

Evolution of the wearable tech revolution *By Stuart Goodman*



Early last year our Customer Experience team wrote about [‘the revolution of wearable technology’](#) and what impact this emerging trend could have on healthcare, and specifically the pharma industry.

As Q1 comes to an end, we review our earlier [2015 pharma marketing trends](#) to see if we're on track with what we predicted would be in store for us as pharma marketers. One of the predictions we made was around wearables:

“Wearable tech will play an even more integral role in the collection of aggregated patient data to help identify disease trends, predict treatment outcomes and improve future diagnoses. What we anticipate seeing more of in 2015 is a closer integration between the wearable device and how it feeds information to various sources.”

I would like to revisit some of our earlier thoughts on the wearable tech revolution and continue analysing what role they play in pharma's future.

A saturated market

In the last 6 months we have seen the health and fitness market expand rapidly with innovative new wearable devices. This expansion has been bolstered as the potential of the industry is increasingly realised by consumers and companies alike.

Latest estimates by [Vandrico Inc](#) indicate that there are 293 wearables currently on the market, meaning that more than 60 new devices have been released over the last two quarters. Considering that the majority of these fall within the health segment, and that tech giants Apple, Google, Microsoft and Samsung are actively moving into this arena, these numbers certainly seem to validate growth projections in the billions for the coming years.



But with all this predicted growth and opportunity, what will determine new product success? What are the factors that will determine whether a wearable enjoys a long-lasting and significant impact, or whether it falls by the wayside, like so many others attempting to capitalise on the latest fad.

Here at Blue Latitude we strive to look beyond what is rehashed across typical media outlets and news sources. Instead we provide meaningful and actionable insight for our clients in the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries. Below is a short collection of comments that, from our perspective, will be critical in the near future of wearable tech, and hence worth bearing in mind for associated stakeholders.

From Healthy to Unhealthy

To date, the wearables market has largely been associated with addressing the needs and wants of the fitness community - developing devices and applications to support the healthy, tech-savvy and (typically) affluent. Whilst it's still only relatively early days, the sector is already nearing saturation point. The majority of the different activity trackers perform pretty much the same type of biometric data collection, simply marketed in a different way. The key shortcoming to note is the fact that these types of wearables fail to engage the patient population who stand to benefit most from the devices – the ill and chronically ill.

Patients suffering from one or more chronic diseases (approximately 15 million people in England) by necessity actively track and monitor their health, reporting regularly to health care providers on their condition. This is in stark contrast to the fact that, according to PwC's Health Research Initiative, more than half of individuals who have purchased a wearable fail to use it on a daily basis, with 10% of these not using it at all. When you combine it with their other findings that physicians are eager to increase patient interactions and are comfortable putting diagnostic testing of basic biometrics into patients' hands, the transition of wearable tech into regulated wearable medical devices is almost a must in order to cut rising healthcare costs, and to provide the most comprehensive quality of care.

As [Kabir Kasargod](#) from Qualcomm Life [so elegantly puts it](#): *"Go from the children's table to the grown-up table... There's a tremendous dearth of information here. I would move away from fitness and go hard-core into health. That's where the money is."*

By the same token, there is also likely to be a slower parallel transition emerging, in which medical wearables are focussed around predictive and preventative capabilities as opposed to treatment-orientated ones. As sensors and devices become smaller and less intrusive, the types of information they can collect is limited only by imagination and the ability to ensure scientific accuracy. Whilst there will always be a demand for improved treatment options, keeping patients out of hospitals by empowering them to be more proactive stakeholders in their own health will be a massive factor driving the basis of wearable technology in the future.

What does it all mean?

A factor that will be critical for the success of wearable devices will be their ability to interact with information systems, especially existing ones. Releasing a ground-breaking product is futile if it fails to 'talk' to anything, hence compatibility needs to be at the forefront of developers' minds in order to ensure target customer adoption. To specifically overcome this problem, and to promote collaboration and aggregation, companies like Samsung and Apple are bringing out open source platforms (SAMI and HealthKit respectively), and in doing so are positioning themselves at the forefront of the wearable technology movement.

However it is about more than having wearables that can communicate with either a smart phone or a device not similarly co-located (both important in their own rights), and amassing



different types of data. It is about having devices that can talk to systems that turn these massive volumes of data into something meaningful for the end user, whether that be the healthcare professional or the patient.

Consumers and patients are no longer content to merely have information about their health, they also want to be told what it means, the implications of this and how they should respond. Medical devices that are serious about changing people's behaviours and thus making a significant impact on the industry should have a clear strategy on:

- how functionally their device will collect data
- how this data is delivered, and
- how this data will influence patients' behaviour for better outcomes.

Customer centric design

It's one of the buzz phrases being used by marketing and development teams alike, but few understand what customer centricity refers to, let alone how to implement it into their business and product strategies. Customer centricity is about putting at the core of your strategy an understanding of who your customers are, what they are trying to achieve and in what environment they are trying to achieve it in. Contrary to what most believe, this begins at the very beginning stages of product development and carries on continually throughout a product's lifecycle.

Involving prospective users of your device from the earliest point possible will not only validate critical leap-of-faith assumptions, hence allowing you to either persevere or fail fast (saving a lot of time and money!), but it will also allow you to collect the data necessary to underpin your decisions. The end result is a wearable that has been created as a solution to a real problem or need, not one that you believe your awesome product would have solved (but unfortunately doesn't exist).

One notion of the customer centricity model that we touched on in our previous blog post is that successful wearable devices must seamlessly blend into their wearer's lifestyle. In a time-poor society, with a heightened emphasis on fashion and identity, new devices should be aesthetically pleasing and intuitive to use. Devices that require large amounts of extra work in order to set-up, operate or to generate insight will ultimately fail to take-off as they undermine consumers' desire for instant information and convenience.

Ultimately, wearable devices must be a solution to a problem and they must go beyond a simple tracking behaviour. They must provide information, an analysis of what that information means, and provide an indication to the user on how to respond to this information.



Thinking about your wearable integration strategy?

[Get in touch](#) with one of our experts for a no-obligation chat about how we can help you develop a great strategic approach to solving your data integration needs.

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