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CREATING EVIDENCE-BASED, COMPETITIVE FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS FOR A
BUSINESS MODEL TARGETED AT INTERNATIONAL HEALTH MARKETS

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Abstract

This paper gathers evidence and builds an internationally viable business model for Thryv, which improves the health of employees with its rewards-driven mobile application and fitness wearable, saving companies significant productivity and health-related costs. Key findings reveal that despite their benefits, contemporary corporate wellness programs have low engagement rates. Existing literature and fifteen primary expert interviews attribute this lack of use to shortcomings in user-friendliness, accessibility, social support, competition, incentives, individualization, and data security. Thryv's business model addresses the needs of HR decision-makers (buyers) and employees (users) based on these seven shortcomings, considering market conditions, competitors, and growth opportunities.

Keywords: Funding Strategies, Mobile Health, Entrepreneurship, Financial Projections, Business Model, Corporate Health

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1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving corporate environment, the health and well-being of employees have emerged as important elements that significantly impact the productivity and overall success of organizations (Bontrager and Marshall 2020). The onset of chronic diseases among the workforce, coupled with the increasing prevalence of sedentary lifestyles, has ushered in a new set of challenges for corporate entities. Health problems, ranging from cardiovascular issues to mental health concerns, have profound implications not only for individual employees but also for the organizational structure and economic stability of businesses (Stewart et al. 2003).

Studies have consistently shown that employees grappling with health issues are more likely to experience decreased productivity, higher rates of absenteeism (Andreyeva et al. 2014, 6-8), and, in some cases, presenteeism – where employees are present at work but operate at reduced capacity due to health issues (Demerouti et al. 2009, 51). The direct and indirect costs associated with these health-related productivity losses are substantial, often eclipsing the expenses related to healthcare and insurance (d'Errico et al. 2013, 277). Furthermore, the ripple effects of poor employee health extend beyond financial aspects, impacting workplace morale, employee engagement, and the overall corporate culture (Wright and Cropanzano 2004, 341). Despite the recognised importance of employee health, traditional corporate wellness programs have predominantly focused on primary prevention strategies (Goetzel and Ozminkowski 2008, 304). These programs, while beneficial, primarily target employees who are already health-conscious and engaged in maintaining their well-being. As a result, a notable segment of the workforce, especially those who might benefit the most from health interventions – such as individuals with pre-existing health conditions or those leading inactive lifestyles – remain neglected.

To address this need, our research explores the realms of secondary and tertiary wellness

programs, focusing on the development and implementation of strategies that are inclusive and effective for all employees, regardless of their current health status. This encompasses the exploration of tailored interventions, programs, and support mechanisms that are specifically designed to engage those employees who may be at higher risk due to lifestyle factors, pre-existing conditions, or lack of awareness about health and wellness.

Our approach recognises that a one-size-fits-all solution in corporate wellness is insufficient to meet the diverse needs of the modern workforce. We aim to design a framework which understands the barriers that active as well as less active employees face in participating in wellness programs, whether they are related to accessibility, motivation, awareness, or personal circumstances.

Moreover, we acknowledge the importance of creating a culture of wellness that permeates through all levels of an organization. Our focus extends to how corporate wellness programs can be integrated into the organizational culture, thereby fostering an environment where health and well-being are valued and actively pursued. By adopting a more inclusive approach to corporate wellness, our goal is to facilitate a shift in how businesses perceive and implement health and wellness initiatives. We envision a corporate landscape where wellness programs are not just seen as ancillary benefits but as tailored, integral components of the organizational strategy, driving both employee well-being and corporate success.

2. Methodology

Findings from a literature review and from structured expert interviews are compared and applied to create a business model in this paper. This approach enables us to dissect the complexities of corporate wellness programs through existing literature while proposing an innovative solution which addresses needs of modern companies and employers based on first-hand insights from the interviews.

2.1 Literature Review

This literature review was the first step in this paper's research process, and primarily encompasses three key areas: the burden of diseases on companies, existing corporate wellness programs, and the emerging field of mobile health (mHealth). The review involved a thorough examination of academic journals, industry reports, and case studies to gather evidence on the current state of corporate health and wellness initiatives.

The review's objective is to uncover the direct and indirect costs of health issues in a corporate setting, including the impact of chronic diseases and lifestyle-related conditions on employee productivity and organizational performance. Then, based on psychological theory, meta-analyses and studies, the effectiveness of existing wellness programs are then examined, scrutinizing their shortcomings and determining what makes them effective.

2.2 Expert Interviews

Following our literature review, a series of fifteen structured expert interviews was conducted. While most interviewees were predominantly experienced in the field human resources, there was a range of candidates, including executives from start-ups, healthcare professionals and seasoned corporate employees. A full list of these candidates with brief job descriptions can be found in Appendix A. These candidates have been assigned numbers for the sake of simplicity when referenced in this paper. Each team member selected three interviewees whom they felt could contribute relevant and helpful insights. These interviewees were not selected based on their previous use of corporate wellness programs, as the team wanted an accurate representation of usage statistics. Finally, the selection involved primarily employees in Germany, as it had been determined based on market research that this is a logical market to begin in for Thryv.

Based on initial findings from the literary review, an interview structure for a half hour

interview was created (see Appendix B for a full list of questions, Appendix G for interview transcripts). These conversations allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to effective implementation of wellness programs, the perceived needs of employees, and the strategic considerations of businesses in adopting health initiatives. The first six questions were created to gain insights into the engagement levels at the interviewee's company and into their level of personal familiarity with corporate wellness applications. These questions were written in an open manner to either confirm or deny one specific central void which had emerged through literary analysis; a lack of engagement with contemporary wellness programs. They also allowed us to determine other specific reasons for the shortcomings or success of their companies' wellness initiatives. To avoid any kind of bias, the basics of the business approach were not explained until after question five.

The second interview section assesses the interviewees' interpretation of the initial idea after its introduction, and the efficacy thereof. Then, specific questions are asked regarding the effectiveness of group challenges and the involvement of senior management, as these had emerged as a significant driver of engagement in research. Competition had emerged as an equally important topic, as had the inclusion of incentives, so these were also assigned their own questions. Asking these more specific questions would later prove to provide vital first-hand experiences. For example, interviewee 15 and others indicated that they felt unmotivated to compete with highly active co-workers, as it seemed futile, which influenced the inclusion of a relative effort score. Lastly, a question about the willingness to engage with a pilot program in future was asked to determine the employee's genuine level of enthusiasm regarding the app, and an open question was asked for further feedback in a bid to capture new findings and contributions.

2.3 Business Model

To translate our research findings into a practical business solution, we followed a pitch-like approach to structure our idea. In building our business model, decisions were based on the evidence gathered from the interviews and from academic sources. In addition, the external context and team capabilities were taken into consideration. The business model begins with our mission, vision and value proposition, which directly influenced our product features, market, operational model, implementation and international expansion and financials. The top-down approach ensured that the goal and vision of our business are determined and adhered to while explaining how the operational side will unfold, and how the external landscape will influence it.

A guiding framework for this was the Business Model Canvas (BMC), developed by Alexander Osterwalder (2010), which can simplify how business models are structured and visualized. The BMC comprises nine elements, each playing an important role. These elements are Customer Segments, Value Propositions, Channels, Customer Relationships, Revenue Streams, Key Resources, Key Activities, Key Partnerships, and Cost Structure. Critically assessing our own model based loosely on some of these framework elements allowed us to determine if the big picture is succinct, interwoven, and structured.

Through the systematic construction of a business model based on evidence, a comprehensive blueprint is built for Thryv to address the underlying problem of unhealthy employees in an internationally scalable way.

3. Literature and Structured Interview Review

In analyzing the health burden on companies and corporate wellness programs, the shortcomings and, in contrast, effective features of contemporary solutions emerged. These shortcomings are also summarized in Appendix C – Problem Tree.

3.1 Burden of Diseases and Absenteeism on Companies

The rising pervasiveness of chronic diseases among employees presents a significant challenge for modern corporations, impacting both their financial stability and overall productivity. The direct and indirect costs associated with unhealthy employees are substantial and multifaceted. One study identified the impact of obesity on work absenteeism in the US and highlights that obesity leads to a noticeable increase in the number of workdays missed by employees. Specifically, individuals with obesity miss approximately 1.1 to 1.7 more days of work each year when compared to their average-weight colleagues (Andreyeva et al. 2014, 1124). This study also suggests that for America, absenteeism due to the obesity of employees costs \$8.65 billion per year. Additional expenses incurred by companies for recruiting and training new personnel to replace employees who are absent due to illness also represent a significant cost factor.

Other common pain conditions such as headaches, back pain or arthritis contribute significantly to workplace absenteeism (Stewart et al. 2003, 2449). The literature articulates that these conditions result in considerable time away from work, with 4.6 hours lost on average per week for people who experience some type of pain condition. These conditions, often linked to lifestyle factors, have direct implications on employee health and indirectly affect their ability to perform effectively (Stewart et al. 2003, 2451). Thus, it appears that health conditions and productivity are linked.

A study by Goetzel et al. (2014, 2474) goes on to underscore the link between chronic health

conditions and increased costs for employers. This research reveals that conditions such as obesity and diabetes not only result in higher medical and absenteeism costs but also contribute to a decrease in overall work performance, a phenomenon known as presenteeism. This phenomenon refers to the scenario in which employees attend work even when they are unwell, leading to reduced productivity and performance (Demerouti et al. 2009, 51). This can not only lead to diminished work output, but also to an increased likelihood of accidents and errors at the workplace. The financial impact of presenteeism is profound, often exceeding the combined costs of absenteeism and medical expenses, as indicated by d'Errico et al. (2013, 277). In fact, the costs associated with presenteeism can be as much as 5 to 10 times higher than those of absenteeism, highlighting a significant economic concern (Evans-Lacko and Knapp 2016, 1575). Moreover, the consequences of presenteeism extend beyond immediate productivity impacts. Working with health issues not only affects the immediate work output but may also lead to worsening health conditions in the long run (d'Errico et al. 2013, 277). Thus, the economic costs of presenteeism include both direct impacts, such as decreased productivity and work quality, and indirect impacts, such as the long-term health implications for the workforce.

The psychological impact of employee health issues is another critical factor that corporations must contend with. According to a study by Wright and Cropanzano (2004, 341), mental health issues, often compounded by physical health problems, significantly affect employee morale and engagement. This not only leads to a decline in productivity but also adversely impacts the overall workplace environment.

3.2 Introduction to Corporate Wellness Programs

3.2.1 Definition & Evolution

In response to the considerable economic significance of disease and mental health-related issues resulting from sub-optimal lifestyle choices by company employees, many companies have begun to implement comprehensive wellness programs aimed at improving employee health and reducing the associated costs. These programs are designed to enhance the physical, mental, and emotional health of employees, thereby cultivating a holistic culture of well-being within the workplace. Danna and Griffin (1999, 358) describe these initiatives as comprehensive efforts by organizations to boost employee health, curtail absenteeism, augment productivity, and support overall well-being. Lerner et al. (2013, 209) define corporate wellness programs as “opportunities available to employees at the workplace or through outside organizations to start, change or maintain health behaviours.”

According to Goetzel and Ozminkowski (2008, 304), employee wellness programs are divided into three distinct categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary programs target relatively healthy employees, with the goal of sustaining their well-being and reducing the potential onset of diseases through preventive measures. These interventions might include activities like regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and effective weight management. Secondary programs, on the other hand, are designed for individuals at higher risk due to unhealthy behaviours such as a sedentary lifestyle, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, stress, and irregular working hours. This level includes interventions like stress management workshops, weight loss programs, and smoking cessation. The third category, tertiary programs, focuses on managing existing health issues such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, obesity, and depression. These programs aim to either improve the condition or slow its progression and are typically curative, complementing medical treatment. They represent a crucial component of a comprehensive wellness strategy (Goetzel and Ozminkowski 2008,

305). These program categories provide an effective way to segment health app users and indicate that any solution aimed at improving employee health must be multifaceted and address different needs.

In an employer health benefit survey in 2018 by the Kaiser Family Foundation, around 82% of large firms and 53% of smaller firms in the U.S. implemented such initiatives (Health Benefit Survey 2018). Factors such as legislative support, notably the Affordable Care Act in the U.S. that supports companies with funds for fostering workplace wellness programs, have played an important role in the growth of the industry.

The landscape of corporate wellness has experienced notable transformations in recent years. A study by Abraham and White (2017, 222) analyses three major changes in the industry. First, the range of corporate wellness companies is becoming broader, calling attention to the fact that companies are focusing on different niches. This diversification reflects the expanding reach and applicability of wellness initiatives across different sectors. Secondly, there is a discernible shift in the business models of many wellness companies. These entities are increasingly focusing on fostering a "culture of health" that goes beyond mere programmatic interventions. This approach emphasises the promotion of holistic organizational and population health, integrating wellness into organizational operations. Thirdly, the approach to marketing the value proposition of wellness programs to employers is experiencing a change. The emphasis is moving away from the traditional metrics of return on investment, primarily measured in terms of medical care cost savings and productivity enhancements. Instead, there is a growing focus on the broader concept of value on investment. This shift in thinking considers a more comprehensive range of economic benefits that wellness programs can deliver to an organization, including aspects such as employee engagement, retention, and overall workplace satisfaction (Abraham and White 2017, 225). These trends indicate the importance of catering to an evolving zeitgeist where health solutions are not purely for profit. Instead,

they are holistic and serve health-conscious individuals with a variety of preferences and demands.

