

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

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MARCH 2026

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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

## The Club Insider Advertising Team Still Taking Your Club Business to New Heights

By: Justin Cates

The second annual *HFA Show* was a true success! Between the awards, the presenters, the keynoters and **Liz Clark** herself, as well as the pre-parties, the parties and the after-parties, the glue that holds it together year after year are the exhibitors. Many were new, some were tried and true. To anyone who attended, good on you!

This month, we want to pay homage to the glue that keeps *Club Insider* going. The following 12 companies have been with us through thick and thin. From the pandemic, to going Online Only, they have not wavered, and neither should you when doing business with them. And, do business with them you should!

### The Club Insider Advertising Team

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#### LA Fitness

The **LA Fitness** club team

consists of people passionate about health and fitness who are committed to making the fitness experience at our clubs an exceptional one. They span multiple departments and are responsible for creating and maintaining a clean, fun, friendly environment and helping set the tone for the club experience. Whether interacting with members, assisting operations, maintaining facilities, generating leads, building relationships or closing deals, these team members play critical roles across nearly all aspects of the business. Opportunities in these  
(See *Club Insider Advertisers* Page 10)



**LA | FITNESS**

## The HFA Show 2026 Brings the Global Fitness Industry Together in San Diego

**SAN DIEGO, CA** - *The Health & Fitness Association (HFA)* hosted *The HFA Show 2026*, with more than 10,000 health and fitness industry professionals registered from around the globe; along with 380 exhibitors showcasing the latest equipment, programming, technology and software; and 150 expert presenters and educational speakers for three days at the San Diego Convention Center.

The evening before the show's opening, 240 people gathered for the *HFA Hall of Fame*, which was sponsored by *The Bay Club Company* and honored the

organization's second class of inductees, raising more than \$200,000 for the *HFA Foundation*, a 501(c)3 public charity that works to support health through exercise. The evening also included a celebration recognizing **Elaine LaLanne's 100th birthday** and her lasting contributions to the fitness industry.

The first day of the show featured a full slate of education sessions and a *Zenoti*-sponsored keynote by **Erica Dhawan** titled "*Win Together: Building Resilient, High-Performing Teams in the Age of AI*." Dhawan shared strategies

for building trust, fostering agility and strengthening collaboration in the age of AI. The program also included the *Women's Leadership Summit*, followed by the *Women's Leadership Summit Reception*, both sponsored by *Daxko*. The day also included the *Brazilian Forum* and the *Latin American Forum*, both sponsored by *ABC Fitness*. The evening concluded with *The HFA Show Kick Off Party*, sponsored by *Hapana* with music provided by *BMI*.

The trade show floor opened on day two with 380 exhibitors and featured  
(See *HFA 2026* Page 6)



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- Connected Health & Fitness Summit 2026: The Future of Wellness is Integrated, Human and Outcomes-Driven - **By:** Nancy Trent
- Is the AI Revolution Leaving Your Gym Business Behind? - **By:** Jim Thomas
- You Can Do It: Now is the Time to Disrupt Aging - **By:** Frank Guengerich
- Strength, Stretch and Recover: An Evidence-Upgraded Blueprint for Programming in 2026 - **By:** Sara Kooperman, JD
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

# Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **387th** monthly edition of this **30+ year** running club business publication I refer to as: **A Labor of Love!** I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of **Norm's Notes**, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of "**Telling-It-Like-It-Is!**" I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to **THANK YOU ALL** for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, so please read on!

■ **Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT!?** Hmm... hmm... hmm! And, as usual, let me start these **Norm's Notes** with my normal monthly salutation to you all: **GOD BLESS AMERICA and GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY and YOUR BUSINESS!!!**

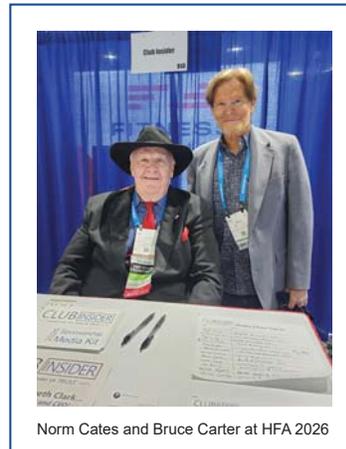
■ Let me kick off my *post-HFA Convention and Trade Show Norm's Notes* this month with **SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS to the 2026 HFA HALL of FAME INDUCTEES** who were honored in San Diego at the HFA Convention. This 2026 Class is really strong and honors the following very special

Inductees: **JOE CIRULLI, ANNBETH ESCHBACH, ELAINE LaLANNE, GALE LANDERS, PHILLIP MILLS, CHUCK RUNYON and DAVE MORTENSEN. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!**

■ To name just a few of the attendees at **2026 HFA Convention and Trade Show** with whom I had the pleasure of seeing again were long-time-friends: **DOUG MILLER, RAY GORDON, BRUCE CARTER, and his lovely wife, JOHANNA, MIKE MANNING and RUDY FABIANO.** And, I also had the pleasure of again seeing **HANNAH KARASS**, the lovely *Senior Executive Recruiter for JLR Associates* (Hannah, please say "Howdy" to **JEFF RANDALL** for me).

■ And, to name more of the **new folks** I had the pleasure of meeting, let me include the lovely **AMY THOMPSON**, a young lady who's very advanced in our industry. Amy is the *Owner & CEO of The IDEA Health and Fitness Association (IDEAfit.com)*. I also met **RONALD GRIMES** who is the *President of E-FORCE*.

■ Congratulations to **GALE LANDERS** as his *Fitness Formula Clubs (FFC)* have



Norm Cates and Bruce Carter at HFA 2026



Norm Cates

been named *Chicago's Best Gym for the Third Consecutive Year!* The recognition comes as part of *Chicago Reader's Annual "Best of Chicago" Awards*, where more than 100,000 Chicagoans participated in the nomination and voting process, making this achievement especially meaningful. These accolades reinforce FFC's long-standing commitment to delivering exceptional fitness experiences while fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

Founded in 1984, FFC operates ten upscale health clubs, seven in the city of Chicago and three in the surrounding suburbs. For over four decades, FFC has remained a leader in Chicago's fitness community, continuously evolving its programming, amenities and services to meet the needs of its members.

"We are incredibly honored to be recognized as Chicago's Best Gym for the (See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

## About Club Insider

### CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

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## Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be in our **33rd Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

Very sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* go to the **late Rick Caro**, the **late Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. *Thanks and Appreciation* to my long-time friends, the **late Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They did an absolutely excellent job for us over the years and printed every one of our monthly printed editions! And, of course, *Thanks and Appreciation* to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers!

