trainers and studio owners committed to success:

1. Specializing. The studios and trainers trying to be all things to all people are not doing well. Those who have defined their niche and are running with it are thriving. Analyze your strengths as a trainer or team of trainers and analyze your passion for specific populations. Specialize in that this year and don't limit yourselves to traditional niches. Next, tailor everything so it communicates and fosters that specialty. By everything, I mean your branding, your offerings, your continuing education work, all of it. Commit to being the best at serving that niche/community. Opportunities like new clients, strategic partnerships and fresh revenue streams will organically present themselves to you as a result.

2. Technology. Tech in fitness will continue to pervade our client work and as small business owners. Pay attention to what your clients are using and decide what tech could help you run your business better and help serve your clients. However, be careful with tech implementation. Tech itself is not a solution for anything. You must understand what you need, why you need it and then take the time to

implement it effectively. Like a dumbbell, tech alone is not good or bad. How well we know the body, program design and mechanics will determine a dumbbell's effectiveness. Software, tracking devices and apps are just like that dumbbell. In the hands of a novice or without the proper understanding, it can hurt more than help.

3. Behavioral psychology and coaching. The most effective trainers and teams understand that clients need solutions that consider the psychology behind behavior change and decision-making. Now, I am the first to insist my trainers and training teams exercise healthy boundaries and respect their scope of practice. Little is worse than a well-intentioned personal trainer becoming an unqualified, underpaid psychologist. Instead, I am suggesting that you learn how behavior change, support and involving the right wellness consultants can holistically help clients succeed. We need to listen to their needs, pay attention to recurring requests from our client communities and offer simple, helpful solutions that have been proven by our colleagues in behavioral psychology and coaching.

BIO

Michelle Blakely is the founder of [See Jake and Jane Train](#), a business that leads great fitness professionals into becoming outstanding business owners. For more than 15 years, Blakely perfected game-changing solutions at her own training company, twice named the city's best by the Chicago Reader. Her See Jake and Jane Train online

courses and coaching increase revenue by 18 to 41 percent holding an ROI of 35 days after completion. Blakely writes and presents for *Personal Fitness Professional Magazine*, *Club Industry*, the *Association of Fitness Studios*, *SCW MANIA*, the *National Strength and Conditioning Association* and is a go-to source for publications such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Prevention* and *Oprah.com*.



BY MARIA PARELLA-TURCO,
FOUNDER OF HONOR YOGA



BY JULIA SUTTON,
COO OF EXHALE

As an operator of a boutique studio brand, these are the trends I see in the studio space for 2019:

1. Recovery. People are getting injured and strained with all the hard-core boutique fitness offerings. Exhale will be launching its new recovery option in the coming months alongside floating meditation.

2. Workouts that combine in-studio and at-home workouts. People love the motivation and the community feel of in-studio workouts. They just cannot always fit it into their schedule so they will utilize exhale on demand. We have also launched this for the traveler in the Hyatt hotels

3. Programs. People want wellness done well and easy. We have combined exhale eats with specialized programming to help our clients achieve their wellness goals.


BIO

Julie Sutton, COO of [exhale](#), New York, was a member of exhale's founding team. She directs the company's expansion and day-to-day operations and directs exhale's human capital.

The number of yoga and mindfulness practitioners continues to increase. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of Americans doing yoga rose from 20.4 million to 36 million, according to a recent survey conducted by the Yoga Alliance and Yoga Journal. It's anticipated that 80 million people will participate in yoga this year.

In 2019 consumers will continue to seek yoga, mindfulness and holistic services that keep the mind, body and spirit healthy. These services will rise in both boutique fitness and larger box clubs: mindfulness and meditation programs for adults and kids, yoga and meditation programs geared toward medical issues, continued growth in digital delivery including apps, increased programming and higher participation from kids and men.

BIO

Maria Parrella-Turco is a fitness industry expert, speaker, writer, consultant, turnaround specialist and entrepreneur. She's founded several companies including yoga franchise [Honor Yoga](#). Her company's revenues combined are in excess of \$10 million, and she has been featured in and on the cover of several fitness industry publications. Her achievements also include assisting hundreds of fitness-related businesses in the aspects of strategic planning, system implementation, execution and staff training. 



SPONSOR: PRECOR

TAKE A CUE FROM THE BIGGEST 2019 FITNESS TRENDS BEING DRIVEN BY MILLENNIALS

Studio growth has been driving, in part, by millennials, and by determining what they like about studios, traditional health club operators can get them through their doors, too.



BY KATIE DOBBS,
CONTENT MARKETING EXPERT AT
PRECOR

Fitness trends come and go, but one trend—the growth of boutique fitness studios—is continuing into 2019. The reason for studio growth can be laid, at least in part, at the feet of millennials. Millennials have an appetite for specialized fitness experiences that offer variety and energy and that feed into their sense of adventure. This is something boutiques offer. Millennials tend to bundle multiple fitness experiences as part of their “wellness wallet.” The brands and activities they take part in reflect their individuality. Although many millennials belong to a traditional gym, they seek additional specialized fitness opportunities that align with their unique identity.

What are some of the main features that millennials look for in their exercise environment? Check out these five features they want:

1. Uniqueness. Millennials look for the fun and adventurous side of fitness. Although they still use treadmills, ellipticals and strength equipment for their workouts, they supplement their routines with something that’s different and thrilling.

2. Motivation. Millennials want to be inspired and pushed to achieve their fitness goals.

3. Transparency. Boutiques typically list their prices upfront without requiring a membership, a form of transparency that millennials like. Studios usually have mobile apps, which makes it quick and easy to sign up for and cancel classes.

4. Locality. Millennials enjoy engaging with staff who get to know and appreciate their clients. Even though many health clubs offer a friendly hello and goodbye at the front desk, studios tend to take engagement to a greater level.

5. Tribe Mentality. Millennials flock to boutiques where they can form strong bonds with their fellow exercisers, who often are like-minded peers. This deep sense of connection helps not only with motivation but also the feeling of locality.

Use this information to your benefit if you are looking to appeal to the younger generations.

Some ideas for incorporating these features into your more traditional facility include:

- Emphasize community by developing a special space to create that community. You don’t have to spend a


lot of money to do this. You could simply add some tables and chairs outside of your group exercise studio or front desk so members can talk before and after classes to help form the tribe-like mentality that they are craving.

- Poll current and prospective members to determine the types of specialized classes and experiences they enjoy, especially if they are pursuing those classes outside of your facility. Try out new class styles based on your findings.

- Be genuine in your marketing efforts, particularly of the digital variety. Millennials tend to head to social media, company websites and review sites before making big decisions like joining gyms. List your prices upfront, and avoid tacky marketing techniques like using too many emojis or overgeneralizing about younger generations.

“Although many millennials belong to a traditional gym, they seek additional specialized fitness opportunities that align with their unique identity.”

BIO

Katie Dobbs is the content marketing expert at Precor, a fitness equipment manufacturer whose mission is to develop personalized health and fitness experiences that help people live the lives they desire. For more information about the fitness industry, tips for facility operators and workout ideas, visit the [Precor Resource Center](#). 



SUCCESS STARTS HERE

Reimagine your facility with our total solutions approach. From new equipment, to smart product innovations, to the best-in-class group training and networked fitness solutions, Precor provides a solution for everyone.

Visit [precor.com/total-solution](https://www.precor.com/total-solution) to begin your transformation today.



STATE LEGISLATIVE TRENDS WILL AFFECT THE FITNESS INDUSTRY IN 2019

State legislators in more states are becoming active when it comes to developing new regulations that affect the fitness industry.



