

# BODY&FIT BUILDS GLANBIA'S ECOMMERCE EXPERTISE



20 years ago, sports nutrition was a niche category. Now, it's a mainstream industry worth over \$13 billion globally.

**G**lanbia is the world's largest sports nutrition company, and during the last two decades, the business has played a key role in shaping the buoyant sector, investing in marketing campaigns which have raised awareness of nutritional protein as essential for building and repairing muscle and supporting recovery after exercise. Today, a broad range of people use nutritional protein products as an integral part of their lifestyle.



Richard Moore, Body&Fit

Glanbia Plc was formed in 1997 following the merger of Avonmore Foods and Waterford Foods. However, its first significant move into sports nutrition was the acquisition of Optimum Nutrition in 2008. Since then the business has made numerous strategic acquisitions including BSN, Think Thin, Amazing Grass and Nutramino. The latest addition to its performance nutrition family is Dutch firm Body & Fit. We caught up with General Manager, Richard Moore, who explains why the two make such a great match.

A former Procter & Gamble strategist, Richard joined Glanbia in 2011. He fulfilled several critical roles in the UK and Europe, before taking the Body & Fit reins. With extensive knowledge of the business and the industry, as well as being involved in several acquisition integrations, this was the perfect challenge for Richard, made more exciting because the companies complement each other so well:

"Body & Fit is the leading ecommerce sports, health and wellbeing retailer in Benelux. It also has a significant presence in Germany and France. Glanbia started looking at the business 18 months before acquiring it in March 2017. We were impressed with its strong foundations – a great brand, loyal and passionate customers, and a capable team with significant

knowledge of the industry and ecommerce retailing. Whilst Glanbia had extensive international brand building experience, it lacked Body & Fit's B2C proposition and in-depth ecommerce capability."

Initially established as a physical retail store back in 1995, Body & Fit's founders soon realised that the big opportunity was online. Over subsequent years, they created a strong brand and ecommerce operation across Benelux before expanding overseas. While sports nutrition remains a key part of the business, Body & Fit has branched out into functional food and, in 2018, launched a clothing range.

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With over 4,000 SKUs, Richard says there's now something for everyone – "from top tier athletes to mums wishing to make healthier choices for their families." He added: "In the past, five-pound tubs of protein were the main stay of the business, but now

customers can choose from a much broader range of items including popcorn, peanut butter and Muesli, although protein powders remain the biggest sellers."

It's a sizable operation too, with over 200 employees based at the Heerenveen headquarters, in addition to a small commercial office in Amsterdam. Whilst many support the fulfilment and customer service side of the business, Glanbia inherited strong teams within ecommerce,

digital, nutrition, R&D and supply chain. Richard's main objective is to oversee Body & Fit's successful integration into the wider Glanbia organisation while building on the strong fundamentals the business has embedded over the years. His first year has been focused on delivering the commercial plan whilst building a bridge between the two organisations, as he explains:

"Culturally, the two businesses were very different, and it's been crucial to evolve the Body & Fit culture while

maintaining the essence of what's made it successful. What's important is finding the right balance between moving at pace to unlock the opportunities as they arise and the need for more process. That means retaining the strength of a smaller business, with the agility to evolve and change direction when needed. We need to ensure decision making is executed effectively, but with the right consideration and input from all the key stakeholders."





On the culture side, communication was a primary focus. Early on, Richard identified how operational silos were causing unintended consequences within the business, and significant effort has gone into embedding a more proactive approach to communication. Part of this was creating seven 'values' for Body & Fit which distinguished it from the broader Glanbia organisation. Using Glanbia's values as a foundation, Body & Fit carried out interviews and focus groups with employees, before finalising its own: 'winning together', 'find a better way', 'customers' champion', 'performance matters', 'passion for our brand', 'sense of fun', and – at the centre of all the other elements – 'do the right thing.'

They've been well received, according to Richard, and he sees them as fundamental to any future success, by reinforcing the behaviours expected from employees, supporting the decision-making process, and allowing people to articulate the business to external stakeholders and potential candidates.

Investment in resources has increased since the acquisition – a combination of leveraging new opportunities, as well as embedding additional manpower. The focus, Richard explained, was unlocking strategic opportunities as well as strengthening certain functions, such as increasing the size of the marketing and commercial teams and introducing more specific skills (e.g. languages) and capabilities to support growth in new markets. Some individuals joined from Glanbia to provide additional expertise and Richard is happy with the strong mix of original employees, Glanbia employees, as well as many new faces with different experiences: "This balance has helped ensure that we build on our strengths and introduce new ideas to help maintain momentum. Of course, there have been challenges, but we're now in a

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stronger position to take advantage of opportunities across the region."