Now, as we have gone all digital, *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **READERS**. Sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. *Thanks and Appreciation* to the **Health & Fitness Association** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to my son, **Justin**, our *Publisher*, who is a truly great business partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

Last, but surely not least, this writer who refused to fear failure when many told him he didn't have a chance of surviving the publishing business for even a year did survive. And, he would like to give his sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to the power that made that survival happen: **God**.

Very sincerely, with love in my heart for you all,

*Norm Cates, Jr.*



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...HFA 2026

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destinations including *Innovation Alley* (sponsored by *Sweatworks*) that featured the following companies: *Alchemy Innovations LLC, AI Advertising by Mixo Ads, BELLIX, Bolt Recovery, Buzz Bomb Caffeine Company, DetecFit, Fit – M.O., Fit-X, HipDoc, InSquare, MatFresher, Milton AI, Nervō Labs, ObliQ Fitness, OmniFit, OnSight, Silient, Superset App* and *xplate*.

The trade show also included the *New Product Zone* featuring nine companies, the *Pickleball Experience* and the *Demonstration Stage*. The show was supported by 52 sponsors overall, including nine in the *New Product Zone* and five in the *Recovery Lounge*.

Outside the trade show, the *Recovery Lounge* was a place for attendees to relax and hear about recovery products from *Am-Finn Sauna Company, CryoBuilt, Silent, WellFit and WellnessSpace Brands*.

Startup companies in *Innovation Alley* participated in a *Pitchfest* each day of the trade show. The winners of the first *Pitchfest* will be announced soon. They will receive a complimentary booth at *The HFA Show 2027* and will be recognized in a future issue of *Health & Fitness Business*.

The show floor also featured group exercise classes and early-morning workouts, bringing energy to the event while giving attendees the chance to experience new training formats and equipment firsthand.

The second-day keynote, sponsored by *Matrix*, featured entrepreneur, author and speaker **Jesse Itzler**, who delivered "*The Spiritual Billionaire*." Blending storytelling, humor and personal reflection, Itzler shared lessons from his entrepreneurial journey about creating opportunity, cultivating resilience and building a life that achieves big goals without sacrificing what matters most.



Prior to the second-day keynote, HFA handed out two awards. The *Jim Worthington Advocate of the Year Award* went to **Chris Craytor**, CEO of *ACAC Fitness & Wellness Centers*, for his service to the fitness industry and HFA. The *John Holsinger Global Leader Award* was given to *LifeFit Group CEO, Martin Seibold*.

The day also included the *29th Annual Financial Panel*, which was renamed the *Rick Caro Financial Panel* in honor of **Rick Caro**, President of *Management Vision*, who created the panel 28 years ago and had moderated it each year until his passing in August 2025. The panel was sponsored by *AltaDX*.

International attendees participated in multiple events on the second day, including the *Canadian Forum, EMEA Forum, APAC Forum* and the *International Attendee Reception*, celebrating the global fitness community.

The final day of the show featured a keynote from Olympic Champion **Apolo Ohno**, sponsored by *ROR*. In "*From Podium to Pivot: How Champions Upgrade, Adapt and Win Again*," Ohno shared lessons on reinvention, adaptability and performance in a rapidly changing environment. Additional education sessions, supplier seminars and trade show activity continued throughout the day.

Prior to the keynote, *Bodytech*

*Colombia Co-founder and Executive Vice President, Gigliola Aycardi*, received the *Woman Leader Award in Honor of Julie Main*.

Across all three days, the event convened leaders from around the world for education, business development, product discovery and conversations about the future of the health and fitness

industry. Topics throughout the event included leadership, technology, AI, operations, training, recovery and global industry trends.

"What stood out this year wasn't just the scale of the event but the strength of the conversations happening across every part of the show," said **Liz Clark**, President and CEO of the *Health & Fitness Association*. "From the keynote stage and education sessions to the trade show floor, industry leaders came together to share ideas, explore innovation and build the relationships that will help shape the future of health and fitness."

HFA would like to acknowledge *Alloy Personal Training Solutions, LLC* for authorizing the use of its registered trademark "*Stronger Together*" as the theme for *The HFA Show 2026*. HFA thanks this year's exhibitors and sponsors for their support. *The HFA Show 2027* will take place **March 10 - 12, 2027**, at *Mandalay Bay* in Las Vegas.



The HFA Team



The HFA Hall of Fame Class of 2026



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### ...Norm's Notes

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third year in a row!" said **Gale Landers**, *Founder and CEO of FFC*. "What makes this award so meaningful is that it reflects the voices of Chicagoland. At FFC, we go beyond being a place to work out; we create spaces where sports, lifestyle, health, fitness, wellness and nutrition come together to build communities. This recognition belongs to our dedicated staff and our members who inspire us every day."

FFC's continued success is driven by its unwavering focus on community, innovation and results. From signature group fitness programming and expert personal training to comprehensive wellness services, spa offerings, and medically based rehabilitation programs, FFC delivers a holistic approach to health and wellness.

In addition to being named Best Gym, FFC was also awarded and honored with these accolades: Best Inclusive Gym; Best General Fitness Gym; Best Exercise Class; Best Personal Trainer; Best Yoga/Pilates Facility; and Best Community Fitness Center.

■ **Villa Sport** announces the acquisition of *Memorial Athletic Club (MAC)* in Houston, Texas, marking another significant step in the company's strategic expansion

across the greater Houston area. With this addition, Villa Sport now operates four premier athletic clubs in Houston, further strengthening its presence in one of the nation's most dynamic and fastest-growing fitness markets.

"Today marks an exciting milestone for Villa Sport as we continue to invest in the Houston community," said **BILLY MALKOVICH**, *President of Villa Sport*. "Memorial Athletic Club has a remarkable legacy of serving its members for more than 40 years. We're thrilled to welcome MAC's members and team into the Villa Sport community and look forward to continuing to provide the MAC's expansive programming opportunities and exceptional service our members expect."

Memorial Athletic Club has been a cornerstone of the Memorial neighborhood, known for its strong community culture, dedicated team and commitment to member wellbeing. Villa Sport will maintain existing staff during the transition to ensure continuity and preserve the relationships MAC members value.

**DAVE CARDONE**, *current Owner of Memorial Athletic Club*, shared his enthusiasm about the transition: "Memorial Athletic Club has always been about people: our members, our team and the community we've proudly served for decades. Partnering with Villa Sport is an

exciting next chapter. Their commitment to quality, service and community aligns perfectly with the values we've built this club on. I look forward to supporting the team and our members through this transition and seeing the club continue to thrive under Villa Sport's leadership."

