



More people
More active
More often

Safeguard the future of the fitness and leisure sector with digital strategy

Your Digital Health Matters

Paper sponsored by Digital Futures Core Strategic partners:



Gladstone

E G Y M

LES MILLS



Partnership with Sport England and Rewrite Digital



REWRITE DIGITAL

FOREWORD

As strategic lead for digital transformation at ukactive I have the privilege of designing and overseeing the ukactive digital transformation programme, Digital Futures. Delivered in partnership with Sport England, its design and outputs have been created by the sector for the sector through ukactive Digital Futures Advisory Group and with the support of many operators in the UK leisure sector. Its purpose is to improve the application of digital within the leisure sector to enhance consumer experiences and add value to operators.

The 2021 ukactive Digital Futures Report highlighted that the sector is becoming more digital but there is lots more to do. ukactive reports, 'The Future of Leisure' and 'The Decade of Change for Public Sector Leisure', in 2021 cited the multiple challenges, including infrastructure and procurement, that were impacting this part of the sector from progressing in many areas – including digital. This was highlighted in the 2021 Digital Futures Report, where private operators scored higher than public operators across all categories, with organisational model and digital experiences scoring much lower.

The application of digital is not only important to the growth of our sector, but also for its potential to provide new and enriched experiences that attract and retain participants, as well as to provide insight through data.

Recent events have seen a huge uptake in digital which remains strong as our members returned. During this period there has been an increase in digital expectations from the consumer which has inevitably led to a decrease in consumer satisfaction as experiences fall short. With many uncertainties remaining, operators need to focus on their digital strategy to build greater resilience, improve efficiency and enhance decision making, and, of course, consumer satisfaction.

ukactive is committed to supporting the fitness and leisure sector in its use of digital, through its approach but this is a joint effort that will require the wider sector's continued support in delivering this programme. This first paper provides some practical steps you can undertake, with short case studies on their implementation.



DAVID GERRISH
ukactive Strategic Lead Digital Transformation

STATE OF THE SECTOR

Last year we launched our *digital maturity and effectiveness online tool*, giving participants an instant digital score to benchmark themselves against five levels of digital maturity by assessing five digital measures:

1. Organisational model

A measure of how adapted and prepared an organisation is for digital.

2. Performance and impact

How digital is contributing to an organisation's commercial, social, and other KPIs.

3. Data and insights

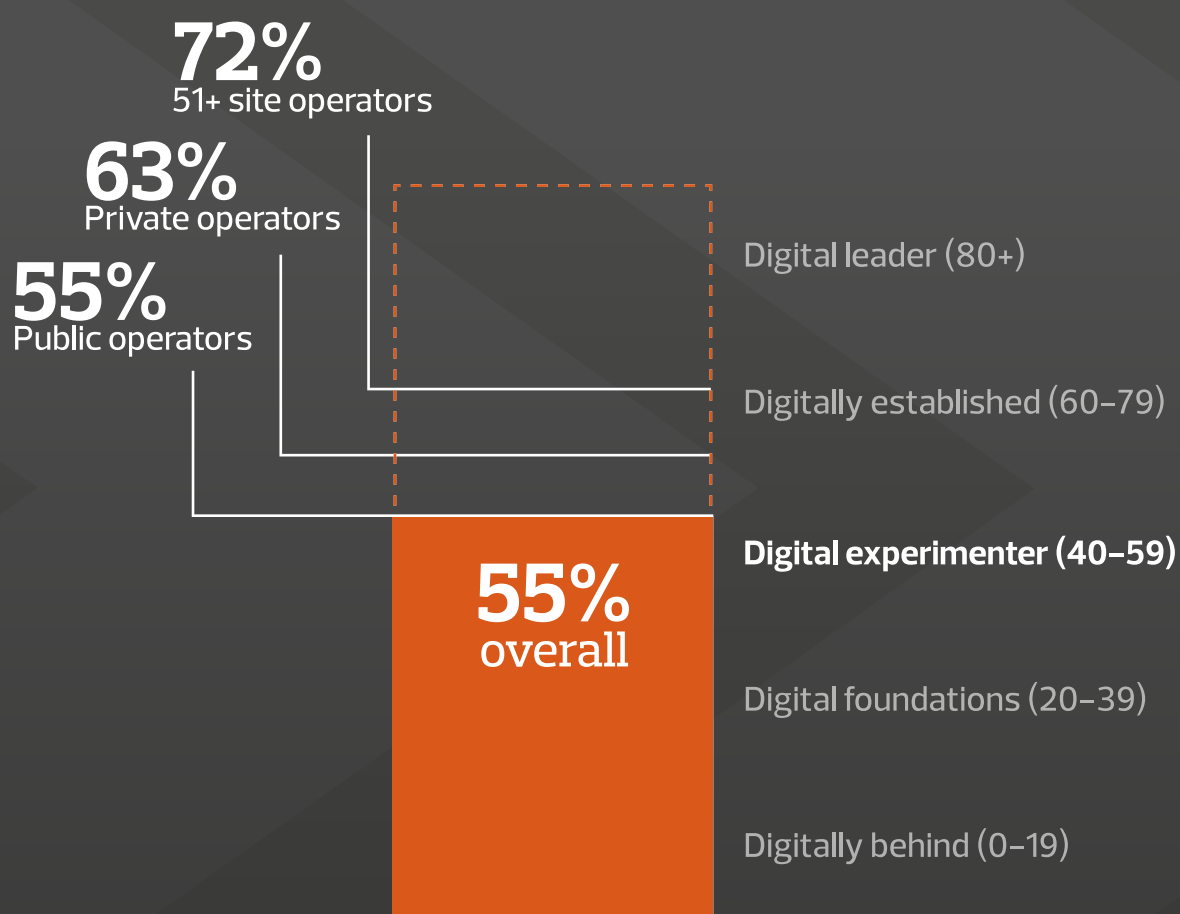
How data is collected and used to improve the relevance and quality of consumer experiences and drive value.

