

## **Slide 1 - Intro**

Hi, I'm Chris Pointon. I'm the co-founder of Racefully, the social fitness platform that enables businesses, charities and other organizations to nurture active communities, no matter where they are in the world today. I'm going to talk about some of our experience supporting virtual communities.

I'll start by discussing how communities can help people start and maintain greater physical activity and how they don't really need to meet in person, at least not all the time. Later, I'll talk about the importance of employer support and how Racefully can help with that. And I'll finish up with some ideas for connecting employers with local and national physical activity initiatives.

First of all, a health warning. This deck contains images of groups, of people exercising close together that you may find distressing. I am so-o-o looking forward to that being normal again!

## **Slide 2 - Fitness is better with friends**

So one of the benefits of having a community around you is that it can have a positive influence on many aspects of your exercise. I'm sure many of you are aware of a number of studies showing that joining a group or even enlisting a buddy can really help.

Some of the things they can improve are about your commitment. It's very hard to cop out if someone else is expecting you. I know that my running group, when we're out on a Sunday morning and it's drizzly February, there's not much that get me out from under the duvet, but knowing that some other people are going to be waiting for me is a big motivation for me to get out and to join them.

Greater enjoyment. There was a really good study from the University of Southern California that found that people who worked out with friends or even their spouse or coworker enjoyed the exercise more than those who are sweating it out alone.

For effort, there's an effect called the Köhler effect, which means that, in any group, the people who are maybe not the most capable, not the fittest, maybe will work harder if they're inspired by people around them who are a little bit further along the journey. And, that's very good for getting people to optimize their exercise. Maybe do a little bit more than they would otherwise motivate themselves to do normally.

Then finally, there's variety. If you're in a group, other people can think of things that you wouldn't think of, they can mix it up. Maybe you do a fartlek session. Maybe you go do some. Maybe you go for a walk somewhere new that you haven't seen before. The group can really help sort of mix things up and stop it getting stale. And that's a really important thing. So that you feel like you are able to continue with your exercise.

## **Slide 3 - Champions are key to successful groups**

One of the most important things we've noticed in our work with virtual communities is they don't necessarily just form. They need care and attention and one or more people need to feel responsible for the group. We call these people Champions. Charlie Dark of Run Dem Krew is

an excellent example of a group champion, setting the tone, being a cheerleader to the people in the group and celebrating them outside the group and keeping it fresh and fun so that the group has always got things to do and feels involved and part of a community.

#### **Slide 4 - Increasing expectations of employers**

One of the most pervasive communities is our coworkers. We're almost automatically in a community with those people we work with. It's becoming increasingly common for employees to merge their personal and professional lives. And they're expecting more of their employers. In this stat here, 71% of their employees feel responsible for influencing health and changing behaviors.

#### **Slide 5 - What to do when you can't meet up?**

The other thing that's happened in the past year - in 2020 - is that remote working has become much more common. And although we're all remote now, at least many of us in the UK, and are maybe not loving being right at the end of that pendulum in terms of being isolated, but it's very common for both companies and employees to be looking at a more hybrid way of working where you're not necessarily working at home, but maybe you're not commuting every single day to be in the office.

There's definitely a greater move towards distributed teams one way or the other. Employers' support for health and wellbeing needs to adapt to this, this new non-centralized world in order to treat all employees equally. And that's where Racefully comes in. We really help with this particular situation.

#### **Slide 6 - Bringing community to employee wellbeing**

Racefully is a web and mobile platform that enables companies to run a global physical activity programs. It's 75% social and 25% activity tracking. So it's very much designed to connect teams and groups together, and it's been virtual from the beginning. So anyone can take part no matter where they are in the world. We are already in use in 80 countries and we support a wide range of teams and challenges.

#### **Slide 7 - Delivering team engagement**

So the key feature in Racefully is Tribes. Tribes are active groups that come together. They might be based on the team and that be based on a group that are all in the same location, or that have the same role. Or possibly just cyclists or runners - so by activity type as well. Tribes are branded for the company so that it feels like your own space within the Racefully App.