This acquisition further accelerates Villa Sport's nationwide growth strategy. With the addition of Memorial Athletic Club, Villa Sport now operates a total of 11 fitness locations and 8 full-service athletic clubs across the country, with an additional club opening later this year in Campbell, California. The expansion reflects the company's continued focus on high-growth markets and its commitment to delivering exceptional health, wellness and recreational experiences for members of all ages.

"We're excited to deepen our roots in Houston," Malkovich added. "Expanding into the Memorial area allows us to serve even more families, athletes and community members. We see tremendous opportunity in this market and are proud to continue growing our presence here."

■ Folks, be sure to check your email every **Wednesday Morning at 9AM EST** for **Club Insider Weekly!**

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to **THANK YOU** for reading **Club Insider!** We appreciate you

being with us. And, in particular, **WE VERY SINCERELY APPRECIATE ANY and ALL SUPPORT OF OUR ESTEEMED Club Insider ADVERTISERS! PLEASE DO BUSINESS WITH THEM and WHEN YOU DO, PLEASE TELL 'EM Club Insider SENT YOU! THANK YOU ALL!**

■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 50+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, celebrating 30+ years of trust in publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President and a Co-Founder of the Association with the late Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)*

# What if Your Marketing Manager Had to Build Mailchimp?

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

At most health clubs, the role of the Marketing Manager is clear. They are responsible for growing awareness, driving leads and communicating effectively with members and prospects. To do their job, they combine their passion and expertise, with your brand's personality and messaging, and then use an array of tools – Meta Ads Manager for digital ads, SMS platforms for mobile engagement, and an email marketing system – all necessities that allow them to have maximum impact. You would never expect them to build all those tools. You wouldn't ask your marketing manager to build *Mailchimp*, would you? Of course not, they oversee *delivering* the message, not building the mechanism. We see group fitness the same way.

We believe your Group Fitness Manager should oversee the *delivery* of the experience, not the *building* of every workout on your schedule. They should be searching for new talent, running workshops to mentor new instructors, upskilling your current team, investigating new offerings, working with the sales team to sharpen their process, building relationships in the community, and organizing and acting on data to guide strategic decisions. They should be combining their passion for group fitness and their expertise in exercise physiology to ensure your team is delivering an amazing experience – allowing you to service as many of your members in group fitness as possible.

Having professionally designed group fitness programming is like having a professionally designed email marketing system, like Mailchimp. You partner with them because they bring high-quality, always updating, ever obsessing about email deliverability. They bring a level of expertise. A turnkey product. They help save you time. They allow you to continually evolve. And, they help you put your best foot forward in every customer communication.

Here are a few reasons why you should consider having a professionally developed system for email marketing, member CRM and check-in software, equipment maintenance, website design and SEO, and yes, for group fitness.

**A Level of Expertise:** No single person can be an expert in everything. When you rely on a system that's been professionally developed, you're tapping into a depth of knowledge that goes beyond what any one individual can realistically build and maintain. It reflects a broader perspective shaped by research, experience and refinement over time. For group fitness, it doesn't replace your team's expertise – it supports it. It gives your Group Fitness Manager and instructors a stronger foundation, allowing them to focus less on building and more on delivering a consistent, high-quality experience.

**Always Evolving:** Member expectations change, trends shift, and what once felt

fresh can quickly start to feel dated. The challenge isn't just creating something good – it's creating something great and keeping it relevant over time. The most effective systems are designed with that in mind. They evolve continuously, incorporating new ideas, refining what works, and adjusting based on real-world feedback. That ongoing development helps ensure your group fitness – just like your email marketing – stays engaging and current, without requiring your team to constantly start from scratch or feel like they're playing catch-up.

**Ever Obsessing:** The difference between a good experience and a great one often comes down to the details, and those details require more attention than most teams have time to give. A professional partner brings that focus, those details, allowing you to leverage their time and energy and expertise to free up your team to do what they do best. In group fitness, that means connecting with members and bringing that experience to life. They can coach, connect, and create energy in the room, rather than worrying about building the perfect playlist or designing the most innovative workout. Instead of creating and trial-and-erroring, they can bring amazing workouts to life on stage.

Call us obsessed, it's true! At MOSSA, we *want* to sweat the details



Jeffrey Pinkerton

of building amazing, inclusive workouts, turnkey products that help save you time, continually evolve, and that help you put your best foot forward. That means your instructors can focus on what matters most – coaching, connecting, and creating energy in the room. If that sounds like a better way to run group fitness, it is. Let's talk about adding programs like *Group Power* to your schedule.

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at 770-989-4737 or email at [jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net](mailto:jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net).)

# Connected Health & Fitness Summit 2026: The Future of Wellness is Integrated, Human and Outcomes-Driven

By: **Nancy Trent**

*Connected Health & Fitness Summit 2026*, held in Los Angeles, brought together leaders across fitness, health and technology. What stood out most was not just the breadth of topics, but the quality of the room: informed speakers, engaged attendees and a notably open exchange of ideas. Across sessions, the strongest conversations were centered on the question: how do we help people achieve better health outcomes through connected, credible and practical support systems?

**Community is a retention strategy, not a marketing slogan.**

One of the clearest takeaways from the event was the renewed emphasis on community. In a market crowded with boutique, big box, digital, at-home and medical-adjacent offerings, brands are

being forced to answer a deeper question: why does someone stay?

The strongest answers heard throughout the summit were consistent: progress, accountability, feeling seen, belonging and a reason to return.

This conversation tied directly to retention and frequency. While acquiring new members remains important, the strategic focus is increasingly shifting toward habit formation and repeat engagement. The takeaway for brands: community messaging alone is no longer enough; brands have to show how their environments support consistency, confidence and outcomes over time.

**What GLP-1 means now for fitness and wellness brands.**

GLP-1 was a major topic across sessions, but the tone of the conversation has evolved. Speakers repeatedly

emphasized comprehensive support models: GLP-1s may be an important tool for some individuals, but outcomes improve when they are paired with movement, nutrition, education, behavior support and long-term adherence strategies.

Fitness and wellness brands are already seeing consumers arrive with questions shaped by GLP-1 adoption, social media narratives and rising expectations around results and personalization. Even organizations that do not offer medical services need a clear communications strategy for how they address the topic; what they can speak to, where they should stay in their lane and how they guide consumers toward credible support.

