**The evolution of self-service: a strategic imperative for leisure centres**

**In this blog from ukactive Strategic Partner, Gladstone Software, Lindsay** Micklethwaite**, the organisation’s Head of Product – explains the growth of self-service technology and how leisure providers can get up to speed to support this user demand.**

The leisure industry is undergoing a profound transformation. As the **ukactive Digital Maturity Report** highlights, the shift toward digital self-service is not merely a trend but a strategic necessity. In a world where convenience, control, and personalisation are paramount, leisure providers must embrace self-service solutions to stay competitive and deliver exceptional member experiences.



**What’s driving this shift toward self-service?**

The rise of self-service technology is underpinned by several critical factors:

**1. Changing consumer expectations**
Modern consumers demand seamless, intuitive experiences. Influenced by tech leaders like Amazon and Apple, they expect the same level of convenience from leisure providers. With 96% of UK residents owning a smartphone, mobile-first solutions are no longer optional—they are the standard. Members want the ability to book classes, manage memberships, and make payments instantly, at their convenience.

**2. Advances in technology**
Technological innovation is transforming how leisure centres operate. AI-powered tools, real-time analytics, and responsive mobile apps allow providers to scale efficiently while delivering tailored experiences. These advancements enable higher transaction volumes and personalised recommendations, enhancing satisfaction and driving loyalty.

**3. Post-pandemic cultural shifts**
The pandemic accelerated the adoption of contactless systems and cashless payments. As digital wallets become the preferred method for global e-commerce transactions (projected to account for over 50% by 2025), leisure providers must adapt to meet these expectations.

**4. Operational efficiency**
Self-service solutions reduce queue times, optimise resource allocation, and empower staff to focus on high-value tasks. By automating routine processes, providers can reallocate resources to enhance customer engagement and improve overall efficiency.

**What do customers expect from self-service?**

Insights from Gladstone’s roundtable discussions reveal members’ priorities:

* **Ease of use**: Intuitive booking and payment systems are essential.
* **24/7 accessibility**: Members value the flexibility to manage their interactions anytime.
* **Quick navigation**: Mobile apps must offer fast, user-friendly interfaces.
* **Personalisation**: Tailored recommendations and customised communication create deeper connections.

However, frustrations persist when systems are inconsistent or lack key functionalities, such as easy access to site for group bookings. Addressing these pain points is critical to delivering a seamless member experience.

**Preparing for the future: strategic recommendations**

To remain competitive, leisure operators must adopt a proactive approach to self-service.

Key priorities include:

1. **Investing in mobile solutions**: Ensure apps are responsive, accessible, and designed for intuitive use.
2. **Leveraging data**: Utilise analytics to personalise services, anticipate member needs, and optimise operations.
3. **Integrating AI**: Implement tools that enhance operational efficiency and complement, rather than replace, human interaction.
4. **Prioritising accessibility**: Building a user experience which is inclusive, catering to diverse user demographics.

**Unlock in-depth insights**

To support your long-term strategy, we have developed **“The Future of Self-Service”**, a comprehensive research paper that explores the latest trends, data-driven strategies, and actionable insights to guide your digital transformation journey.

[**Download the Report Now**](https://www.gladstonesoftware.com/innovation) (link to - <https://www.gladstonesoftware.com/innovation>) to access the tools and knowledge needed to drive your organisation forward.

Gladstone is here to help you take the first step toward a smarter, more efficient future. Together, we can redefine what’s possible in leisure management.

To learn more about Gladstone and to access the latest trends, data-driven strategies, and actionable insights to guide your digital transformation journey from its report, **“The Future of Self-Service”**, click [here](https://www.gladstonesoftware.com/innovation).

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