



**Mark Garrahy**  
General Manager  
HighLow Fitness  
Holdings Limited

# Director Briefing with Mark Garrahy from HighLow Fitness Holdings Limited

**Mark Garrahy, General Manager of HighLow Fitness Holdings Limited (“the Company”) discusses:**

- Australian expansion plan - outlook and strategic focus
- HighLow Fitness and its points of difference in the market
- Company structure, culture and growth plans

We spoke to Mark Garrahy, General Manager at HighLow Fitness Holdings Limited about their growth and expansion plans. HighLow Fitness offers a wide variety of workouts, catering to the individual needs of the client. The Company boasts a proven and scalable boutique HIIT fitness business model and has rolled out both an owner operated model as well as a franchise model.

***EdenExchange:*** *Thanks for speaking with us, Mark. Firstly, can you tell us a bit about the spark that ignited HighLow Fitness? What is your current role and what is your background and experience?*

**Mark Garrahy:** Fitness has always been a huge part of my life, and even now I regularly do half marathons and triathlons. Since 1997 I have worked in the fitness industry with various senior roles, originally in retail and commercial equipment and importing premium brands. This had me doing extensive international travel. When I saw boutique High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) growing overseas, my partner Kerrie and I envisioned building our own concept to enter the space. We based our concept on low impact cardio equipment with functional strength. Fast forward to today and our first site in Ramsgate, Sydney has been up and running for five years now. We now have four sites in the Sydney area; Ramsgate is fully owned and the three others are franchises. I am the General Manager of the Group.

***EdenExchange:*** *In simple terms, what does HighLow Fitness do?*

**Mark Garrahy:** HighLow Fitness is based on providing group personal training (5-30 participant capability) incorporating wearable technology by Myzone, ensuring user accountability through the real time streaming of heart rate and calorie expenditure to large screens.

We have built an exercise community through three self-developed zone layouts (The Grid, BoxOn and Super Hit). The exercise is administered through structured programming of High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) sessions. We change the programming for the sessions at our four sites daily, which for us is vital in keeping content fresh and members engaged with the variety.

The model provides a community hub, enabling participants to improve their fitness under the guidance of our qualified and professional instructors.

***EdenExchange:*** *How does HighLow Fitness differ from other HIIT programs available?*

**Mark Garrahy:** Fitness is becoming exactly like other service providing industries that have been revolutionised by broker companies. Like Airbnb is to hotels and Uber is to transport, the fitness industry has fast growing providers like Fitness Passport and Classpass that we have developed partnerships with, and the growth in this form of purchasing is enormous. All other boutique HIIT brands are only one room or zone and are unlikely to be able to capitalise on this large market share. The fact is: weekly subscription members or visit pack holders won't be impressed if they can't get a spot in a session via a third party, and that is to our advantage, as well as the fact that we offer several sessions at the same time. Without this strategy it becomes difficult for other providers to diversify how they are going to fill their gym with participants, to maintain a profitable session capacity and to make trading more challenging.

***EdenExchange:*** *What is the layout and equipment like for a HighLow Fitness franchise? Does an instructor need to have their own location with their own equipment? Or can they operate out of a gym or fitness center?*

**Mark Garrahy:** HighLow has the ability to not only continue down our current path of opening company-owned and/or franchisee sites, but we also have the opportunity to enter the space of the fast emerging “club within a club” concept.

Large 1,000-3,000 square metre gyms (known as ‘Big Boxes’) realise that the trend of boutique HIIT is still on the rise and isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Therefore the only way to compete or keep members is play to their notable advantages, namely vast amounts of equipment and space, but also the need to offer a similar product.

HighLow Fitness can fill that void with our strong supplier agreements for equipment, as well as our ability to supply programming and training to get any current team members ready to lead HighLow HIIT sessions.



*“The model provides a community hub enabling participants to grow their fitness under the guidance of our qualified and professional instructors.”*

**EdenExchange:** *You’ve had quite a lot of experience in fitness and business. How has this affected your approach in HighLow Fitness?*

**Mark Garrahy:** Like in any service business, the right staff is key. Ensuring that high standard I strive for has meant focusing on having the best trainers on board to follow the model and deliver a superior group training HIIT experience. There are various types of trainers out there and to be a successful HighLow Trainer we look for a friendly and vibrant personality for starters as we can’t train that into somebody!

