

# IHRSA 2009

## Innovations For Hospitality Fitness

The economy has the industry in a bit of a holding pattern where the future is concerned. However, it is clear from what attendees saw on display at the International Health, Racquet and Sports Club Association's annual convention and trade show that manufacturers and industry professionals are focusing their efforts on expanding the evolution of the digital platforms introduced in 2008. A handful of products at this year's show are unique for their relevance to the needs of hospitality and resort-based fitness environments.

### Virtual Fitness

Virtual reality technology has brought the once-divergent worlds of digital gaming and fitness together. The results are entertaining, individual training platforms that offer a host of resources and place users in unique virtual environments at the push of a button.

One particularly strong product is the E-Spinner by Star Trac. The E-Spinner represents one of the first examples of a conventional cardio-vascular training mechanism modified into an instructional, simulated group-exercise experience for the individual, without the need for a live instructor. The product is a top of the line spinning bike combined with a full color, touch-screen monitor. Once on the bike, the rider plugs in a pair of headphones, straps on a heart rate monitor, and a world of options appear, including instructors and training programs to suit the user's preferences, conditioning and goals. Perhaps the greatest feature of this new bike is that your guests can bring their own iPods and dock into the monitor so that the system can integrate their favorite Playlists right into the pace of the workout! Bottom line, the personalized training and exercise experience delivered here is one-of-a-kind and bound to wow your guests. You'll likely need to add a couple. Surprisingly, they sell for less than the average treadmill or elliptical, so in today's market this might just be the best way to update your current fitness offering without the capital costs of an extensive renovation.

Another company gaining a lot of attention is I-Tech Fitness and its XRKADE. The XRKade is similar to a gaming system found in an arcade setting, and it allows the user to choose a variety of games that are based on different forms of exercise or activity. For example, a user could engage in a full-blown karate battle, surf Hawaii's majestic waves, cycle through the European countryside or participate in a high-energy dance



E-Spinner's full-color touchscreen monitor makes a simulated group exercise experience possible for individuals without a live instructor.



The XRKade, with its varied product applications, provides potential for new revenue when offered on a pay-for-use basis.

competition – all from a single XRKade machine. Though originally conceived and created in response to the childhood obesity crisis as a means of getting children to be more active, the XRKade is fun for everyone. Thus, it is an ideal solution for family-vacation travelers.

In addition to the space-saving and “limited- to no-staffing” benefits provided by the E-Spinner and XRKade products, they provide potential for new revenue if offered on a pay-for-use basis. Creating a Fitness Suite or allowing guests to rent these units in-room on an as-requested basis may prove to be another great way to keep up with the growing guest demand for fitness. With the support of basic, yet effective, in-room and in-facility marketing collateral (e.g., brochures, one-sheets, posters, etc.), a facility can create excitement and demand for these innovative new products, driving usage and revenue.

Gaming-based fitness programs have become very popular with consumers in residential environments, thanks to products like Nintendo’s Wii-Fit. These products are providing consumers, who in many cases avoid the traditional

health club experience, an entertaining way to get fit and stay fit. The evolution of these residential products has paved the way for hotels and resorts to offer similar solutions. Suddenly, fitness-driven revenue streams are not limited to the fitness center itself, but can expand to the in-room experience. Hotel, villa and condo operators should



Precor's low-profile S-Line circuit machines are a good fit for hospitality's limited-space applications.

be considering the addition of products like Wii-Fit as an in-room guest option.

### Multi-Purpose Space Savers

The digital revolution isn't at the heart of everything new in fitness. Other manufacturers have developed products that are extremely practical and uniquely applicable to the hotel, resort and hospitality environments.

Precor has introduced its new “S-Line” of strength circuit-training equipment. The S-Line machines work extremely well for hospitality fitness centers, whether you are designing new space or reallocating existing space, as these machines are low-profile and ideal for smaller rooms where maximizing space is critical. The line is very user-friendly and doesn't require an extensive learning curve for effective use – an ideal feature for hospitality applications, since users are often in and out; this ensures they can use the product successfully, right away.

Another innovative product, the XTrainer from SportsArt Fitness, is a multi-purpose product that offers a legitimate total body workout. The XTrainer XT20 and XT50 both combine a recumbent bicycle with an upright rowing machine, providing a challenging and effective upper and lower body workout. So often, cardio-vascular machines such



as treadmills, recumbent bicycles or stair climbers only focus on the lower body. But the cardiovascular benefits of challenging the upper body are incredibly important. The XTrainer targets both.

Once again, since space considera-

tions typically limit the number of machines or “exercise stations” in a hospitality setting, products like the XTrainer can do the job of what would normally take a couple of machines to achieve. In addition, the XTrainer line

features a user-friendly interface, allowing the guest to choose from a variety of program options with step-by-step instructions that make it easy.

Today’s fitness providers are striving to meet guests where they are, no matter their current fitness level, age or dexterity. Whether high-tech products based on the integration of digital technology for added interest, or incredibly simple, practical yet highly effective options for more serious fitness-minded guests, hospitality suppliers continue to innovate to offer your guests new and valuable solutions to getting fit. **R+R**

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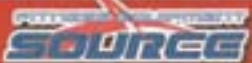
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