Currently Racefully can cover walking, running, cycling, skiing, and snowboarding, and we're planning to allow non GPS activities to be tracked as well this year. Key to the tribes is the concept of challenges and leaderboards. where you can set up, either individual challenges: for instance, everybody run 5k sometime this week; or group challenges such as the whole group, getting over 100km in a month. The group challenges help everybody get involved because no matter what your ability, you can still move the needle towards that group achievement

Around the challenges and leaderboards, we have a lot of social features. There's a chat system in the Tribes. So you can share your experience, you can share, what you have done and people can go and see it. You can also share out to other social networks - to your corporate Slack or teams - and also to Facebook and Twitter and that sort of thing.

Finally, we integrate with a fundraising platform so that if your team is actually coming together around a charity event, which is a major motivator for a lot of people, a lot of corporate events, your team can track its progress and see what it's raised.

### **Slides 8-10 - Searchmetrics case study**

I'd like to give a brief case study of one of our clients, a company called Searchmetrics, who are an AdTech company. They have offices in Germany, Croatia, a UK, and the US. They wanted to be able to do something that supported everybody in all their offices.

So the kickoff event was a fundraising day charity challenge, where the whole company had a day off and they were encouraged to log an activity and get out and about during that day. Over half the company signed up to it and of those 93% of them actually did get out and log an activity on their day off. They managed to get over 1200 kilometers locked, raising 10,000 euros for charities.

Each of the local offices nominated a local charity in that area, and there was a lot of, positive chat, both on internal and external social channels. It certainly raised a lot of interest. The staff were very satisfied with the event, and the executive sponsor said, said that "the outcome was perfect" so they're very, very pleased with how that all came about.

Moving into the longterm, we wanted to build on this success and everyone's excitement about their achievements. So we helped Searchmetrics establish champions in each of their offices whose job is to encourage the people in the office to get out and about, and act as cheerleaders there.

Over half the participants in the original events have gone to participate in another challenge. And, for this year, we're looking at using exercise as part of supporting employees' mental wellbeing, and trying to do more smaller scale challenges rather than a big bang, like events that are centered around connecting people and prompting them to go outdoors and get a break.

### **Slide 11 - The role of internal champions**

So when we talked to the guys at Searchmetrics we ran through with them what they should be doing as champions. I thought I'd share that what we can achieve with companies is really down to how well the champions understand their role, and we give them the tools that they need to actually carry it out.

While Searchmetrics pretty much picked this up and ran with it - if you pardon the pun - some companies do need programme support. So to bring new ideas and enthusiasm we're working

with some fitness coaches and wellbeing partners to bring programs into companies who may not necessarily have the staff internally to be able to run them.

### **Slide 12 - Partnering to help employers**

Many of the people who are watching this are involved in promoting participation for particular groups or in particular locations and areas, or for specific sports. I felt that it'd be interesting to explore some of the ways Racefully can support that, through connecting those sporting initiatives in with employers. Employers could be a great channel to bring healthy activity to a wider audience.

It looks like virtual challenges are going to remain the way to engage with communities at least until the summer, and possibly in the longer term. You've got a greater chance of engaging more widely if you can involve everybody, no matter where they are in a particular area, they didn't have to get to a particular place.

So first of all, we have the community initiatives. These are initiatives that you're already running or planning to run in your community. We can help bring them to companies, support them to run them virtually and train up the champions internally to take them forward alongside your own work, to support the initiatives in the community.

We can also use challenges that are across companies. We're talking to two of the active partnerships about corporate challenges for companies in their regions. If this is something you'd might be interested in, just get in touch, please.

### **Slide 13 - Wrap-up**

So to recap, employees can be a great channel to bring healthy activity to a wider audience, and they want to support their employees.

And even after COVID many people are going to be hybrid working - partly working in an office, partly working from home or from satellite offices and drop-in hot desk areas. So virtual solutions are going to be key to supporting everybody equally.

But employers need support to give the best experience to their employees. And that's where many of the groups that the House of Sport might be able to engage and do more with employees than they do currently.

A good program does more than empower individuals, it strengthens teams and harnesses their benefits to get better outcomes.

And we mustn't forget the champions. They may already be in the company, or there may be some of you watching today.

Well, thanks for taking the time to watch this briefing. I hope you found it useful and that we'll see some amazing community physical activity programs launched in 2021.