There are trainers who might have done a lot of group training that is based on choreography and following the trainer’s every move, made famous by the Les Mills Model. This is not ideal if the attendees don’t have a good understanding of personal trainer style training using kettlebells and suspension straps, for example. Our training programme is set to be very comprehensive to ensure we have complete consistency in standard and member experience, no matter who the trainer is or which HighLow facility someone is at. On our [YouTube channel](#) we have uploaded two series of exercises for the benefit of members, and also for perspective trainers to understand the detail we go into explaining

*Director Briefing - Mark Garrahy from HighLow Fitness Holdings Limited*

form and technique to our members which is part of our DNA. We believe in fulfillment through helping others.



*“We believe in fulfillment through helping others.”*

***EdenExchange:*** *What sets HighLow Fitness apart from its existing competitors in the industry (both public and private providers)?*

**Mark Garrahy:** Two things primarily:

- **Multi-Zoned:** All comparable models are secluded to one room/zone - HighLow has three zones. Our three HIIT zones having different themes and workout content has definitely made us a winner and created avid fans in our members. This provides them with variety (which is the spice of life) in their weekly exercise routine and the different combinations of strength/cardio equipment and session styles improve their fitness and body composition faster.
- **Scalable Floor Plan:** We have already dramatically changed size of our zones to suit the various opportunities at facilities or startups that we have fitted out, which is powerful looking ahead as clubs and sites comes in all shapes and sizes. All comparable models have very specific allocations of size and shape, eliminating them for integration with other clubs as well as targeting a suburb with limited gym-friendly sites.

***EdenExchange:*** *Australians are very fitness focused. Where do you see the greatest demand for HighLow Fitness? What has the market response been like to date?*



**Mark Garrahy:** Watching some of the original small models of boutique HIIT from the USA and UK become juggernauts of 1,000+ sites globally is inspiring. It has always been our focus and we can to an extent, 'ride on their coat tails'. The awareness is now viral and this makes marketing a lot easier than when we started. Working hard for early members whilst continually watching developments here and abroad has helped us turn our original concept into a highly reputable brand in the category, with unrivalled retention. HighLow's success is a testament to our product and accessory integration, using the science and extensive catalogue of HIIT-friendly exercises and individualising methods during the session in order to truly accommodate the extremely fit as well as the absolute beginner. Working hard with no audience at the beginning has defined a HighLow trainer to be a touchpoint specialist, not a drill sergeant.

***EdenExchange:*** *Are there any key marketing trends you've been noticing that you think fitness specialists or business professionals should be watching out for?*

**Mark Garrahy:** Like Uber and Airbnb, the whole "Broker Business" is really taking shape fast. Soon the biggest member base could have no facilities on their own books - like the two examples just listed in their fields. Stand-alone boutique models can't and won't be able to capitalise on this, as loyal members will leave if they have to compete for class spaces with casuals. Our members welcome this arrangement as we open up more sessions at that time in other zones, meaning they win with more variety at the time they wish to train.

***EdenExchange:*** *Can you tell us a bit more about some key achievements and challenges the Company has encountered so far? Do you see any potential future challenges?*

**Mark Garrahy:**

- HighLow received a Silver Award in 2014 and 2015 by Fitness Australia, the industry governing body, which is reserved for only 100 fitness facilities in a market of over 3,500 facilities.
- In 2017 HighLow Fitness won the fitness category for the St George Local Business Awards and was a finalist in the Business Champion Awards for the fitness category in 2018.
- MindBody listed HighLow in their top 30% worldwide sites (approximately 58,000) and we received a Visionary Award in the same year for being in the percentile.

The Fitness Industry is a very competitive space so it is fantastic being recognised by governing bodies and we will continue to strive to be our best and benchmark ourselves against the best businesses out there.



*"Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life."*

A challenge HighLow has faced was at a time when we were trying to offer body wellness sessions. We really wanted to help people preserve their bodies better. The exercise wasn't a failure by any means but would have proved more of a distraction - as our seven-day 'addicts' were the only ones in the sessions and not the other 70% of the member base we were hoping would engage in the sessions. Essentially the lesson learnt was to stay with what is in demand and not try to be everything for everyone.