3.2.2 Benefits of Corporate Wellness Programs

Corporate wellness programs have been shown to be effective for several reasons. Firstly, these initiatives can result in enhanced employee well-being and productivity, along with decreased healthcare expenses for the company (Bontrager and Marshall 2020, 273). Research spanning medicine, public health, and health economics consistently emphasizes that the advantages of corporate wellness programs surpass their associated costs, significantly reducing insurance expenses and absenteeism. A meta-analysis revealed that for every \$1 spent on wellness programs, \$3.27 are saved in healthcare costs and \$2.73 in absenteeism costs (Baicker et al. 2010, 1).

Beyond these savings, there is a notable impact on productivity. Management and operations researchers (Danna and Griffin 1999; Grant et al. 2007; Neumann and Dul 2010) have consistently contended that employees in better health are not only more cost-effective and present but also exhibit higher levels of productivity. The concept of “presenteeism” – or working while sick – implies that losses in productivity could cost firms more than \$150 billion annually, nearly tripling the costs of absenteeism (Hemp 2004, 49). Healthier employees typically exhibit higher energy levels, better focus, and overall greater work capacity, leading to increased productivity (Hemp 2004, 49). In addition to the enhancement of employee productivity, corporate wellness programs also play an essential role in reducing healthcare costs. By focusing on preventive health measures and promoting healthier lifestyle choices, wellness programs help in mitigating the risk of chronic diseases, which are often a substantial financial burden due to their long-term medical costs. This preventive approach is crucial, as it not only saves costs but also ensures a healthier workforce in the long term (Bontrager and

Marshall 2020, 273).

Other research indicates that well-structured corporate wellness programs can improve job satisfaction, elevate employee moods, boost athleticism, and reduce job-related stress and absenteeism. (Giddens et al. 2017, 3627). In addition to these benefits, the presence of corporate wellness programs can significantly improve the workplace atmosphere. By fostering a culture of health and wellness, employees are more likely to feel valued and supported by their employer. This, in turn, contributes to a more positive and collaborative work environment. This highlights the role of wellness programs in reducing job stress and absenteeism, factors which can directly impact the overall work atmosphere. A less stressful and more supportive work environment not only enhances employee satisfaction but also encourages better teamwork and communication among staff (Giddens et al. 2017, 3627).

Another significant factor is that companies offering comprehensive wellness programs are also often seen as more desirable employers. This perception can be a crucial factor in attracting top talent in competitive job markets. Mulligan (2010, 182) points out that corporate wellness initiatives can further bolster a company's reputation as a caring and responsible employer. These programs resonate with an employee's desire to work for organizations that contribute positively to society.

Finally, the practice of resistance training within corporate wellness programs has been shown to positively impact the psychological health of employees (Serra et al. 2017, 1). Study participants who exercised regularly with corporate wellness programs significantly improved their mental wellbeing, reduced feelings of anxiety and depression and performed better in the work environment. This indicates that not all forms of corporate fitness need to be restricted to cardio or meditation, for example, but that a variety of activities can have a positive impact.

In conclusion, research indicates that corporate wellness programs provide a range of advantages, from enhanced employee health and productivity to a reduction in healthcare

expenditures. Beyond financial savings, these programs also enhance the overall workplace atmosphere, job satisfaction, and mental well-being. As such, they are valuable tools for companies seeking to foster a healthier, more motivated, and productive workforce.

3.3 Engagement – The Central Shortcoming

3.3.1 Lacking Employee Engagement

Despite these distinct advantages of implementing corporate wellness programs, delving deeper into the literature and evaluating interviews, it becomes evident that there is room for improvement in these programs. One obvious insight gained from expert interviews and existing literature is the critical, overarching challenge of sustaining employee engagement with corporate wellness programs. This is also shown in Appendix C's problem tree as the focal issue to which all other wellness program drawbacks relate. Of the 15 interviewees that we interviewed, only two reported an engagement rate above 30%, painting a concerning picture of the effectiveness of these wellness initiatives in truly reaching and impacting the workforce.

Interview candidate 1's observation of low participation rates, even during a global health crisis like COVID-19, sheds light on underlying factors that deter engagement. These factors range from stigmas associated with wellness programs and concerns regarding data privacy to the complexity or obscurity of the programs offered. Candidate 2 noted an engagement rate of merely 10%, citing busy schedules and disinterest, particularly among certain employee demographics, as key reasons for this lack of participation. Candidate 11 observes that even when there is a high initial interest, this fades over time. This pattern suggests a need for wellness programs that are not only appealing at the outset, but also capable of maintaining their relevance over the long run. Candidates 7 and 9 emphasize the importance of integration and voluntary participation in these programs. They argue that for a wellness program to be

sustainable, it must not feel like an obligation and should fit seamlessly into the daily routines of employees.

Moreover, the interviewees' collective feedback suggests that to enhance engagement, wellness programs must address the root causes of disinterest. This involves tackling stigmas, alleviating privacy concerns, increasing visibility and awareness of the programs, and most importantly, ensuring that participation is incentivized and voluntary. These strategies, aimed at making wellness programs more accessible and less intrusive, could transform them from underutilized initiatives into integral components of employees' daily lives.

The theme of declining engagement in corporate wellness programs over time is also supported by academic research. For instance, a study by J. Kim et al. (2020, 4-5) observed a significant drop in participant engagement over time in a wellness program. This is consistent with the findings of Terry et al. (2011), which also point to a decrease in interest and participation over time for wellness initiatives. The study further shows that organizations which implemented “best practice” approaches achieved a higher participation in health assessment and health coaching programs. Quality components of best practice organizations included management support, integrated incentives, and comprehensive communication. A study by Mitchell et al. (2013) further noted that initial enthusiasm for wellness programs often wanes.

It appears that, while existing wellness programs have proven benefits, their lack of sustained engagement presents a vital problem and points to a gap in the market which needs to be addressed by Thryv's business model. While there is no threshold for what constitutes “enough” engagement, candidate 7 states, if “half the people think it's fantastic, you would consider doing it”. Therefore, there is potential to enhance the interviewee's rates, with many currently falling well below the 30% mark. One could and should work on moving towards 50% employee engagement in wellness programs.

3.3.2 The Psychology Behind Engagement

Employee engagement is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Understanding these factors is crucial for promoting motivation and task engagement, especially within the work environment (Graña et al. 2021, 1). Deci and Ryan (1985) discussed intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour, emphasizing the importance of autonomy and psychological needs in driving engagement. Moreover, societal and cultural elements, including examination norms and external expectations, have been recognized as pivotal in influencing engagement. (Zhang et al. 2023, 399). This underscores the significance of creating a work environment that fosters extrinsic motivation, psychological needs, and aligns with societal and cultural expectations to enhance employee engagement. These studies provide insights into the vast variety of factors that drive engagement in various domains, including organizational settings, social media, and personal motivation. Especially interesting for the scope of this project are the factors that drive engagement in the work environment. To drive engagement in a work environment, several key factors need to be implemented. Psychological conditions such as psychological empowerment, psychological meaningfulness, and psychological availability have been identified as significant predictors of employee engagement. Psychological empowerment refers to individuals feeling a sense of control, competence, and autonomy in their work environment. Psychological meaningfulness, on the other hand, focuses on individuals finding their work to be intrinsically valuable and aligned with their personal values and aspirations. Psychological availability, the third construct emphasizes the mental and emotional investment of individuals in their work (Asiwe et al. 2017, 1). Therefore, organizations should focus on fostering these psychological conditions to enhance employee engagement. Additionally, workplace happiness has been found to positively mediate employee engagement (Shelke and Shaikh 2023, 238). Furthermore, research has explored the role of social and community

aspects in driving engagement. For example, Ataman et al. (2012, 419) investigated civic engagement, highlighting the influence of social factors on engagement. Therefore, social dynamics within the workplace can play a crucial role in influencing engagement. Positive interactions with colleagues and supervisors foster camaraderie, trust, and belonging, while negative social dynamics can lead to a toxic work environment that demotivates and disengages employees. Keyko et al. (2016, 4), in a systematic review on work engagement in professional nursing practice, identified psychological factors such as psychological capital (the ability to handle psychologically challenging situations) and empowerment as drivers of engagement. Han and Kim (2020, 51) examined the effect of moral sensitivity and psychological well-being on job engagement among clinical dental hygienists, emphasizing the role of personal and psychological factors. From the above studies, it becomes evident how significant social and psychological factors are in driving engagement.

Engagement therefore includes a complex mix of motivations, influenced by intrinsic motivations such as a competitive nature, or extrinsic motivations such as monetary incentives. These psychological, social and cultural factors should be closely considered when trying to motivate a workforce.

3.4 Defining Shortcomings and Opportunities

3.4.1 Lack of Digital Solutions

Despite the recognized benefits of corporate wellness programs, this paper's expert interviews reveal a notable gap in the integration of digital fitness solutions within these initiatives. This issue and all others contribute to a lack of engagement. In the case of lacking digital solutions, candidate 1 from Amazon references the use of "Twill" and a local mental health support app, but notes a scarcity of digital fitness options, particularly in Germany. This observation is echoed by candidate 2, who observes that while sports clubs are available, they lack digital or

app-based components. Furthermore, candidate 3 from Doctolib mentions "Urban Sports Club" as a digital option, yet their primary focus remains on "mocha care", a wellness app geared more towards mental health.

This trend underscores a broader industry emphasis on non-software related fitness activities and mental wellness over digital fitness solutions. The prevalent underutilization of digital approaches may be due to most interviewees reporting a lack of awareness of digital fitness apps in their workplaces. This gap in digital fitness integration highlights a potential area for development and innovation within corporate wellness strategies. By incorporating more digital solutions and advertising these more effectively, companies could enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of their wellness programs.

Digital solutions can have unique benefits over non-digital solutions. The literary findings around the effectiveness of digital health applications suggest that their lack of use is not due to a lack of efficacy, but rather due to the digital health sector being new and not yet saturated. A systematic review by Wang et al. (2017, 456-460) underscores the effectiveness of mobile health (mHealth) interventions in encouraging healthy lifestyles and aiding in obesity and diabetes management and self-care. These mHealth interventions typically include features like goal setting, reminders, personalized coaching, and data tracking. Significantly, interventions centered on personal activity were found to be most effective. Dounavi and Tsoumani (2019, 899) also claim that digital strategies that encourage regular physical activity, often measured through daily step counts, lead to notable health improvements. This measuring of incremental improvements, as well as the level of personalization and data feedback from digital applications can make them highly motivational. The contrast between the potential benefit of digital wellness tools over non-digital solutions and their current underutilization in corporate settings presents an opportunity, especially in the current market of German health offerings.

3.4.2 Defining Missing Features Using Research, Psychology, and Interviews

Stoyanov et al. (2015) developed a Mobile App Rating System (MARS) to assess the engagement, functionality, aesthetics, and information quality of mobile health applications. Using MARS, Bardus et al. (2016, 2-8) analysed 23 top weight loss apps and found that while these apps generally have moderate quality, they score higher in functionality and aesthetics, suggesting a user preference for well-designed and user-friendly apps. Goal setting, self-monitoring and provision of feedback were the most frequently included features. Khaylis et al. (2010, 931-936) also cites self-monitoring, feedback, social support, a structured program, and an individually tailored program as the five essential elements in technology-based interventions for losing weight.

Table 1
Major categories, themes and sub-themes reported by participants.

Categories	Themes	Sub-themes
Motivation	Initial motivation	Health and looks
	Staying motivated	Social Support
	Barriers	Good weather Attention on physique Using pictures Goal setting Inability to stay motivated Time and tiredness Slow results Limited knowledge and conflicting knowledge of nutrition No control over cravings Unwanted social influences
Previous experiences with weight loss programmes and self-help	Advantages	Peer Support Apps provide 24/7 mobile access
	Limitations	Dislike of calorie counting Apps are too complex No personalisation and not relevant to user No long term support
Desired changes for support	App support Motivational features	App features wish list Setting/reviewing goals Routine Not too many alarms Personalisation Having control Rewards Progress reports Competition Sharing
Comments on FIT	Acceptability	FIT's potential Gender difference I would imagine...

Figure 1: Major Reported Themes from MHealth Focus Groups, from Solbrig et al. (2017, 26)

Major categories reported by mHealth focus groups, seen in figure 1 above, confirm that aside from creating a well-designed and user-friendly app, features such as goal-setting, data collection, feedback and reminders are commonly used and can be helpful in driving behavioural change towards more movement and healthy eating. A social aspect to the app as well as providing incentives can also inspire use.