Richard is pleased with progress so far but was keen to emphasise the importance of not becoming complacent amidst a competitive marketplace. Some of the biggest FMCG companies in the world are developing protein, health and wellbeing offerings, and consumers too are more demanding, expecting great products in completely different formats to meet their lifestyle needs. Body & Fit must meet and exceed expectations as well as stay ahead of trends to beat its competition. But, its nascent ability to succeed at doing this was critical to why Glanbia acquired Body & Fit. Three areas, Richard says, make the business stand out – "the team, knowledge and expertise and our brand."

Most of Body & Fit's sales are direct through its website, in addition to partnerships with marketplaces like Amazon and bol.com. Selling direct allows the business to better understand consumer data and build its database. With an already broad customer base, Richard explained

how his team is currently updating key target segments, as well as the technology that allows the business to reach diverse groups. All the while, it's working with key partners to better understand trends and what further technologies should be introduced. Four disruptive ecommerce trends are central to this strategy – the growth of mobile, content optimisation, personalisation and AI – and developing expertise in these, Richard says, is essential to deliver the right user experience and drive conversion:

"The website plays a critical role and content is one of our key strengths. Much of our content is created in house, and we've got lots of information online, for all our products, which helps consumers make the right choices. Personalisation will be a significant game changer and the ability to tailor messaging will help drive conversion and basket spend, as well as improving marketing spend efficiency. Ways to communicate with consumers will continue to get smarter, and we need to continue evolving our offering and stay ahead of technology."





A real point of difference for Body & Fit, according to Richard, is its “excellent” customer service team, who he described as “real experts, many of whom live and breathe the category.” The business won ‘best web store’ at the 2017 Netherlands Shopping Awards and customer service was one of the key reasons behind the decision. They work across each market, allowing customers to call and email, as well as chat to specialists via social media, during their purchasing journeys. Customer service also plays a key role in the innovation process at Body & Fit. The large team listens to and shares customer ideas and suggestions, feeding information through to the R&D division to influence product development. Innovation is a critical area for the business, says Richard, and being part of Glanbia means they have access to significant resources and capabilities in the EU and US.

Furthermore, educating the market is a fundamental aspect of every product launch at Body & Fit and the business is well represented at key

events such as FIBO – a huge health and wellbeing conference – as well as sports themed ones like Mud Masters, the biggest obstacle course in the Netherlands, providing first-hand advice to current or potential consumers: “In our industry, consumers

**“With natural products too, consumers want clean labels and to know exactly what’s in the food and drink they buy.”**

are always looking for ‘the next big thing.’ As well as feedback from customers, our internal R&D team is in contact with Glanbia R&D specialists too, ensuring the business stays ahead of the competition. Special Series, for example, launched in 2018 and is a premium natural high-quality protein developed in-house and based on feedback from the market – it’s been incredibly successful.”

Trends that Body & Fit is keeping an eye on include the rise of veganism and a growing demand for natural products. Veganism, Richard highlighted, continues to grow in popularity, driven by consumers

seeking alternatives to dairy products. With natural products too, consumers want clean labels and to know exactly what’s in the food and drink they buy. While dairy based protein is still the main component of Body & Fit products, if consumers want choice, then Richard says it’s Body & Fit’s duty to “offer breadth in our range” to meet demands.

Looking ahead, to maintain the pace of growth in a competitive marketplace, Richard revealed his aim to create an energised and inspiring workplace for all. In addition to embedding values and a tailored culture within Body & Fit, training and development is another area seeing focus and investment. As well as on-the-job training, classroom and external development, the business is leveraging the Glanbia global sports nutrition school, which provides everything from corporate history and marketing activation through to detailed technical product knowledge. Body & Fit is taking insight from there and applying similar elements within its own operation. In Richard’s words:

“People are our most important asset. So, training and development are key within the business. It’s about upskilling the whole organisation – supporting our teams with product knowledge, marketing, digital training, etc. We’re very entrepreneurial and give our people significant autonomy, whilst having the resources and opportunities of a major international business. And we’re not only creating new opportunities but also developing the current team too.”

With offices and businesses across the globe, Richard highlighted how careers at Glanbia also exist if people demonstrate the right capabilities and attitude. He added: “It’s really appealing to potential candidates and individuals within the organisation and it’s an area we always emphasise during the recruitment process.”