BY HELEN DURKIN,
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF
PUBLIC POLICY AT IHRSA

See a tsunami of legislation and regulation bearing down on health clubs from their state legislators. Four trends are driving the wave at the state level:

1. The industry is increasingly targeted as a source of revenue for states in urgent need of new revenues.
2. There is a strong push for greater protection for consumers. This is outside of the usual lineup of states that have traditionally been pro-consumer.
3. Unregulated new technologies and concerns driven around big data are, for good or bad, leading legislators to pass new laws.
4. More states are becoming more legislatively active. In the past, club operators located outside the 10 or 12 legislatively active states were pretty safe from any of these concerns. Now, IHRSA is lobbying in states that I never have, in my almost 30 years doing this, ever lobbied in before.

State legislators in search of revenue are increasingly pushing to impose a sales tax on your membership dues. That seems crazy when we have an inactivity crisis that

costs states money in healthcare dollars. To indicate how much of an issue this has become, in the most recent legislative session, we worked to protect clubs against sales tax measures in the traditionally low-tax states of Georgia, Nebraska, West Virginia, Wyoming, Tennessee and Kentucky.

The push for greater consumer protection laws isn't specifically targeting the industry. Many of these regulations are driven by problems in other industries. For example, we see a lot of legislation around automatic renewal of contracts. This push comes mainly from the growing trend and abuses from subscription-based services. But even if clubs aren't the target, the sting of getting caught up in this law can be just as painful.

Technology and data are changing the way clubs operate. Clubs are in a position to collect and leverage enormous amounts of data about their members, including health and financial data. Although this data can be used to enhance the member experience and optimize club operations, high-profile mismanagement of consumers'

data by Facebook and others has regulators and lawyers flocking to data as the new legal and regulatory frontier.

The effects of these trends mean it will be increasingly risky for club operators to ignore what is going on at their state's capital. With the industry in the crosshairs of revenue-seeking state legislators focused on expanding sales taxes, a sales tax that would increase membership dues almost instantly by 5, 6, 7 percent or more would have a detrimental effect on club membership enrollment and retention. Changes in consumer protection law and a growing number of plaintiff's attorneys ready to sue health clubs for a possible violation of the consumer protection law will force some club operators out of business if their contracts are found to be voidable or if they can't pay the attorney's fees to defend themselves against trolling lawyers.

I am personally fascinated by the opportunities presented by new technologies and the data available to improve my fitness performance through wearables. Clubs are capitalizing on data in interesting ways, from biometrics for access to the club and tracking employee hours, to tracking data to optimize their use of space. But with these new opportunities comes new risks. Regulators are focusing on data privacy. They are looking at what is collected, how it is collected, stored and used. The broader trend from the regulator standpoint is toward greater individual control over their data. Recent laws give consumers the power to decide what data to share, with whom to share it, control over what their data can be used for, the ability to decide what it can be used for, and the ability to request that a business not collect their data. This started with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and The California Consumer Privacy Act. But it won't end there, and how it will impact clubs remains to be seen.

I've talked a lot about the types of state bills that will affect clubs. That is because the laws that could be most disruptive to the industry are made at the state level.

At the federal level, we are working on bills that will help grow the industry and the number of people physically active and exercising at clubs.

IHRSA is proud to support the Personal Health Investment Today Act (PHIT), bipartisan legislation that passed the House of Representatives last summer with bipartisan support. This was a huge victory for the industry. Unfortunately, the PHIT Act did not get a vote in the Senate before the last session ended, so it will need to be reintroduced in 2019.

PHIT allows Americans to use flexible spending accounts (FSAs) and health savings accounts (HSAs) to pay for health club memberships, youth sports leagues, exercise equipment and other health and fitness expenses. PHIT broadens the scope of what constitutes a medical expense to include fitness expenses. So when it passes, PHIT would allow individuals to spend up to \$1,000 of their

pre-tax savings on fitness and athletic expenses. Families would be able to spend up to \$2,000 of their pre-tax savings on fitness and athletic expenses.

In November, the mid-term election changed control of the House of Representatives from the Republicans to the Democrats. In addition, January marked the beginning of the 116th Congress and a whole new beginning of the legislative process. All bills, including PHIT, have to be reintroduced. IHRSA is talking to the Congressional offices to see what will be introduced and considered in 2019 and 2020. Given how volatile things are in Washington, it is too early to say what we will see. So other than PassPHIT, we don't know what other positions the industry will need to weigh in on in the 116th Congress.

Health club operators need to pay attention to what is going on. This is not the time to stick your head in the sand in hopes it will all go away. It won't go away without industry involvement. IHRSA alerts its members to every piece of industry-specific state legislation that could impact them. And IHRSA makes it easy to take action. To get alerts for your state, e-mail gr@ihrsa.org to make sure you are signed up to receive alerts. (All you need is your zip code.)

Clubs operators are generally great networkers. Get

to know your state and federal legislators. Don't forget that health club members are the most likely section of the population to be politically active. They vote, they make political campaign contributions. You don't have to be overtly political. Next time you have a fundraiser for a community charity, invite a legislator to attend. Many will appreciate the opportunity, and it will give you a chance to get to know them better.

You could even be as bold as to hold a fundraiser for your elected official. I was recently at a fundraiser at Dedham Athletic Club in Dedham, Massachusetts. The room was filled. One club member, who didn't have any idea who I was, told me that she was so excited to come to this event. She said that she believed that the club owners were so invested in their community, and she wanted to go to the event to thank them for their participation. A typical reaction? Maybe not, but you won't know until you start getting more involved.

And for people who truly wish to support IHRSA's advocacy efforts, they are welcome to reach out to the Industry Leadership Council, an industry leadership group that directly funds IHRSA's efforts to influence legislation.

BIO

Helen Durkin is executive vice president of public policy at [IHRSA](#). She has been with IHRSA since 1989, becoming the director of public policy in 1999. She has a political science degree from Holy Cross and a law degree from Washington College of Law, American University. Prior to joining IHRSA, she worked as an attorney at Kearns and Associates, and she worked in government in Massachusetts and Washington. ☎

“The effects of these trends mean it will be increasingly risky for club operators to ignore what is going on at their state's capital.”



TEAM TRAINING IS A TREND AT THE END OF ITS S-CURVE

As more health clubs and studios offer team training, the pricing has fallen and the model is no longer sustainable on a broad level, but it won't completely go away.



BY THOMAS PLUMMER,
FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL
FITNESS BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Nothing lasts forever. Why would we expect the fitness industry to be the exception to this rule?

Most businesses and trends work on S-Curve Theory, which shows a predictable life cycle for the business. With S-Curve, you have a long, steady growth period, a quick acceleration, a peak period, and then a slow, steady decline.

You see this theory at work in everything: in the demise of certain retail brands, in the popularity of trendy diets that appear out of nowhere and then return to the darkness, in mullet haircuts and fanny packs. They rise, they peak and then they slowly disappear.

This build, rise, peak and fall cycle used to take decades to complete, but now, with social media and other forms of immediate information sharing, what used to take decades now can cycle through in just a few years.

Most people working in an industry never see the cycle play out. We deny because change directly affects us, or we simply can't believe that what we believe in most is going away. Although the world changes, we often cling to a past business or trend that is failing right in front of our eyes.

We are not the exception in the fitness world, and one of our hottest programming features, team training, is over the peak and starting its long, slow, but no-doubt decline.

Team training, where you have one coach working with a large group of people simultaneously, and usually for a fairly high fee per month, can be traced back to about 2005 when CrossFit and the other early boot camp players redefined how the client/gym interaction took place. Prior to this, all training done in most of the commercial gyms was

done as a one-on-one relationship between a client and a coach.