**What Women Want: clarity, credibility and partnership.**

The women's health-focused programming included leaders from *The*



Nancy Trent

*Well*, *Barre3*, *Les Mills* and *Fitizen*. A key theme throughout the discussion was that many women do not need more information; (See *Nancy Trent* Page 19)



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different departments range from club staff to sales to maintenance and all the way up to managers, with almost something for everyone in between.

Specifically, the group fitness department is comprised of motivated and enthusiastic professionals with a passion for inspiring others and supporting those on their fitness journey. From class instructors and coaches all the way up to coordinators (and lots in between), there are numerous ways to get involved with group fitness.

Learn more at [www.lafitness.com/careers](http://www.lafitness.com/careers). Check out the **LA Fitness Ad on Page #5**.

MOSSA



Group fitness, when delivered with intention, becomes the most powerful driver of engagement and retention inside your health club. It's where members connect, build consistency and form the habits that keep them coming back. Delivering a consistent, high-quality group fitness experience requires more than strong instructors — it requires a well-designed system. From scheduling and programming to instructor development, music, marketing and member onboarding, every detail matters.

We partner with health clubs to provide a complete group fitness system — one that replaces complexity with clarity, consistency and results. For decades, we've delivered a portfolio of programs designed to reach a wide range of members, and with a rigorous development and testing process behind every quarterly release, facilities offer workouts that members trust and love.

Learn more about **MOSSA's** group fitness system and our *M4 Programming approach (Movement, Music, Motivation, and Metrics)* at [www.mossa.net](http://www.mossa.net). Check out the **MOSSA Ad on Page #9**.

Workout Anytime



**Workout Anytime** began in 1999, when industry veterans, **Steve Strickland** and **John Quattrocchi**, saw a gap between high-priced gyms and real-world member needs. Their idea was simple: build a

welcoming club that's always open, uses top-tier equipment and keeps membership pricing within reach. The first location opened in Douglasville, Georgia and is still open today. That member-first mindset still guides every club and gym business decision today.

**Workout Anytime** shines in the 24/7 premium fitness franchise arena by delivering a high-value, low-price membership model that resonates with today's cost-conscious but quality-driven consumer. This value positioning is fueling strong membership growth and attracting franchisees who want to capitalize on the expanding demand for affordable, premium fitness experiences. Its streamlined operations, scalable format and robust corporate support make it a compelling choice for entrepreneurs aiming to grow a multi-unit portfolio in one of the industry's most resilient segments.

Learn more at [www.workoutanytimefranchise.com](http://www.workoutanytimefranchise.com). Check out the **Workout Anytime Ad on Page #11**.

JLR Associates



For over two decades, **JLR Associates** has earned an unmatched reputation as the premier executive staffing firm for the fitness industry. Through our company, transformative leaders have been placed across health clubs, boutique studios, national gym chains and wellness facilities. From general managers and operations directors to C-suite executives, our placements drive lasting organizational change.

In addition, we proudly serve leading vendors and suppliers across the fitness ecosystem, connecting them with exceptional sales and leadership talent. Our success stems from a deep understanding of the fitness landscape and an extensive network of vetted professionals. The candidates we place don't simply fill roles. They elevate entire organizations.

Learn more at [www.jlrassoc.com](http://www.jlrassoc.com). Check out the **JLR Associates Ad on Page #7**.

HWLS



**Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services (HWLS)** specializes in health club ownership and operational consulting. With our multi-faceted approach, we are dedicated to helping health clubs thrive.

Through our wealth of experience, we are experts in driving profitability by optimizing revenue and implementing smart expense control management strategies. Our focus is always on delivering bottom-line results and maintaining a strong cash flow.

We understand that attracting, hiring and motivating top talent can be a gamechanger for any organization. That's why HWLS utilizes the right recruiting methods and screening tools to build winning teams. We recognize that individuals are the human assets that form the backbone of any successful business or non-profit venture.

In addition to our consulting services, HWLS is at the forefront of providing wellness services and biohacking solutions. We recognize the tremendous opportunities in health promotion and guide our clients in delivering these services safely and effectively, all while maximizing profitability.

Learn more at [www.hwlservices.com](http://www.hwlservices.com). Check out the **HWLS Ad on Page #16**.

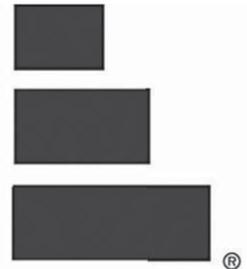
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For over 20 years, **Business Finance Depot (BFD)** has provided financing services for franchisors, franchisees and entrepreneurs in a broad spectrum of industries. **Paul Bosley** originally launched **Healthclubexperts.com** to provide equipment leasing to the fitness industry and fitness equipment manufacturers.

The company has greatly expanded its services over the past two decades, serving health clubs, restaurants, campgrounds, RV parks and many other industries. We offer many consulting services as well, to help business owners become more profitable.

In 2010, Paul became a volunteer for SCORE, and as a result, Paul learned the SBA 7(a), 504 and Express loan process. BFD developed its unique SBA loan process to serve a growing number of franchisors to provide financing to their new franchisees.

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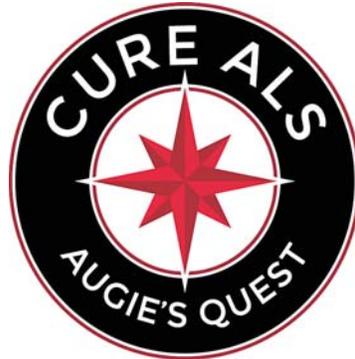
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HFA



The Health & Fitness Association is the only global trade association dedicated to protecting, promoting and growing the health and fitness industry.

We support active, healthy living by advocating for health and fitness businesses, delivering industry research and providing education that drives professional growth.

Medical experts and scientific evidence affirm that physical activity improves both physical and mental health, and psychologists point to the value of social connections beyond the home and workplace to reduce loneliness and foster belonging.

All of this is at the heart of the health and fitness industry's existence: *helping people lead healthier, more fulfilling lives through movement and community.*

Our mission is to support that impact by advocating for the industry, delivering action-oriented research and providing education that drives professional growth.

Learn more at [www.healthandfitness.org](http://www.healthandfitness.org). Check out the HFA Ad on Page #15.



Seriously, folks, if it were not for these companies, I would not be able to write this to you now. THEY kept us in business, and now, as always, they can help your business excel!

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 40+ years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 15+ years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider in April of 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin at [Justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Justin@clubinsideronline.com).)

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# Is the AI Revolution Leaving Your Gym Business Behind?