Through the lens of cybernetics and control theory, one finds explicit parallels between the aforementioned vital app features and behavioural psychology. Carver et al. (1982, 111-135) call to attention processes in human decision making, which involve setting goals, comparing current states to desired states, and making adjustments to achieve desired outcomes. Feedback loops are also integral to control theory, which entail receiving feedback about their progress, enabling them to make necessary adjustments. These processes and feedback loops reiterate how vital goal setting, data collection, feedback and reminders are in an app that is aimed at behavioural change. Control theory also stresses how vital personal agency (having a sense of control), self-regulation, and individualized approaches are in personality development and psychological adjustment. This further emphasizes that the importance of having a social aspect to a health app, providing feedback, setting goals, collecting data, and allowing for personalization cannot be understated.

By scrutinizing the explicit parallels between the MARS scale (Stoyanov et al. 2015), mobile health focus groups, control theory, and the results from 15 expert interviews, some key criteria can be defined for what makes mobile health apps effective, and for what is missing from existing applications. Namely, these features can be categorized into a lack of digital solutions, user experience and accessibility, a social aspect and management influence, a competitive aspect, incentives, individualization, and data concerns. These shortcomings, which also form the roots of the problem tree in Appendix C, will now be explored in more detail.

3.4.3 User Experience and Accessibility

Self-monitoring in mobile applications is a double-edged sword, as it can lead to reflection and involvement initially, but on the other hand can lead to a bad user experience and discourage use over time. As interviewee 7 suggested in the expert interviews, app use must not feel like an obligation. While in cases, “self-reporting has been recognized as [...] important [because it] can modify behaviours to achieve goals through the process of observation, evaluation, and reinforcement”, “there is a natural tendency to lower one’s adherence to self-reporting over time regardless of weight loss outcomes” (J. Kim et al. 2020, 9). Bardus et al. (2016, 3) also show that semi-automated tracking leads to higher MARS scores, suggesting that “reducing the burden associated with manually logging diet or [physical activity] may increase engagement”. Focus groups interviewed by Solbrig et al. (2017, 23) support this; apps which required calorie counting were seen as tedious. Echoing the comments of interviewees 7 and 15, who emphasise that minimal input effort is the right approach, an option for health data to be passively tracked should therefore be strongly considered.

Contributing their thoughts on what makes a good user experience, candidates 2 and 11 equally stressed simplicity, while candidates 8, 10 and 13 called for a user-friendly interface. Candidate 8 added that “you have to try to generate as little friction as possible because people always have their own job to do” and candidate 10 agreed that the interface should “integrate well with our employees' daily routines”. It appears then, that beyond wanting a good-looking app, there is a desire for a fitness app that disrupts the daily routine of employees less. This reiterates the sentiment around requiring too much user input; what is missing in the user experience may not be the app’s design as much as seamless integration into work life.

3.4.4 Social Aspect and Management Influence

A further successful feature of mHealth apps is the inclusion of a social aspect, an “inspirational

feature” which reduces “feelings of isolation” (Ghelani et al. 2020, 412). Focus groups from Solbrig et al. (2017, 26) also cited social support as a reason for staying motivated when using mHealth applications (see fig.1). Regarding weight-loss, “group support can foster motivation, encouragement and commonality” and is “superior to individual interventions” (Khaylis et al. 2010, 935). However, Solbrig et al. (2017, 29) points out a risk: some users “fear of negative attention was also expressed by participants in previous studies of physical activity apps, who preferred to share to a closed group/app community or not at all”.

The desire for social support was also reflected in expert interviews. Candidate 9 and others approved of charity rewards, as these not only “do something good” but add an aspect of “team-building” and “coming together”. This mention of a group incentive is sustained by candidates 2, 4, 5 and 6. According to candidate 5, “If the prizes are only individual, some people might quit. That’s why I think a team prize helps to get everyone to push towards the same goal”. Candidate 6 agrees on the team aspect and says, “Team events are the best incentives as a group dynamic gets triggered”.

Another social behavioural cue, the engagement of senior management, was universally deemed essential in fostering corporate wellness engagement. As candidate 2 states, “leading by example is essential”. Candidate 3’s sentiment confirms that “people would do it more if leaders walked the talk”. Candidates 1, 10 and 14 also agreed that in large and complex companies, leaders are instrumental in gaining widespread support. Some, such as candidate 4, articulated that the higher the rank, the higher the engagement; “if the CEO wants something to be implemented, it will be implemented”. Some companies, such as Doctolib, are already implementing this in their strategy; “we are actively leveraging the leadership to send out our communication and say hey, I’m attending this workshop [and] I hope to see you there” (candidate 3). Consequently, a unified approach from leadership can significantly encourage the adoption and sustained engagement in wellness programs. The fact that only one

interviewee mentioned that this strategy was being actively implemented in the current marketing strategy reveals that this approach can be more adopted by companies going forward to further increase engagement internally.

3.4.5 Competitive Aspect

Competition has been identified as a significant driver of participation in mobile health apps. Existing literature has investigated the psychological aspects of competition and its impact on task engagement and motivation in general. For instance, Çağıltay et al. (2015, 35) reported that competition may motivate individuals extrinsically and increase effort in current tasks. Additionally, Hu and Zhu (2018, 4-5) investigated the positive influence of competition on preschool children's competitiveness and subsequent engagement in a task. Research has shown that the inclusion of a social feature in health interventions, like a team-based element where users compare and compete, can positively influence users' willingness to use with mobile health apps (Balk-Møller et al. 2017, 2). Moreover, competition and collaboration are archetypes of gamification, another feature that can drive corporate health app engagement (Schmidt-Kraepelin et al. 2020, 1-11). Also, Fischer et al. (2018, 28-40) examined the effects of competition and cooperation on cognitive control engagement. Their findings suggest that competition yields greater motivation, enjoyment, and task engagement compared to cooperation. This aligns with previous research indicating that competition can positively affect engagement and motivation (Jones et al. 2015, 389).

These studies provide insights into the role of competition in task engagement and motivation. They suggest that competition can enhance engagement and motivation, particularly in tasks that involve autonomy, variety, significance, problem-solving, complexity, and uncertainty. However, it is important to consider individual differences and contextual factors when examining the effects of competition on engagement and motivation.

Also, competition appeals to some and not others, and there is a lack of solutions that offer companies a flexible approach wherein they can toggle competition on or off. According to the interviewed experts, the desire for a competitive solution varies by department and region. Candidate 2 suggests that in America, there is a “more competitive side” while in Germany the sentiment was more “fifty-fifty”. Beyond cultural differences, candidate 2 claims that their more tenured employees, who average 15 years of employment, are less open than a startup might be to change. Candidate 3 noted that sales departments, which are inherently competitive, might be more receptive. Candidates 10 and 14 suggested that competition could be valuable if it aligns with company culture and includes options for customizable preferences, like toggling competition features on or off. Candidate 5, however, warned against creating a potentially toxic environment through intra-company competition, preferring the idea of company vs company challenges instead.

Noting that the preferences for competitiveness vary, the option to toggle competition off arises as a yet unexplored solution, but one which finds support in expert interview sentiments. Interview candidate 14 suggests the option of configuring competition on an individual and team level; “I find it very attractive if you can set filters. That it can be configured whether the competition takes place in a team, in a department,” and candidate 9 also enjoys the concept of “teams vs teams”. As candidate 4 states, competition is healthy “as long as it is voluntary”, and as such companies who choose to toggle competition on should explicitly inform their employees of this.

Interview candidate 15 suggested to make activities more comparable between individuals to avoid discouragement by high performers. Candidate 15 touches on a significant pain point, which is echoed by multiple other candidates; creating an even playing field. Candidates 8, 11, and 12 agreed that accommodating different fitness levels would be more motivating, and in candidate 15's experience with a company step challenge, regular or sedentary individuals

having to compete with the likes of triathletes was “frustrating” and lead to drastically decreased engagement. A review of the literary evidence supports this sentiment; “to encourage long-term changes in physical activity, the strategies incorporated into technology should [...] directly address the special barriers to increasing activity in vulnerable populations who are at highest risk for a sedentary lifestyle” (Sullivan and Lachman 2017, 2). In other words, any value proposition should consider how to target the most at-risk and sedentary individuals more effectively, as these are also the most at risk of “negative health outcomes, including cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, obesity, several types of cancer, musculoskeletal conditions, and all-cause mortality [as well as] depression” (Rosenkranz et al. 2020, 1). This draws the eye back to Goetzel and Ozminowski (2008, 304)’s research on primary, secondary and tertiary programs; rather than just target those who are already fit, secondary and even tertiary programs (for example, addressing or reversing type two diabetes through exercise) deserve more emphasis.

3.4.6 Incentives

Contemporary literature provides substantial support for the argument that incentives increase engagement for certain tasks in people. Similarly, Kullgren et al. (2016, 1) discovered that personalized financial incentives may prove more effective than generic incentives, as they foster autonomous motivation essential for initiating and sustaining healthy behaviours, even after their removal. Furthermore, West et al. (2021, 106) demonstrated that incentivized individuals were considerably more likely to sustain weight loss and maintain a stable weight, indicating the positive impact of incentives on sustained engagement in health-related tasks. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that the impact of incentives on engagement can be nuanced. While most of the literature supports the positive effect of incentives on engagement, there are studies, such as (Murayama et al. 2010, 20911), that have shown that extrinsic rewards

based on performance can undermine intrinsic motivation to participate in an activity. Additionally, Jang et al. (2022, 469) highlighted those incentives, particularly loss incentives, can introduce distraction or increase cognitive effort, particularly for older adults. The role of incentives and rewards in driving engagement cannot be overstated, as is supported by the expert interviews as well. Candidate 7 highlights that candidates who are not interested in sports will probably not participate “unless you start turning people around because they have fantastic incentives and can get an additional bonus”. Also, candidate 10 is open to providing incentives, claiming that “recognizing and rewarding engagement is something we value”. The approach to incentivizing employees varied. Candidate 10 argued that simply the clear communication of benefits could drive enthusiasm. Most interviewees, however, expressed the possibility of their company adopting greater incentives.

Money as an Incentive to be Healthier

Financial incentives have been extensively studied as a strategy to encourage health-promoting behaviours. Research found that financial incentives are effective in encouraging healthy behaviours (Giles et al. 2014, 1-14). Similarly, Mantzari et al. (2015, 75) discovered that individual financial incentives have proven effective in influencing health-related behaviours like getting vaccinated or attending screenings. The study indicated that financial incentives can play a positive role in promoting health-related behaviours, particularly non-habitual ones, by providing tangible rewards. More applicably, Patel et al. (2016, 386) focused on the framing of monetary incentives to motivate obese adults to engage in physical activity. The findings suggested that the framing of financial incentives, including the amount incentive given and the duration of the incentive program, significantly influenced their effectiveness in motivating overweight and obese adults to engage in physical activity. Additionally, the design and implementation of the incentive program, including the framing of the incentives and the

timing of rewards, can impact their effectiveness.

To illustrate this concept, we consider a scenario where a large enterprise implements an incentive program to increase physical activity among its employees. The company's goal is to reduce overall healthcare costs by fostering healthier behaviours among its workforces. The incentive structure rewards employees for tracking their steps using wearable devices, providing a certain amount of money for every 100,000 steps achieved, for example. The incentive program could run for a predetermined period, such as six months or a year, to provide a structured timeframe for achieving behaviour change. This would allow for tracking progress and evaluating the overall effectiveness of the program. This incentive structure offers increasing motivation as employees progress toward their step goals, while the option to redeem rewards for eligible items, such as hoodies, fitness equipment, or gift cards, caters to diverse preferences and interests.

The above incentive program is effective because it is personalized, immediate and clearly communicated. Also, the monetary incentives are tailored specifically to reward increasing levels of physical activity while being well integrated into a broader corporate wellness program. The effectiveness of financial incentives stems from their ability to tap into individuals' intrinsic desire for rewards and their aversion to losses. By aligning financial gains with healthier behaviours, incentives create a positive reinforcement loop, encouraging individuals to adopt and maintain those behaviours. The notion that financial incentives can lead to more healthy behaviour should consequently be considered a modern health-based business model.

Non-monetary (digital) rewards

However, not all interviewees felt that monetary incentives fit their company's values. While some interviewees are impartial, others express a clear preference for non-monetary or more

symbolic rewards. Candidate 1 from Amazon is averse to monetary rewards due to a lack of culture fit and complexities like payroll and taxation. Instead, they lean towards recognition in the form of digital prizes and accolades. Candidates 4, 8 and 12 also express distaste for monetary incentives and indicate a preference for certificates, perks or branded company merchandise; “non-monetary incentives like additional leave days or recognition within the team would likely be more effective than financial rewards” (candidate 12). In stark contrast, candidate 2 states that “you can’t go wrong with a monetary reward” and candidate 3 confirms that “money back [...] is always effective” and that physical and company branded goodies were “like hot potatoes” and “everyone’s proud to wear” them. There is an observably strong divide in opinion around incentive types based on varying company cultures.

