Mill Park Leisure is a community, not-for-profit recreation centre managed by the YMCA and owned by the City of Whittlesea, offering both wet and dry facilities including a 400 sq m gym. The club has 2000 health and wellness members, runs 65 group fitness classes a week with over 5000 group fitness participants per month. It also offers RPM, along with strength and cardio training areas, a crèche and an occasional childcare centre. On the wet side, a 25 m pool, learners pool, toddlers pool and spa and sauna attract over 1700 learn to swim enrollments along with a busy schools’ swimming program.

Mill Park Leisure has a very diverse member base, with a variety of cultural backgrounds and a large age range. Members are even split male/female, and the club has broad appeal, with a focus on providing a family friendly environment where there is something for everyone. The club is very active in the community through programs such as Open Doors, which offers scholarships to disadvantaged community members giving them discount or free club access. Mill Park Leisure also runs outreach classes, bringing the club to schools and community centres who may not be able to easily visit. Currently there are 5-6 ongoing weekly outreach classes including aged people and cultural groups, enabling them to train together as a group.
Challenges
Mill Park Leisure operates in a very competitive environment, with 21 other clubs in the local Whittlesea area. Since the introduction of 24 hour gyms, recreation centres like Mill Park face new challenges in competing with gyms offering cheap memberships with high quality equipment and 24 hour, convenient access. Mill Park Leisure’s equipment was dated and in a poor state of repair, so it was time to work with Whittlesea Council and the YMCA to decide on a new suite of cardio and strength equipment.

Solution
Following a competitive tender, Precor was chosen as the equipment supplier to refurbish Mill Park Leisure’s gym. Key factors in the decision included the quality of Precor’s equipment, commitment to after-sales service and maintenance and the level of technology offered with Precor’s Preva networked fitness and its ability to continually evolve.

“The outcome we wanted from a new equipment supplier was to grow our membership database through new members as well as retention, and to gain the ‘wow factor’ we need in order to remain competitive,” said Paul Barbagallo, Centre Manager at Mill Park Leisure.
Results
Member retention was up 4.5 per cent in January this year compared to January 2013, and Paul believes this can be attributed to the hype and expectation around the refurbishment that was underway at that time.

“We definitely have that ‘wow factor’ now - all feedback so far is very positive, the new layout of the gym is great. Members are telling us they like the new equipment, its functionality, ease of use and how it looks. And they love the technology!

“It’s almost comparing apples and oranges to talk about technology, because the most ‘innovative’ feature we had before was heart rate monitors – now people can create their own account with Preva, set goals, track progress and access online content – it’s like a revolution for our members,” said Paul.

“With Preva we feel as though we have future-proofed ourselves to a certain extent, because of the way its features and functionality are continually evolving and being updated.

Overall, the Mill Park team are delighted with the support they have received for the launch of their newly refurbished club.
The Precor team has shown a real willingness to help out; they have been available to us anytime we have needed anything. We have dealt with a whole team of experts, not just one person, so we’ve had support in all areas, from operations to marketing and beyond, not just one person selling us equipment.

“We had to change our timeframes at the last minute which they were able to accommodate, and the follow up training since installation has been brilliant. “The passion the Precor team shows for the equipment is very apparent and our members have even noticed it, with the Precor team physically here with us in the club helping us prepare for our launch. They are not just about talking the talk, they have delivered on what they have promised and that is rare and important in this industry. From a facilities management point of view that’s a great story for me to be able to tell,” concluded Paul.

Facility Name: Mill Park Leisure
City of Whittlesea

Location: Whittlesea, Victoria, Australia

Facility Size: 400 sq metres

Equipment Type and Quantity:
Cardio: AMTs, treadmills, ellipticals, recumbent and upright bikes, rowing machines, spin bikes
Strength: Discovery Line selectorised and plate loaded, modular strength stacks, smith machine, leg press, chin dip, FTS Glide, barbells, plates and bars

Networked Fitness: All P80 connected & Preva Network Fitness enabled CV equipment.
Preva

Mill Park Leisure is gradually introducing each of their members to Preva, RFID tokens and the mobile app, encouraging them to sign up and demonstrating the benefits to them. In fact, in just a few short weeks since the club re-launched, 414 members have signed up to Preva, with 214 goals set and 3,236 workouts already logged.

“We definitely want a big uptake with Preva, especially with the proven increased frequency of working out once goals are set and the RFID token is in use. Members are excited about it and while some may anticipate it would be complicated to set themselves up, once they see the functionality and how easy it is they are in to it straight away,” said Paul.

Mill Park’s team has started to adopt Preva’s in-workout messaging system, promoting their recent launch party for the refurbishment via Preva producing a great level of attendance.

“This is definitely something we will use more, we’ve only touched the tip of the iceberg with Preva’s capability and we are excited about the future of it within the club,” concluded Paul.