



## 2016 Fitness Industry Forecast According To John Fuller, Plus Fitness 24/7

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*In our [Summer 2015 edition of the WNiF Magazine](#), we chatted exclusively to some key industry players. Here is the full Q&A with John Fuller, Company Franchisor and founding Director of Plus Fitness. Plus Fitness currently has approximately 170 Plus Fitness Clubs, either open or scheduled to open, with a goal of servicing 150,000 members by early 2016.*

### **How would you summarise your brand's achievements in 2015?**

Despite an overall slowdown in the growth of 24 hour gyms, Plus Fitness opened a club every 14 days throughout 2015 with our First International Club opening in December 2015. We have an enormous amount of momentum which will carry this through 2016 with a goal of 200 franchise units either sold or open by the end of 2016. Whilst we continue to see Franchisee growth we are extremely focused on our ongoing support and have expanded our Field Manager Support Team to ensure all clubs remain profitable and relative in an ever changing fitness market. From a marketing perspective we continue to achieve great results through our social media initiatives and interactions, our national television brand awareness through motorsport sponsorship and in particular entering a Plus Fitness Car into the Bathurst 1000. We have also secured a true icon of Australian sport, Sally Pearson as our Brand Ambassador. As Sally prepares herself for the Rio 2016 Plus Fitness will be working with her to help achieve her Olympic Goals as well as a range of marketing and fitness initiatives to motivate members, the public and increase our brand awareness.

### **What key industry developments do you predict will take place in 2016?**

We are very much aware that the industry, as it always has, works in "cycles" and the 24-hour gym market is not immune to this. In fact it could be argued they are more prone to risk of the changes within our industry, which is why it is imperative for both Nigel and I as Franchisors and our entire Head Office Team, stay at the forefront of these changes as the industry shifts and we shows strong direction and leadership to be able to adapt to the changes without compromising the low cost operating model of a 24-hour gym. Having the foresight and ability to do this will continue to set Plus Fitness apart and will provide our Franchisees with continued

prosperity. We have seen a huge increase in independent operators and larger chains implement changes too quickly and make knee jerk reactions without consideration to the operating costs in a desperate effort to retain members and increase services. We believe remaining relative can still be achieved with a more considered approach through the use of technology and existing resources without the need to increase operating expenditure. A combination of high establishment costs and increased pressure to spend more money on services will impact on many 24-hour and traditional gym operators in 2016 both independents and franchises.

**What impact do you see personal fitness technology (e.g., wearables, training apps, etc) having on clubs and/or the industry next year?**

Personal fitness technology will have a positive effect on awareness within our industry which will have an initial flow on affect to increased memberships as a result. Like any new “fitness craze” however technology will change quickly as we have already seen with products such as a Fitbit and the Apple Watch. Ultimately it will, like all products in our industry have a levelling effect and clubs that can simplify the interaction between technology , the member and the gym they attend will have the most long term benefit from the new technology that will be in abundance to the end user, which will no doubt become the new “ab roller” of current times.

**Do you have any predictions or thoughts regarding developments in gym and/or cardio technology next year?**

As personal fitness technology becomes more “mainstream” cardio integration with media will become less important as people use their own devices to achieve a far greater range of options than integrated media solutions can provide as they will become out dated far quicker than a personal hand held device will and club owners generally only update their cardio every five years or so at best.

**What do you think may be the next big thing in group fitness, in 2016?**

As traditional big box gyms continue to struggle to provide a large of array services without increased membership income, and high operating costs we believe small group fitness classes and outdoor options will continue to enjoy popularity as will an increase in virtual style classes.

**What changes or developments, if any, do you think will occur in 2016 in the landscape of personal and/or outdoor training?**

We believe personal fitness services and outdoor training will continue to see steady numbers particularly with functional style training becoming more popular within our industry. I still however, see functional style training (much like yoga in the 90s) as a cottage industry and not sustainable as a business model in main stream society. This is of particular interest to smaller CrossFit-style businesses with higher operating costs than an outdoor PT or PTs operating within in a gym. As Functional Training becomes more popular I believe it will (again just like yoga) become “mainstream” in gyms and will put pressure on these smaller studios to survive with a limited market. Those who can capitalise on this in their gyms without increasing their overheads will survive through this adjustment period.

**Do you predict any significant changes in your or the industry’s membership base (e.g., who is doing what – male/female/baby boomers; changes in demographics/psychographics; uptake of PT services, etc)?**

With the inception of 24-hour gyms we have already seen a massive increase in in gym participation rates over the past four years , something the industry has struggled to achieve in the 15 years prior. Although 24-hour gyms may not be able to take all the credit for this the fact that they seem to have broken down a lot of barriers to joining a gym, perhaps by their accessibility, flexibility and affordability is a great thing for our industry despite the shake-up they have created. Remaining credible is very important for all gym operators and the focus on members well-being and the reasons why we all started in this industry is now paramount. Working with doctors, governments and allied health professionals to achieve this should be a focus for us all and raising the bar when it comes to personal health and wellbeing and our collective ability to achieve this will help secure a strong future for our industry. I believe we can achieve this as well as operate successfully as the market becomes more educated and mature.