Gamification

Research suggests that gamification can positively influence task engagement. For example, Dindar et al. (2020, 142) unearthed the positive effects of cooperative gamification and competitive endeavours on learning outcomes, motivation, and social connections. A study by Ērgle and Ludviga (2018, 409-415) echoed these findings, determining that in human resource management, gamification increases engagement and job satisfaction among employees. Gamification has been shown to have a positive impact on engagement not only in the workplace, but in online and mobile health programs; systematic reviews concluded gamification increases engagement in online health programs (Looyestyn et al. 2017, 1; Ouyang et al. 2022, 1196) and another study exploring the links between mHealth gamification and smoking cessation found that gamification empowered users to complete tasks more efficiently and enjoyably, thereby increasing engagement (El-Hilly et al. 2016, 2).

It is not only the literary findings that indicate a profound behavioural change due to gamification. Interview candidates 5 and 13 both advocate for an increased incorporation of

gamification in apps to boost engagement, particularly for “people who normally don’t do sport” (candidate 5). Candidate 5 also notes that gamification has a compelling pull, and candidate 13 emphasises gamification’s ability to “coax [people] out of their reserves”. This is particularly relevant in a context where these newcomers to sport could see the biggest health improvements and calls to mind the previous sections’ discussion of adjusted performance to level the playing field and motivate more sedentary employees. Candidate 13 goes on to suggest that “maybe you can build up a streak or get rewards over time”, implying that basic game elements may suffice to motivate individuals. These findings collectively support the argument that gamification can have a significantly positive effect on participation not only in mobile health programs specifically, but across diverse domains, including online programs, smoking cessation, and human resource management. Thus, gamification should be seen as a valuable strategy for enhancing engagement in the context of Thryv.

Not all rewards are right for everyone

This wide range of suggestions, including gamification and incentives ranging from personal to group rewards and from intangible accolades to monetary recognition and branded goodies demonstrates a range of company cultures. Existing solutions appear to touch on one or some of these elements but fail to provide a flexible solution. Literary evidence on mobile health apps frequently cites “concerns about the degree of personalization and customizability” (Juarascio et al. 2015, 2) and some papers provide evidence that “the higher level of customization of the mobile apps, the more positive apps users' perception” (Lee et al. 2019). Candidate 11 agrees that “it's important that any new initiative aligns with our company’s values”. As a solution to every company having individual cultures, one could consider offering a sandbox-style reward system, much like online shop solutions, such as Shopify. Much like Shopify offers the option to individualize shops with not only design but item images and

prices, an app solution could offer the company a similar flexibility, for example being able to upload an image of a hoodie at 850 points (see fig. 7). Candidate 11 emphasises the need for “ongoing challenges” with “evolving [employee] interests and needs” and candidate 12 agrees that “a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work well” and that a “A flexible model would be cool because then we could almost build the app ourselves. This would allow us to customize the app to suit our specific organizational culture and needs”. Candidate 14 also suggests “customizable features” as a key app component. As such, while exploring which incentives make the most sense according to the existing literature and this paper’s interviewees, it becomes evident that there is a hitherto unexploited desire for customizable incentives in mobile health apps which can be configured by HR employees or app owners based on individual company cultures and preferences.

3.4.7 Individualisation

Much like the need for customizable incentives, the expert interviewees deemed the need for varied and comprehensive program offerings as critical. Candidate 14 mentioned varied preferences: “Some ride bikes, others prefer no exercise at all,” while candidate 13 brought up “stretching exercise groups” and candidate 3 was one of multiple interviewees to mention a collaboration with a mental health app. Candidate 4 noted the popularity of services like massages. This breadth of interests underscores the need for a multifaceted approach wherein “If you offer various things, then people can choose what suits them” (candidate 7). This is demonstrated by candidate 11 and others’ familiarity with apps like MyFitnessPal and Strava, which offer a broad range of fitness and nutrition tracking features by integrating with apps such as apple health, which in turn can track multiple activities. Any competitive app should at a minimum offer these same integrative capabilities to be competitive.

(Solbrig et al. 2017)’s focus groups (see Appendix 1) also describe apps with lacking

personalization or a lack of user relevance as limited. Carver et al. (1982)'s control theory and its reference to personal agency also reiterate the significance of catering to a diverse range of interests. Both the literature and interviews therefore point to creating an app that is able to seamlessly integrate with a range of activities and personal preferences. All sources indicate that cross-integration with other apps and multiple activities is not just advisable, but expected.

3.4.8 Data and Privacy

A review of studies on focus groups shows that data is a major concern for users of mHealth apps. According to Zhou et al. (2019, 1-10), one of the key reasons that people are reluctant to use mHealth applications is because they worry about their data's security and their privacy. O'Loughlin et al. (2019, 111) discovered that more than 70% of mental health app users consider the presence of a privacy policy and data encryption to be important, exhibiting their worries about data security and privacy. Martínez-Pérez et al. (2014, 2-6) also provided advice for mHealth app designers and developers, and especially emphasised the importance of addressing user privacy and security concerns. Finally, Tangari et al. (2021, 4-8) looked into the privacy practices of health and wellness mobile apps endorsed by the UK's national health service and found that many of these apps did not adequately explain how they collect user data in their privacy policies. This indicates that data is not only a primary user concern, but perhaps also not sufficiently addressed in current solutions.

Data privacy also emerged as a primary concern in this paper's empirical interviews. Candidate 1 pointed out the importance of data security in vendor selection, indicating that partnerships have been dropped when vendors could not comply with Amazon's security standards. Candidates 4, 6, 10, 11 and 12 agreed wholeheartedly that the security and privacy of health data was a primary concern of theirs.

There was a noted generational divide, however, as not all interviewees were as sensitive to

data privacy; candidate 7 noted that “people who are 40+ probably have a different attitude towards it than those who grew up with social media, where you share everything”. Nonetheless, the frequent allusions to data concerns in both the literature and interviews suggest that there must be a transparent strategy in place to securely process client data and comply with corporate regulations. Any app failing to provide this transparency will likely fail to compete.

3.4.9 Exploring Solutions and Targeting

Although a solution to the various above points should be multifaceted, extensive research speaks for using a wearable tracker together with a health application. In a German focus group, Canhoto (2017, 15-39) found that fitness wearables like Fitbit, Garmin or the Apple Watch boost user engagement due to their simplicity and precise data. The study also highlighted a social dimension—users feel a peer influence, with one participant admitting they “bought it because a colleague of mine had the smaller version” and another “using the app due to group hype”. Any inconsistent use was related to tedious “clumsy data inputs”, which is supported by the literature and interview reviews so far. This suggests that a wearable tracker could bypass the hassle of manual data entry and offer the benefits of accurate tracking and peer motivation, three significant factors that drive increased participation in health programs.

Furthermore, Giddens et al. (2017, 3632) point out that the benefits of wearables may extend beyond performance. They argue that “the very wearing of the Fitbit, even if the employee does not reach the desired number of steps, nevertheless has well-being benefits,” since the device can enhance awareness of physical activity and the value of a physically active lifestyle. This idea that the mere act of wearing a fitness tracker can foster health consciousness is encouraging, especially when a primary concern is targeting employees who are new to exercise regimes, as in secondary and tertiary programs (Goetzel and Ozminkowski 2008, 304).

Targeting

Data does not just provide a psychological hurdle for potential users. Data insights can be leveraged to provide companies with valuable insights in order to more closely define their wellness initiatives. The absence of a dedicated fund for wellness programs was a trend amongst the interviewed companies. Candidates 1, 2, 3 and 7 mention that there is no “fixed budget. We look for what we think makes sense” (candidate 2). Candidate 7 confirms that “if you believe that offering such benefits can help retain more employees or attract new ones [...] then you would make it a business decision rather than just a budget question”. Candidate 13 also reveals that key decisions are made by “the office squad, where people take care of the office, the well-being of employees” and candidate 15 confirms that “the whole topic of health is an HR matter”. These testimonies indicate that while the sales strategy is a business-to-business (B2B) one, it should also consider the motivations of decision-makers as different from the user; the decision maker may be an HR employee who needs to present a financially viable product to management, while the end user may be more interested in adventure, personal gain and what benefits are on offer. Stoyanov et al. (2015)’ MARS (mobile health app rating) scale alludes to the importance of feedback, and in the case of a data-driven mobile health app, this inclusion of feedback can be equally important for both buyers and users.

Further feedback suggests that in terms of organization types, it may be effective to target small and medium enterprises (SMEs), at least initially. Candidate 7 goes on to add that “if you manage to establish yourself at a younger company [then] you can become a vital part”. This underlines that in young companies, there is a potential for a deep and lasting customer relationship. Not to mention, as has been expressed in the interviews, younger employees may be more receptive to new ideas and less concerned with data regulations, resulting in an easier sale. Candidate 9 also speaks to the simplicity of approaching a smaller vs larger company; “the requirements of a large company are different than those of a small company [...] a small

team, 20 people, you can be quite pragmatic about it. [Because you are not] bound by corporate policies”.

Another argument for targeting SMEs is that very large companies may already have established solutions or even their own apps, such as Amazon’s EAP (employee assistance program, candidate 1) and the Liebscher and Bracht app (candidate 13). Furthermore, it has become a trend at some larger companies to cut costs. For example, the major bank that candidate 15 works in “has been extremely focused on cost reduction”. In contrast, a startup which just received a funding round may be more flexible with its budget allocation.

Some final important insights can therefore be gained from interview comments which can help with a sales and marketing approach; firstly, data insights can be valuable to HR employees, who are results-oriented, while the employees who use mHealth applications may be more driven by personal motivations. Secondly, targeting SMEs initially may be wise because companies could be more open to change thanks to less tenured employees, there may be fewer existing and company-own solutions, and the administrative hurdles may be less significant.

3.5 Mission & Vision Statement

Mission Statement

“Thryv empowers every employee with personalized health insights through its app and integrated wearables, transforming physical efforts into a rewarding journey that enhances health and productivity of employees.”

Vision Statement

“Our vision is to revolutionize workplace wellness by creating an inclusive app which everyone can engage in, where every step contributes to a broader narrative of health. By leveraging technology and a points-based rewards system, we aim to foster a health-conscious corporate culture where physical well-being is a shared goal

3.6 Financials

3.6.1 Financial Scenarios and Assumptions

Making strategic assumptions in a financial model for startups is critical, as it helps to gain competitive advantages, particularly in terms of efficiency and cost reduction (Sehnm et al. 2022, 1200). A central assumption for Thryv is the number of customers and, following that, its number of users. We have created three divergent growth scenarios to cover potential market fluctuations and internal performance variables. The dynamic and uncertain nature of the startup ecosystem necessitates the development of financial models that can effectively capture and analyse a range of potential outcomes. By incorporating different scenarios into a financial model, startups can gain valuable insights into their financial performance under varying conditions. This gives them the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of resources, risk management, and future growth strategies. A study by Frare et al. (2021, 643) highlights the impact of financial management control systems on the performance of startups and indicates that the use of financial management control systems, which may include scenario planning, can impact the financial performance and overall success of startups. Moreover, a study by Felipe and Ferreira (2020, 560) identifies the financial goal as a factor which positively impacts the success of equity crowdfunding campaigns. This underlines the significance of financial considerations and goals in the context of startup financing, suggesting that scenario planning and financial modelling are crucial for setting and achieving financial targets and overall success. From the three cases, the upside case represents the most optimistic forecast, predicated on superior market conditions and optimal outcomes regarding acquisition of new customers. The base case delineates expected outcomes based on current market trends and company performance metrics. Conversely, the downside scenario accounts for potential adversities, particularly regarding sales estimations and customer acquisition. The ensuing section explains the assumptions of the base case, followed by the numbers for the up- and

downside cases.

The initial subscriber base for the base case is projected to start with 625 new users, reflecting our sales efforts in the first year. Based on personal B2B sales experience, we estimate that in the first year, each of the five founders is able to close five small enterprise startups (average of 50 employees). This decision to target small enterprises initially is based the distinct advantages indicated by interview candidates 7 and 13 and 15. Namely, the decision makers have more authority and fewer bureaucratic hurdles, the budget allocation may be more flexible, and there is a lower chance that the company has developed its own solution to corporate wellness. We assumed an average participation of 50% of the company's employees to use our service based on the interviews and literature in section 3.3.1. This leads us to an average number of 25 users per company.

When it comes to adoption rates of mobile applications, the design and quality of the app, as well as security features, play a crucial role in adoption (Zhou et al. 2019, 1-10). It is also important to consider the influence of user ratings and reviews on adoption rates, especially for the long-term development of Thryv (Kamau et al. 2023, 36). Moreover, the intention to use mHealth applications is affected by various cognitive factors, health consciousness, and health literacy (Cho et al. 2014). The literature suggests that the adoption of mobile health apps is a complex process influenced by multiple factors. To increase adoption rates in corporate enterprises, it is essential to consider the proposed value the app, to address security and privacy concerns, and ensure that the app is user-friendly and provides unique value (Alharbi et al. 2022, 1). All the above are features and characteristics which have been determined in Thryv's business model and will be incorporated in our sales approach.