Team has had a good run, and a professional coach can still create magic with a large group of people chasing sweat on a turf area, but the product itself has been diluted, copied and misunderstood to the point it is now a commodity fading to insignificance in the coming three years.

BADLY DONE CIRCUIT TRAINING

Single methodology programming always, and there is no exception, fails. CrossFit, back in the day, applied advanced coaching concepts to a group. As the product was accepted by other professional coaches, team grew into a controlled workout environment where a serious coach could manipulate a group without anyone getting hurt but could gain serious fitness benefits.

Team started to become diluted, however, when the serious coach was eliminated, and the gym owners started looking at it as just another programming offering done in the backroom and led by a newly hired trainer/old school aerobics instructor.

In the last few years, you have had the rise of the 1,800-square-foot team training circuit concept, represented by players such as Orangetheory and F45, and a vast herd of other imitators all trying to capture the magic that both of these companies have enjoyed in their expansions. One trainer, leading a group through an established circuit, and then repeat it the next hour.

The problem is the client always moves on and past the technology. If we look at a few of the national cycle

businesses during the last decade, we can see the S-Curve at its best. Indoor studio cycling had a long growth phase, a hot rise to the peak and then a slow fade as cycling wasn't the cool kid at school anymore. We witness this as we see these companies adding some form of team training in order to overcome the declining ability to keep filling the saddles.

The client always moves past single methodology and on to the next big thing. What is hot becomes not in a short period of time, and team training has reached that "been there, done that" state of mind for many potential clients.

UNSUSTAINABLE

The price is declining nationwide for team training, making it unsustainable in most team-only gyms. Since 2005, the industry has enjoyed a product, team training, that has allowed gyms to charge a \$149 average to a large number of clients and then service them all in one pile. CrossFit created a high price standard that the rest of the industry could benefit from in their own gyms.

The average price for CrossFit gyms has been in the \$149 per month per client range for a decade or longer, setting a new standard for other gyms formerly just dependent on one-on-one training, which while generating a high rate, only appealed to less than six percent of the clients in most gyms.

Orangetheory also brought in a solid price that the rest of the industry could emulate, averaging \$179 or more around the country. For a decade or so, the combination of both of these players gave the industry something that had never existed before: training done at a high price for a whole new population. But in 2018, this average plummeted.

There are simply too many players trying to offer the same concept to not enough potential clients. There is often a saturation point for all of the big franchise companies or license groups where you expand beyond your ability to only attract the best operators and control the size of your group.

In this case, as competition increased, many operators, often those newer to the game or not experienced in business, resorted to lowering their price to attempt to stay competitive in a flooded market. In other words, I charge \$149 now but have no competitors. Suddenly, however, I now have three new gyms all charging \$139 or less for virtually the same product I am offering at a higher price.

Experienced owners might fight back and hold their price, but a sea of less experienced business owners drop their prices when sales slow down, always believing the lower price will take clients away from other gyms.

What use to be \$149 is now in the sub \$100 range and dropping quickly. Business plans based upon that higher rate fall apart quickly when your return-per-client drops in half. As the number of team-based gyms continues to open, the price will continue to fall.

TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

If you stay up late watching TV, you always find the stock guy screaming into the camera about the latest, greatest stock...and the rookies buy.

Real stock guys knew about that stock six months ago and bought while it was a deal. The investors who wait to see how others do always come in too little and way too late.

Team training has now been recognized by the big players, who are creating add-on rooms, new price offerings or who present the secret in a back room. These players are too late, doing too little, don't understand team beyond just another programming offering, but most importantly, have lowered the price to the sub \$50 range. You see this in the big chains and in the larger franchises that are even launching revised concepts of their old models hoping to capture the model of team success of the early 2000s.

There is always a halo effect in S-Curve Theory where a glow exists as the peak is hit, and then the decline begins, and that glow, or halo, can last for several years. The bigger players now chasing team hesitated too long, failed to embrace the change brought forward by the modern training gym, and now are chasing the halo that is already dimming.

WHAT IS NEXT

The modern 6,000-square-foot training gym, generating \$1.2 million or more annually with 350 clients is out there and growing rapidly as a business model. These models still use team as a tool but command more money per client because the owners discovered team is just a tool, and the training business for a more sophisticated client willing to pay a \$149 to \$400 monthly average is more about the experience and not about the tool of the day. Team will die as a low-priced commodity in the mainstream world but still be a vital, and financially viable, tool in the training-centric world.

Everything ends in business. Despite the current trendiness of team—and the franchises and license groups chasing it as the next magic bullet for a declining mainstream segment—team training too will fail and is right on track for a fade within three years.

BIO

Thomas Plummer has been working in the fitness business for more than 40 years. He founded the Thomas Plummer Company in 1990, which eventually became the [National Fitness Business Alliance \(NFBA\)](#) in 2003. The NFBA is a group of industry vendors and suppliers banded together to bring advanced business education to all fitness business owners operating anywhere in the world. Plummer does about 20 workshops per year around the world and is in front of more than 10,000 people per year through numerous speaking engagements as a keynote speaker, event host and private consultant. He has authored 10 books on the business of fitness. ④

“Team training has reached that ‘been there, done that’ state of mind for many potential clients.”

SPONSOR: TRX

5 FITNESS TRENDS YOU'LL SEE IN 2019

Tastes change in exercise just like in any other area, but if you stay on top of the changes, you can remain successful this year.



BY CHRIS FRANKEL,
HEAD OF HUMAN PERFORMANCE
AT TRX

The new year is here, and the fitness forecast looks bright. Baby boomers are more active than previous generations, and younger populations see fitness, sports and active pursuits as an essential aspect of modern life. Nonetheless, tastes and interests are changing (as they will), which means that fitness facility operators need to stay ahead of the curve so their facilities can stay relevant and profitable for the long haul.

With that said, here are some of the top trends to take advantage of this year:

1. Full-body functional fitness continues to lead the pack. Functional training continues to trend up as organizations have placed a spotlight on the effectiveness of training styles that emphasize full-body movements over isolation-based exercises. This classic style of training uses tools such as kettlebells, medicine balls, conditioning ropes and body weight training. Also, mixing in aspects of cardio has become attractive to an increasingly time-starved customer base. When done safely and properly, functional training can fast-track fitness levels and keep members happy and loyal.

2. Wide open spaces. Enhanced focus on full-body movement programs is driving equipment popularity and changing the traditional gym landscape. Selectorized machines have been staples of commercial fitness centers for years as they allow members to work out with minimal guidance, but they also have a large footprint. Thus, as interest in functional fitness and bodyweight training continues, we're seeing gyms eschewing single-muscle group machines and cluttered spaces in favor of tools and layouts that promote whole-body integrated training. Although machines will always have a place in fitness centers, we will likely see an increase in the usage of tools such as kettlebells, medicine balls, suspension trainers, etc. Ultimately, to remain competitive, gym owners will want to trade out some of the older, lesser-used machines to make space for—and expand—functional training services.

3. Performance-based tech, simplified. Years ago, the only fitness assessment tech available to us was step trackers and heart rate monitors. Today, the fitness tech landscape resembles the Wild West in that there's a gadget to measure just about everything. However, there is not a lot of insight into applying that data effectively to reap the benefits. Tools that have the greatest overall impact are the ones that give a user objective measurements/data points and then deliver actionable steps for improvement. Gyms can certainly benefit from this trend in various ways—from gathering qualified leads for personal training sales, customizing their programming and even including metrics


as part of their promo packages to attract new customers.

