

Global Club

The **IHRSA** **Passport** **Program** goes digital via the new **TrainAway** app



“Innovate or die.”

That’s Tara Verity, the senior service project manager at IHRSA, channeling her “inner Bill Gates,” who often employed the phrase, as she discusses the timely evolution of IHRSA’s Passport Program, which went digital in January.

A perpetually popular program, and one of the longest-running benefits of an IHRSA membership, the Passport allows members to purchase a discounted pass that provides them with access to other IHRSA clubs when they travel.

Now, for the first time, the amenity is being delivered exclusively via a mobile app.

IHRSA has partnered with TrainAway, a Copenhagen, Denmark-based company that’s digitalized the service. The firm already owns the world’s largest digital directory of gyms—a database of more than 130,000 facilities—and, with partner gyms in 21 countries on three continents, can offer travelers entry to clubs virtually anywhere in the world.

TrainAway’s innovative technology and sophisticated user interface make it possible for the members of IHRSA clubs to use their tablets or smartphones to locate participating facilities in a matter of seconds.

All IHRSA clubs are required to do is sign up. The service is a free IHRSA membership benefit. (See “The ‘Supercharged’ IHRSA Passport Program,” December 2018 *CBI*, pg. 104.)

The timing is right

So, why roll out the Passport/TrainAway app now?

In part, the step is simply a matter of keeping up with the times, observes Bryan O’Rourke, the founder and principal of Vedere Ventures, LLC, based in Covington, Louisiana. “Given the increasing reliance on smartphones and apps by members around the world, it just makes sense,” he explains. “And since this application doesn’t require an interface with a club’s billing systems or other information, and is easy for members to use, it should significantly increase participation in the IHRSA Passport Program.

Access Granted!

By Jon Feld



“Passport is a great benefit, and digitizing it is a smart and timely move.”

O'Rourke also is the president of the Fitness Industry Technology Council (FIT-C) and a member of IHRSA's board of directors.

“This was absolutely the right time to move the program to a digital platform,” echoes Jim Worthington, the owner of the Newtown Athletic Club, in Newtown, Pennsylvania, and chair of the IHRSA board. “Everything else in our club is digital, so, now, this service will operate in much the same way as most of our other offerings.”

In fact, the move to a digital format had been on IHRSA's list of priority projects for a while before TrainAway entered the picture. More and more members had been requesting just such an option.

“After studying the company, we were very impressed that they were a smart start-up, and were able to view the program from our perspective, recognizing its potential for all parties—the association, TrainAway, our members, and our members' clientele,” says Verity.

Those were among the reasons that TrainAway was selected, notes Alexander Schröder, the co-founder of the firm. Others were its user-friendly platform, and the fact that transitioning to the digital edition of Passport would require no work or investment on the part of IHRSA clubs.

All they need to do, whether or not they've participated in Passport before, is simply to enroll with TrainAway.

The results, rewarding

How will the app work for your club? How will it work for your members?

Once your club has enrolled, your members will be able to use it to search for any IHRSA club, anywhere in the world. You share a unique invitation code with members that provides them with a 25% discount on the purchase of a one-day pass at the Passport club of their choice. When they enter the host club, staff identifies the pass on the member's phone, and that's it. The member is good to go! →

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Because the IHRSA Passport Program is reciprocal, participating clubs must commit to welcoming Passport visitors from other clubs located at least 50 miles (80 kilometers) away, and must provide the 25% discount.

The Passport/TrainAway app is available in several languages, including, but not limited to, English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Russian.

Members using the app receive an appealing and valuable added benefit, and the clubs bestowing it acquire a host of competitive advantages both large and small.

“It’s a great offering for smaller independent clubs that don’t have a network of other facilities their members can use, and for larger ones that lack the international reach the TrainAway app provides,” notes Verity. “It provides an opportunity for them to grow their memberships, and also is a potential revenue generator.”

In addition to those larger-context payoffs, the program profits clubs in other ways.



