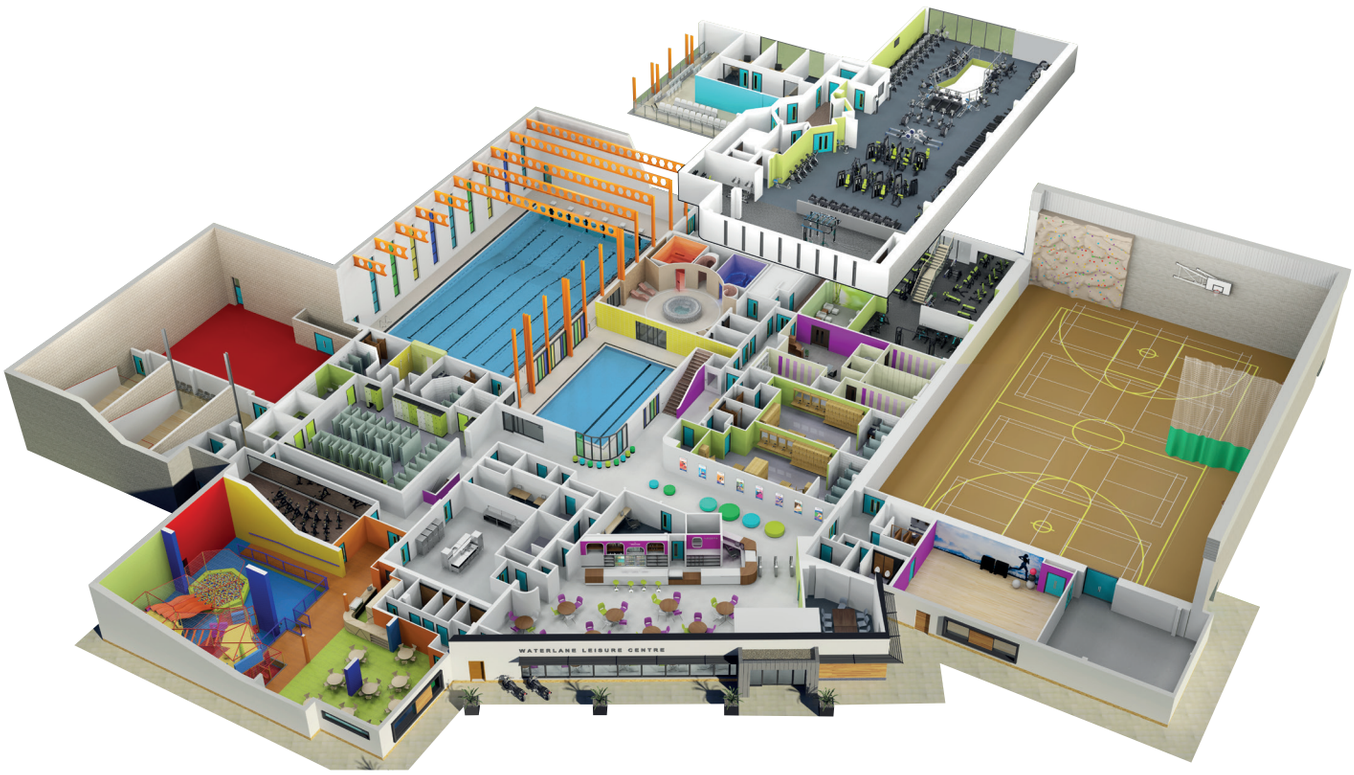
Pulse's leisure development business model a proven success as membership hits a record breaking 620% increase at Waterlane Leisure Centre!



With 35 years' worth of experience, leading leisure solutions company Pulse have first-hand experience of how a leisure facility should not only be designed and equipped, but also supported operationally to flourish in a competitive market.

Pulse were appointed as strategic leisure development partner to Waveney District Council (WDC) in 2010 to project manage the £8m redevelopment of Waterlane Leisure Centre. Since then, Pulse have worked in partnership with WDC and the operators, Sentinel Leisure Trust (SLT), offering a range of business support services that helped the site to take membership from 480 members to in excess of 2,800 in three years, exceeding latent demand by 900 members!