4. The rise of movement assessment tech. One of the most overlooked elements in fitness is quality of movement. Young and old consumers want to stay active for the long-haul, avoid injury, and move and perform better. Assessment technology that provides members (and their trainers) a clearer picture of how well they move — and what to do to move better — not only helps keep members healthy but it gives fitness professionals the information they need to make customized and purposeful programming decisions. Performing intermittent assessments with our clients can give us objective data points to ensure progress over time. Movement is the forgotten component of fitness and will be a vital way to achieve fitness goals in and out of the gym.

5. Staffing standards on the rise. The internet has given the average consumer access to an abundance of information about fitness and exercise. Consequently, many of our members are as informed about nutrition and exercise as their fitness professional peers. This more informed and educated consumer is driving our industry from the bottom up. In other words, there's an embedded expectation for a higher level of professionalism and knowledge from fitness professionals. Thus, trainers and instructors will need to invest more in education and skill development to stay relevant (and employable). Health club owners and managers can support their staff by bringing in top-level workshops and courses and by sending them to quality industry conferences.

Overall, we are in an exciting transitional phase in our culture where the intersection of technology, information and our environment are converging with positive implications for what we do and where we go as an industry. Leveraging the aforementioned trends will allow us to deliver on our promises to our members/clients and continue to stay relevant in this ever-changing industry.

BIO

Chris Frankel is head of human performance for [TRX](#) and has been with the company for more than 10 years. He has more than 35 years of experience in the human performance field as a strength and conditioning coach, sport and exercise scientist, professor at undergraduate and graduate levels, and consultant to professional and collegiate sports teams. Prior to TRX, Frankel was an instructor in the health, exercise and sports science department of the University of New Mexico. Frankel continues to coach, teach and conduct research in the areas of strength training, cardiovascular/aerobic fitness, movement analysis, fitness assessment and injury prevention. 



THE TRX 360° EXPERIENCE



**GEAR
ACTIVATION
TECHNOLOGY**

sales@trxtraining.com
(888) 878-5348, option 3
trxtraining.com/commercial



SIX TECHNOLOGY TRENDS TO WATCH FOR IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY IN 2019

Technology plays a large role in fitness today, and that role will only expand in 2019.



BY MIKE RUCKER,
VICE PRESIDENT OF TECHNOLOGY
AT ACTIVE WELLNESS

This year's Consumer Electronics Show (CES), which was held in January in Las Vegas, included a vast array of impressive sport and health technology. Only a few years back, a handful of major players dominated the CES floor space dedicated to fitness wearables. Fast forward to this year's show, and hundreds of fitness and health-related wearables were showcased—spanning aisle after aisle on two floors of the venue. This year's show also had a larger presence of cardio equipment manufacturers than ever before, presumably looking to chase Peloton's \$4 billion valuation.

Although the sheer volume of “stuff” at the show was certainly noteworthy, the same cannot be said about a significant portion of the products on the floor.

The show is likely a good representation of what can be said about what to expect in 2019 regarding fitness technology trends in general. The choices in fitness technology are vast. The challenge for us this year as operators is to find a way to create value by making the right choices.

Here are the technology trends I see in 2019:

1. Emulation. 2019 will be a year of emulation. If CES is any indication, look to see a lot of Peloton and Aaptiv clones this year. Membership-based online fitness classes, as well as virtual training and coaching, are growing in favor with millennials—an assertion backed by available financial data. It is likely that various fitness equipment manufacturers are going to sell us on chasing this success.

There are three things to be mindful of regarding virtual fitness: the medium, the delivery and the content.

Ask yourself, how is the user engaging with the “virtual” medium? Part of Peloton's success is that the primary medium is a bike (or treadmill), and most people know what to do on common pieces of equipment. This is a benefit of virtual fitness that is delivered through equipment. The learning curve is not as steep as it is with standalone virtual fitness classes.

Is the delivery slick? A lot of exergaming technology has failed in the past because the delivery was clunky—creating a sub-optimal user experience.

Lastly, is the content any good? The major competitor for virtual fitness content is YouTube, and many fitness influencers are creating studio-grade content now for free. YouTube is even willing to [educate you how to do it for free](#). Therefore, the virtual fitness content that we offer our members needs to be at least this good for any investment to make sense.

2. Data. In 2019, operators will make better use of data. It is refreshing that we are no longer wasting time on buzzwords such as big data. Furthermore, most fitness technology innovators have become comfortable with the fact that we have surrendered our data standards to Apple and Google (e.g., [Life Fitness brings first Apple GymKit-enabled cardio equipment](#)).

It is impressive that the operators that “get it” are now

finally putting in the time and hard work to identify the data that is meaningful to their respective operations and creating quality customized data products that enable them to make better business decisions.

This recent trend is due in part because this type of analysis has been democratized a bit through powerful, free tools such as [Google's Data Studio](#). In 2019 and beyond, it no longer takes a programmer and a data scientist to pull together an analytics platform. Operators no longer have to capitulate to the constraints of vendors that offer these types of products as a service. In 2019, the value of your data comes from identifying your business problem first and looking at your available data ecosystem for the best solutions, in contrast to having to work with the performance indicators being pushed on you by your available systems.

3. Equipment will be smarter. In 2019, we will likely see more high-tech novelty equipment trickle into our clubs. Such equipment includes smart jump ropes that project fitness stats in real-time during a workout, yoga mats that tell you when you are off balance, golf clubs that help you improve your swing and [SkyTechSport's BotBoxer](#)—a smart punching bag that dodges punches and helps you improve your skills through coaching.

4. Wearables are not going anywhere. The amount of available wearables in 2019 is almost overwhelming. It is table stakes nowadays to simply track stats like heart rate and steps. The latest wearable technologies aim to modify users' behaviors. For instance, using exercise history and performance biometrics, new technology such as the [Garmin Forerunner 935 GPS watch](#) can tell you if you should push a little harder, if you are overtraining or if you are right on track based on your individual goals.

Other high-tech wearables we will see in 2019 include running shoes that track everything from steps to cadence, lap-tracking swimming suits, smart helmets that measure performance indicators with aerodynamic perfection while you ride your sports equipment of choice and connected

shorts that measure the electrical activity of muscles. There is also an emerging class of wearables specifically designed to help with injury prevention and exercise recovery time.

5. Fitness technology will continue to become more accessible. In 2019, we will begin to see unnecessary hardware disappear. A sign that this is beginning to happen is body scanning. Body scanning can help our members target their goals and track their progress, but gone are the days we need bulky hardware to do this. By the end of the year, most people will be able to accomplish this task easily with their mobile device.

6. Virtual and augmented reality. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) fitness offer an immersive gym experience that can transport our members to different realities while they exercise. The difference between the two is VR fully immerses you in an artificial world, while augmented reality adds virtual elements to our existing world (think [Pokemon Go](#)). Imagine doing an ab workout while floating at the bottom of the sea or going for your daily run on Mars. Although VR and AR are still somewhat novel modalities, the possibilities are endless as VR and AR slowly but surely become mainstream and more widely adopted by our members.

“The choices in fitness technology are vast. The challenge for us this year as operators is to find a way to create value by making the right choices.”

BIO

Michael Rucker is vice president of technology for [Active Wellness](#). He has two decades of professional experience in technology, marketing and digital strategy, which includes two C-level tenures and a portfolio of industry accolades for various enterprise-level achievements. His body of work includes innovative solutions for companies such as Sony, Universal Studios, Red Bull and Realogy. He has a Ph.D. in organizational psychology focusing on effective workplace wellness strategies. He was named as one of the top 50 influencers in digital health by the analyst group [Analytica](#).





TECH TRENDS IN 2019 AREN'T JUST ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

A collection of innovations and dynamics are a part of these five technology trends to watch in 2019.



