

THE UK'S NO 1 DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR GYM OWNERS & FITNESS PROFESSIONALS

# GYM OWNER

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### THE

# EXCLUSIVE

WE INTERVIEW

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**DIR**, SPAIN'S LARGEST GYM OPERATOR, PARTNERS WITH **FISIKAL** TO COMPLETE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

**THE INS AND OUTS**  
**OF DIGITALISATION**  
EXPLAINED BY **ERNST DE NEEF**, CEO AT **FUNXTION**

**THE DOS AND DON'TS** OF PERSONAL TRAINER LIABILITY INSURANCE



# DiR, SPAIN'S LARGEST GYM OPERATOR, COMPLETES DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

**I**n 2018, DiR, the largest operator of fitness clubs in Spain, met with Rob Lander, CEO at Fisikal to discuss migrating a number of services online. Two years on and the initial transformation is now complete. Here, Jordi Fornas, Co-Director, Fitness Clubs DiR, talks about why the brand committed to such fundamental changes and how the transition is playing out.



"Since Covid-19 the global fitness community is onboarding digital solutions but back in 2018, when we first starting looking at the idea, most facility owners were still operating manual systems," explains, Jordi. "DiR is a market leader in our territory and moving services online to improve efficiencies and enhance the member experience seemed like a natural progression to keep our brand at the forefront of innovation in an ever-changing market. I am just so pleased we started our digital journey two years ago. Having digital systems in place has really helped us to navigate effectively through the recent pandemic, helping us



to manage the member experience and capitalise on operational efficiencies."

Digitalisation has taken place in controlled phases. Firstly, an online booking and payment system for personal training and other complementary therapies was introduced at selected DiR Clubs, then rolled out across the group. Once this was operating effectively the online booking provision was extended to group exercise classes. Digital workout capabilities supported by a huge video library of exercise demonstrations were also activated, helping gym floor trainers extend their support and influence beyond the physical walls of the facilities.

All 21 owned DiR Clubs have completed all phases, plus one Yoga site and two franchise sites. Other facilities within the DiR family are being encouraged to follow suit.

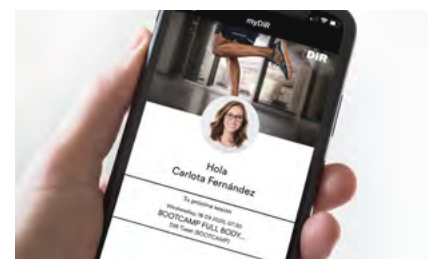
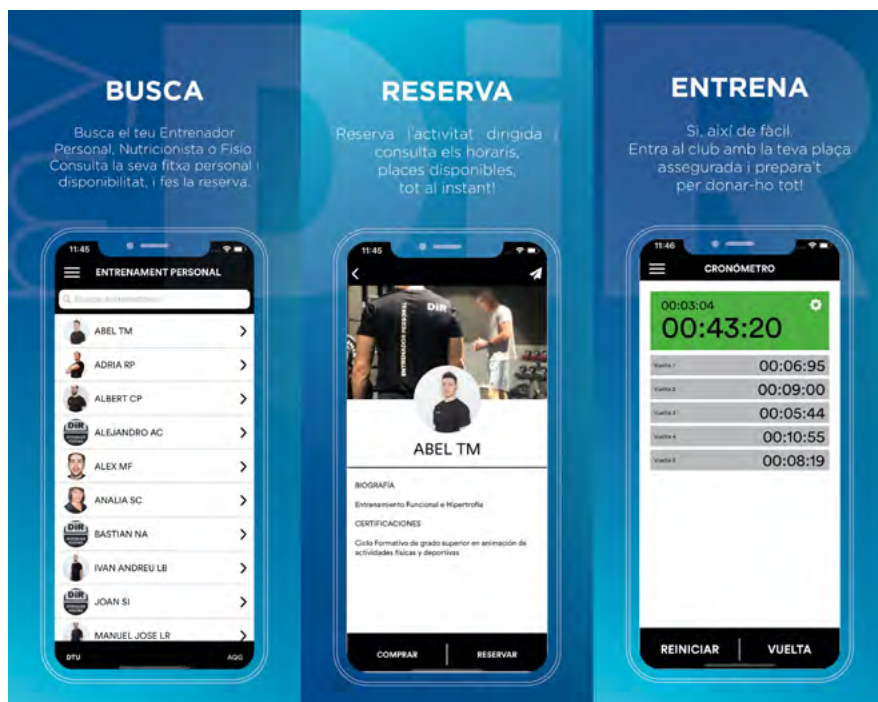
Jordi continues: "The biggest challenge we faced lay in the fact that our incumbent CRM system is the product of a 40 year company evolution. As a result, it is littered with peculiarities and nuances