In Thryv's second year, we plan to target medium sized enterprise customers with an employee count of up to 250 employees (average of 80 employees) bringing us to an average number of 40 users per company. Over the following years, we will target larger sized enterprise

customers with an employee count of over 250 (an average of 850 employees) leading to an average of 425 users per company. All assumptions for average company size are derived from the Federal Statistical Office in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2023).

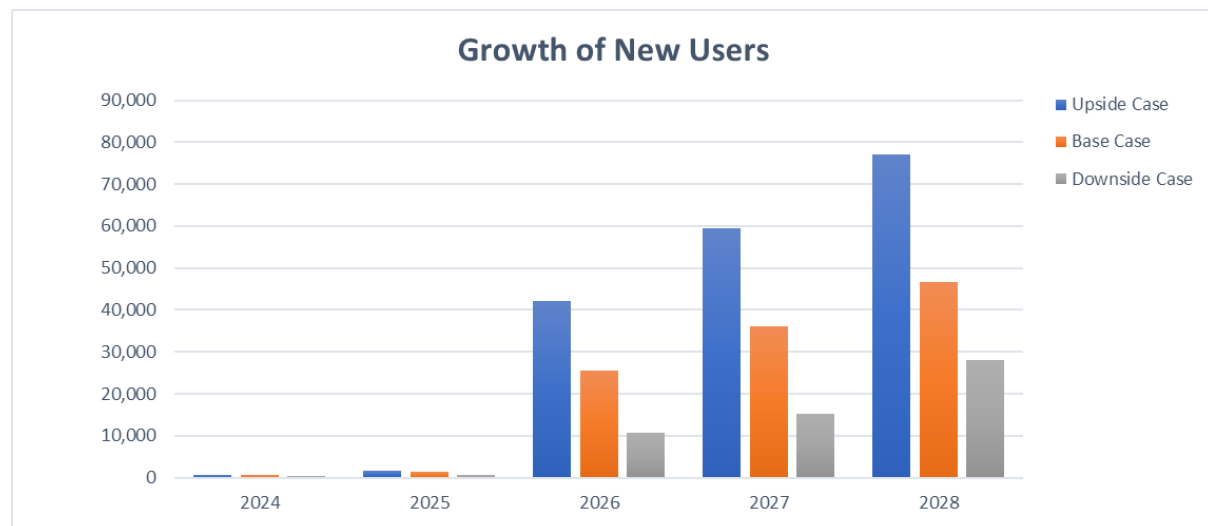


Figure 2: Growth of New Users

Figure 14 above depicts our new user growth in all three scenarios. We anticipate an increase in customer acquisition to over 45,000 new users in year five. This progression is based on the hires we make in our sales department, as well as our expansion to the UK and US in years three and four respectively. The assumption is to grow our sales team by five new sales managers each year, who acquire on average five new enterprise customers. Ramping up our sales efforts is key for entering the market quickly and growing our customer base. Addressing the potential adversities and uncertainties in our assumptions and business model, we adjusted for the number of companies acquired per sales manager per year and the average size of the companies acquired for our upside and downside scenarios. This results in roughly 53,000 users and a total revenue of about €4.5 million in year five for the downside case and, in contrast, about 173,000 users and a total revenue of about €14.8 million for the upside scenario. The user count forecast for all three cases is shown in Appendix F.

3.6.2 Revenue Projections

In this section of the financial model, we dive into the revenue generation, exploring the strategies and projections showcasing our business's ability to translate value into financial gains. Our revenue is generated by the monthly price per employee. We charge a fixed rate of €5.00 for employees who already own a compatible smartwatch or wearable. A rate of €8.00 per employee will be charged for those who will be equipped with our model. All models come with a two-year warranty, which is included in the €8.00 we pay for our wearable. Additionally, every employee will receive a brand-new wearable after the warranty is over. Therefore, every employee who joins in year one will receive a new wearable in year three, and employees joining in year three will receive a new wearable in year five. Adjustments to the pricing due to changes in cost structures or inflation are possible, though this was not included in our financial planning. Later, the reasoning behind this pricing will be expanded upon further. This monthly price is multiplied by the number of subscribers we account for each year.

Furthermore, the churn rate of companies leaving our service per year is projected and is a pivotal financial assumption in our model, falling from an initial 15% to a consistent 5% after the third year. This improvement is due to our product enhancements, driven by user feedback and data-driven insights that we plan to collect continuously. We forecast that our ongoing investment in user experience and customer service excellence will strengthen user retention, thereby stabilizing our revenue streams by reducing the churn rates. Comparing these numbers to other B2B software companies from different industries, a 5% churn rate from year three on after having matured as a company seems reasonable (LaFlamme 2023). Thereby, the revenue projections for year one in our base case scenario are around €53,000, increasing to around €197,000 in year two. This equates to a growth rate of both subscribers and revenue of 270%. With our expansion in years three and four, we will hit the mark of €3.8 million in annual recurring revenue (ARR) in year three and further advance to €8.6 million in year four. In year

five, our vision to become a leading corporate wellness provider for large enterprises is reflected in our forecast of €14.8 million ARR and a growth rate for revenue and subscribers of 71%. The compound annual growth rate for our company from 2024 until 2028 is 208% and can be seen throughout the revenue development in Appendix F. Figure 15 below illustrates the promising financial trajectory for Thryv, showing the effectiveness of the business model and market strategy. The moderate growth in EBITDA and net income from 2024 to 2025 is based on a phase where Thryv is focusing on establishing a market presence and acquiring an initial customer base. The substantial increase in revenue from 2026 onwards indicates successful scaling, due to a more professionally developed product, paired with a strengthened sales power. This allows us to achieve expanded market reach in core and new markets. Free cash flow growth aligns with our strategic reinvestment in the business, including the app, sales staff, marketing efforts and market expansion. This financial forecast suggests that the venture is expected to not only capture but also sustain market share in the evolving corporate health space, benefiting from increased health and sports awareness in changing work environments.

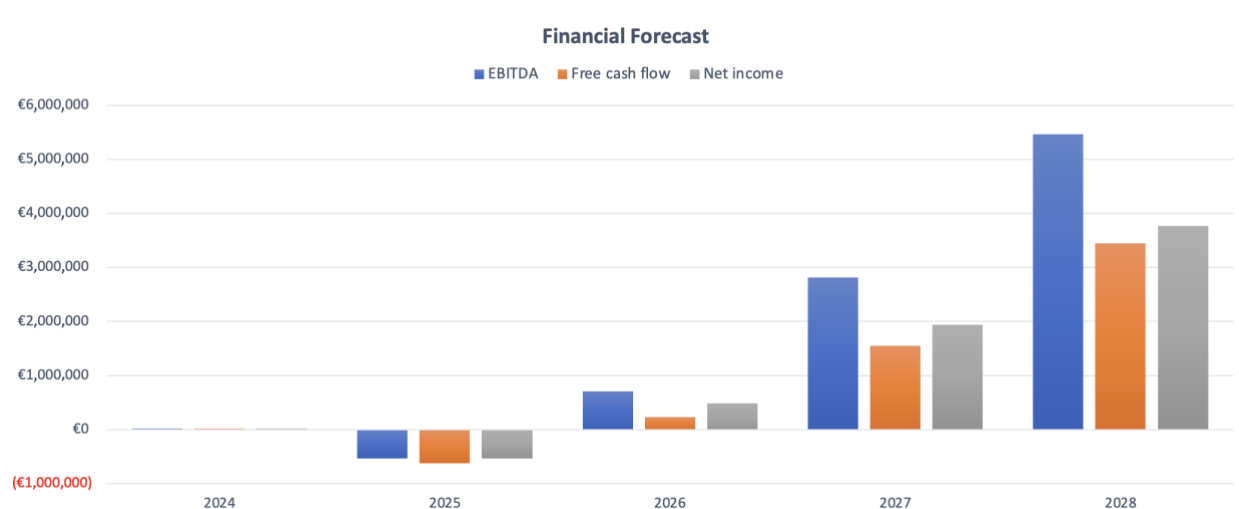


Figure 3: Financial Forecast

3.6.3 Cost Structure

This section outlines the various costs associated with operating the business, providing a clear picture of the financial resources required to establish a solid foundation for growth. Starting with the initial setup costs in year one, we calculated a €10,000 budget for the initial marketing costs, which will be used for maximum impact with the inclusion of guerrilla and physical marketing according to our marketing strategy, giving us a push at the start. Legal costs were also set to around €10,000 per year, based on research (Canella 2023). Our app development costs for year two were set at €75,000, as research suggests that wellness apps with tracking functions range anywhere between €30,000-€100,000. We see ourselves rather on the upper end, due to the increased complexity of our app (Successive Digital 2023).

A significant portion of the main costs, app maintenance is projected to be at 17,5% of development costs, based on research indicating app maintenance costs range from 15%-20% of cost of the initial app's development (Martin 2023). Therefore, our app maintenance costs remain constant at €13,125 annually, acknowledging the need for continuous updates and user experience improvements. This reflects our commitment to delivering a seamless and evolving app experience to our customers. To bolster our service offerings, Thryv invests in wearables for user engagement, with costs expected to follow the trajectory of our user base expansion. The hardware consists of a wearable which we acquire from a Chinese contact. The price per wearable from this Chinese contact is €8.00 for a minimum order quantity of 500 units. As we expect to surpass these 500 users in year one, we will be able to immediately order for €8.00 per wearable. Another big pillar in the main costs are our marketing costs, which are set at 12% of revenue annually as recommended by research and will therefore quickly grow from the initial €10,000 euros (Whatman 2023). These increasing marketing costs are in line with our ambition for expansive user acquisition and brand establishment, although most customer acquisition efforts are done by our sales managers. Therefore, the budget for marketing costs

is going to include website development, SEO optimization, public relations and content creation. Costs for rent, utilities and office equipment were ignored for the first year, as we do not have employees and we all work from home in a bid to keep costs lean. Starting from year two, we calculated ten square meters needed per employee for our office space in Berlin. The price per square meter was set at €19.15 and 10% of our rent will be used on utilities (Berlinstartupjobs 2023). Office equipment will cost around €1,800 per employee (Williams 2023). This equates to a total cost for rent, utilities, and office equipment of roughly €95,000 in year two, which increases to €150,000 in year five as more space is needed. Another major cost to run our business is the salaries of our employees, primarily our sales managers. The investment in our workforce is substantial, with the total founder's salary set at €150,000 from year two to year five to cover basic costs of living. In year one, there will be no salary costs as all five founders who take the job of sales manager will not pay for themselves and will instead rely on personal savings to sustain the company. From year two until year five, there will be a strategic increase in software developers, key account managers, and sales staff as Thryv scales. By the end of the forecast period, we project total salary costs to rise significantly from €585,764 to over €1.7 million, rising steadily with the increase in total employees from 5 to 35 (Appendix F).

In personnel development, we intend to boost the number of software developers and sales staff in proportion to our expanding user base, with an additional developer per new market entered, and a new account manager for every 50 companies onboarded. Sales staff will increase by five employees annually, ensuring we can handle the growing demand and maintain high customer satisfaction on the tail-end.

To conclude, our financial and personnel strategies are designed to support user growth and service quality. The projections show a business model poised for expansion, with significant and calculated investments in product development, data security, and human resources.

3.6.4 Bootstrapping in Year One

Bootstrapping a startup refers to a business practice where entrepreneurs start and grow a company using their resources, often with little to no external financial input such as venture capital or angel investment. This strategic approach requires founders to rely on personal savings, revenue generated by the business, and operational efficiency. Moreover, Löfqvist (2017, 1234) emphasized that bootstrapping is not only employed for the growth of newly established small businesses but is also widely utilized in small established companies during product innovation, underscoring its relevance across various business stages. This method offers several advantages, particularly during the formative stages of a business when external funding may be limited or undesirable. Offering a minimum viable product with existing customers when asking for funding gives Thryv more leverage, meaning that less equity must be sacrificed. This approach is chosen for our first year of operations as we want to emphasise financial independence and autonomy and avoid dilution of founder equity in the first year. A study by Ebben (2009, 346) confirms that bootstrapping can be a proactive strategy for preserving ownership and control, indicating its potential usefulness for startups, particularly in the initial phase. Additionally, Vanacker et al. (2011, 681) direct attention to the correlation between financial bootstrapping and the growth of new ventures, suggesting that bootstrapping strategies can positively impact the growth of startups. Critically, this autonomy allows startups to pursue their vision without external interference ensuring decision making that aligns with their long-term goals.

With Thryv's it is crucial to continually test and adjust the application, to see how we can rely on self-funding, and to demonstrate early traction and generate revenue to sustain operations. This market-driven approach provides real-time feedback on Thryv's product-market fit and customer demand, allowing for timely adjustments and course corrections. Moreover, bootstrapping can strengthen relationships with early adopters and customers. By

demonstrating commitment to the product and a willingness to engage directly with customers, bootstrapped startups foster trust and loyalty, building a strong foundation for future growth. As Thryv is initially targeting small enterprises, these may feel that we understand or align with their own entrepreneurial ethos.