BY BRYAN O'ROURKE,
PRESIDENT OF THE FITNESS
INDUSTRY TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

The Fitness Industry Technology Council recently released its report, "[2019 Fitness Industry Technology Trends](#)." What is different about the trends we identified is that they are not about technologies individually—they are about how a variety of technologies, along with other mega trends, will evolve industries with new business models and new customer behaviors. In our view, fitness is a subset of the massively growing well-being marketplace.

The following five trends are a collection of innovations and dynamics that technology is a part of:

1. Escape experiences. New interfaces, new business models (Airbnb trips that include fitness and wellness, Equinox's new fitness vacation escapes), hyper convenience, all enabled by advancing technologies.

2. Ethical technology. As brands use data, how they use it and the way they treat their customers will become more important. Think of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the decline in the use of Facebook.

Increased hyper-personalization based on the data you are willing to share might impact price, for example. Levels of trust need to be established for the sharing of data, not creating unforeseen, creepy things by creating experiences users are not ready for. Being ethical with technology is going to become a bigger deal.

3. Open sourcing. As data and business models rely on sources of information, how those sources are used and leveraged will increasingly involve open source brands. This

requires transparency and the need to collaborate across platforms to deliver user experiences that people seek.

4. Engineered well-being. Healthy is the new skinny, and the elements and data around nutrition, fitness, sleep, DNA and hydration will lead more and more to engineered well-being. People will increasingly have information about all aspects of their lives to more conveniently engineer the sense and outcome of health that they choose in an informed way. Data meets new interfaces meets intelligence. Noom is an example.

5. Hybrid brands. As industries converge and diverge, new business models will emerge that were unthinkable before in the well-being space such as GymSharks (apparel meets fitness), Diamandis Human Longevity clinic (medical meets fitness meets nutrition), and full MRI body scans, blood workups, hormones, DNA, other health screenings fed into computers using algorithms to prescribe specific engineered health outcomes based on assessments and recommendations.

"As brands use data, how they use it and the way they treat their customers will become more important."

BIO

Bryan K. O'Rourke holds many roles in the fitness industry. He is CEO of [Integerus LLC](#), CEO of private equity firm [Vedere Ventures LLC](#), chief strategic officer and principal of [Fitness Marketing Systems LLC](#), president of the [Fitness Industry Technology Council](#) and chief strategic officer of [Gold's Gym of Houston](#). ☺



THE USE OF BIOMETRICS, VIRTUAL COACHING AND WEARABLES WILL CONTINUE TO GROW IN 2019

Technology isn't new in the health club industry, but the growth of technology's importance in the industry is something some may not have expected even 10 years ago.



BY CANDACE SWEATT,
DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES
AT CRUNCH FITNESS

People use technology in their lives every day outside the health club, so it's no wonder that they now expect to use technology every day at their health club.

Here are the three technologies that I predict will be major trends in the industry in 2019:


1. Biometrics. The fitness industry will see an expansion of biometrics for functions such as facility check in, confirmation of purchases and activities using technology that people already use every day outside of the industry—often just by unlocking their mobile phones. The use of biometrics as identification for functions within our world not only make it easier on our customers but also provide unmatched security.

2. Virtual coaching. Virtual coaching will continue to grow in popularity and scope. This is something that can benefit our customers both inside and outside of our facilities. It can allow people to receive guidance on how to move/use equipment properly and can provide on-demand content for those who may want to try something new or

need an accessory to their favorite modality on off days.

3. Wearables, wearables, wearables. We're starting to tap the era where we'll see wearables take off beyond the watch. Watches/trackers themselves are also becoming increasingly accurate, making it easier for people to get and stay active. It's up to us to figure out how to continue to best leverage these devices both inside and outside our facility walls.

BIO

Candace Sweatt is director of member services at [Crunch Fitness](#). She has spent her career of more than 20 years within the fitness industry, working both on the front lines and behind the scenes for companies both large and small, as well as nonprofit, public and private. She specializes in leveraging technology and applications for business and operational solutions to both customer as well as employee needs. She's currently the director of member services for Crunch Fitness. 

“Virtual coaching will continue to grow in popularity and scope.”

SPONSOR: ABC FINANCIAL

GREAT USER INTERFACES: TECHNOLOGY TO WATCH IN 2019

The design of quality user interface is more essential than ever for health club and boutique studio operators.



BY KELLY CARD,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF
PARTNER RELATIONS FOR ABC
FINANCIAL

Just as in years before, in 2019 fitness business owners will need software systems that work with the least amount of challenges possible. Having reliable software and business systems and solutions can be the difference between success and failure for health club operators in the United States and worldwide.

Having worked in fitness for many years with a focus on technology services, I feel that the design of a quality user interface, or as it is often called UI, is becoming more essential than ever. However, what looks pretty isn't always the best solution. Developing great UI that works is not easy to do.

Prioritizing UI as a critical component of systems can help operators lower employee training requirements, improve efficiency and realize greater benefits from their systems. The results can be greater profitability. However, achieving the perfect balance of reliability and functionality is hard and demands insightful industry experience. Sometimes, developers who conceive how solutions might work do not have the benefit of understanding the real world they will be applied in. That can mean a great deal of risk for unwitting operators who might consider investing in something that looks like the new shiny thing only to discover problems down the road.

This challenge is not unusual in an era of great technological change. In fact, many businesses attempting to adopt new technologies to transform how they do things fail. Don't believe me? Check out this article from Inc. Magazine titled "[Most Digital Transformations Fail — Here Is Why, According to Experts.](#)" Here is an excerpt:

"Many digital transformations are failing because people do not understand why the organization needs to change in the first place. Transformation initiatives are only successful if there is a clear directive centered around delivering exceptional customer experiences. New technologies cannot be the end game. The customer needs to be at the core of the work and everyone in the company needs to be involved."

UI becomes an important emphasis when investing in a new platform. Failing to have knowledge of how things

work in the real world can result in software that seems to look great but doesn't ultimately do what the customer needs it to do.

Innovation is a process that demands a balance of the essential best practices while embracing the potential and new tools of the future. I agree with the Inc. Magazine article: "New technology cannot be the end game."

BIO

Kelly Card is the senior vice president of partner relations at [ABC Financial](#). She serves on the board of directors of the Fitness Industry Technology Council and is the co-founder of Industry FIT. Card has more than 20 years of experience in health club, gym and fitness operations and co-founded and was president of Club-Apps, which was acquired by Netpulse in 2014. You can reach her at kelly.card@abcfinancial.com and follow her @KellyCard on most social platforms. Connect with and follow @IndustryFit for the latest in fitness trends and technology as well. 📧

“Failing to have knowledge of how things work in the real world can result in software that seems to look great but doesn't ultimately do what the customer needs it to do.”

software

training

reporting



security

the industry's
**leading
gym** management
software

payment
processing

One Piece at a Time.

Create a better member experience through fitness management software and payment processing. Call **1-855-338-0566** or visit us at **abcfinancial.com** to learn how we can help your business!

*learn how
ABC provides
unparalleled
customer service
and a true
commitment to our
client's needs*

**customer
service**





The Opti-Life club in Wichita, Kansas, features one of the hot design trends for 2019: a monochromatic design with pops of color. (Photo courtesy Fabiano Designs.)

GOOD HEALTH CLUB DESIGN HELPS DRIVE FINANCIAL WELL-BEING IN 2019

Ensuring that your health club has the best design has always been a good business strategy, and that is no different in 2019.



