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“Where do we (as an industry) need to invest to improve the levels of education, certification, continued development and professional registration for fitness and wellness professionals in Asia-Pacific?”

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Ryan Hogan
CEO, APAC
Les Mills

In the era of ultra-competitiveness in which we live, we believe that the only way any brand, organisation or industry is going to win is by investing in its people. People are the single biggest differentiator and driver of success, and a sure-fire way to ensure your people are the best at what they do, is by investing in their education and growth. There's no question that when an industry can come together and agree on a minimum level of qualification and development, standards rise. Australia and New Zealand are world leaders in fitness, and having agreed minimum education standards for trainers and instructors has been a key contributor to this success. The minimum standards pave the way for a high quality of fitness professionals in the marketplace which professionalises our services and increases value. In the APAC region, with markets in such different stages of development, agreeing on common standards will be a difficult task. The good news is that best practice models already exist in other parts of the world and we can learn from the successes and challenges that other countries with systems in place have experienced and extract the best bits, for our benefit. Common standards, while not the 'sexiest' item on anyone's to-do list are of benefit to industry professionalism and ultimately growth. And at the end of the day, both are the responsibility of all industry players. Large organisations like ours (Les Mills) that operate across different regions and countries can also provide valuable contributions to these processes. We pride ourselves in our global standard of instructor training, having now certified in excess of 120,000 people globally to teach our programs. These standards form the base of our quality control system which has helped position us as the global leader in group fitness.



Stacey Seward Vandiver
Co-Founder and CEO
SoulBody

As the fitness industry continues to grow, there are many factors that play in its success and development. One area not to be overlooked, as it is an integral part of most clubs, is Group Fitness. Group Fitness is at an all-time high as the boom of the boutique studios is happening globally. These studios are creating experiences that are fun, new and exciting. Programming in health clubs need to stay current, smart and relative to what members are seeking as they now have choices. To make this successful and 'future-proof' Group Fitness, investment needs to come from not only exploring new programming that can be found at trade shows, conferences and fitness networking events, but from the ground up. Operators and directors that support their team through internal education, develop instructors that are skilled to deliver an experience and motivate its members. I have witnessed this first-hand by working closely with SuperMonkey clubs in China. The time they spend with their trainers to bring them up to speed on new programming (and feeling confident to lead their classes) makes a noticeable difference in the level of instruction. Investment in hiring a team that supports and educates from the ground up will keeps members coming back for more as connections and experiences are created.



Dennis Hosking
 Founder & CEO
 FITREC

I believe the answer is contained within the question - Professional registration, itself, is the catalyst for improving levels of education, certification and ongoing development among industry professionals. Without registration, social media becomes the measuring stick by which professionals are compared. Vanity metrics, like 'Follows' and 'Likes' take the place of true understanding and commitment to the role. And while there is no denying that social media metrics have their place, if our desire is to improve how we are perceived as an industry, we need to adopt a more relevant benchmarking tool. Registration provides the tool to measure, and what gets measured gets managed. With registration, in particular, with FITREC, the transparency and accountability provided encourages ongoing development. Professionals can benchmark themselves against others, both locally and internationally - we are, after all, a global fitness industry and share common values, tools and education. So where does the industry need to invest? The logical investment is in actively supporting and encouraging the registration of our fitness professionals. For example, making it a 'highly regarded' component in job ads, sharing registration details with clients or even assisting with/sponsoring registration purchases. It will encourage ongoing development. It will improve our standing among the general public and allied health sector and, with all learning and experience visible, it has the added benefit of providing clearer pathways to development for new professionals.



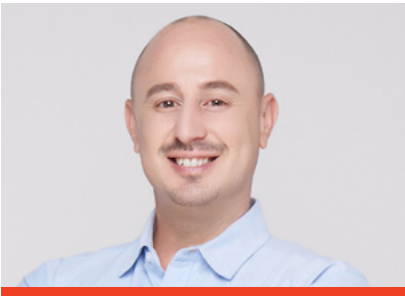
Graham Melstrand
 Executive Vice President,
 Engagement
 American Council On
 Exercise (ACE)

ACE advocates for elevating the role of exercise professionals and health coaches in Asia-Pacific and globally. We believe the greatest impact can be seen in two areas: (i) investing in formal educational programs that prepare exercise professionals for careers in health/fitness at the vocational/technical and university level; and (ii) forming national registries for qualified exercise professionals. These two investments will enhance the competence of practitioners and improve the confidence of consumers, employers, and referring professionals by providing a resource for positive credential verification. This will help position exercise professionals as a credible resource for consumers seeking to enhance their health, fitness, or sports performance by three key avenues. (1) 'Setting a standard for acceptable education based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the job roles represented on the registries.' ACE further believes that individuals should hold a current certification from a third-party accredited certification program. Programs should include a competency-based exam, a professional development requirement, and a disciplinary process to protect consumers. (2) 'Defining professionalism.' As the industry and profession work towards earning recognition that other health occupations enjoy, exercise professionals and employers must act with a high level of integrity and understand how our actions impact the perception the industry as a legitimate expert resource in health, fitness, or wellness. (3) 'Supporting the portability of credentials.' For exercise professionals, being formally recognized on one registry would allow for reciprocal recognition on other registries which supports the development and maturation of the workforce. This provides benefits for all stakeholders including professionals, employers and consumers.



