



## The Future Of Fitness Technology

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Focus On Technology by Gregory Florez

As with other industries, we in the fitness industry tend to become stale and myopic about the future of equipment, trends, and tools that can further our businesses. This is a very natural tendency that we operate within our limited, existing ecosystem. However, thought leaders in every industry have stepped outside of the bubble of their peer's limited thinking to generate products and services that gives birth to creative breakthroughs. Think of Steven Jobs, CEO of Apple, and his continuing success with his suite of iPod products. Certainly Mr. Job's uncanny vision of what consumers want and will use is unique. Yet, he continues to capture the zeitgeist of not only the consumer but also understands how individuals want to experience their media.

This month we've interviewed an executive with a company that continues to spend time and enormous resources thinking about how consumers will use technology in their lives in the future. In this interview we'll concentrate on the enormous challenges facing our industry and the broader health care industry that exist right now.

Jonathon Puskas is a strategic platform planner for Intel's Digital Health Group. A division of Intel, he is committed to changing the game on how consumers interact with their personal computers in the areas of personal care, health and fitness, and management of chronic diseases.

**Gregory Florez:** What macro trends do you see evolving in the next 12 to 18 months that involve technology in the health and fitness arena?

**John Puskas:** Aging populations, those over 60, outnumber those in their 20s for the first time in our history and will do so in the foreseeable future. Chronic illnesses will affect well over 500 million people by 2008. Forty-five percent of Americans already deal with chronic disease on a daily basis. The Center for Disease Control shows that we have a certified epidemic of individuals dealing with lifestyle-related diseases. There are essentially two places to "play" in this arena: treatment and prevention. We look at markets from frail patients in their later stages of life (those with multiple co-morbidities, diabetes and heart disease) to diet and fitness fanatics already using technology as a way to manage, monitor and reach their lofty goals. The third category, arguably the most fertile for the fitness industry is comprised of "the worried well"—those between 30 and 45 who, although not yet ill, have a family history of diseases and risk factors (or simply want to stay proactive in their health and nutrition). Think of your member or customer who thinks "I'm paying attention to my health while not necessarily being a hard core four to six times-a-week exerciser." These are the people we believe represent one of the most fertile groups for technology partnerships on which to concentrate.

All of these categories are becoming regular users of technology particularly using their home personal computers. Early adopters, generally athletes, have been using technology that started with heart rate but now include devices that measure speed, altitude, power, cadence, all of which are uploadable to their coaches. With this group, the days of scratching around in log book are over. It is becoming much easier to make these devices even more compatible with PCs. This aggregation will lead to more seamless use of pedometers, weight scales, even virtual training modalities for all exercisers, not just athletes. Fitness companies recognize that downloading enhances the viability and efficiency of exercise devices which, therefore, increases adherence and goal achievement.

**GF:** How will technology companies support or interact with the fitness industry including manufacturers, clubs and practitioners?

**JP:** First of all Intel does not aspire to build exercise equipment, training devices and other peripherals that will take market share away from fitness equipment manufacturers. Intel hopes to act in a leadership role to enable the fitness ecosystem, drive standards and interoperability of devices and equipment, improve consumer ease of use and out-of-box experience in set up and use of these new products and devices and by doing so increase market potential, drive new consumers and users and improve the business models for all participants. Intel would also like to help fitness companies better understand technology and use it to interface with PCs and create more visibility to those who may not yet exercise in untapped markets.

**GF:** There appears to finally be a merging of health care, personal care and fitness. From your perspective what does this brave new world look like?

**JP:** We see a definite continuum here. It involves improving quality of life combined with lower health care costs. In the pure health care world there is acute care, specialty medical population care, etc., growing at a record pace. In the middle, assisted living, in its many forms is a growing market. Finally, at the highest are

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