By: **Jim Thomas**

The fitness industry has always been about energy, connection and results. But, in today's competitive landscape, those who cling to "old school" operations risk being left behind. *Artificial Intelligence (AI)* is not just a futuristic buzzword; it's the most powerful tool available right now to increase profitability, reduce overhead, streamline processes and boost member satisfaction. If your gym isn't leveraging AI today, you're not just missing out on innovation, you're leaving money on the table.

## Why AI Matters in the Fitness Business

AI is transforming industries across the board, and fitness is no exception. For gyms, AI isn't about replacing human connection; it's about amplifying it. Think of it as having a 24/7 assistant who never forgets a lead, never misses a follow-up and analyzes data faster than any manager ever could. Here's what AI brings to the table:

**Increased Profitability:** Smarter targeting, more consistent sales and predictive analytics mean you close more deals at higher margins.

**Lower Overhead:** AI automates repetitive tasks --follow-ups, scheduling, reporting-- so staff can focus on delivering member experience, not paperwork.

**Efficiency and Effectiveness:** Every lead is nurtured, every member engagement is tracked and no opportunity slips through the cracks.

### Imagine This: Every Lead Gets Followed Up On

One of the biggest profit leaks in gyms is missed follow-ups. Most gym staff mean well, but between classes, member check-ins and facility management, leads often fall through the cracks. AI solves this problem by:

- Sending personalized text/email follow-ups instantly after a tour.
- Tracking member engagement and alerting staff when interest drops.
- Qualifying prospects automatically, so your sales team only focuses on hot leads.

Imagine a world where every single inquiry, whether it comes from your website, social media or walk-in, gets responded to within minutes, not days. That's the reality AI creates.

## Practical Ways AI Can Be Applied in Your Gym

Here are real-world applications you can implement right now:

### 1. AI-Powered Lead Management:

- Automatically capture, score and prioritize leads.
- Predict which prospects are most likely to convert.
- Send personalized offers based on interests.

### 2. Smart Scheduling and Member Retention:

- AI assistants help members book classes, find available trainers and even reschedule appointments automatically.
- Predict churn risk by monitoring member attendance and engagement, then send retention campaigns before they quit.

### 3. Dynamic Pricing and Promotions:

- AI analyzes demand, class sizes and seasonality to optimize pricing and special offers.
- No more guesswork on when to discount or upsell.

### 4. AI Chatbots and Virtual Salespeople:

- Answer FAQs on your website and social media instantly.
- Qualify leads 24/7 while you sleep.
- Book tours and consultations without human intervention.

### 5. Performance Tracking and Staff Efficiency:

- AI dashboards can measure staff productivity, sales closing rates and member feedback.
- This makes training more targeted and performance management more objective.

## Busting the Myths: AI Isn't Replacing People

Some gym owners fear AI will replace the human touch that makes fitness personal. The reality? AI is a *force multiplier*. It handles the tasks humans don't want (or forget) so your staff can focus on the things that matter most: motivating, coaching and connecting with members.

AI doesn't take the place of your best salesperson; it makes them more effective by ensuring they only spend time with qualified, ready-to-buy prospects.

## The Competitive Advantage: Why You Can't Afford to Wait

If you're not using AI in your gym business, your competitors probably are... or will soon. The gyms that embrace AI now will set the standard for speed, personalization and efficiency. The ones that don't will be left scrambling to catch up.

In the same way social media transformed marketing, AI is transforming operations and sales. The sooner you adapt, the bigger your advantage.

## Action Steps for Gym Owners

Here's how to get started today:

**Audit Your Current Gaps:** Where are you losing leads, missing follow-ups or overspending staff time?

**Start Small:** Implement one AI tool, like a chatbot or lead nurture automation.

**Measure ROI:** Track conversions, member retention and staff productivity improvements.

**Expand Gradually:** Layer AI into scheduling, retention, pricing and performance tracking.

**Stay Educated:** AI evolves quickly; commit to continuous learning so your gym stays ahead.

**Conclusion:  
The Future Is Here; Don't Be Left Behind**

AI isn't optional anymore; it's the new baseline for running a profitable, efficient and member-focused gym. If you're not using AI, you're not only wasting time and money, you're risking your gym's future.

Independent gym owners, bou-



Jim Thomas

tique studio operators, gym entre-preneurs and personal trainers must see AI as more than a tech upgrade; it's a business survival tool. The gyms that thrive in the next decade will be the ones that marry human passion with artificial intelligence.

**The question isn't whether the AI revolution is coming. It's already here. The real question is: will your gym be part of it or left behind?**

*(An Outsourced CEO, Turnaround Expert and Author, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of FMC USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround, financing and brokerage firm specializing in the leisure services industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing facilities of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve gym sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. Learn more at [www.fmconsulting.net](http://www.fmconsulting.net) or [www.youtube.com/gymconsultant](http://www.youtube.com/gymconsultant).)*

# Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

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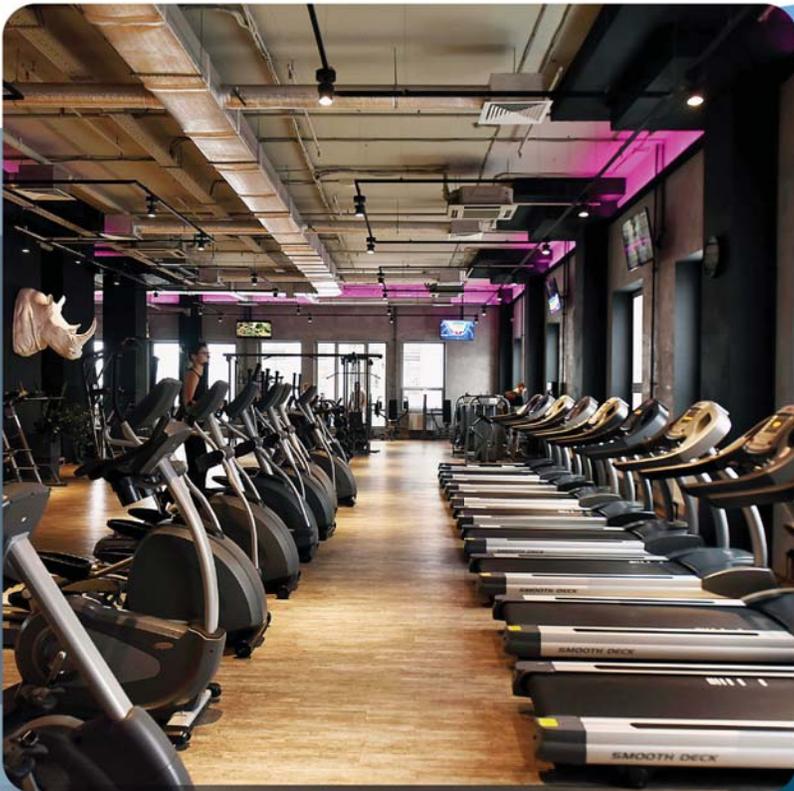
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# You Can Do It: *Now is the Time to Disrupt Aging*

By: Frank Guengerich

I recently celebrated my 62nd birthday, and I can honestly say I've never felt better. While I don't fully agree with the phrase, "age is just a number," I absolutely believe it's possible to improve your health, physique and overall wellness as you get older. In fact, staying strong, active and disciplined is one of the best ways to disrupt aging.