Ben Wilde
 International Director,
 Training & Education
Matrix / Johnson Health Tech

I've managed various teams in a range of roles but a fundamental belief in education and personal development has underpinned everyone – so you could say I'm biased. Today we are presented with a myriad of educational opportunities – so many that it can be hard to prioritize. A personal audit of skills can helpfully guide everyone to areas which will make the biggest difference to them and those that they interact with. Historically, I focused on resistance training and effective application of biomechanics but that's not what I would primarily prompt further study of. Sure, it's helpful to really understand the effect of the loads we are imposing on the human body and their likely outcomes (both positive and negative), yet we know that the vast majority of populations, especially in Asia, are not sufficiently engaged by what we offer as an industry and how we offer it. Consequently, I genuinely believe that learning focused on behavioural science is likely to have the biggest impact. Our industry speaks knowledgeably of the need to 'attract, retain and engage' members. I feel the same about fitness professionals – one of the ways we can really help is to provide real learning of personal interactions which can maximize the likelihood that those we are working with keep coming back. That way we can help them get real results and make the difference which prompted many of us to enter this terrific industry in the first place.



Drew Campbel
 Managing Partner, Asia
**International Society of
 Sports Nutrition**

The industry is on fire, yet with the blazing inferno also comes many opportunists investing into the marketplace. From the West there are many trying to push their way into the market or have country partners representing their brand of fitness education, and from the East there are some that are setting up their own shop and curriculum. Mostly it is good education, but due to the growth there are also some offering low quality and, in some cases, copy and paste information with little substance to no substance. Fitness education is no different than any other information and needs to be quality and authentic to have any value. The unfortunate reality is that some trainers care only about the piece of paper they can receive, but there is a growing segment caring about the knowledge they gain from a course vs. the certification alone. Without quality education it is just a piece of paper and a certification with no practical value. We at The International Society of Sports Nutrition (ISSN) take great pride on providing the highest quality of sports nutrition education first as well as the globally recognised certification. We therefore do not cater to all trainers in Asia, some want the cheapest program possible, this is not ISSN, and ISSN does not compromise on the quality we offer. With often 80% of the results in the gym, sport or fat loss coming from diet and nutrition it is an area that is too important to compromise on. I believe investment should go into quality of education vs. the monetary gain alone, which will in turn greatly help the industry grow and be sustainable at the same time.



Suzanne Hosley
 Founder
Asia Fitness Conference
 Managing Director
FIT Thailand

That really depends on the country, for example, Thailand, Hong Kong and the Philippines are way ahead of other countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, in terms of university education in the field. Some fitness chains in Thailand and the Philippines do not hire fitness professionals without a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in Exercise or Sports Science. This is not true in most of the region. So, basic education in exercise and sports science needs to be better developed (and more valued!) in most of Asia. Fitness certification and continuing education are not required in Asia. Mandatory certification makes being a fitness professional expensive since institutions can charge whatever they want. That is not so good. Because fitness certification is not required, it means that people who get certified and continue their education are doing so because they believe in it, a positive! Of course, if also means that many 'fitness professionals' have no education or training in the field...that is not so good for the industry. Should we require certification in Asia, the industry should invest in developing a system that is relevant to Asian countries. Most fitness professionals here are certified by Western certification agencies, even though the lifestyles, nutrition, health and fitness issues in Asia are very different to those in the West. I'd like to see the industry invest in reviewing and issuing guidelines pertinent to Asian fitness issues. Local fitness certification and training should be developed and valued in the long run.



Joanne West
 Director
FitnessSG
 Co-Founder
ExPRO Fitness

Fitness is an innovative and progressive industry that's rapidly becoming digitally driven and in this competitive profession your people are your differentiators. It is therefore vital for exercise professionals to keep on top of industry trends, strategies and trainings to remain relevant to prospective employers and push our fitness businesses to the top of an increasingly competitive market. It's clear that as a collective all fitness and wellness providers contribute towards the sustainability and growth of a world class industry that embraces knowledge sharing, and in order to thrive we also need to enforce our credibility as a professionalised industry. In SE Asia this is increasingly apparent and achieving this demands quality assurance and recognition of standards, acknowledgement of accountability and acceptance that our profession is one of a specialized skill set that requires certification and training, in order to provide best practice to our clients. This does not dictate or limit individual experience nor professional trajectories but rather endorses the credibility of our industry and sets the foundation for specialised pathways and continued development. Collaborative and inclusive platforms that promote professional recognition offer an opportunity to raise the standards for fitness and instil confidence in our profession from government bodies, regulatory authorities, allied health and private health providers. With an imminent crisis of ASEAN's healthcare spending expected to reach US\$740 billion in 2025, building the bridge between the fitness and healthcare industry, allowing for a more concerted 'preventive' effort, is one area of focus. Embracing supportive networks and investment in and exposure to international education not only creates an opportunity to elevate our workforce, protect the reputation of our industry and promote career enhancements, it also has the potential for international progression for our industry in SE Asia.