For Thryv specifically the decision to use bootstrapping is grounded in several key factors. Firstly, our business model does not necessitate the purchase of capital-intensive machinery or property, nor the hiring of highly specialized experts. We possess the capability to build much of the product in-house and even without code, initially. Furthermore, our team's combined expertise and network are adequate to ensure the product's success in its initial stages and to facilitate its sale to companies. A significant portion of our business operations can be efficiently managed using software. Most importantly, the founders are committed to maintaining control over the company and wish to make key decisions autonomously, without external influence. We are confident that we can sustain our first year of operations without paying ourselves salaries and that we are able to create a no code solution for our first customers which illustrates the potential for further improvement of the product and showcases the value it has. We also rely on support by friends, family and our savings to come up for initial costs such as the wearables, legal and marketing which sum up to €25,000 in year one. Being able to cover those costs, provide for necessary cost of living and work productively on customer acquisition will set everything up for an angel or venture capital investment in year two. In conclusion, bootstrapping offers a compelling strategy for early-stage startups seeking financial independence, resourcefulness, market validation, agility, and strong customer relationships. While external funding will play an important role for us in year two, bootstrapping provides a valuable foundation for sustainable growth and long-term success.

3.6.5 Seed Funding in Year Two

After one year of bootstrapping, seeking a seed round is a strategic decision driven by several factors. Seed financing rounds typically represent the initial stage of external funding for startups, providing capital to support the early development of a business idea or prototype. These rounds are characterized by smaller investment amounts and higher risk, as they are aimed at financing the starting activities of a venture (Caviggioli et al. 2020, 695). The utility of seed financing rounds lies in their ability to provide crucial early-stage capital, allowing entrepreneurs to prove their concept before raising additional funds for company growth (Bachmann et al. 2021, 1725). This funding will allow us to bring a knowledgeable angel investor or venture capitalist into the company, providing valuable industry insights and advice for scaling operations. Additionally, the provided capital will enable us to accelerate our hiring process, adding more staff to sell our products to larger and a broader range of companies. Increasing our account management team is also crucial to ensure our product performs optimally for clients. Lastly, the seed round will facilitate the implementation of extensive feedback, allowing us to further refine and enhance our product. As we accelerate our operations in year two, we end up with a cash flow deficit of around €600,000, consisting mainly of costs for salaries, app development, hardware and costs related to our office space. Therefore, we will be needing an angel or VC investment of €600,000 plus a buffer of 15% leading to an amount of €690,000 needed. To align both interests of our early investors with our long-term goals, we will offer a convertible note with a 20% discount to ensure equity does not become overly diluted and a valuation cap of €5 million. This structure will allow Thryv to break even in Q3 2026. Our investors will have the chance to participate in the upside of our company's growth while also protecting their capital in the event of a down round. We will offer a convertible note which provides several advantages for both startups and investors. Convertible loan notes offer a flexible financing option allowing the company to raise capital

without an immediate valuation, which is particularly beneficial in the early stages of a company's development (Kaplan and Strömberg 2000, 281). Additionally, convertible loan notes can help entrepreneurs, business angels, and venture investors avoid dilution, improve the internal rate of return of venture capital, and assist venture investors in monitoring entrepreneurs (Mikryukov 2021, 634). We will carefully select the angel or VC investor, looking for a background in the healthcare sector and preferably extensive experience in building B2B businesses. Furthermore, the personal investor fit will be scrutinized to avoid misaligned incentives.

3.6.6 Pricing Structure

Thryv's pricing strategy is a carefully considered mixture of value-based pricing and competitive positioning in the market. Operating as a SaaS venture, Thryv presents a compelling offer for companies seeking to enhance their employee wellbeing and engagement through a sophisticated tracking and fitness platform.

At the core of the pricing structure is the option for users to either integrate Thryv with their own wearable devices at a cost-effective rate of €5 per month or to opt for the full experience by purchasing one of Thryv's wearables at €8 per user per month. This dual pricing model allows Thryv to cater to different user employees, while ensuring all users get the full advantages of high-quality data analytics (as determined in 4.2.4).

Thryv's value-based pricing approach considers the less tangible but highly impactful benefits that the service offers, such as bolstering team spirit, enhancing company appeal, and boosting overall employee motivation. These are aspects of corporate culture that are difficult to measure but are integral to the long-term success and cohesion of any business. Thryv understands that the investment made into their platform and wearables is one that pays dividends over time, reflected in higher engagement rates, reduced turnover, and positive

feedback from employee surveys, as well as a decrease in absenteeism and presenteeism.

Thryv's pricing model that is slightly above the average market range of €3 to €6, where most competitors in Germany fall (as described in 4.5.4). Thryv justifies this with a premium offering that includes branded wearables and comparable relative effort matrixes. This not only provides a tangible product for users, but also serves as a symbol of recognition and commitment to employee wellbeing.

The financial return Thryv's pricing strategy becomes evidenced when looking at section 4.3.2. Figure 9, where the annual cost per user of €96 for those opting for a Thryv wearable—plus additional expenditures on rewards—is significantly lower than the average savings of €709 that companies can realize, as a customer will see a sevenfold return on their investment in an average case. These savings are even more pronounced for users who choose not to acquire a wearable from Thryv, with low annual costs of €60, exclusive of rewards. In these cases, the return on the employer is more than tenfold.

The decision to adopt a minimum subscription duration of six months is rooted in the understanding that true change within a workforce—especially in terms of health and wellness habits—requires time (Gardner et al 2012, 664-666). This period allows for the full integration of Thryv's corporate wellness program into the daily lives of employees, enabling the formation of new, healthier habits and the chance to experience the benefits that come with increased movement and activity. It is crucial that employees engage with Thryv's platform consistently to benefit fully. This includes participating in individual and team challenges and earning rewards, which collectively serve to amplify the motivational aspects of the program. Offering customers, the option to cancel their subscription by the month following an initial six-month block is a testament to Thryv's confidence in its product and its respect for customer autonomy. It gives clients the freedom to manage their expenses according to the value they perceive and the results they witness, removing any feelings of being locked into a long-term,

inflexible commitment. This also reduces the psychological hurdle that sales teams must overcome and can help to more quickly win customers.

Thryv separates itself from the competition by eliminating the common practice of charging a setup fee—often as high as 20%. This decision underscores Thryv's efficient onboarding process, facilitated by a user-friendly 'get started' instructions that allow users to set up the service mostly by themselves (see 4.4.2). The presence of Customer Success Managers ensures that help is on hand, should it be needed, without imposing additional financial burdens on the customer.

Financially, Thryv's model is structured for sustainability. Thryv's Chinese partner provides a two-year warranty on its wearables. In the event of a malfunction not caused by the user, devices are replaced immediately, ensuring that the customer experience remains uninterrupted. For wearables damaged due to user error, a nominal replacement fee of €10 is charged. This fee is designed to be fair and manageable, almost covering replacement, handling and shipping costs, thus reflecting Thryv's customer-centric approach.

Additionally, Thryv offers the flexibility for new users to join an existing corporate subscription at any time, with a minor setup fee of €5. This fee is necessary to cover the logistical expenses of distributing wearables and integrating new users into the company's system, ensuring that latecomers are seamlessly added to the wellness program.

Despite the service generating average minimum savings of over €600 for companies, Thryv has consciously chosen not to increase its prices further. This decision stems from an understanding of not only competitors' price points, but of the current economic landscape where companies are actively looking to cut costs (as stated by candidate 13). A higher price could present a significant barrier to subscription, deterring companies from investing in a wellness program, regardless of the potential savings.

Moreover, Thryv is expected to operate with sufficient profits to sustain its business operations

without exerting additional financial pressure on its clients. The company acknowledges that while its service is a powerful motivator in promoting a healthier lifestyle, it is not the only wellness benefit. For instance, Thryv does not replace the need for a gym membership, which remains a significant cost for many companies (indicated by candidate 3). Recognizing that ultimately individuals need to engage in physical activity, Thryv prices itself as an accessible tool to encourage and facilitate that process, rather than as a standalone solution.

Looking to the future, Thryv is exploring strategies to expand its customer base, such as offering a three-month free trial to win over sceptics. The rationale behind this potential move is to further lower the barrier to entry, making it easier for companies to commit to a contract without an immediate financial outlay. However, such a move would require a solid understanding of the company's financial health, including profits and churn rates, to ensure sustainability. The goal would be to provide wearables for free during the trial, with the confidence that users will see the value in Thryv and transition into paying customers.

This strategic initiative, though promising, is unlikely to be implemented until at least the third year of operation. Thryv recognizes the necessity of establishing a robust financial foundation and a clear insight into customer retention metrics before embarking on such a venture.

3.7 Team

Finn Blacklaws

Finn Blacklaws, a dynamic and multilingual professional with a diverse background, is suited for a sales and marketing role. He is equipped with a Summa cum laude bachelor's degree in media production from Bournemouth University and currently pursuing an International Master's in Management with a focus on Entrepreneurship at Nova School of Business and Economics in Lisbon, Portugal. Finn possesses a unique blend of creative and strategic thinking. His experience at Amazon as an Account Representative Intern, where he leveraged data insights and fostered cross-team collaboration, demonstrates his analytical ability. Finn's stint as an Inside Sales Manager at Doctolib showcased his talent for client acquisition and retention through tailored value propositions and data-driven strategies. In his role as an Assistant Producer at CNDY Film GmbH and as an editor at the Farm Group in London, Finn honed his creativity and leadership skills, evidenced by a successful social media strategy and client-facing pitches for prominent brands. Finn's background in advertising film, collaborating with both agencies and corporate clients, honed his ability to market products using visual storytelling.

Benjamin Rehwald

Leading our Product and Tech department is Benjamin Rehwald, making sure that our platform runs smoothly across all devices and that all standards are upheld. Growing up in Germany, he has since lived across Argentina, Australia, the United States, and Mexico, taking every opportunity to explore and learn. With a bachelor's degree from the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, he is now completing his master's degree at Nova School of Business & Economics in Lisbon, Portugal. Running his own company for over five years, Benny has extensive experience in the e-commerce sector, driving multiple online shops to a total sales volume of 220,000€. His hands-on experience spans coding, SEO, internet marketing, and team

management, alongside sales, customer service, and conversion rate optimization. Benny is experienced in communicating with customers, including understanding and acting on their needs or concerns. Now, Benny brings his expertise to our new venture, leading the Product and Tech department.

Lennart Stoeppler

Lennart Stoeppler lived most of his life in Germany where he grew up and completed his bachelor's degree at the renowned Frankfurt School of Finance and Management. He gained cross-cultural experience by living in several countries, such as the United States, Australia, Mexico, and Portugal. The latter is where he pursued his master's degree at the NOVA School of Business and Economics, specializing in Entrepreneurship. During his studies, he worked at the venture-backed startup Portagon, where he successfully helped develop the B2B marketing channel. In addition to marketing, he supported the sales team with setting up and maintaining the CRM platform. He also gained startup experience at the corporate venture builder Ampolon, helping to develop startups in Germany's PropTech sector. His core tasks involved developing and evaluating business models, as well as markets for a feasible implementation. Drawing on his expertise, he is part of the sales team, focusing on after-sales service and the successful implementation of our product for the customer.

Jan Wetzel

Jan Wetzel will take on the responsibility for the operations of our corporate wellness app, assuring that our business runs smoothly, and customers are satisfied with our product. His academic background, with a Master of Science in Management focusing on Entrepreneurship from the Nova School of Business and Economics and a Bachelor in Science in Business Administration from the University of Mannheim, has provided him with a strong foundation

in strategic business management and innovation. At everphone GmbH, a B2B startup for device rentals, Jan gained first-hand experience in managing processes and order flow for enterprise customers, which is directly applicable to his role in our company. His hands-on experience in dealing with operational challenges during the scaling phase and his contribution to improving service functionalities align perfectly with the demands of managing operations for our business. Jan's internship at Loma Health, an at-home blood testing company, further underscores his proficiency in the health sector. Furthermore, as a Founder's Associate at Eaze, a psychological sleep coaching firm, Jan helped to develop a sales process for partnerships with companies, universities, and insurances, showcases his adeptness in sales and customer relationship management. Jan's blend of academic knowledge, hands-on experience in sales, product development, and business operations, particularly in the health and tech sectors, make him an ideal candidate to lead the operations of our corporate wellness app.

Philip Stockmar

Philip Stockmar will lead our finance department for the corporate wellness app, bringing a solid foundation in finance and business management. He has studied Management with a focus on Entrepreneurship at the Nova School of Business and Economics, and Banking and Finance at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, equipping him with key insights into financial strategies and business administration.

Philip's professional experience perfectly aligns with our company's financial needs. His internship at ODDO BHF AG in Private Wealth Management honed his skills in data processing and customer relationship management, essential for overseeing our app's financial operations. His role at Cushman & Wakefield in Capital Markets further strengthened his financial analysis skills, where he was involved in creating investment memoranda and cash flow models. Working at PrivateFinancePartners, Philip learned how to develop financial

models and collaborated on business development projects. In addition, he assisted in real estate valuations during his time at NAI Apollo Real Estate in investment, which further improved his strategic financial planning and management skills.

