Why Spain is Frightened to Develop On-Site Corporate Fitness Centres

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Strangely, Spain has the first fitness penetration in the whole citizenship in West Europe, with a medium of 14% (Catalunya region is over 20%). In France, as example, this ratio is less than 5%. Despite that, in Paris, France, there are more than 80 on-site corporate fitness centres, when in the whole of Spain we can't count more than 10. I think the difference of development is the difficulty of the Spanish leaders to consider that an on-site fitness centre is not a frivolous thing, but a great tool of internal marketing, and a very clear way to improve staff efficiency and work environment. Besides, in a business parks case, this is a very good option to render profitable the real-state property.

What are you referring to?

When companies move to suburbs of cities like Madrid or Barcelona, they often move to business parks. To improve the acceptation from their employees, companies are looking for additional services like restaurant, crèche, shops, or fitness centres. In the other hand, the business park landlords improve the rent level, creating new ways of income to render profitable some areas which are difficult to rent in a "normal way". On-site corporate fitness centres are not competitors of classic fitness centres because the membership is very cheap or free, so the members can follow with their membership in the club they have near their home to work-out when they don't come at the office.

So, what is the situation of corporate wellness in Spain?

Further away than on-site fitness centres, there are few companies with real corporate wellness programs. Most international companies with this type of program running in other countries only have the minimum here. Just to say: we're doing it in all our subsidiaries! When the truth is: they put one physiotherapist 2 hours a week in a small room (besides employees have to pay for it) and negotiate a 10% discount on membership in local fitness centres.

Nowadays, there are around 20 companies with an active wellness program running, 10 of them with fitness centre on-site. We have a lot of work ahead to evangelize the Spanish companies about Corporate Wellness.

How does the crisis affect the Spanish market?

Nowadays, is ruder! For two big reasons. First of all, the cost reduction in all companies. It's very difficult to convince a GM or CEO that he has to invest now on a Corporate Wellness program or on-site Fitness facilities. Second of all, the absenteeism rate is lower with the crisis than before (in 2009, it represents 1,2% of the GDP). Employees don't want to change or quit, because they're afraid of what they can find outside. Employers know that, and they don't want to improve Compensation & Benefits in these years of crisis.

Bio of author

The Corporate Gym was founded in early 2005 in Barcelona with one principal mission: Contribute to the health and wellness of people in a professional environment. We're creating and managing corporate fitness facilities on-site (companies and business parks). Nowadays, we're managing more than 25 centres between Paris, Madrid and Barcelona (Accenture, Microsoft, Abertis, Procter & Gamble, Novartis, Pfizer, etc.).