Eugene Lee
 Founder and CEO
 ELCA Asia

Our industry has no lack of quality education, certifications and continued education opportunities. The education component in our industry is a fast-booming business compared to just over a decade ago. As much as this has given rise to the status of our professionals, the real question would be, would more education equate to professional growth and increased business for these professionals and their respective organizations? The amount of technical expertise tends to be the key highlight of what many of us aim for: the “WHAT to train”. New methods, updated research, popular certifications, etc. Don’t get me wrong, it’s always crucial to be on top of your game. However, the HOWs and WHYs of growing, retaining and troubleshooting daily issues as a professional in the field is usually based on figuring it out eventually through experience, or never. Have you ever asked such questions? (i) “How can I collect overdue payments or charge for cancellations without losing your customer eventually?” (ii) “How can I maintain good CRM for long-term?” (iii) “What’s the balance between getting more clients and investing time in growing your business?” (iv) “Is there more to just training clients after a decade?” Before we all jump onto the bandwagon of chasing more certificates in the fitness and wellness industry, the fact is the pathway of growth is somewhat limited to a certain extent. The greatest investment from an education perspective needs to address our profession that includes strong skills in business, marketing and CRM. There’s obviously more than that, but this makes a good point to start with. If we are looking at reducing the turnover rate and long-term sustainability of our careers, we need to stay relevant, beyond technical knowledge.



Shawn Sugendran
 Founder and CEO
 Singapore Wellness Centre

Before we explore this further, we must take stock of the technological challenges facing the industry. The concept of mobile fitness and fit-tech are real challenges today, which will displace thousands of personal trainers in Asia Pacific and around the world. In fact, it is already displacing many of them as we speak. The biggest question to ask is how are personal trainers commanding per hour fees more valuable than a mobile app where the customer pays USD10 flat per month? What is the personal trainer’s value proposition? Only when we answer that question, we will know what is really needed in terms of certification, education, continuing development and professional registration. The answer lies in evolution. Not natural evolution but radically engineered evolution. And the community must be ready to embrace radical change else they will be lost in translation. Singapore Wellness Centre is now working with various stakeholders to expose threats, identify opportunities; bridge the gaps and future proof this industry. In our engagement with current and new stakeholders we are seeing lots of synergy and buy in to move things forward. We are also embracing the tech threat by incorporating the threat into the change. It is time to spawn a whole new generation of personal trainers, fully qualified and equipped professionals and specialists who are in the forefront of cutting-edge fitness, science and medicine, fully capable of managing people of all faculties and health conditions. That is my grand vision.

A big thank you to this month's contributors



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Asia Fitness & Wellness Summit

25 September 2019

Mira Hotel, Hong Kong

The Business Network for Health, Fitness & Wellness

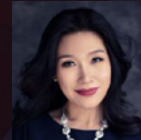
Confirmed Speakers Include



Rey Bolivar
COO
Will's Group



Danny Yeung
Co-Founder and Group CEO
Prenetics Group



Christy Cao
Founder, Chairman and
CEO
Powerhouse Gym (China)



Adam Sedlack
President
UFC Gym



John Gillman
Head, Health Solutions
(APAC)
Fitbit



Andrea Lomas
Group Head, Spa
Operations,
Mandarin Oriental
Hotel Group



**Heather Thomas
Shalabi**
Founder
Flex Studio



Mignonne Chen
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Wellness (APAC)
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Bali Wellness Summit

28 November 2019

Alila Seminyak, Bali, Indonesia

**The Business Network for
Health, Fitness & Wellness**



Confirmed Speakers Include



Tony De Leede
Renowned Wellness and
Fitness Entrepreneur



**Lindsay Madden-
Nadeau**
Global Director, Well-Being
AccorHotels



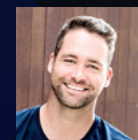
Jeremy McCarthy
Group Head, Spa & Wellness
Mandarin Oriental Hotel
Group



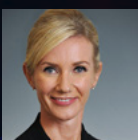
Meghan Pappenheim
Co-Founder
The Yoga Barn and The
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Karoonkornsakul**
Founder and CEO
Absolute Group



Peter Thew
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Niamh O'Connell
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