Overall, Philip's comprehensive education and varied professional experiences make him well-suited to lead the financial operations of our corporate wellness app. His expertise in financial management and strategy is key to guiding our company towards growth and success.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Key Findings from the Literature and Interviews

This paper's literature review begins by highlighting the central problem which the Thryv business model addresses, namely the significant impact of poor employee health on corporate productivity and financial stability. Absenteeism due to obesity (Andreyeva et al. 2014), common pain conditions such as back pain (Stewart et al. 2003) and other chronic illnesses (Goetzel et al. 2014) is shown to be one factor that negatively affects profits. But the economic impact of presenteeism, or the lack of productivity while employees are present at work, is surprisingly far more severe (Demerouti et al. 2009) by a factor of up to 10 (Evans-Lacko and Knapp 2016). These physical issues compound with mental health issues to cost companies not just money, but morale (Wright and Cropanzano 2017).

Corporate wellness programs, as defined by Danna and Griffin (1999) and Lerner et al. (2013), are evolving to comprehensively enhance employee health and reduce related costs. Goetzel and Ozminkowski (2008) categorize these into primary programs (aimed at relatively healthy employees), secondary programs (for at-risk individuals), and tertiary programs (for those who are already sick). The industry is trending towards a broader focus on organizational health and a shift from ROI calculations to a value proposition which include non-calculable benefits (Abraham and White 2017). Beyond offering benefits like improved health and productivity, reduced healthcare costs, and absenteeism reduction (Bontrager and Marshall, 2020; Baicker et al. 2010), wellness programs also positively impact job satisfaction, mood, fitness, reduce job stress, and absenteeism (Giddens et al. 2017; Creek et al. 2017), making companies more attractive to top talent (Mulligan 2010).

On the surface, corporate benefits appear to be an ideal solution against disease. However, delving deeper revealed that contemporary solutions are far from perfect. Analysing the expert interviews and contrasting them with literary findings, it quickly became clear that a lack of

engagement is the central critical shortcoming of contemporary solutions, with all but two interviewees reporting engagement rates below 30%. All other shortcomings tie into this main concern, as shown in Appendix C. Despite their availability and potential benefits, there is also a notable lack of long-term commitment and usage for mobile health apps (Kim et al. 2020, Terry et al. 2011). Key factors contributing to this disengagement include stigmas associated with wellness programs, privacy concerns, and the complexity of the programs (candidates 1,2,7,9,11).

Based on existing literature and control groups, control theory (Carver et al. 1982), Stoyanov et al. (2015)'s MARS scale (mobile app rating scale), and interview results, the shortcomings of current mobile health apps were determined. For one, digital solutions for corporate wellness remain underused, especially in Germany (candidates 1 and 3), despite these solutions having unique features like data-based feedback, and digital goals and reminders (Wang et al. 2017), which can encourage regular physical activity (Dounavi and Tsoumani 2019, 899).

Beyond a notable gap of digital solutions despite their efficacy, an assessment of user experience and accessibility indicates that while self-monitoring in apps can be efficient, it may lead to a poor user experience over time. J. Kim et al. (2020) and Bardus et al. (2016) push for a solution with minimal input effort. Candidates 7 and 15 emphasise the importance of passive health data tracking and a simple, user-friendly app which does not interrupt employee's daily lives.

The literature and interviews resoundingly call for a solution which offers group support, as it is an "inspirational feature" which reduces "feelings of isolation" (Ghelani et al. 2020, 412). Both the research and interviews suggest that social aspects foster engagement, and that this engagement is also greatly driven by senior management. "Leading by example is essential" notes candidate 3. Only candidate 3 mentions that this strategy is being actively implemented in their company, indicating that the distribution for applications has not yet been optimised.

One risk to social engagement is some users fearing negative attention when sharing their performance (Solbrig et al. 2017).

The risk of negative attention is echoed in the findings on the competitive aspect of mobile health. Here, adjustments for varying fitness levels and considerations for creating an even playing field are discussed. Çağıltay et al. (2015), Hu and Zhu (2018), and others demonstrate that competition can indeed greatly encourage motivation. Candidates 2, 3, 5, 10, and 14 indicate, however, that there are varying opinions on competition. They propose that this difference in opinion can be based on age, company culture, department, and region. For example, sales departments or younger individuals at startups could be more competitive than tenured professionals in a larger corporate company. Some suggest a flexible approach to competition, allowing it to be toggled on or off. Interview candidate 15 draws the eye to a vital point; that more sedentary individuals can be discouraged by very active employees and calls for adjusting effort to be more comparable. Candidates 8, 11 and 12 agree.

Just as the desire for competition varies based on company culture, so does the desire for incentives, which are also pivotal to an app's success according to sources like Berdud et al. (2016) and Kullgren et al. (2016). The interviews reveal radically diverse opinions on incentives, though, with some candidates favouring financial rewards (candidate 2 states that "you can't go wrong with a monetary reward") and others showing a strong preference for non-monetary or symbolic rewards. The importance of being able to customize rewards for a business becomes clear, as it was with competition. Candidates also call for the gamification of their apps, and candidate 13 highlights the importance of game features "coaxing people out of their reserves". This echoes the findings on competition and is especially relevant for less active individuals where sport makes a big difference. This also draws the eye back to Goetzal and Ozminkowski (2008)'s secondary and tertiary programs, which target at-risk and sick individuals. It seems that some contemporary solutions can be discouraging for those with a

less active lifestyle, and that beyond customization options, gamification is one key tool for Thryv to change this.

Personalization for the user is also essential. Interviews highlight varied interests and preferences in sports activities, suggesting the importance of an app that integrates with a range of activities from cycling to running and even daily steps. The literature and interviews collectively indicate that cross-integration with other apps and multiple activities is a bare minimum for a modern fitness app, and that any competitor failing to achieve this will fall short of expectations.

Zhou et al. (2019) and O'Loughlin et al. (2019) indicated that privacy and security are major user concerns. Interviews reflected similar concerns, with a noted generational divide in attitudes toward data privacy. The necessity for a transparent strategy in handling client data and complying with corporate regulations emerges very clearly from research, suggesting that apps lacking in this aspect may struggle to compete.

Based on the literary findings, some approaches to a business model are explored before the business model is delved into further. This brief section introduces the potential of wearable trackers in enhancing user engagement and addressing the above shortcomings in health programs, as evidenced by Canhoto (2017) and Giddens et al. (2017). These wearables offer simplicity and social motivation, while also fostering health consciousness even in the absence of rigorous activity tracking. Regarding targeting strategies, a dual approach in marketing strategies should be considered: addressing HR decision-makers' need for financially viable products and end users' personal benefit motivations. Furthermore, the study suggests an initial focus on SMEs due to their openness to new ideas, fewer existing health solutions, and simpler administrative processes, compared to larger, more established companies. This dual-focused approach, combining the practicality of wearable technology with strategic targeting, presents a promising avenue for enhancing engagement in corporate health programs, but one that needs

to be more concretely defined in the below business model.

Overall, the literary analysis defines the “roots” of the problem tree in Appendix C, namely a lack of digital solutions, user experience, social and management influences, a lack of /wrong incentives, a lack of individualization, and data and privacy concerns. These all lead to a lack of engagement with corporate wellness programs. By addressing this lack of engagement using an improved business model, Thryv can help employees to exercise more, improving their health and reducing corporate costs.

4.2 Main Takeaways from the Business Model

At the outset of our business model, we established our vision and mission with a clear focus on addressing the fundamental challenges in workplace wellness. Our mission, "to empower every employee with personalized health insights through our app and integrated wearables," targets the core issue of enhancing individual health and productivity. The vision, "to revolutionize workplace wellness by creating an inclusive app," builds on this foundation, aiming to transform how physical well-being is integrated into corporate culture and accessible to all. This strategic direction was shaped by an informed understanding of the needs and gaps in current wellness programs based on research.

In the development of our product, we identified key elements that would make our approach both innovative and effective. Thryv combines a user-friendly app with smartwatch data, creating a more interactive and engaging fitness experience for employees. This integration is crucial for tracking and incentivizing healthy habits, thereby boosting productivity in the workplace. Our decision to focus on this tech-driven solution was reinforced by expert interviews, which highlighted the importance of practical, yet engaging methods to encourage health activity among employees.

The features we aim to implement are centred around a sports score system and a

comprehensive employee rewards program. The activity score focuses on relative effort rather than just absolute output. We used this metric based on feedback we got that sport activities need to be comparable across different fitness levels. It ensures a fair and inclusive measurement of wellness activities, accommodating employees at all fitness levels. The employee rewards system, designed as a points-based structure with multiple tiers, motivates sustained engagement and personal goal setting. This system, with insights and feedback based on accumulated points, aligns with our mission by fostering a health-conscious environment and encouraging continuous improvement in personal wellness. Both features embody our commitment to a holistic and inclusive approach to workplace wellness, guided by our initial vision and ongoing findings in the literature and expert interviews.

For our value proposition, we focused on understanding the needs of both HR employees (the buyers) and the company employees (the end-users) and mapped these to value proposition canvases (Appendix D and E). Candidate 2 noted HR's key role in decision-making. HR professionals, the buyers and decision makers, require a more quantified approach, as they seek approval from senior leadership. Beyond reduced absenteeism, higher satisfaction and productivity, and increased company loyalty, however, the interviews indicated that buyers would also be interested in less quantifiable metrics like team spirit (candidate 11).

For users, or employees, creating an adaptable and engaging app involves more personal factors which impact their daily lives and well-being, including user experience, rewards, personalization, and social connectivity. All these features build on the psychology behind engagement. In particular, conditions such as psychological empowerment, psychological meaningfulness, and psychological availability have to be covered as they have been identified as significant predictors of employee engagement. Additionally, the social and community aspects were also shown to drive engagement and are addressed by Thryv. Significantly, as candidates 5 and 15 indicated, Thryv has an opportunity to engage users who do not yet enjoy

fitness and are intimidated to compete with very active colleagues so far with its 'relative effort' feature. Data privacy plays a key role in both value propositions.

Quantifying our value proposition involved estimating the measurable outcomes HR professionals look for based on previous studies and research in a worst-case, middle-case, and best-case scenario (fig. 9). As is visualized in the problem tree in Appendix C and in figure 9, The value to employers was split between productivity savings and health-related costs. On the productivity side, an average case sees a 3% reduction in attrition (€141,00) per employee and a 5% presenteeism reduction (€119,95). For medical savings, a middle case scenario would lead to a 20% reduction in sick days (€362,40 in savings) and a 20% reduction in mortality chance per annum (€85,83). In total, Thryv estimates quantifiable savings of 709,18€ per employee per annum in Europe. Best case savings rise to €1.239,67, while worst case savings are estimated to be at least €280,08. In the United States, this value proposition would be greatly bolstered by a reduction in healthcare costs, which are shared by the employer and may be reduced by 20 to 55% (U.S. DHHS 1996, 81-144).

Regarding the market, we analysed the corporate health market to understand where Thryv fits in. In Germany, where we plan to launch, the market is evolving with increasing investment in employee health, as indicated by the new regulations and tax incentives stemming from the CHM, which is the regulatory framework and incentive for employers to foster employee health from the German government (Radtke 2023a). The German digital health market is characterized by a less dense competitive landscape compared to the U.S. While existing German health apps tend to offer basic health-tracking functionalities, Thryv wants to differentiate itself by making wearables mandatory and therefore ensuring precise data. Moreover, the commitment to customizable competitiveness, user challenges, and rewards provides a unique and flexible approach that not many competitors offer, allowing the platform to cater to various company cultures.

We also looked at the implementation and funding of corporate health programs in German companies. Our research, supported by interview insights, showed a mixed picture: some companies have fully implemented programs, while others are just starting or haven't considered it yet (Radtke 2023a). This variability in adoption rates and budget allocations for health programs underscores the potential market for Thryv, especially among companies that are either developing their wellness programs or looking to enhance existing ones (Radtke 2023b).

The global market for corporate health applications is estimated to be around USD 8 billion according to our market calculations (compare 4.5.3). This figure is part of the larger corporate health market, valued at USD 53 billion in 2022 (Grand View Research 2022), which includes physical health services, and is projected to grow at a rate of 4.47% yearly until 2030. Starting in Germany, our initial Serviceable Available Market (SAM) is calculated to be approximately €5.4 billion, involving over 38 million employees across 2.53 million companies. However, a more realistic Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM) for Germany, subtracting important factors such as company size, funding availability and relevant operational fields, is about 4 million individuals, translating into an annual market value of €307 million.

Our focus will initially be on white-collar industries and administrative sectors of manufacturing and service-oriented companies, considering that younger workforces and white-collar employees generally show a higher interest in health-enhancing measures as indicated by the majority of interviewees. The potential for future expansion into the DACH region, the UK, and particularly the United States makes this market even more promising.