making integration with third parties complex. Having had several discussions with various digital providers, I finally met with Rob from Fisikal who gave me the confidence to push forwards with digitalising our business."

In September 2019, Fisikal began phase one of the integration. Jordi explains: "This first phase elevated our personal training and other bookable therapy services to a whole new level, through the transfer of paper-based services to online.

"As a large, multisite operator it is imperative that we have real-time performance visibility of all aspects of our business. This just wasn't the case in terms of our complementary services. It was difficult to effectively track, monitor and evaluate how many sessions were being sold, by which individuals, at which site and how this information related back to potential capacity. It was also difficult to standardise the quality of the service across sites, from a member perspective.

"Since Fisikal moved our booking and



payment function online, our analytical capabilities have become almost limitless. We can now evaluate real-time performance across all sites, at site level or even by individual. It enables us to identify and react much more quickly to performance dips, helping to maximise efficiencies and revenue generation. This has made a huge difference to our business. In six months we saw a 15 per cent uplift in personal training income, especially due to avoided late cancelled sessions.

“Our members have also benefited from the digitalisation. Being able to schedule or amend a booking and make payments via our App has given members more control over the management of their training diary. It has also helped to alleviate queues at reception ensuring members can focus 100 per cent on their training experience.”

Once booking and payment functionality was successfully up and running for personal training and therapy services the provision was extended to group exercise. “This is where we really started to appreciate the benefits”, says Jordi. Through the App, members were able to; access class schedules; check availability; make, amend or cancel bookings and also join waiting lists which they could monitor in real-time.

“This functionality has enhanced the member experience whilst also providing valuable performance data. We now have a much better understanding of class capacity levels and have a means of

directing members to alternative classes if their class of choice is fully booked.

“Digitalisation is transforming our business. During the pandemic, being able to provide members with digital workouts, supported by high-quality video exercise demonstrations, has enabled us to continue to offer effective support despite physical contact restrictions.

“Most facilities have now reopened but in Catalonia, new restrictions have been imposed. To control capacity, our digital functionality also means we can insist that members pre-book their visits and certain in-club activities such as group exercise. This means, that when they arrive, they know they will be able to train, rather than risk being turned away at the door. Operationally, it would have been almost unimaginably difficult to manage effective member flow without a digital provision.”

“The entire digitalisation of bookings and payment systems took 8 months to complete. Speaking of the integration, Rob Lander, CEO at Fisikal, says: “Fisikal offers

a flexible solution that is equally effective serving a large multisite operator like DiR as it is a single site gym or individual trainer. Our modular system enables the selection the specific functionality from a huge array of services, making it possible for us to create bespoke provisions relatively simply. As businesses evolve, additional functionality can be ‘switched on’ as required, making Fisikal the perfect digital partner for the long term.”

Jordi concludes: “As with all major change, we faced some challenges along the way but, now that Fisikal is fully integrated, our business is providing a much superior member experience whilst also optimising efficiencies. The ambition for DiR is now to roll out digital booking and payment functionality across more of our portfolio. Eventually, we would like to see all of our venues running digital booking and payment solutions.

**For more information about fisikal, visit [fisikal.com](https://www.fisikal.com)**

DiR manages a network of 21 beautiful sports centres in the province of Barcelona and Sant Cugat serving more than 120,000 members. In addition, the organisation operates two yoga studios and manages a network of nine fitness franchise facilities and 35 Yoga franchises. These are also located in and around Barcelona.

DiR Clubs offer a range of luxury facilities including well equipped workout spaces, swimming pools, fitness studios and paddel courts, as well as a range of complimentary services such as physiotherapy.

