



## Clubs And Manufacturers Go Beyond Exertainment

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**Many of you who have been** in the industry for several years might recall the early attempts at combining exercise and entertainment, many of which focused on technology platforms. These products and projects were described by pundits and product managers under different categories including "exertainment," gaming while exercising, etc. Sadly, almost all of these concepts have been shelved or greatly diminished in their promise because, quite simply, they didn't work.

Equipment product departments (and some health clubs) are littered with the carcasses of beta tested or early versions that failed. Here are some of the reasons why.

The majority of the 40,000-plus exercisers we've coached or personal trained over the years have informed us that although they value the outcomes associated with exercise, they don't necessarily love the process. In fact, many of our former and current clients tell us that they want to "zone out" or be distracted while exercising. Now certainly exercisers need to know that they are exercising effectively and safely and have equipment and trainers to set these parameters. Beyond that, many would like to "check out" by not having to engage their brains while exercising. If you question this, simply wander your club's floor and you'll find that an increasing number of your members are hooked up to a handheld music device, or watching television while on cardiovascular equipment.

The personal technology industry has already responded to this need by producing and selling huge numbers of personal entertainment devices, from MP3 players to personal, mini disc players and other "flash memory" devices that allow users to listen to music, books on tape, and even videos or movies, anytime and anywhere. This trend will continue to increase rapidly as technology becomes less expensive, memory becomes more portable and products durable enough to hold up to the demands of sweating, active bodies.

The real news is that equipment manufacturers are beginning to truly understand what exercisers want and will use. We interviewed personal technology entertainment device executives, fitness equipment manufacturer product managers and, most importantly, regular exercisers, and here's what we found:

Personal entertainment devices will continue to evolve into products that are flexible and portable enough to not only store music but also to withstand sweat, heat and humidity, and the inevitable pounding that comes with people who are active.

Devices will also offer small screens that allow active people to watch favorite videos, exercise sessions and even television programs. After-market products will also include audio and video meditation, relaxation and other mind/body components. Some are already available that provide music syncopated to keep a user's heart rate in the proper zone and intensity level while exercising.

Technology companies will offer protective casing that repels sweat and devices will be waterproof for swimming.

Portable players will have the ability to sync up with existing club technology. This will include the ability to wirelessly connect with a club's sound and television system and, in some cases, use a cardiovascular machine to not only watch television or listen to music, but also charge their portable device's batteries while doing so.

Products on the drawing board include features such as wireless receptors and radio stations built into the console of the machines to allow users to listen to music wirelessly or download pre-recorded and pre-stored workouts.

Any TVs in a club can pick up music with videos, educational clips and even messages from the facility, local medical practitioner's health tips through [www.clubcom.com](http://www.clubcom.com).

Video and audio downloads on equipment will be available to help educate users about supplementation and sports-specific training. In some cases, users will be able to download workouts to their personal devices at hotel gyms while they're traveling, spending time outdoors and even staying at home. Manufacturers will increasingly make their Web sites more interactive so visitors can download workouts, videos of exercise "how to's" and a variety of other helpful tools.

Admittedly, these are "stretch" goals for club managers and owners in our current environment, but we must remember that the sales/marketing choice must start and end with your customer. These are the needs that keep

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