BY RUDY FABIANO,
FOUNDER OF FABIANO DESIGNS

Looking at the trends cycle every year, it's obvious that not many owners actually take them seriously until someone proves them to be a business success. This is understandable. However, for those fearless owners who lead the industry in embracing change, many have been rewarded for adopting early trends. New amenities, boutique ideas, equipment, programming, pricing models, equipment and retention systems have all helped evolve our industry to become a \$30 billion annual industry in the United States alone. It has been growing by at least 3 percent to 4 percent annually for the last 10 years with no signs of slowing down. Fitness trends are a lot like the fashion industry—runway clothes rarely sell right off the rack, but they do influence behavior, excite us about what's to come, and eventually these styles become a financial road map for the rest of the industry to follow.

GOOD BUSINESS STRATEGY

As an architect and designer, I believe that good design is one of the driving forces in the growth and financial well-being of this industry. For example, looking at the current

state of the high-volume, low-price (HVLP) models and the number being built each year, better design strategies are helping these clubs distinguish themselves from the competition as well as expand their market share. When Planet Fitness was the only chain selling \$9 memberships, the price was such a novelty that even with little design effort, they were hugely successful. Now that low price is a standard in many markets, the consumer will logically flock to the nicest health clubs they can join at that price. Good design is a good business strategy.

The trend to raise the average membership dues beyond the advertised price is in full swing. Up selling individual programming, such as personal training, team training or small group, to existing members can raise an average membership from \$24 to \$34 per person. Architecturally, we use a retail design strategy to showcase each of these components distinctly, like a department store may. This retailing of fitness reinforces that these items are boutique and worthy of an upcharge beyond the base price. Clubs big and small are continuing to evolve as de-facto malls for fitness and wellness, offering individualized services.

Understanding that typically only 10 to 20 percent of a club's members buy into these elevated offerings, a new breed of club is being introduced at the other end of the spectrum. These clubs are designed to serve those more affluent or willing members seeking an upgraded experience from pure fitness to well-being. As an example, in the new E by Equinox, an impeccably designed club with a membership cap, the fees can approach \$26,000 per year. Betting on the cultural shift to a healthier lifestyle, E by Equinox provides holistic life-enhancing services that elevate the quality of a member's life through personalized programs. As you can imagine, these clubs are built exquisitely utilizing the best in design and materials. Members will have retina scan access to the clubs, the best trainers in the Equinox system readily on call, boutique-style classes, assisted recovery, nourishment counseling, concierge services, direct access to private medical care and digital showers. Exclusive high-end clubs are not new, but an elite chain of them in every major city is.

SPEND LESS, GET MORE

As far as club economics go, the trend of spending less while trying to achieve more will continue. The glut of available real-estate from many brick and mortar stores

closing is giving developers the opportunity to grow aggressively. The pressure to lower the per-unit cost will be high, since saving just 10 percent on each build-out will yield a free club for every 10 clubs built, increasing their ROI. Designers, developers and owners as a team will have to be smarter and more creative to accomplish this. One means is to lease a building with interesting features and elements that can be part of the overall design strategy.

““Found” design features, such as brick, original wood, cool ceilings or big windows can help make a space better without spending more.”

“Found” design features, such as brick, original wood, cool ceilings or big windows can help make a space better without spending more. One of my clients insists that landlords provide huge windows as part of their shell delivery requirements during lease negotiations. Natural light is a nice feature universally enjoyed, and the big windows offset the need to build more expensively inside.

Material will also play a part in controlling the lifecycle cost of a facility. The expense of upkeep, maintenance and replacement of products over time is an expense that can be controlled by investing in durable products. Most clubs have so much usage that this hidden cost can be very high. Technology is helping to develop better material like carpets, tile, self-patching laminate to remove scratches, wall protection, etc., all to withstand the abuse that a regular club is subjected to. Although initial costs may be higher, the maintenance savings will more than offset the investment, resulting in a cleaner, better-looking club.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Lighting helps bring a project to life. With the latest technology, LED tunable lamp, we can create dramatic environments of any color or intensity desired. This can be a powerful motivational experience for our members. These tunable lamps not only change color but have the capacity to match the natural light we get from being outdoors. The color of the sun actually changes slightly as the sun moves through different angles in our atmosphere. Our bodies respond to this light with what is known as our biological circadian cycle. Our bodies respond to this light by gearing up for work or slowing down to rest. We have somewhat confused this innate biological process by blasting constant one-color, bad lighting inside facilities. By having lamps in a club subtly change color to match our natural cycle, people will feel more at ease and refreshed with an overall greater sense of well-being.

Understanding these trends will help us design clubs that our members will be happy to be in, rather than just a place they need to go to. Utilizing technology, creativity, and supporting human nature, we can build these clubs to support the innovative trends that will continue to grow our industry.

BIO

Rudy Fabiano is founder and design principal of [Fabiano Designs](#), a full-service architecture and interior design firm specializing in the creation of the user experience. ☺





These three pictures of Regymen Fitness, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, show the trend in the use of low-cost theatrical LED lighting to add variety and change the mood of a room depending on the color of the lighting. (Photos courtesy Optimal Design Systems.)

HEALTH CLUB DESIGN IN 2019 MUST BE A PERSONALIZED AND INVITING EXPERIENCE

The need for health clubs to create the ultimate experience for physical and social activity will result in a continually increasing role for design.



BY BRUCE CARTER,
OWNER OF OPTIMAL DESIGN
SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, said that “Change is the only constant in life,” highlighting the need to always plan for and be ready for change in every aspect of our lives. The club industry has been seeing many changes in the last few years including lower-priced models, the increase of studio facilities and the need to constantly create more revenue per member. Being better aware of the newer design trends can help a club take advantage of these evolving changes.

Therefore, what can be done with design to best satisfy the needs of the ever-changing marketplace?

Initially it is best to look at design in these four areas:

1. The business model you plan to follow.
2. What facilities and programs will best support the business plan.
3. The important details of design — the layout of the facility and the sizes of the spaces so everything functions well.
4. The exciting aspects of what people see – and most importantly – experience, including lighting, finishes, colors, materials, graphics, equipment and furnishings.

Health clubs are no longer a small side segment of the overall service and retail industry. Much of what happens with design in the restaurant, hospitality and retail industry applies to today’s health clubs. All are trying to create a more personalized and inviting experience that people will enjoy and seek to relive.

Here are some of the more profound design trends for 2019 and beyond:

1. Business model design trend. Health club design needs to follow a business plan. What will be your dues model? Will you have a strong emphasis on upselling to higher dues programs? Will you have a la carte pricing for classes? Will you be a smaller specialty club with high dues or an overall larger club with a wide range of facilities, programs and pricing? Do you feel that sociability (a growing component of clubs of the future) is a part of your success formula? More than ever, the specifics of design must support a club’s ability to generate revenue and control expenses.

Another key part of the business model design trend is larger clubs are now trying to design clubs within a club,

meaning they are taking a space and program, such as indoor cycling, yoga or cross training, and making each space be as dynamic as any studio club focused on that one program. Engaging interiors with strong branding and signage lets members have the ultimate studio experience without having to go to a specialty studio.

2. Technology. Technology and clubs in 2019 will have more technically based programs and services than ever. Virtual workouts, digital monitoring of members' physiology and controlling who can access classes and spaces (based on their type of membership) will necessitate the unobtrusive installation of more components (data, cat 6 cables, RFID, key pads, etc.) throughout a club. This also includes simple things such as more outlets and USB charging stations in certain areas.

A side aspect of technology is the need to have a décor unique and exciting enough to be "Instagrammable" to post on social media, especially if you wish to attract younger demographics.