Tara Verity



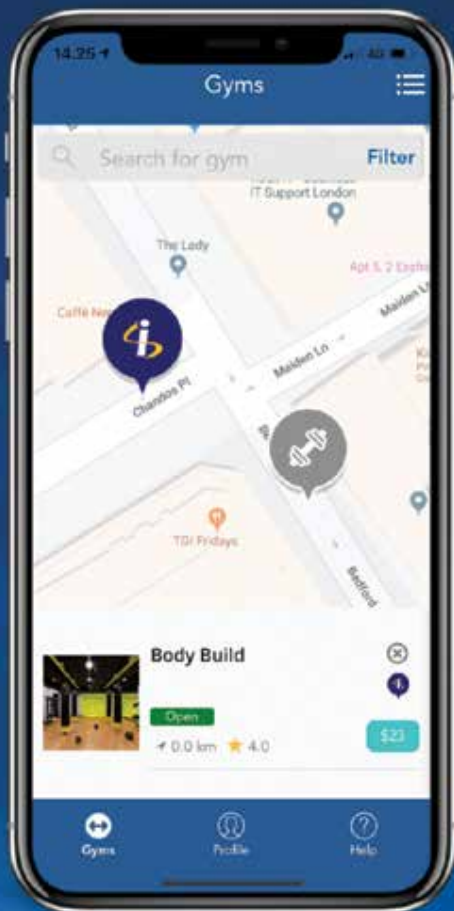
Bryan O'Rourke



Jim Worthington



Alexander Schröder



Traveling?

Enjoy discounted guest privileges at a worldwide network of clubs ... using a mobile app!



Here's How it Works:

- 1) Download the TrainAway App and set up your profile.
Note: Include the invitation code provided by your home club for a savings of 25% on one-day passes at clubs that participate in the IHRSA Passport Program.
- 2) Search for a club in the area where you are traveling and buy a pass.
- 3) When you arrive at the club you selected, activate the pass on your phone and show it to the front desk staff to work out.



It's that easy!

International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association

The Passport/TrainAway app spots gyms in Portugal and 20 other countries



Personal training—available here, there, and everywhere



Caption

“First, enrollment in the program for clubs is free and simple—it’s all done through an online form,” explains Schröder. “From that point on, we keep track of everything. There’s no software or IT integration for clubs, and we track all the data. We send monthly reports, so you know who’s using the program, and how and when they’re doing so. We also collect all of the guest-pass payments and, each month, send those, automatically, to the bank accounts of the host facilities.”

The data, Verity points out, can be employed as a particularly powerful sales and retention tool.

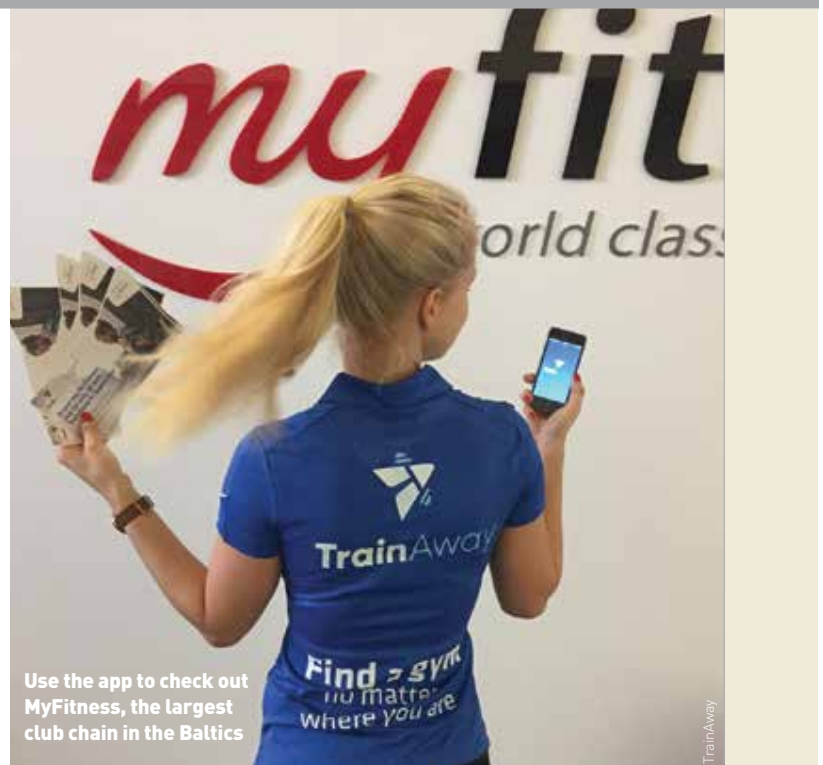
“This is the first time we’ve been able to offer usage metrics to our member clubs,” she says. “Knowing how your members are using the program can drive your marketing. You can use it to develop messaging with real impact, real value, particularly in the case of frequent users. It’s also a great benefit to emphasize when you’re selling into the corporate market.”