***EdenExchange:*** *What is your vision for HighLow Fitness's future? What are your expansion plans? Where do you see the Company in 6 months or a year from now?*

**Mark Garrahy:** We are looking at opening seven new sites in 2019 and 2020, and have a total of 22 sites by 2022. We're primarily looking at Melbourne and Brisbane as our expansion areas. These are cities where there is a large demand for alternative fitness models. We will also focus on consistency in setting an even higher standard with our sessions and the member experience.

We plan to grow our reputation as a free information service online and also grow our marketing and reach via better video and social media content. This will be better for developing trust within the silent mass out there who are yet to embrace modern exercise and try HIIT. We know our conversion rate on trials and our transparent approach of having no contracts/joining fees/transaction fees helps build the

trust that makes our members stay with us for more than three times the average, which will fuel our reputation and growth.

***EdenExchange:*** *You have an experienced management team in place. What strengths do they bring to the Company? What opportunities does this create?*

**Mark Garrahy:** *“Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”* That Mark Twain quote sums up the energy and feeling that has been emulated by the talent we have attracted into our team. The staff culture is simply amazing and a prime example is how our team come back in their own time (including directors and management) and train in each other’s sessions and give feedback and support that pumps oxygen into all parties. This example isn’t enforced even slightly and purely proves that the environment we have created is something very special.

We developed a whole new session when we sought a new specialist strength coach - our LIFT session was created on this fresh input and passion to explore. LIFT wasn’t part of the original business plan and is now a session our sites offer 8-10 times every week, and it is now a proven success and pillar part of our IP DNA.

As we grow and beef up our HQ roster especially, the talent we are going to go after will be impressed at our low turn-over of staff and more importantly the strong and supportive culture within. Having over 20 years of experience in the industry and a large network of top level operators, I am very excited and certain we will attract the right talent and continue to unite a team that will ensure success.

***EdenExchange:*** *Do you have any advice for anyone out there who is struggling with finding the right fitness-related business and get their business into high gear?*

**Mark Garrahy:** A lot of fitness businesses need to evolve and ensure they maximise their income streams, like I mentioned earlier about broker businesses for instance. A lot of ways to get marketing attention that used to work are now obsolete, like letter box drops and print media. So investing in digital videos that show what the business represents and focusing on Instagram and Facebook boosting ads is where it is at now and that should be the focus of the marketing budget.

***EdenExchange:*** *What do you love most about your job? What drives you to do what you do?*

**Mark Garrahy:** There is a saying in fitness *“most people have no idea how good their body is designed to feel”* and we truly believe that.

The amount of lives HighLow Fitness has changed forever was highlighted at our five year party earlier this month. The night was filled with so many chats with the 100+ people that showed up, both foundation members and newbies and it proves what a special brand and concept we have created.

When introducing people to HIIT and the accelerated strength and cardio results that come with it, the satisfaction and gratitude from literally hundreds of members who have come forward and thanked us for the “new look, new me” drives us to continue to scale the model.

*Thank you, Mark. It has been a pleasure.*

**For more information about HighLow Fitness Holdings Limited, please visit [here](#) (log-in required, joining is free). Alternatively, please contact Dr Mark Rainbird and his team by phone: +61 7 3160 2840 or email: [brisbane@fundingstrategies.com.au](mailto:brisbane@fundingstrategies.com.au).**

# Funding Strategies

*DISCLAIMER: Eden Exchange Pty Ltd and Funding Strategies Pty Ltd have taken all reasonable care in publishing the information provided by HighLow Fitness Holdings Limited contained in this Director Briefing. It is information given in a summary form and does not purport to be complete. The information contained is not intended to be used as the basis for making any investment decision and you are solely responsible for any use you choose to make of the information. We strongly advise that you seek independent professional advice before making any investment decisions. Eden Exchange and Funding Strategies are not responsible for any consequences of the use you make of the information, including any loss or damage you or a third party might suffer as a result of that use.*



For previous Director Briefings by Funding Strategies, or to receive future Director Briefings, visit <https://www.businessbuyinvest.com/the-director-briefing-service/> or phone +613 8658 2292.