3. Lighting. Lighting is changing in health clubs. The most basic energy inefficient options are gone. Instead, lighting is human-centric. It takes into consideration how lighting affects people's performance and well-being physiologically. This includes color spectrum/temperature (3,000K to 7,000K but stick with 4,000K to 5,000K), intensity (lumens of which 1,600 lumens equal 100 watts of the old designation) and timing (units that adjust the light level throughout the day).

Also, the use of low-cost theatrical LED lighting that allows for colored lighting and can be attuned to music

(such as in group classes) will become more of the norm than the exception. When used properly, these types of light add more variety, energy and fun to an environment.


4. Monochromatic environments. Today's design is more monochromatic, meaning about 80 percent of an area is white (or a shade of white) and about 20 percent of the space offers eye-popping contrast colors, such as yellow, orange, blue or green. This design is a cleaner look that also provides an energetic experience.

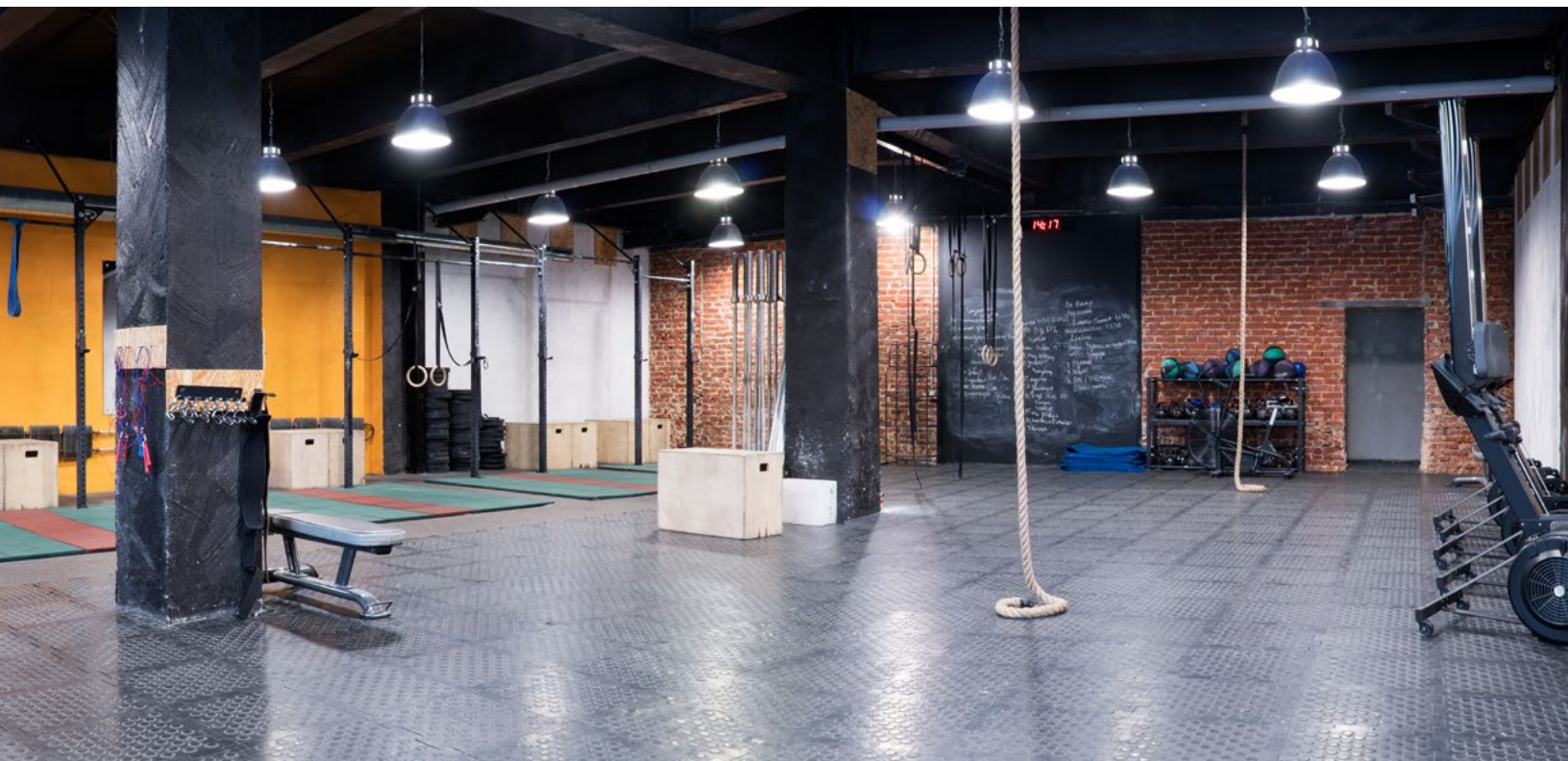
5. Large graphics. Large graphics (6-foot-by-6-foot and larger in color or black and white) are a big trend today. They can take the form of motivational word collages or large pictures of nature or people being active. These graphics — which you see more in retail, restaurants and hotels — have an inspiring impact so expect to see more of these in clubs.

The need for health clubs to create the ultimate experience for physical and social activity will result in a continually increasing role for design. Budgets for new clubs and renovations will need to be large enough so that the environment is one that people love to be in, especially since doing so will not only help attract people to health clubs but also retain them.

“Much of what happens with design in the restaurant, hospitality and retail industry applies to today's health clubs.”

BIO

Bruce Carter is the owner of [Optimal Design Systems International](#). He has been involved in more than 800 design and consulting projects in 48 states and 33 countries valued at approximately \$1 billion. He also has been an owner and operator of a wide variety of clubs. 



FOUR MARKETING TRENDS TO KEEP IN MIND IN 2019

Facebook's appeal has decreased, but that doesn't mean you should throw it out and jump on the latest bandwagon.



BY LESLIE NOLEN,
PRESIDENT OF RADIAL GROUP

Marketing continues to change for the health and wellness industry as new ways to engage with members and potential members emerge and existing methods change. Here are four marketing trends to watch in 2019:

1. What comes after Facebook? It's one thing for people to know that Facebook shows you ads based on your interests. But when it was revealed in late 2018 that Facebook let vendors read your direct messages, it felt completely different for many people. Throw in a healthy dose of political and cultural vitriol cluttering up far too many newsfeeds and you have a perfect storm that is driving consumers away from Facebook. That's on top of the fact that the number of adult users in their 20s and early 30s continues to drop.

Even Facebook acknowledges that U.S. usage is down. Is it dramatically affecting advertising ROI? Not yet, but it will — probably not this year, but it almost certainly will in 2020 and beyond.

Another killer marketing platform will emerge. It won't be Snapchat, Instagram or LinkedIn, but it will be something.

Until then, I tell every health and wellness business owner I talk to: Refuse to be the guinea pig. You don't need to spend time and money jumping on every bandwagon. Let other consumer-facing businesses do that, then learn from their mistakes and successes.

Meanwhile, fix your business page posts if no one is sharing or commenting. Split your Facebook ad strategy between top of funnel and bottom of funnel campaigns. Dial in your audience targeting, and strike a balance between quick-hit image ads and higher-impact video ads that really draw prospects in.

2. Local search: You must play to win. Local search used to be all about directory citations and SEO gamesmanship — stuffing footers with zips of local communities, for example.

Now, what matters most is Google reviews, Facebook, NextDoor, Yelp! recommendations, and making the most of Google My Business profiles, posts and Q&A.

Tailor your website content to current technical and on-site SEO best practices, embrace Facebook Messenger, throw in website chat and push notifications, enable Google

Ads message extensions and you have a soup-to-nuts marketing strategy tailored to what actually works in 2019.

3. Embrace your customer's journey. Health clubs need to tap into their customer's journey — their life experience with health, wellness, weight, stress, disappointment and achievement.