Worthington views the app, in and of itself, as a unique marketing opportunity for his club.

“The TrainAway app will allow us to promote the IHRSA Passport Program more effectively through our own digital marketing channels, including e-mail, social media, and our website,” says Worthington. “We’ll also be able to provide information about the program at point-of-sale to enhance our value, and promote usage from the very start.”

Clearly, the program creates some great opportunities for IHRSA clubs and their members. But how does TrainAway profit from the arrangement?

“The IHRSA network gives us a chance to develop more partnerships with health clubs all over the world,” responds Schröder. “This will increase our →



Use the app to check out MyFitness, the largest club chain in the Baltics

TrainAway

“This was absolutely the right time to move the program to a digital platform. Everything else in our club is digital, so, now, this service will operate in much the same way as most of our other offerings.”

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coverage significantly, moving the platform closer to being a one-stop solution for travelers who are seeking access to a gym virtually anywhere.”

The reviews: 5-star

As Verity acknowledged, IHRSA members had been asking for an improved Passport Program. Now that it's in place, the first reviews have been very positive.

“From our perspective, the program had been in need of a facelift, and TrainAway appears to be a great way to modernize the platform and give it a needed boost,” observes Troy Freet, the chief information officer (CIO) for EOS Fitness, which operates some 30 clubs in Arizona, California, and Nevada. “Our members will be more likely to utilize this program because it's robust and mobile-friendly.

“In addition, the new app allows us to track usage trends from visitors to our markets, and to better understand markets that cross over with ours,” he continues. “The digital platform also will give us tighter control over the use of the discounted IHRSA rate at our clubs. ... For our members, the app provides added value because it's an easy way for them to find and purchase day passes when they're away from home.”

Darcy Wefers, the reciprocal coordinator for the Cambridge Group of Clubs in Toronto, which includes the Cambridge, Adelaide, and Toronto Athletic clubs, views the app as a way to simplify things for both the chain and its 5,300 members. “For our clubs, there's no paperwork, and, for members, it expands the network of available clubs and makes check-in seamless,” she says. “The TrainAway digital platform is clearly the way of the future.”

Considering the big picture, Worthington notes that the app directly addresses member expectations.

“It gives our club a way to provide the Passport digitally, which is what our members prefer,” he says. “It puts the service at their fingertips, whenever and wherever they require it. It's a fact that, today, the world is increasingly app-based in terms of providing services. Our members have come to expect this level of sophistication and ease, and our goal is to always provide it.”

In the final analysis, Verity concludes, the TrainAway app is all about providing greater value. “IHRSA's partnership with TrainAway provides Passport users with a better experience, increasing the worth of their membership, and enhancing the club's membership proposition,” she says. —

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ACTION REQUIRED! HOW TO ENROLL IN THE IHRSA PASSPORT PROGRAM

To learn more about the IHRSA Passport Program and TrainAway, visit ihrsa.org/passport.

Note: Even if you've participated in the IHRSA Passport Program in the past, you'll need to enroll through TrainAway in order to continue to offer this benefit to your members. —

Adelaide Club, Toronto/Cambridge Group



Visiting clubs worldwide is possible
with the new Passport/TrainAway app