



Use your Space.

Changing times means **a change of thinking.**

Ever wondered to how to use your space more efficiently?

Every facility has downtimes and space that is poorly utilised. In the health and fitness industry, schools, community halls, and recreation facilities (referred hereafter collectively as facilities), all seem to have just accepted the peaks and troughs of attendance and usage for decades now. It is time to change this mindset and better use our facility resources and space that is so often empty. Why is this required?

Firstly the current economic climate means every facility needs to maximise its usage, membership and programs they offer to get return on investment and ensure the business stays in the black. Secondly, the steady growth of inactivity, obesity, type 2 diabetes and other preventable health issues, means we have an ever growing task of providing products, programs and solutions to reduce this health crisis in our communities.

Generally group fitness studios lie dormant during school hours, unless your business has a strong morning attendance by mothers, or a CBD lunch crowd. Our schools have great gym or hall facilities that are generally used only between 9-3pm, and recreation facilities have stadiums used only at certain times for sports.

We need to offer a more diverse range of programs and many of these can be offered in facilities' downtimes to target 'new' users not previously targeted whilst also engaging existing members who will be retained for longer. Successful business is built on sales of memberships and the up sell of programs, services and products. The ability to offer more services generally equates to improved retention and ability to up sell more (of everything).

Personally I find it hard to think why facilities have not embraced this need previously or the opportunity to capitalise on both downtimes and the broader community needs. Having a program director role to oversee facility usage is the key. This person is a driver of all business operations in this space whether it is karate classes, ballet, seniors' activities and exercise, youth/school exercise groups. Next is making sure these particular identified groups have new innovative solutions to make their experiences more enjoyable, **and** are targeted for their needs. Traditionally the same old health and fitness solutions are being sold in different marketing packages that don't actually address the broader community needs. These packages being time efficient, in comfortable environments and tailored programs that gets results.

Operators must have goals of profit, but also be passionate to help as many people as possible through as many solutions as possible which a program director can oversee.

EYE

EXCITE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

fitness

exercise equipment – education – exergaming



Traditional Weights, cardio and group fitness are extremely important and provide the results for a small dedicated percentage . This membership is ultimately the standard /**core group** once we have attracted and provided other solutions to **those** looking for more from their health and fitness facility or local community facility. These **new** products and programs need to complement these **original** facilities in multipurpose rooms in health and fitness centres or as part of a school hall/gymnasium or recreation centre stadium.

So what are the solutions? As above a program director type of role can co-ordinate and maximise usage of space and oversee and develop a range of options to run at the club. At a health club I suggest to **start by offering** programs charging for a term or course eg a 10 week dancing course for seniors between 11-12noon or salsa dance class from 8-9pm, or capoeira martial arts for kids from 3.30-4.30? Certainly market to your members/users but also externally, as this attracts new member groups we have discussed. All solutions are about broadening your niche and offering more, which **will** bring in more of your bread and butter memberships. At schools, use your facilities for external sports/fitness/dance or senior groups outside school hours or do joint ventures with PT's offering small group sessions (rather than 1on1 as this is a better leverage of time, resources, opportunity and profitability for all) to provide the school with additional income. With **this additional finance, it can provide** better PE programs with innovative and interactive products for children for an improved fitness learning experience to benefit their life long-term (this is a whole other topic). Schools luckily provide an opportunity to involve students in the facilitation of programs to aid their leadership development. If you combine this with exciting new products (refer below) this market can grow substantially **within** schools, community halls and recreation facilities.

On the product and program front there are many innovative solutions using some form of technology to engage users of all ages and again these are ideal in multipurpose environments.

Firstly HOPSports, A US based multimedia projection of over 100 different lesson plans can be used by PE teachers and gym instructors alike to facilitate lessons from Hip Hop dance to plyometrics and martial arts through an interactive media centre. The users are engaged to the interactive medium, content is facilitated by leaders at the user's level providing feedback, challenge and encouragement whilst not having to be "experts" in 100 different fitness and sporting activities. To get some perspective this training system is training over 1 million people per week. The objects used range are basic but unique to HOPSports as their mats are universal for use as cones, agility ladders and task mats.

Xerdance uses Wireless Dance mats otherwise known as DDR or dance dance revolutions is even more interactive. Each mat records the users accuracy from the projected dance routines. Up to 32 users can be logged in any time with up to 3 routines per song being projected at once. A trolley cart for the wireless pads means this is extremely portable and has low storage space.



The Sportwall product has over 150 different Training drills and games for all skills, sports and fitness exercises. Ideal in relays and with other skills can handle up to 20 users depending on space, but also ideal for 1 on 1 sport performance. It is a permanent fixed feature to a wall but yet doesn't affect any space of any existing group fitness studio, hall or court. The application for development of so many core skills is truly unparalleled.

Trixter X-Bikes. Used in over 300+ UK schools and commercial clubs offer bikes suitable for 6-16yr on the X400 youth bike or 10+yrs on the adult bike. X-bikes have resistance in the handlebars making the riding more realistic, effective and allows for instructor led class or a virtual reality projection for the users to follow and teacher/instructor to facilitate. If storage is available these bikes are ideal in any facility class, small group PT or as part of traditional circuits.

The benefit of all systems is the interaction and ability of each program to be a great leveller between users allowing all ages and abilities to work side by side. Feedback on all innovative products helps users to learn and compare their OWN results against themselves for improvement. These are equally suitable for women's groups, seniors, sports teams, and business groups.

I believe, and from seeing overseas facilities using these new innovative products, that these are real solutions to the current under utilising of facilities. The ultimate goal is to offer more solutions so users can rotate through programs eg. having DDR in a group fitness room, running Sportwall at one end of the stadium, having rooms with Trixter bikes that offer more program solutions with their upper body resistance.

Remember space is the key, but it is what you make of it. Don't think that because you have some under-utilised areas that a simple bit of marketing will work with 'old school' programs. Think bigger picture and longer term. Create and try different programs and consider new innovations that cross multiple demographics and you can explore a greater return on your investment whilst making an impact on more people lives.

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David has been in the fitness, physical education and sport industry for 15 years and is deeply passionate at helping the greater population find lifestyle balance and health through exercise. David's experience includes corporate health, health club management, Personal Training, coaching and training athletes young and old. In 2006 he set up two award winning express health studios for the de-conditioned/uninitiated public, proving his theory that facilities need not offer traditional facilities and services to specifically target the market and make a difference to the wider community. These experiences have provided a broad insight to the education and fitness industries need, for programs that deliver to a greater population and provide the development of exercise as a lifelong habit. David now shares his knowledge and experience through speaking, writing and his role at EYE Fitness. EYE fitness imports, sells and trains users, businesses and schools on the benefits of innovative exercise equipment, education and exergaming products to enhance adherence, participation, enjoyment and connection to the benefits of exercise. David has sourced the majority of the products offered by EYE fitness for the simple reason - they work, and make a difference for users and business/schools.