If you're curious what trophy I'm holding, I competed in the *Masters USA Bodybuilding National Championships* and finished *2nd in the 50+ Classic Physique Division*. If this old dog can do it, anyone can!

So, here is my request... It's a great time for you to recommit to your health and fitness journey. With summer approaching, there's no better moment than now to refocus, reset your habits and start working toward getting in the best shape of your life. The truth is simple: you

can do it.

For those of us in the fitness industry --club owners, managers and fitness professionals-- our commitment to health goes beyond ourselves. We serve as role models for our staff, members, and even, our families. People watch what we do. They notice the choices we make and the habits we live by. When we prioritize our own health, we set a powerful example for others to follow.

I'm reminded of this every day. My personal commitment to health and fitness is not just about my physical and mental wellbeing; it's also about leadership. If we want our staff and members to live healthier lives, we must lead by example.

As a *NASM CPT and Nutritionist*, one topic I'm often asked about is developing a strong core. You've probably heard the saying, "abs are made in the kitchen." There's some truth to that, but it doesn't tell the whole story.

Your core is already working

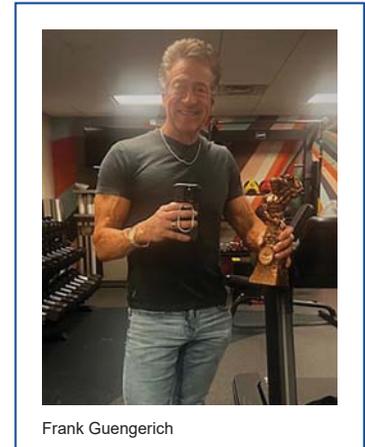
every day. If you exercise regularly, your abdominals are constantly stabilizing your body during movements like lifting, running or even standing. Many people believe that doing endless abdominal exercises will magically reveal their abs, but that's not usually how it works. If your abs are covered by a layer of body fat, they may be there, you just can't see them yet.

Core exercises are still very important. They help improve strength, prevent injuries and support proper movement and functionality. But, if your goal is to develop a defined core, the first step is reducing excess body fat.

That's where consistency and discipline come in.

Consistency may be the single most important factor in improving and maintaining your health, fitness and physique. I always encourage people to set a compelling goal, something that motivates and inspires them to stay consistent.

Maybe your goal is to run a 5K,



Frank Guengerich

compete in *HYROX*, look great for a wedding or vacation, or even compete in a bodybuilding event. Whatever your goal is, having something meaningful to (See *Frank Guengerich* Page 17)

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- Mary Thomas | Owner and General Manager | Western Racquet & Fitness Club | Green Bay, WI

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### ...Frank Guengerich

continued from page 16

work toward helps keep you focused and disciplined.

Nutrition also plays a major role. One of the best strategies I recommend is weekly meal preparation. Personally, I like to prepare my meals on Sunday evenings for the upcoming week. Life gets busy, and when we work long hours it's easy to skip meals or make poor food choices. Meal preparation helps ensure you have the right portions, balanced macros and healthy foods ready to go.

Another important step is minimizing wasted calories, foods that provide little nutritional value. The five items I always suggest people watch closely are fried foods, alcohol, sweets, bread and junk foods like chips. That doesn't mean you can never enjoy them, but moderation is key.

When it comes to leaning out, the basic principle is simple: burn more calories than you consume. This creates a calorie deficit, which allows your body to begin using stored fat as energy.

Carbohydrates often get blamed, but they are not the enemy. In fact, carbs are an important fuel source for the body. The key is regulating them properly when your goal is fat loss. Combining balanced

nutrition with regular strength training and cardiovascular exercise, ideally at least three times per week, can significantly improve your results.

It's also okay to occasionally enjoy foods that aren't part of a strict diet. A slice of pizza or a burger now and then won't derail your progress. In fact, occasional "refeed" meals can replenish glycogen and help satisfy cravings. What matters most is your overall consistency.

The most important thing to remember is that leaning out and building a stronger body doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, patience and discipline. Whether it takes three months, six months or longer, the journey is worth it. And, once you reach your goal, the focus shifts to maintaining those results. That's why health and fitness can't be a temporary fix; it has to become a lifestyle.

Regular strength training, cardiovascular exercise, balanced nutrition and proper recovery are the foundation of long-term health. When you commit to those habits consistently, you'll not only improve your physique, you'll improve your energy, confidence and overall wellbeing.

Most importantly, you'll continue to disrupt aging. So, as summer approaches, recommit to your journey. Be the example. Be the role model your staff, members and family can look up to. Stay disciplined. Stay

consistent. And remember, you absolutely can do it.

See the **HWLS Ad on Page #16**.

*(Frank Guengerich is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services - HWLS, a boutique club ownership and management consulting firm. HWLS has a limited number*

*of high-value clients seeking individualized attention. HWLS specializes in assisting clubs to maximize revenue and profitability, with a focus on membership marketing and sales, fitness programming and wellness/medically supervised programs. For more information about HWLS, visit the website at [www.hwlservices.com](http://www.hwlservices.com) or email [frank@hwlservices.com](mailto:frank@hwlservices.com).)*

## Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

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# Strength, Stretch and Recover:

## An Evidence-Upgraded Blueprint for Programming in 2026

By: **Sara Kooperman, JD**

**Publisher's Note:** Our friend and *Club Insider Author*, **Sara Kooperman, JD**, has produced the following excellent and extensive article on the various types of group exercise training, modes within those programs and their benefits, all within the construct of an over-arching, well-thought-out system that provides more benefits as a whole than using any one piece on its own. This requires a lot of knowledge and experience, so while I have your attention, I want to introduce, or reintroduce, to you our friends at **MOSSA** who provide fully choreographed systems, from music to movement, for use in your facilities. Be sure to check out **Jeffrey Pinkerton's Article** on **Page #8** and the **MOSSA Ad** on **Page #9**.