The original redevelopment was so successful that SLT invested a further £1m in 2014 to increase capacity by an additional 30%. Continuing to exceed targets, membership now resides at 3,500 members and growing daily, attrition has dropped to 4% and the average length of stay is a loyal 11 months, all figures contributing to an impressive 18% income increase for the site.

WATERLANE
LEISURE CENTRE

Case Study

Something to shout about!

The old centre was built in the 1970s and required a complete overhaul. Pulse redeveloped the entire facility, refurbishing the swimming pool and adding a brand new learner pool, luxurious thermal spa and village changing area. A 110 station fitness suite was created and the old squash courts were converted into a soft play centre. Additionally a new spin studio, group exercise studio, family change and beauty treatment rooms were also included.

In their partnership role, Pulse delivered all aspects of the redevelopment including a new layout, engaging fitness facilities and total interior and exterior re-fit and have installed the best systems to create a modern and future proof facility. Additionally, for the next 15 years Pulse are wholly responsible for driving membership at the site by managing the centre's sales and marketing.

Branding

Pulse's first and biggest challenge was to develop an effective and informative marketing and communications strategy to raise awareness and commercial identity of the new development to the local community.

Fundamental to the plan was the introduction of a new brand and brand culture which radiated the value proposition of 'something for everyone within a private facility standard at an inclusive price'.

Thus the brand's primary role was to change people's perception and expectation of a typical Local Authority leisure centre by positioning Waterlane Leisure Centre as the leading provider of sports, fitness and leisure in the area.

Pulse deliver a wide range of business support services

In the last 35 years Pulse have provided business support to more than 10,000 fitness facilities. Using this experience they were able to offer a range of operational support services which included;

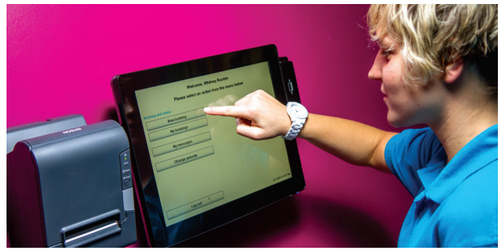
- Leisure business consultancy
- Equipment selection and layout advice
- 2d and 3d gym designs including interior branding
- Sales and marketing management
- Operational management support
- Recruitment, appointment and management of three dedicated sales personnel
- Direct debit and member management
- Web solution with online fitness class booking and member joining portal
- A mobile app with booking class functionally
- Exerp facility management software to support all aspects of a leisure facility including direct debit management, CRM, EPOS, timetabling etc
- Access control system (Gantner RFID)
- IT infrastructure
- Comprehensive ongoing staff training program
- Attractive service and maintenance program.

Branded graphics

Professional training

Sales staff

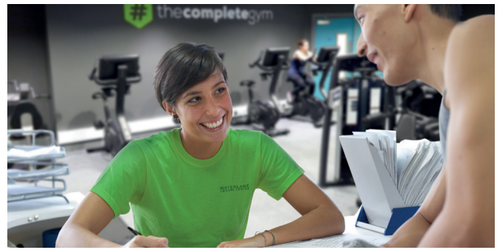
Services delivered



IT support

Pulse installed all communications infrastructure for the site including over 100 user email accounts, phone systems and internet. Additionally all IT hardware including two brand new member booking kiosks and an online class booking system linked to the website.

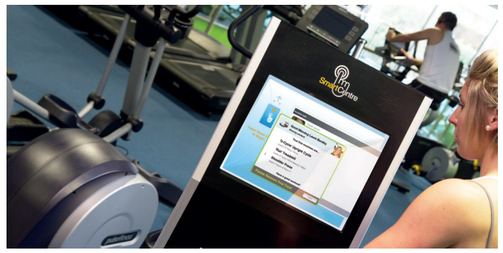
An access control system, which includes entrance barriers at reception and magnetic swipe door entry across the site, was added to the gym, soft play and spa areas to provide the highest level of safety and security for both staff and members. Pulse will continue to provide dedicated IT support for the duration of the partnership.



