MEDELLA

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WELLNESS IN CORPORATE AMERICA

An Undergraduate Thesis Portfolio
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Bachelor of Science in Computer Science

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A large percentage of adults in the United States suffer from mental and physical health problems, including conditions such as diabetes, obesity, depression, and anxiety. As such, there has been a surge in the creation and usage of personal and company-provided wellness programs and technology. The technical project focused on developing a web application which aimed to improve the health and wellness of employees in the workforce by providing them with weekly health-related content such as quizzes, blogs, videos, and newsletters. This project, like many wellness programs, assumed a definition of wellness in order to begin designing the product. Social groups such as employees, employers, and wellness technology companies have different interpretations regarding the meaning and implications of wellness, and the interactions between each inform the design and implementation stages of wellness programs and software. The STS research focused on analyzing the social construction of wellness in corporate America, and how this has informed the field of wellness technology.

The technical capstone group designed a corporate wellness platform Medella, to help improve employee health and wellness. The functionality goals of the program were to enable the Medella admin team to create custom content, enable the Medella administrator team and companies to send out content to employees, allow employees to customize subscriptions to certain health categories, enable employees to track personal progress, and enable employers to track overall employee engagement. The system organized the types of accounts into four roles: site administrators, Medella administrators, company administrators write, and employees. Each type of account had a different level of accessibility in order to ensure the privacy of the employee data, and to ensure that changes could only be made by the proper account types.

Initially, the technical project team hoped to display insurance cost information to prove the effectiveness of the program, but sample data was too difficult to obtain. We also designed the website to only companies to register employees for the service, however we later changed the model to enable unaffiliated employees to register an account. Overall the project was a success, as we achieved our major functionality goals.

The STS research analyzed the social construction of wellness across relevant social groups in corporate America using the social construction of technology framework, placing the most emphasis on employers, employees, and wellness technology companies. This paper summarized literature and past research about the field of wellness, focusing on the problems in past studies, methods of improving future studies, problems in current wellness programs, and methods of improving wellness programs. This paper also addressed the increase in company-provided wellness programs across America, as well as the possible motivating factors which include performance, insurance cost, and company image concerns. The employee perspective addressed the prevalence of personal health-tracking technology, as well as privacy and coercion concerns when a company introduces and implements a wellness program. The wellness company perspective discussed the users and non-users of products, and how the perspectives of relevant social groups are necessary when designing and implementing successful products.

The goal of the technical research was to create a corporate wellness web application to help guide employees to make healthier life choices. The STS research analyzed the needs of relevant social groups regarding wellness technology so that designers and developers of future wellness programs, devices, and applications can make informed design decisions to best benefit the users.

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