The trajectory of fitness programming in 2026 is defined not by extremes but by integration: strength training, mobility optimization, smart stretching and intentional recovery working together to build healthier aging, improved performance and long-lasting joints. Modern research continues to reinforce that no single modality --strength, cardio, flexibility or recovery-- operates in isolation; the key is intelligent sequencing and layered progression that serves all demographics.

Before we explore the latest science on stretching, fascia, neuromuscular benefits and recovery timing, here's a practical answer fitness professionals and owners are already asking:

### What Programs Should a Club Offer in 2026? (Top-Down Perspective)

To build sustainable, evidence-based offerings that appeal across a variety of age groups and performance goals, clubs should structure their calendars with the following integrated formats:

#### Progressive Strength Tracks:

- Overload-based small group programming with measurable progression;
- Foundational strength classes for beginners;
- Heavy-Load Group Strength Formats;
- Heavier barbell or resistance-based classes such as *Les Mills BODYPUMP HEAVY*;
- Scalable strength-forward group workouts that attract both strength seekers and aging populations;
- Hybrid Cardio-Strength Classes;
- Resistance-infused cardio formats like *Zumba + LIFT* that build bone and muscle

while improving heart health;

- Pilates Reformer Programming;
- Small-group reformer-based classes to improve core stability, controlled strength, mobility and postural integration;

**Goal-Driven Conditioning Tracks:** Structured preparation programs for performance events (e.g., Hyrox-style training) that motivate consistent training and community engagement.

**Mobility and Strength-Through-Range Sessions:** Dynamic mobility, loaded range drills and functional movement training rooted in current evidence.

**Recovery and Restore Blocks:** Breathwork, foam rolling and recovery strategy sessions intentionally built into weekly programming.

**Water Exercise and Aquatic Strength Programming:** Low-impact, joint-friendly resistance training in aquatic environments, especially valuable for aging populations and joint-sensitive members. This diversified "ecosystem" ensures members can cross-train safely, pursue goals and avoid stagnation or injury.

**Strength Training: Foundational and Scientifically Supported:** Emerging research underscores strength training as one of the most potent ways to enhance functional ability, metabolic health and longevity.

### Strength Drives Functional Fitness for All Ages

Recent exercise science affirms that structured resistance training improves health and functional fitness in adults over 40, counteracting age-related structural declines in muscle mass and strength that begin around midlife and accelerate with age. Strength losses of ~1-2% annually after age 50 are well documented, yet targeted exercise slows this dramatically.

A robust body of evidence also supports strength training for improving balance, mobility and reducing fall risk, critically important for older adults. A review of strength and balance interventions highlights the powerful role of structured exercise in enhancing functional performance and mobility.

Younger participants know the benefits of muscles mass and its relation to fat-burning and general health.

**Strength and Longevity:** Maintaining strength doesn't just make you stronger; it is linked to healthier aging and lower mortality

risk. Individuals who stay moderately active, including regular resistance work, have significantly lower risk of chronic disease and premature death compared to inactive peers.

**Neuromuscular Coordination:** Strength training improves motor unit recruitment and timing, leading to better coordination and performance quality. This enhances agility, reduces compensatory movement patterns and supports joint stability across age groups.

**Programming Tip:** Progressive overload doesn't require heavy weights exclusively. Evidence shows strength benefits even with lighter loads taken to fatigue, making it scalable for all populations.

### Mobility and Stretching: What Current Studies Reveal

**Flexibility and Longevity:** Recent long-term observational studies reveal that greater flexibility is associated with lower mortality. Higher flexibility scores correlated with better longevity outcomes over extended follow-ups, likely because greater range supports continued physical activity and reduced pain.

**Dynamic vs. Static Stretching:** Emerging mobility research reinforces the value of dynamic mobility in warm-ups to enhance force production and neuromuscular readiness, while static stretching remains important post-workout to improve passive range. The evolving consensus is not about choosing one over the other but sequencing them appropriately within sessions.

**Mobility as Functional Capacity:** Physical activity clearly improves mobility, coordination and the ability to perform fundamental tasks like sit-to-stand or stair climbing, especially in older adults. Task-specific mobility training has been shown to meaningfully improve functional movement abilities.

**Programming Tip:** Incorporate movement patterns that elevate joint control within range --loaded mobility drills, Pilates stabilization and functional strength drills-- rather than isolating passive stretching alone.

### Pilates Reformer Programming: Evidence and Practical Application

Pilates, particularly on reformer equipment, is uniquely suited to build controlled strength, improved posture and integrated mobility.



Sara Kooperman, JD

Recent pilot research on reformer training shows improvements in muscle strength, flexibility, core stability, trunk and pelvis control, and breathing efficiency. Used both for performance enhancement and rehabilitation contexts, reformer work supports multiple adaptations in one modality.

### Why Reformer Matters in 2026:

- Enhances strength in extended range;
- Improves postural and core control;
- Complements traditional strength training;
- Scales for both younger participants and active agers alike.

### Fascia and Tissue Adaptation in Context

Fascia, the connective web supporting muscle and organs, responds to varied mechanical load and movement variability. Programming that blends strength, mobility and controlled stretching encourages fascial elasticity and efficient force transfer. The goal is to avoid rigid movement patterns that stiffen tissue and reduce adaptability. Evidence supports incorporating multidirectional loading, eccentric control and varied movement stimuli into training programs.

**Recovery - The Science Behind Adaptation:** Recovery is where adaptation happens, not just rest but structured processes that allow muscle repair, nervous system down-regulation and tissue adaptation.

**Muscle Recovery Dynamics:** Moderate to high-intensity resistance training typically requires around 48 hours for optimal recovery of involved muscle groups. Without this, strength gains diminish and injury risk increases.

(See *Sara Kooperman, JD Page 19*)

## ...Sara Kooperman, JD

continued from page 18

### Breathwork and Nervous System Regulation:

Controlled breathwork activates the parasympathetic nervous system, lowers stress hormones and supports recovery and cognitive function. Integrating breathwork at the end of sessions enhances restoration. The benefits of programs like yoga are substantial and still relevant.

### Foam Rolling and Self-Myofascial Tools:

Evidence indicates foam rolling improves short-term range and reduces perceived discomfort without impairing performance, making it a valuable recovery tool when used appropriately.

**Programming Tip:** Schedule "Restore" sessions that include mobility, breathwork and foam rolling to support weekly adaptation signals.

### Neuromuscular Benefits and Progression Science

Progressive programming should enhance:

- Motor unit recruitment;
- Eccentric control;
- Multi-planar strength;
- Proprioceptive awareness.

