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Getting the UK active

David Stalker sheds some light on why the Fitness Industry Association has become 'ukactive' and why a new new logo and new colour palette means a new vibrancy for the organisation.

In all the years I have been working in this sector, the pace of change has never been greater. We all have to adapt to an increasingly demanding consumer base, in a digital age, with a flat-lining economy. This is driving rapid innovation and change. No longer just a world of 'fitness'; organisations across leisure, sport, physical activity, nutrition, health and business, are starting to come together to help improve the health of the nation.

And it can't come a moment too soon. The nation needs to be more active. It's not a choice: it's an unquestionable duty that we have to fulfil. Physical activity, including sport, is intrinsically linked to the future of our National Health Service as we struggle to meet the rising costs of an ageing population and the increasing burden of lifestyle-related diseases. Only a third of adults currently meet the chief medical officer guidelines for physical activity, while physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality and costs the UK economy £8.2 billion per year.

With this backdrop ukactive (sic) was launched in November 2012 following a period of extensive consultation with stakeholders across the world of sport and fitness lasting over twelve months. Readers may know us as the FIA (Fitness Industry Association) – the trade body launched 21 years ago to champion more people, more active, more often. In that time the sector has changed and so have we. Our members and partners reflect the connections we are seeing across the physical activity landscape, comprising everyone from traditional gyms and leisure centres to outdoor fitness providers, councils, nutrition companies, groups delivering community sport, charities, members of the medical community and large corporate brands.

ukactive is our new name and with this comes a new logo, new colour palette and new vibrancy. However, I will reiterate that it is not about our name but about our vision. And that mission remains 100% the same. As ukactive, we will always live and breathe our long-standing and uncompromising focus of more people, more active, more often in order to get the UK active.

ukactive will work with any organisation with a role to play in, or benefit to be gained from, getting more people, more active, more often. We aim to achieve this by facilitating big-impact partnerships, championing innovation, providing high-quality services to our members and partners, campaigning, providing research and sharing insights. We do not intend to always be the lead in these advancements but to support organisations that are working towards these objectives, where that is more appropriate. However, what we do bring to the table is the breadth and reach of our members and partners.

For instance, Water Babies is teaching 30,000 babies to swim every week, Premier Sport are teaching 150,000 children to get more active in schools every week, and Everyone Active have a database of over one million people they are supporting to get more active. These members www.theleisurereview.co.uk

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and partners have the size and scale to get the UK active; we are just supporting them to do so, in the best way that we can. Our summit in November 2012 helped to build on some key aspirations for the organisation and the sector. We were delighted to get overwhelming backing from our key stakeholders, partners and even a positive mention from the PM.

At the Summit, we tested out some of the core objectives for ukactive in the future. These include:

Establish physical activity as a core business of the NHS, building bridges between the medical and activity sectors, with an emphasis on those most in need

To do this we will continue to build the evidence base through our work with the ukactive Research Institute at the University of Greenwich and the Medical Royal Colleges. We will seek to work with the new national centres for sport and exercise medicine, and to support the government's Change4Life campaign. As the responsibility for delivering public health shifts towards local commissioning, we will encourage our members and partners to build relationships with the newly formed clinical commissioning groups, local authorities and Public Health England, continuing to strengthen the role and ability of general practitioners to play a role in this agenda. Our partnership with the Local Government Association will help support local councils in meetings their new health responsibilities. We will work with our partners to showcase excellence and best practice, ensuring that health is recognised in all relevant policies across government both nationally and locally – in particular, travel, leisure and sport.

Secure the wide-ranging support of business and major commercial brands to engage their colleagues and consumers in healthier lifestyle choices

We need to open up the responsibility for delivery a legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to a wider grouping of brands that want to contribute. All employers, large and small, can and should play a role in promoting health and wellbeing to their own employees. We have successfully facilitated partnerships with large brands including Danone and Asda by working with the supermarket, Sport England and our members to bring 20 family sports days to hard-to-reach communities across the UK.

Promote the latest innovations in technology and its power to support people to become more active

Working with our members, partners and stakeholders we are harnessing the power of technology, encouraging organisations across the sector to place technology at the heart of strategy for growth. This includes exploring the value in what operators in the sector already have, billions of lines of data sat within our existing operating systems, awaiting some form of analysis. In order to maximise our chances of success in this area and given the extent of resources available and expertise within the sector, we have to place collaboration at the heart of our strategy. As an obvious objective, we have to complete the job of making it as easy and routine to consume sports and physical activity services online as booking a train ticket, hotel room or completing your weekly shop; we have launched spogo.co.uk in partnership with Sport England to fulfil this need.

The UK activity sector should be a priority sector for investment in education and skills

ukactive is working with key bodies in this aspect of the sector, including SkillsActive and CIMSPA, to ensure that the needs of employers and the general public are taken into account in all matters relating to the

education and training of our workforce and to continue to promote professionalism and high-quality services across the entire sector.

Champion the priority that should be attached to promoting active lifestyles across all relevant government departments

We aim to promote a cross-government, cross-party strategy for sport and physical activity, a strategy that shadow secretary of health Andy Burnham reinforced in his speech to delegates at the summit. London 2012 was a great example of several years of cross-party collaboration; this cannot be the government that inherited the Games but lost the legacy.

Supporting the community sport sector

We will continue to work with Sport England and national governing bodies of sport (NGB) to grow participation in sport, and develop partnerships that between NGBs and operators, such as the recently launched Cardio Tennis which we are delivering to members in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association.

Establish active lifestyles as early as possible

Via such initiatives as supporting mums-to-be to be active, teaching physical literacy in schools, incentivising families to be active or promoting the development of policy relating to school activity based on impact on health and evidence; supporting the integration of local community clubs and activity providers into promoting school sports.

These are just a handful of our core aims that we hope to work with the sector to achieve; in addition to that we will ensure that our bedrock of success, our core membership, are engaged with the mission, and brought with us on the journey.

David Stalker is the chief executive of 'ukactive'.

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