4. Digital experiences

A measure of how rich and thriving the organisation's digital experiences are.

5. Accessibility, inclusion, and satisfaction

How digital experiences welcome, support, engage and satisfy all consumers.





84%

of fitness and leisure operators do not have a digital strategy that's up to date, complete, ambitious, and supported by an achievable roadmap.

30%

of operators said they do not have a digital strategy.

A LACK OF DIGITAL STRATEGY REVEALED

The findings from the digital maturity and effectiveness online tool were published in the Digital Futures Report 2021. They showed that the COVID-19 pandemic provided a spark in which to ignite a level of digital change. Most operators reported having created on-demand or live video content for members and 95% of operators now sell or provide products or services digitally. However, 84% of fitness and leisure operators said they did not have a robust or complete digital strategy in place, and some 30% said they had no digital strategy at all. A gap was also revealed between the digital maturity of public operators and private operators, with private operators more likely to sit within the 'digitally established' banding, while public operators were more likely to be positioned as 'digital experimenter'.

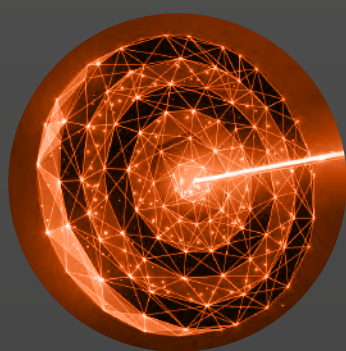
There is no 'wrong end' of the scale to operate from. It may not be possible or necessary for some organisations to become 'digital leaders'. However, as 98% acknowledge that digital will play an increasing role in the future, there is a need to understand your digital positioning and to plan for appropriate improvements that ensure the longevity of your brand and quality of provision. Our report identifies that the sector scores lowest in the operational model and digital experience categories and points to a lack of a robust digital strategy, continual investment, and adaptability of third-party technology platforms, as reasons holding operators back.

DIGITAL DEFINITION

WHEN THE DIGITAL FUTURES GROUP REFER TO DIGITAL, WE MEAN:

The use of technology and data throughout the sector to meet raised consumer expectations and drive innovation, actionable insights and value, covering:

- Capabilities and culture
- Processes and systems
- Services and experiences (online, in-venue and in the community)



IS DIGITAL STRATEGY DIFFICULT?

Strategy doesn't have to be complex. It can start as simply as acknowledging where the problems lie in your organisation and considering how digital solutions could address them. There is no set way to launch a digital strategy, but the below offers a simple roadmap.

STEPS TOWARDS A DIGITAL STRATEGY

- 1 Understand your digital maturity by auditing your technology, people and skills to evaluate potential improvements.
- 2 Learn the needs and expectations of your target customers, your leadership, and the rest of your staff.
- 3 Create a tactical plan for delivery that aligns to your organisational strategy, governance, internal and external stakeholders.
- 4 Implement that plan.
- 5 Monitor, review, optimise, repeat.



THE NEED TO EMBRACE DIGITAL CHANGE

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Organisations of all sizes and budgets can begin to implement digital changes that make significant improvements to customer engagement, business efficiency and the bottom line. Of the respondents to the survey behind the Digital Futures Report 2021, 95% agreed that digital implementations make operational savings. Meanwhile, many organisations are using skilled staff to undertake repetitive tasks that could easily be automated. While there are costs to implementing digital solutions, they are typically paid back in efficiencies gained. Implementing digital strategy mitigates the risk of inefficiencies through legacy systems, unleashes the skills and talents of trained professionals and prevents customers 'dropping off' as they embrace technology elsewhere in the sector.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Customer retention and acquisition rely on providing a smooth and enticing customer experience. As generational shifts occur, naturally the abilities of the population to use and understand technologies improve, and consumer expectations increase. Technology does not stop advancing and the more finely tuned the user experience becomes in other sectors, the higher the expectations of customers on the fitness and leisure sector.