Everyone wants to win over the inactive consumer, but you don't do that with trendy fitness classes and smoothies and child care. You do it by overcoming their belief that they have to get fit before they can even think about joining a health club. You do it by overcoming their deep fear of feeling like an idiot, having a heart attack on a treadmill or

being laughed at by other people. Yet, judging from the advertising out there, too many health club owners are still just shilling club features and facilities.

4. Face-to-face interaction. The lure of digital marketing distracts far too many health and wellness owners from capitalizing on their strongest competitive advantage: a brick and mortar location staffed with real people who give a damn. You don't have to pick either/or. The smart play is a balanced marketing

strategy that integrates online marketing with offline, real-life lead generation experiences at your own place and in collaboration with like-minded local businesses.

BIO

Leslie Nolen is president of Radial Group, which provides marketing and strategy makeovers for health and wellness businesses. She can be reached at ideas@radialgroup.com or by phone at (972) 851-0098. ☎

“Another killer marketing platform will emerge. It won't be Snapchat, Instagram or LinkedIn, but it will be something.”



GOOGLE MY BUSINESS IS A KEY TO SUCCESSFUL MARKETING IN 2019

Health club owners who aren't already using Google My Business are missing a tool that will help them manage their business across Google.



BY MERRILL RICHMOND,
SENIOR MARKETING EXECUTIVE AT
SPOTTER MARKETING

One of the most important social media platforms for businesses today is Google My Business (GMB), a free service provided by Google designed to help businesses manage their online presence across Google, including Search and Maps. Club owners may have missed the many feature updates now available on their GMB page, but knowledge of these changes is important to capture the leads you need in 2019.

On a desktop, Google will show the GMB results on the right side of the screen, adjacent to organic results. On mobile, GMB shows up before the organic results. Given this prominent real estate, I believe GMB increasingly behaves like a free “shadow website.” It can also extend the life of images and posts that owners develop for Facebook and Instagram.

Here is a list of some Google My Business features and functions that have been recently added:

- Clubs can feature a video, in addition to photos, on their GMB page. Video makes a huge impact and takes time to create. Repurpose yours on your GMB page.
- Clubs can share informative blog posts and event announcements by adding them as posts to their GMB page.

- Clubs can also use the posts function to give visibility to special offers and promotions.
- Consumers can ask questions about your club (and you can respond to them) directly on your GMB page. Like reviews, this feature makes a strong impact on your brand reputation so make sure you are answering any posted questions asked.
- Google My Business has various updates to its analytics component (Insights) that show you how your Google My Business page is driving traffic to your business.

“Club owners may have missed the many feature updates now available on their GMB page.”

If owners haven't made Google My Business a routine part of their marketing toolkit, 2019 is a great time to start.

BIO

Merrill Richmond is a senior marketing executive at Spotter Marketing. Prior to that, he held roles at several fitness industry vendor companies, including as vice president of global marketing for Core Health and Fitness, and as vice president for local sales and partnerships at Zoom Media. Prior to that, he was chief marketing officer at Town Sports International, and he served as director of marketing for Disney Consumer Products. ☺

6 NUTRITION TRENDS YOU WILL SEE IN 2019

Nutrition plays a large role in being healthy and losing weight, which is why each new diet fad can cause concern. Here are the latest nutrition trends you'll be seeing in 2019.



BY KAT BAREFIELD,
REGISTERED DIETITIAN

Every new year brings new trends to the fitness industry, and while consumers and gym members are constantly looking for ways to lose weight and improve their health, it's important for operators to offer tools and services that are credible so they don't lose the trust of their member base. After all, health clubs have the word "health" in them for a reason, and nutrition's impact on wellness and weight management goals is undeniable. Also undeniable is the plethora of unproven products, diets and misinformation that persists.

Here are a few nutrition trends that are likely to pick up steam in 2019 as well as the related strength of evidence.

1. Nutrigenomics and "personalized nutrition." Genetic testing in the fitness industry is gaining traction, as companies market their services as a way to customize a fitness plan. This typically includes the type of exercise that best suits you, which supplements to take and avoid, and the nutritional makeup that "matches" your genes. Although genetic makeup can identify genes related to specific nutrients such as caffeine metabolism and therefore the usefulness or timing of certain supplements, the research is less supportive for identifying the ideal activities and diet based on DNA makeup. This is one to keep an eye on as the research emerges.

2. The microbiome and gut health. The immune system function, digestion, weight control and even sleep cycles involve the microbiome. Products related to boosting gut health, including probiotics and prebiotics, are gaining in popularity. Data shows that poor diet can negatively affect the diversity of friendly gut bacteria, which can affect various aspects of well-being. A wide variety of fiber-rich foods and various strains of probiotics have been shown to improve gut health, positively affect blood sugar and the immune system, and offer potential benefit for exercisers and athletes, which explains the numerous "gut health boosting" products on the market. Microbiome testing to personalize dietary recommendations and supplement plans is also making its way to the mainstream, but it's a bit too early to consider this an evidence-based tool for the masses.

3. Protein and its role in healthy aging. Protein and protein supplements will continue as mainstays in fitness and will likely appeal to older segments of gym members as more research emerges supporting the role of higher protein intakes to counteract the age-related loss of muscle tissue, strength and functional capacity. Data supporting the safety of higher protein intakes should be of particular interest to fitness professionals. In 2018, one systematic review of 28 studies found that daily protein intakes almost twice the minimum recommended dietary allowance (RDA) did not impair kidney function in healthy individuals of varying ages, and a separate

review had similar findings related to blood pressure. Thus, higher protein intake not only supports body composition goals but also appears safe and vital for healthy aging.

4. Fasting and time-restricted eating. A specific form of fasting, called time-restricted eating (TRE), will gain some steam as additional research emerges about the benefits of fasting on weight loss, the microbiome, sleep and aging. Time-restricted eating involves consuming all calories within a specified window of time each day. Common examples include the 16:8 TRE, in which all food is consumed within eight hours followed by 16 hours of no eating. The 20:4 TRE restricts eating to a 4-hour window and so on. This type of fasting has been shown to reduce total calorie intake and may be more appealing than fasting one or more entire days. Therefore, TRE appears to be a safe and effective option for those with weight management goals; however, whether it is feasible and results in meaningful and sustainable weight loss is dependent on each individual.

5. CBD-related products. Cannabidiol, or CBD, which is derived from the hemp strain of the cannabis plant family, purportedly has benefits for treating pain, anxiety, inflammation and other conditions without psychoactive impact. Although marijuana is legal in some states, the FDA does not permit CBD as an ingredient in food and dietary supplements. That doesn't mean there's no shortage of CBD-containing brownies, cupcakes, beverages and other items in the marketplace. It's best to stay clear of these products for now as the FDA is starting to enforce its current stance. This, however, could change with new research and a change in public policy.

6. The carnivore diet. An extreme version of the popular ketogenic diet is making its way into the mainstream as people continue to seek simple solutions for ridding excess body fat. As the name indicates, this diet involves consuming meat only, whereas the keto diet includes a healthy amount of fat and approximately 5 to 10 percent carbohydrates. Although this diet is trending up, I'm not sure this one will hold up as long as the ketogenic diet due to its extremely restrictive nature. Keep in mind that extreme diets often result in temporary results due to their unsustainability. It's better to offer solutions that people can stick to even if it takes more time. Credible nutrition and supplement education, the proper use of protein-rich meal replacements for weight loss/muscle gain and wellness goals, along with regular accountability have tremendous value for members and function as retention tools for operators.

BIO

Kat Barefield is a registered dietitian and a certified fitness professional with NASM and ACSM. ©



CLUB INDUSTRY