

CLICK TO JOIN, CLICK TO GIVE

In the second part of our Gymtopia series, Ray Algar takes a look at a fundraising venture by UK-based budget operator The Gym Group

Back in 2009, UK low-cost gym operator The Gym Group decided it wanted to start raising money for a range of UK charities. To keep joining fees as low as possible, all members join via the company's website. The simple idea was to add one additional question to the sign-up process: 'Would you like to make a one-off donation to our charity of the month?' Members choose how much to donate, and this is added to the first month's gym payment.

How did the project start?

The Gym Group was receiving many requests from members to organise charitable events in its gyms, as well as direct requests for funding from charities. It decided that some structure was required to evaluate which charities to support, and to develop a way of maximising the fundraising effort.

How does it work?

The Gym Group selects a charity of the month to support. It tends to support smaller local charities, where an injection of funding can make a dramatic difference. The senior management team selects charities based on suggestions from local gym managers – they are currently fundraising for Jigsaw South East, a charity supporting bereaved children and young people, and those who have a family member with a terminal diagnosis.

Once a visitor to The Gym's website has selected the club they wish to join, they are given the opportunity to add £1, or a higher figure, to their first month's membership fee. Donations can be gift aided for UK taxpayers, adding a further 25p for every pound donated. The Gym Group then transfers monies collected to the charity at the end of the month.

Make charitable donations easy for members

Gymtopia – a place where clubs do social good

Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar (right), who believes the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to do good in the world, beyond its immediate customers. The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need. It was created with the generous support of various UK and overseas individuals and organisations.

Read more stories and submit your own: www.Gymtopia.org



Why do this?

The Gym Group was founded following investment from Bridges Ventures, a specialist fund manager with a founding principle that all its portfolio businesses create real social and/or environmental impact. Maximising the good that gyms can do, beyond serving their members, is deep in The Gym Group's DNA. It adds just a few seconds to the sign-up process, so why wouldn't you do it?

Results so far

Because the giving process has been made so easy, the majority of all new members make a donation. This means online giving is making a big difference to the small charities being supported. The Gym Group now collects £5,000–£7,000 every month, equating to a whopping £60,000–£84,000 a year.

So what can you do?

Gyms are slowly beginning to offer the option to join online. It puts members in

charge and is fast and convenient. So here's my request: as your business embraces online joining, consider adding a simple donation option to the process. Members will feel good when they give and charities will love you for caring. Once started, see it through – make it a permanent part of the joining process. ●

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: The Gym Group – www.TheGymGroup.com
Location: UK
Start date: September 2009
Project status: Ongoing
Impact: National
Gymtopia keywords: Clothing & Shelter, Health & Wellbeing, Helping Children, Medical Research
Monies collected: Between £5,000 and £7,000 a month
Charities supported: Numerous