

How wearable tech can improve employee wellness

By [Steven Howard](#)

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Technology is transforming employee wellness programmes. Gone are the days that nurses do the physical checkups for many European and US countries.



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Africa, and in particular South Africa, seems to be lagging in the first adoption stages of wearable technology such as fitness trackers when it comes to employee wellness and has mainly stayed in personal-use capacity. However, as the demand for technology increases and becomes more accessible, the curve in the adoption rate should slowly start increasing in South Africa as well.

The global trend

More and more companies are starting to opt for wearable tech devices in order to gauge employee health milestones and improve on employee performance. We have seen an increase in the adoption of activity trackers such as Garmin, Samsung, and Fitbit in this industry.

Business tech can be used to take employee wellness to the next level. Fitness trackers have gone beyond personal use - in fact, according to FitBit CEO, James Park, the use of wearable tech in the business sector has seen exceptional growth.

According to BI Intelligence, wearables are in the initial stages of expansion and it is predicted that the market will experience a yearly international growth rate of 24.8% over a five-year period. This is massive, considering that the adoption rate for personal use has become somewhat stagnant globally.¹

The benefits of wearable tech for employee wellness

Wearable tech is improving the convenience of employee wellness programmes as well as achieving better results. Healthier employees are absent less frequently and they perform better than their colleagues who are struggling with health issues.

The average loss in rand value for South African businesses due to sick-related absenteeism is estimated to be around R19,144bn per year.² It should, thus, come as no surprise that more and more companies are looking to employee wellness programmes to improve employee health and productivity levels.

Other popular technologies that can be used as part of wellness programmes include Garmin and Samsung. Not only does wearable tech improve physical well-being, but it also contributes to improved mental health. This technology can also be used to decrease stress levels.

Wearable tech such as activity trackers is less invasive and less time consuming than a traditional physical checkup and data is easily accessible.

Wearable tech is personal

Another advantage of adopting wearable tech in the workplace is that many individuals are already using this technology which makes them more likely to engage with it at work as well.

In fact, a study done by PWC found that more than 72% of employees will be more than willing to wear an activity tracker or wearable technology device if it was being used to improve employee wellness and work productivity.

South Africans are also willing to share personal information with businesses in order to help with work-related stresses and increase work capacity and productivity.

Wearable tech offers employers access to valuable data which provides up-to-date insight into their personal health and well-being. In a sense, wearable technology makes an employee feel more valued and less like a statistical analysis with a true interest in the well-being of the employee. It makes the employee wellness programmes more personal.³

Adoption in the South African market

Contrary to the fast adoption of our international counterparts, most South African companies have not opted into using wearable tech for employee wellness programmes. Most companies still make use of travel nurses, doctors, or clinics for physical checkups, although high-end data and software are being used for cognitive testing.

The bottom line

Internationally, wearable tech has shown to help create work environments which support employee wellness. Technology can be combined with incentives to effectively improve the health of employees.

Incentives can include prizes or even reduced medical aid scheme costs. Businesses can use these structures to engage more effectively with employees on health challenges and ultimately manage employee absenteeism and other health-related problems such as stress or depression more effectively.

With effective mechanisms in place, productivity can still be individually increased and employers can manage absenteeism with increased skill sets from other employees. The bottom line is that wearable tech can be used to boost employee productivity and, therefore, profits.

1. [Business Insider](#)
2. [Fast Company](#)
3. [Human Capital Review](#)
4. [PWC](#)
5. [ICAS](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Howard started specialising in e-commerce and digital marketing in 2013 and is currently heading up the e-commerce division for The Gadget Shop (@thegadgetshopsa). His skills include streamlining business systems, implementing e-commerce conversion strategies, partnering with business influencers and growing business ROI. He has successfully built e-commerce sites from the ground up and taken businesses from strength to strength. Find him on <https://www.linkedin.com/in/steven-howard-166a6179/> [LinkedIn].

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