



SALLY JONES

CATEGORY: 3-7 YEARS

MultiFitWellness



'FIRST TO OFFER FUNCTIONAL FITNESS TO MASSES'

FOUNDED IN MAY 2015 by Sally Jones, **MultiFit Wellness, a functional fitness chain,** has today grown to 32 gyms. A team of more than 120 training professionals and 30-odd administrative staff has been key to MultiFit's fast growth. The startup's current challenge lies in changing the perception that one needs sophisticated machines to become fit. Jones is this year's choice for BW Businessworld's Young Entrepreneur Awards. In an interaction with BW Businessworld, she talked at length about her company and its road map. Excerpts:

The idea behind the startup

Being an athlete I used to always feel that traditional Gyms don't offer the kind of fitness that would engage people. I started with this idea trying to make fitness as one's favorite sport. Initially the target was just one great gym, but then our members wanted to open more gyms like us and before I realized we crossed 32 gyms in less than 44 months! Our next target is 100 gyms.

The USP

We are India's first pure-play functional fitness and strength training Gym. When we started 44 months back we were the first to offer functional fitness to the masses. Additionally, there are two key factors that differentiate us from the rest: one, we are a multi-disciplinary set-up that offers a variety of solutions ranging from

HIIT, looping (indoor cycling), calisthenics, dance, yoga, boxing, strength training, rehab, etc., in short a mind-body-soul wellness experience as opposed to conventional gyms that are largely focused on sculpting bodies, and two, we are driven by a community approach that also includes group training as a core, as opposed to the conventional rental models in gyms, where people are paying to just use equipment. We go with the global standards of fitness formats and curate every class with our international advisory board that has immense experience in the field of fitness, training and sports.

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Business model

Our business model is built around creating and monetizing a seamless community based fitness and wellness platform. The model envisages an O2O consumer experience encompassing everything from large format fitness studios to being an aggregator of fitness along with all its supporting retail extensions. Currently, the competition is not large in India. Besides, India is one of the most underserved countries in the world in terms of fitness leaving enough and more room for multiple players in the space if they are able to get their model right.

The way forward

One of the things we have ensured is that consumer focus and agility is built into our DNA. We are continuously monitoring the space globally for new trends and innovations so as to remain relevant and ahead of the curve in India. Towards this, we recently appointed

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our international technical advisory board comprising of 11 Olympians whose key responsibility is doing just this. Further, our training academy ensures that we keep skilling our people to keep abreast with what's changing and we keep working closely with these Olympic athletes.

Overseas foray

We are already present in the Middle East and UK markets. Apart from expanding our presence in these markets we are also actively exploring expansion in other developed and developing countries, such as in South and Southeast Asia.

Social touch

Our mission is "to be a pioneer in the wellness industry by making fitness a lifestyle choice of every individual we engage." We believe that our brand is community based hence it has created a healthy chain reaction which has a common platform for all fitness enthusiasts and the word of fitness has been spreading rapidly in the emerging markets. We intend to make a healthy space for every consumer across geographies. I believe that by getting people to make fitness a lifestyle choice is something that really makes me feel very good about us as a company and we are really making a positive impact in people's health. One such initiative we have recently undertaken which validates this further is our 'Mission 5k' or 'MM5K' as we call it. Here we are aiming at putting over 100,000 first-time runners through a nine-week free training program with the aim of ensuring that they are proficient with at least a 5km run. Secondly, we have also created enough jobs in the market where passionate people are moving in this space.

The paradigm shift

The fitness industry is dynamic at the moment and with more players being added to the cart will further increase its impact and market. Organized players, global companies and homegrown startups in the fitness segment are effecting greater consolidation in the market and giving rise to newer business models and revenue streams. The industry is seriously evolving with digitization and the consumer is now becoming aware about the merits of working out daily. Further, with the health epidemic, especially NCDs, almost exploding in our country, there is going to be further change in the way fitness is viewed in India.

Tech disruptions

With the rise in technology we are also starting to leverage the AI platform to create and deliver a gamut of services and products. This includes everything from wearable fitness devices to digital platforms where consumer can sign up for gym memberships, personal training and other ancillary products.

Idea of wealth generation

We are creating a pool of talent in the country, which means we would see many fitness and sports professionals emerging every year from our own training academies as there is a lack of good training platforms and our training academy (MESA) will generate more supply as demand of the market is huge. The overall fitness segment is currently at \$1.61 million and is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent resulting in a market of \$2.08 billion by 2023.


Self realisation

During our fitness journey of 44 months, we took the first 17 months to get to the first 1,000 members at MultiFit and in the next 27 months we got the rest of the current 55,000-plus members. This incredible growth made us realize that we were doing something good. But as they say, the journey has just begun and we have a long way to go.

Message to entrepreneurs

The ability to understand risk-reward ratio is one of the most important aspects of business and as my partner Samir Kapoor says, "The cost of innovation is developing an organisational ability to face failure." People should not have a fear of Failure, some ideas will work some won't but the ones that do will over-compensate for the ones that haven't. One has to remember that the most successful are the ones that fail fast not the ones that never fail.

Dare to dream moment

As a British national who came to India for a six-month assignment whilst working for BNY Mellon, mine has to be having to quit my job in India at BNY after almost 10 years of service with them to pursue my dream of opening a functional fitness gym. So, I chose not to return to my home country, quit my job and started a new business in a foreign country. That's the biggest dare moment in my life! 

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