

CASE STUDY

NATIONAL FITNESS DAY IN FINLAND

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The cost of inactivity for society is enormous. The idea behind the Fitness Day was to wake up the decision makers and for them to notice how important health-enhancing activities are, and to increase awareness of the professional service which health and fitness clubs are offering around Finland. National Fitness Day was invented and developed to unite local health and fitness centres to execute (together) a unique exercise day free of charge for all people across the nation. Clubs were asked to choose from two categories of "Club marketing packages" depending on the desired visibility for the event promotion. The goal of the event is to inspire people to move, no matter their shape, size or age, and to have fun doing it, and get them to exercise regularly into the future at one of the health and fitness centres involved. The clubs distributed free exercise vouchers as a gift to people attending and free tickets be used in any club participating until the end of the year.

The effect will work both ways; clubs will get new members, and people joining will be healthier, and in better shape to improve their quality of life. National Fitness Day was developed within the management group of Finnish Health and Fitness Centre's Association (SKYry). The main reason and inspiration for this innovation was to establish a joint activity with fitness clubs, and for the event to support local clubs to get new customers, raise awareness of health and fitness industry, promote new methods and fitness technology and above all to get more people to take care of their physical health.

The biggest challenge is to get clubs involved with the marketing efforts before and after the event. Successful joint promotion is challenging, because clubs usually have no dedicated personnel to execute marketing activities. As event organizer SKY is providing the marketing-communication platform to the clubs, so updating the event site and club's own website or brainstorming the activities on-site prior to the event which varies a lot. Some clubs do it with great enthusiasm and some not at all. Every year SKY is enhancing the event marketing-communication format based on the feedback by creating the easy-to-use tools and platforms. Social media is playing more and more important role in promoting these kind of events and SKY is also providing on-demand SoMe-training for clubs.

The first National Fitness Day was executed 26.10.2013 and during the first event there were 104 clubs taking part,

offering wide range of group exercise classes, gym services and other tailor made activities free of charge for all club visitors. We succeeded in getting the Minister of Economic Affairs to be the patron of the event, which took the communication, awareness and impressiveness to the level we wanted. Since then there have been National Fitness Day once a year in autumn and the number of people participating the event have been increasing every year.

The heart of the event promotion is the National Fitness Day's website, where all participating clubs are showcased and pinned in a map. Traffic to the site is streamed by social media platforms, electronic newsletters, traditional print Ads, press releases, radio interviews, TV visibility and naturally also by clubs own marketing efforts. Every year there has been over 10.000 people joining, and more than 160 clubs offering services, training and coaching. Examples of success stories are for example clubs who report that more than 500 people were visiting the club on the event date and by executing a campaign within "Liikunta päivät" Facebook-group they got 1000 new customers to their chain. The focus on promoting the event has naturally been moving towards digital media platforms, and the most effective media is still TV. Co-operation with local commercial television station MTV3 has been successful and "Liikunta päivät" got good visibility in their breakfast-TV with series of inserts with different kind of topics, showcasing our partner's expertise for one week before the actual event took place. The National Fitness Day has already become as one of the year's most anticipated health and fitness event among fitness sector and its electronic platforms, like blogging and Facebook, Twitter and Instagram postings are active throughout the year.

Each year has a different theme focusing on different target groups. The first theme was "move now - let's make 100 000 activities in clubs", after that the focus was to inspire work groups and work-mates to join the movement together "Take your workmates to gym!". Last time the encouraging message was "Take the first step!" and it was developed to inspire "couch potatoes" to rise from their sofas and explore all new possibilities that modern clubs are offering to help people to take better care of themselves. Next theme is going to inspire 50+ years old citizens to enter the clubs by offering them easy access and ready-made programmes. However the main message remains always the same: Exercise is good for you, no matter your shape, size of age.