Sales support

Three dedicated sales team members were recruited by Pulse to implement new sales strategies, policies and procedures. Trained and mentored by Pulse to deliver a positive customer journey, by effective health and fitness promotion and member management.

Part of Pulse' operational practises sees the importance of the customer from all frontline staff, as such sales training and monthly sales and retention meetings are held to keep all staff focussed. In synergy with the marketing plan Pulse have a sales activity plan which details sales accelerators, retention, referral and reactivate initiatives.



Member management software solutions

Pulse installed two systems; Exerp SmartCentre. The two systems seamlessly connect to provide a holistic overview of the facility and membership performance. Market leading Exerp streamlines business processes for WLC by providing paperless direct debit solution, an ecommerce website EPOS system, access control and full reporting suite.

Whilst Pulse's in-house developed SmartCentre captures, analyses and reports on a variety of member and staff data giving SLT tangible results for greater efficiency and profitability, the trust can view reports on KPI's such as gym attendance and staff interactions.

Leisure facility consultancy

Operating in a broad range of markets, with more than 35 years' expertise in the sport, leisure and fitness sectors, Pulse are ideally placed to provide initial and ongoing leisure management consultancy to SLT. From feasibility studies to operating procedures, industry trends to future developments, Pulse draw on their experience and in-house professionals to ensure WLC is a modern, sustainable future proof facility.

A detailed and strategic business plan was created for the site, which included financial planning and pricing policies. The partnership identified the demand for the second stage development.

Modile app

Access control system

Case Study Waterlane Operational Support

Continued professional development and training

From sales, marketing and membership management to preventative maintenance of the fitness equipment and accredited fitness training qualifications Pulse have delivered a range of professional certified training courses to the team at SLT and WLC. Committed to investing in and developing personnel Pulse continually review training plans with the senior management team at SLT.

Marketing

Pulse offer SLT a full service creative marketing agency solution from their UK headquarters, writing marketing strategies for one and five years that cover all aspects of the marketing mix including insight, strategy, design, media planning, print, sales promotions, direct marketing, signage, public relations, on location photography and digital/online.

The first task was to develop the new brand portraying the brands vision of a high standard facility at an inclusive price, offering something for all and ensuring its consistency throughout the centre. This included contemporary, colourful and inspirational graphics.

Brand strategy continued externally building a positive brand awareness that focussed on the target audience, by delivering consistent and integrated marketing communication campaigns and creating positive networking opportunities and partnerships. Delivering more than 20 campaigns to date, campaign themes have included something for all the family, targeted promotions for students, holiday makers and local weight loss groups, referral and reactivate incentives, seasonal offers, and general sales accelerators. Another marketing success for the centre was the introduction of a mobile app detailing information on the centre, classes and pricing with interaction links to social media.

The Results

Since Pulse became the Strategic Leisure Partner for WDC, Waterlane has undergone a dramatic, modern transformation. Membership now sits at 3500. The site has seen the average length of stay increase by 57% and attrition levels have dropped to just 4%. The new online booking and kiosk systems are proving popular, with over 75% of members now using it. The booking facility has reduced queuing times and further improved overall customer satisfaction.

"The partnership demonstrates our belief in our own equipment, our team's ability to redevelop Waterlane Leisure Centre and our effective business model," says Chris Johnson, Managing Director at Pulse. "As partners to Waveney District Council and Sentinel Leisure Trust, we are equally invested in the success of the facility and continually strive to deliver above and beyond expectations."

"The results speak for themselves! We have an impressive, modern leisure centre, which is delivering surplus results coupled with Pulse, a proactive partner who possess passion, experience and an aspirational philosophy to persistently deliver engaging, inclusive and sustainable leisure facilities"

Stuart Everett, Managing Director, Sentinel Leisure Trust

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