“It’s not just our industry or competitors, customer expectations are set from the likes of Deliveroo, Uber and Amazon.”

Digital change doesn't have to mean a complete transformation, and in many cases, this would not be appropriate. Many operators have assessed where they could have the biggest impact on consumer experience and focused on that one optimisation. For example, within the 2021 report, many operators advised they implemented an easier booking experience to reduce friction on arrival. Digital change is unique to the organisation and is a vast opportunity for all levels of fitness and leisure provision.

GREATER USE OF DIGITAL CAN:

- Mitigate the risks of customer dissatisfaction
- Maximise the potential for customer touchpoints
- Help to inform and enrich customer experiences
- Protect and provide new revenue lines
- Help secure organisational sustainability

REAL DIGITAL CHANGE IN FITNESS AND LEISURE

EVERYONE ACTIVE – ONLINE BOOKING



We made a conscious effort following the pandemic to ensure that any activity set up was available to be booked online. This involved changing the way we booked activities in some cases and reconfiguring our app to make activities more accessible to book. 70% of customer bookings are now completed online using our website or using the app, preventing customers from waiting and queuing to get into their session, with massive efficiencies for the business.

3 million

customer bookings a month

2 minutes

average time to complete a customer booking

70,000

work hours saved transacting

PARKWOOD LEISURE – WEBSITE INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE



Our website sits at the heart of the user experience. It's the 'shop window' for our leisure centres, often acting as the first touch-point in a multi-faceted customer journey. Following considerable research, we knew that the information architecture (IA) of our website impeded participation. It was often difficult for customers to find answers to basic information, placing barriers in the way of their fitness journey. Over 12 months we have rebuilt our IA, working closely with our customers to ensure that their needs are placed at the heart of our design.

ACTIVE NEWHAM – SELF-SERVICE CHECK-IN



When Active Newham ran a customer NPS survey the number one issue raised was queuing and the time taken to enter the facility. In conjunction with our customers and the local council we set about creating a customer journey that focused entirely around enhancing the members' experiences through the reduction of barriers and upskilling staff. This included the introduction of access control, self-service check-in kiosks with chip and pin, and rebranding of all digital customer touch-points by Gladstone. Receptionist roles were redeployed as concierges using tablet devices, promoting enhanced customer engagement centre-wide and improving member experiences.

1 million

customer transactions
in one month

9%

increase in attendance

8%

increase in income

YOUR DIGITAL SCORE

DIGITAL CHANGE BEGINS HERE



Getting our digital score brought new focus to our transformation agenda, our people, and our strategic business aims. It challenged us as leaders to ensure we remain customer-centric and relevant. We're now able to optimise the very best from digital and data.

- BH Live



With our digital score, we knew we had to establish a dedicated digital strategy to run alongside our leisure strategy. Now in place, our digital team and our managers have a clear focus for harnessing what digital can offer.

- Pembrookshire Leisure



Without Digital Futures, we would have continued to struggle in gaining the support we needed to progress our digital vision.

- You Fit



Our engagement with Digital Futures has helped us as a business review where we are, compare us to the sector and inform our decision-making about how we develop our digital strategy.

- Leisure Focus

The first step towards developing an effective digital strategy is understanding the digital maturity of your organisation and how it compares to others. Our digital maturity and effectiveness tool will provide you with a benchmark with which to understand where improvements can be made, and opportunities exist.

“In just 20 minutes you'll understand the digital maturity of your organisation in comparison to the rest of the sector”

By completing the digital maturity and effectiveness tool, you'll receive:

- An instant digital score
- Personalised recommendations and resources based on your score
- A 1:1 consultation on your digital future
- Opportunities for more participation in the Digital Futures programme

Those who have completed the tool so far have reported that they:

- Could understand progress relative to others
- Could begin to make more effective digital decisions
- Were able to create a commitment statement to aid transformation
- Had enhanced retention upon implementing changes

Your answers contribute to the annual Digital Futures Report, providing broad insights from the sector as a whole and influencing our provisions for digital improvement.

Help us to set the standard for digital transformation and safeguard our sector.

Discover your digital score today.

DISCOVER YOUR DIGITAL SCORE

Complete the digital maturity tool today **here**.

RESOURCES:

[ukactive 2021 Digital Maturity and Effectiveness Report](#)

[UK Government's Digital Strategy](#)

[Havant Borough Council](#)

[NHS Business Services Authority](#)

[McKinsey's strategy for a digital world](#)

[Harvard Business Review: CEO's Playbook for a successful Digital Transformation](#)

[Harvard Business Review: The Essential Components of Digital Transformation 2021](#)

[McKinsey Digital Sentiment Survey 2022](#)



WITH THANKS:

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