Recent studies affirm that integrated training, combining strength, balance and functional movement tasks, improves overall performance and reduces age-related functional losses.

### Goal-Driven Training: Motivation Meets Structure

While durability is the backbone of programming, motivational frameworks elevate adherence. Goal-driven tracks, such as those preparing participants for performance events like *Hyrox* or structured challenges, provide measurable outcomes and communities of accountability. Participants can be involved as individuals and on a team serving both isolated goals and group dynamics. These formats work best when:

- Built atop foundational strength;
- Supported by mobility and recovery blocks;
- Sequenced with progression markers.

Similarly, hybrid strength-cardio classes like Zumba + LIFT build metabolic conditioning while injecting fun and accessibility, supporting psychological adherence alongside physical adaptations.

### Smarter Sequencing for Long-Term Success

Evidence consistently supports sequencing that respects physiology:

- **Dynamic Mobility Warm-Up:** Prepares joints and nervous system;
- **Primary Strength Work:** Optimized early when fresh;
- **Accessory Stability or Movement Control:** Integrated next;
- **Static Stretching:** Post-workout support;
- **Breath-Led Recovery:** Closes the nervous system loop.

A balanced weekly structure may include:

- 2-3 strength sessions (progressive overload);
- 1 hybrid cardio-strength class;
- 1 Pilates/Reformer session;
- 1 mobility, aquatic or restore session.

This sequencing improves resilience, reduces chronic stress responses and supports long-term independence.

### The Benefits of Water Exercise Training

A pool is often the most expensive piece of equipment a facility owns and manages, yet many clubs underutilize it. Group water exercise is one of the smartest investments a club can make, particularly because older adults are highly attracted to aquatic environments and consistently demonstrate the highest retention rates of any membership demographic.

Aquatic training offers unique physiological advantages, especially for aging populations and individuals with arthritis, joint replacements, chronic pain, or obesity. Buoyancy reduces joint compression, while water's viscosity provides multidirectional resistance that builds strength and improves neuromuscular coordination without impact stress. Research supports aquatic exercise for improving muscle strength, balance, mobility and pain reduction in older adults.

From a programming standpoint, water training can serve as a gateway into land-based strength work, a recovery modality between heavier sessions and a long-term retention tool for aging members. Aquatic strength should not be positioned as "light exercise" but as joint-intelligent resistance training that complements strength, Pilates and mobility systems, allowing members to continue progressing

even when joint load tolerance fluctuates.

### Integrating the Science Into Your 2026 Programs

The evidence is striking: **Integration beats isolation.**

- Strength builds capacity;
- Mobility preserves access;
- Stretching improves range;
- Recovery ensures adaptation;
- Hybrid and goal-driven formats (like training for *Hyrox* competitions) increase adherence and motivation.

Clubs that integrate these pillars, supported by newer research on functional fitness, mobility longevity and balanced recovery, set their members up not just to train but to thrive across decades. This is the future of fitness: intelligently sequenced, scientifically grounded and purpose-driven.

*(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education, WATERinMOTION, and S.E.A.T. Fitness won the Most Innovating Fitness Pro by Fitness Industry Technology Council. Sara is the best-selling author of FIT FOR BUSINESS, an inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame, an Illinois State Businesswoman of the Year, esteemed host for NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS Monthly Talk Show and sits on the ACSM Communication & Public Information Committee. Kooperman sits on the Gold's Gym Think Tank and the canfitpro Advisory Panel and was a founding board member for the Women In Fitness Association (WIFA). Plus, Sara was recently nominated for the IDEA Fitness Leader of the Year Award. Learn more at [www.sarakooperman.com](http://www.sarakooperman.com).)*

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they need more clarity.

Between lab testing, wearable data, social media trends and conflicting wellness advice, consumers are often left with more inputs but less confidence about what to do next. Several themes stood out: the need for credible, evidence-based guidance; clarity and interpretation over more data and noise; and support that helps women feel strong, safe and not overwhelmed. The brands that lead will be the ones that combine credibility with care and create experiences that feel supportive before, during and after the interaction.

### Making wellness feel doable.

One thing this summit did especially well was pulling big ideas back down to real life. Yes, there were conversations about AI, data, longevity and next-gen health tech, but again and again, speakers grounded those ideas in practical behaviors people can actually act on: consistent training, proactive screenings, understanding core markers and getting

guidance from qualified professionals instead of just collecting more information they don't know what to do with.

The same was true for AI. The strongest examples were not about replacing people; they were about making teams better: less operational friction, better decisions, smarter personalization and more time for high-value human connection. That framing felt especially important. In this category, innovation only matters if it improves execution.

### What stood out on the exhibit floor.

The exhibit floor reinforced many of the same themes discussed on stage: clarity, personalization, performance and practical behavior change. Companies doing so include:

- **Vitality Blueprint;**
- **Plank Stand;**
- **BODD;**
- **Glanbia;**
- **Garmin;**
- **CareValidate;**
- **Sleep Cycle;**
- **HigherDOSE.**

These brands stand out for translating wellness innovations into something that feels both aspirational and usable, meeting consumers where they are with tools designed to support sleep, stress relief, recovery and everyday consistency.

### What this all means.

Connected Health & Fitness Summit 2026 reinforced that the next wave of winning brands in fitness and wellness will not be defined by aesthetics or trend adoption alone. They will be defined by their ability to integrate credible guidance; human connection; personalized experiences; measurable outcomes; and clear, responsible storytelling.

The brands best positioned for growth are the ones that can communicate not just what they offer but how they help people navigate an increasingly complex health landscape with clarity and trust.

■ ■ ■

Beyond the booths, the summit's movement activations also reinforced the event's focus on participation, performance

and community. The summit included experiences like *HYROX* and *Pilates*. *HYROX* was a personal highlight: we went in intimidated, were challenged the entire time and walked out exhausted, but inspired, and already thinking about doing it again!

*(Nancy Trent is a writer and speaker, a lifelong wellness activist, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and President of Trent & Company, a leading wellness PR firm. Trent & Company, which launched many health and beauty brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A former journalist for New York Magazine, Nancy has written seven books on healthy lifestyles, serves on the editorial boards of several magazines and travels around the world speaking at conferences and trade shows on trends in the marketplace. She is a recognized expert in PR with more than 30 years of experience creating and managing highly successful campaigns. Nancy can be reached at [nancy@trentandcompany.com](mailto:nancy@trentandcompany.com). Learn more at: [www.trentandcompany.com](http://www.trentandcompany.com).)*

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