Our implementation and rollout strategy are based on a phased approach, starting with the development of a Minimum Viable Product and progressing through various stages of market entry, scaling, and expansion. In the initial year, the team plans to create an MVP for Thryv using a no-code solution, specifically Bubble.io, to quickly develop the app with moderate

effort. This approach allows for rapid market entry without significant initial funding. The development and testing phase are estimated at six months, with an emphasis on user feedback and regulatory compliance. The app should integrate with various wearables and activities. The initial sales strategy involves onboarding small companies for a trial period, aiming to convert them into paying clients based on their feedback and app performance.

Year two is about scaling up seed funding, enhancing the app, and expanding the sales team to target medium-sized firms, which we found to be most attractive for our service based on our interview findings (candidate 7 and 9). Partnerships across various sectors are explored for broader market reach. The startup plans to enter the DACH region and prepare for the UK market, which provides more opportunities to tap into a growing market. In year three, Thryv targets larger enterprises, expanding the sales force and focusing on customer success and retention. The expansion into the DACH region continues, and preparations for the US market are made. Year four marks a significant move into the U.S. market, with a strategic focus on medium-sized enterprises and health insurance companies. In this market, the value proposition becomes significantly stronger due to the inclusion of saved health insurance costs for employers. This expansion is supported by strong financial health and does not require additional external funding.

Regarding financial projections, Thryv's model involves three scenarios considering different growth potentials and market conditions. The base case starts with 625 users in the first year, increasing significantly to 46,750 new users in year five as the company scales and expands to different regions and is acquiring larger enterprises over time. Revenue projections are based on a dual pricing model for users with (€8.00) and without (€5.00) Thryv wearable. With the anticipated increase in customer base, this leads to a revenue of around €9.00 million in 2028 and an annual compound growth rate of 208%.

The cost structure includes initial setup costs, app development maintenance, hardware

expenses, marketing, and operational costs like salaries and office space. The first year is based on a bootstrapping strategy, utilizing personal savings and revenue to sustain operations in order to get more bargaining power with an MVP when asking for funding. In year two, seed funding of 690,000 from a VC or angel investor with B2B and healthcare experience is sought to enhance product development, expand the customer base, and establish an office in Berlin. This investment will allow us to enhance our operations and be able to break even in Q3 of 2026.

The pricing strategy balances value-based pricing with competitive market positioning, offering an optionally higher rate for users who want a wearable. The financial logic justifies the pricing against the average savings companies realize using Thryv. The minimum subscription duration is set to encourage long-term habit formation, with a monthly cancellation option after six months. Thryv differentiates itself by eliminating setup fees and covering hardware costs within the subscription model.

In conclusion, our business model is built on solid evidence from literature and expert insights, focusing on creating the right product features and planning a clear path to market. We have carefully considered external factors and market dynamics, drawn from our research, resulting in a straightforward and strong financial plan that effectively meets our mission to become a leading corporate health app.

4.3 Challenges and Limitations

As we developed our business model, we encountered several challenges and limitations that are crucial to acknowledge. Firstly, our market insights are based on a limited number of interviews. While these interviews provided valuable perspectives, they may not fully represent the diverse and complex landscape of corporate wellness needs and preferences. This limitation highlights the potential gaps in our understanding of the market, underscoring the need for

ongoing research and engagement with a broader range of stakeholders.

Another significant challenge is the assumption that our customer base will grow exponentially.

This expectation may be overly optimistic, considering that many companies still lack prioritization of employee health and wellness or face budget constraints (Corporate Wellness Magazine 2023). The reality is that shifting corporate culture and values towards health and wellness is a gradual process, and growth projections may not always pan out as expected.

Additionally, the current venture capital market landscape presents a notable challenge. With a more competitive and stringent funding environment in the last years, our business faces the risk of failing to secure necessary funding (KPMG Private Enterprise 2023). This risk is exacerbated by the costs associated with developing and scaling a digital health solution, including technological development and compliance with health and data regulations.

Moreover, while we have designed our product and business model based on current market trends and user needs, these can rapidly evolve. The digital health market is highly dynamic, with new technologies, regulatory changes, and shifting user expectations. Our ability to adapt and respond to these changes is critical, but also presents a significant challenge in terms of resource allocation and strategic planning.

In summary, our business model, while robust and evidence-based, faces challenges in terms of market understanding, growth projections, funding acquisition and adaptability to market. Acknowledging these challenges is essential for adapting strategies that enhance the resilience and sustainability of our business.

4.4 Future Outlook

Our research clearly outlined an evidence-based business model for the corporate health market, targeting the problem of unhealthy employees and its burden on companies. Future research should further focus effective solutions and viable business strategies in the corporate

health segment that are capable of solving the key shortcoming pinpointed in this paper, a lack of employee engagement with corporate wellness initiatives.

Furthermore, given the rise of remote and hybrid work models (McLellan 2023), future research should also consider the unique health challenges of new work environments. Developing strategies that are flexible and adaptable to various working conditions will be key in ensuring the broad applicability and success of corporate wellness programs.

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Appendix

Appendix A - List of Interview Candidate Descriptions

Candidate #	Candidate Name	Candidate Bio
1	Shannon Tutko	Shannon Tutko is the director of compensation and benefits at Amazon for the EMEA and APAC region. She is among the first 100 Amazon employees, and has been a part of the company for over 20 years.
2	Maren Schwarzkopf	Maren Schwarzkopf has been a senior HR manager in Electrification and Mobility at Stanley Engineering for over 9 years, and has 8 years of consulting experience at manpower.
3	Philip Simpson	Philip Simpson has been a people engagement manager at the Berlin-based unicorn Doctolib in Berlin for 3 years. With a background in psychology, Philip's task is to onboard newcomers and keep employees engaged.
4	Thomas Dannenberger	Thomas Dannenberger is the Head of Learning Operations Global Development at Novartis Pharma AG. Thomas was Head of HR at a German facility of Novartis for several years.
5	Julian Wagner	Julian Wagner is the CEO of Skillsfaster, an early-stage startup which creates online video skill-learning classes. Julian is specialised in Performance Marketing and Web Development, having helped many startups in their growth phase.
6	Anonymous	This candidate is Senior IT Consultant at a leading chemical company in Germany. He has 20+ years of experience in this area, having lead various SAP Master Data Management projects.
7	Julian Born	Julian Born is currently head of operations at the venture backed startup Küchenheld. He is with Küchenheld since two years and led the expansion to various German cities. Prior to this, his experience is in consulting, private equity and M&A.
8	Neele Weitz	Neele Weitz is Managing Director, Product at the Berlin based and venture backed Security Tech start-up Trisor. She joined Trisor in the early stage and helped developing the product after she left IBM.
9	Arash Houshmand	Arash is a serial Entrepreneur and Angel Investor who led companies in the United States and Germany. In 2018 he founded Ampolon Ventures as a corporate venture builder as a

		subsidy of Aareon Bank, Germanys largest corporate real estate bank. After Ampolon Ventures was stopped in 2022, he became active as an Entrepreneur again.
10	Maximilian Kamp	Maximilian Kamp is a co-founder of GetElevate, a young startup in the HR space in Berlin. His previous experiences range from business development to investment banking, deal advisory and sales.
11	Tim Seifferth	Tim Seifferth is the co-founder and CEO of Eaze, a health-tech startup based in Germany. Prior to this, he gained HR experience as chief of staff as well as business development experience in the startup space.
12	Folke Grigo	Folke Christoph Grigo is currently director of people and culture at Everphone in Berlin. He has over 7 years of experience as a senior HR manager at companies like Zalando, Scout 24 and Mister Spex.
13	Felix Huber	Felix Huber has been Head of Community Management at Liebscher & Bracht for more than 6 years now. With a background in hotel management, he is now fostering a community of 50,000 people under the Liebscher & Bracht brand.
14	Anonymous	This candidate holds the position of Business Unit Lead & Senior Consultant in one of the largest IT Consultancies in Germany. He has been working there for over 20 years.
15	Vanessa Stockton	Vanessa Stockton works in the Financial Engineering department for corporate clients at one of the major banks in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She has been a dedicated employee for over 20 years at this bank.

Appendix B - Interview Questions

- 1 Are you currently offering a corporate wellness program? Which initiatives are included and do you use a mobile health app?
- 2 How many are people engaging with the current corporate wellness offerings at your company?
- 3 Why do you think this engagement rate is high or low? Why?
- 4 Is there a fund for employee well being and benefits? If so, how much is that roughly per employee? Do you think this fund is sufficient?
- 5 What corporate health apps are you currently aware of?

Introduce Solution

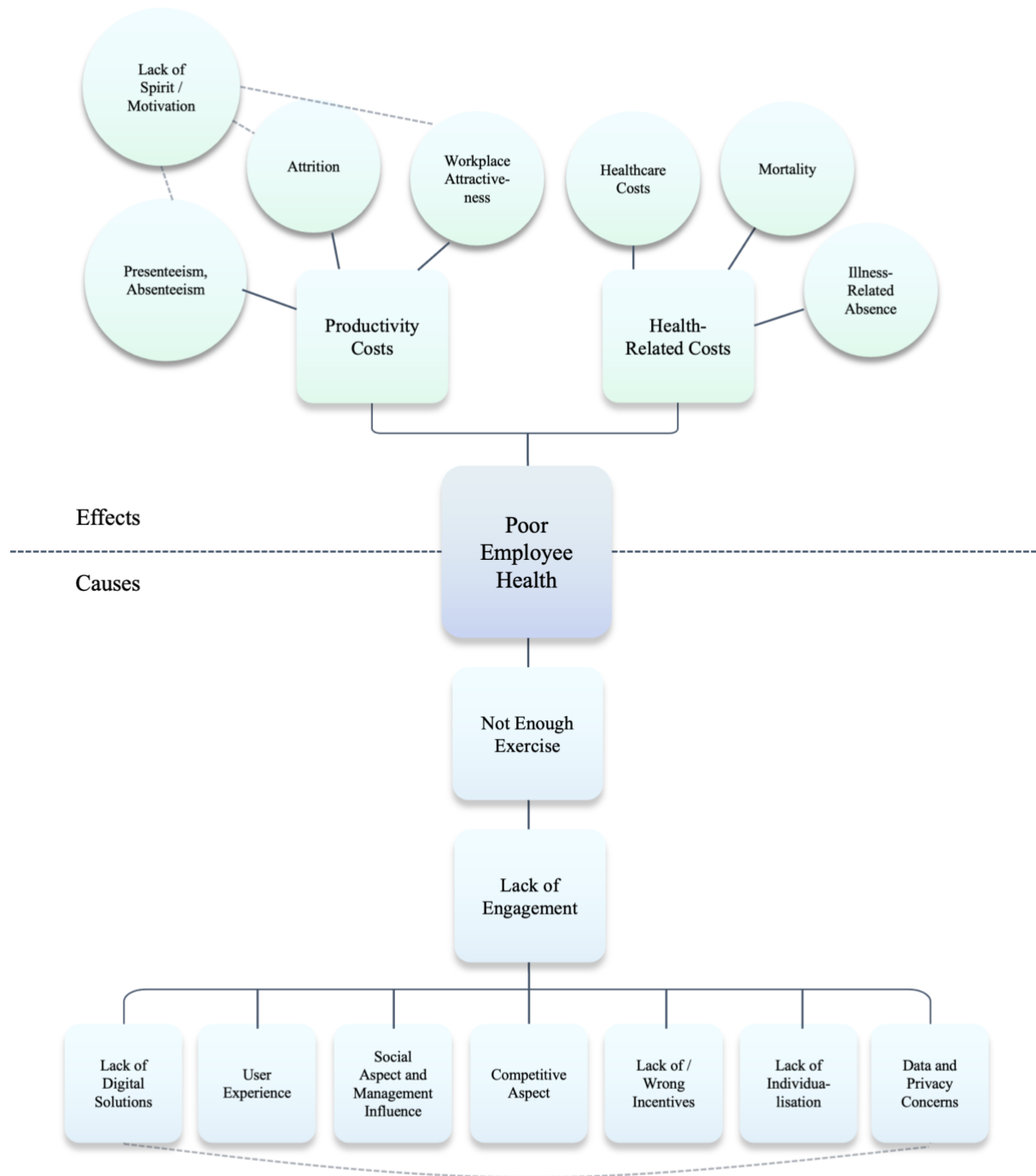
We are currently exploring a health app that provides value to businesses by increasing employee health through reward-based exercise challenges (with the potential addition of diet).

- 6 Have you previously used an app like this? How long did you use this app for? If you stopped using this app, what were the main reasons for stopping?
- 7 How receptive do you believe your employees would be to participating in company-set health challenges and goals?
- 8 What could be your concerns you foresee in implementing such an app within your company?
- 9 How likely do you foresee senior management or leadership to support and promote the use of the app?
- 10 Would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list, be appealing for your company culture?
- 11 Would your company be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who actively participate and achieve set goals in the app?
- 12 Which incentives do you feel would be the most useful? (monetary, trophies, ranking, ESOP?)

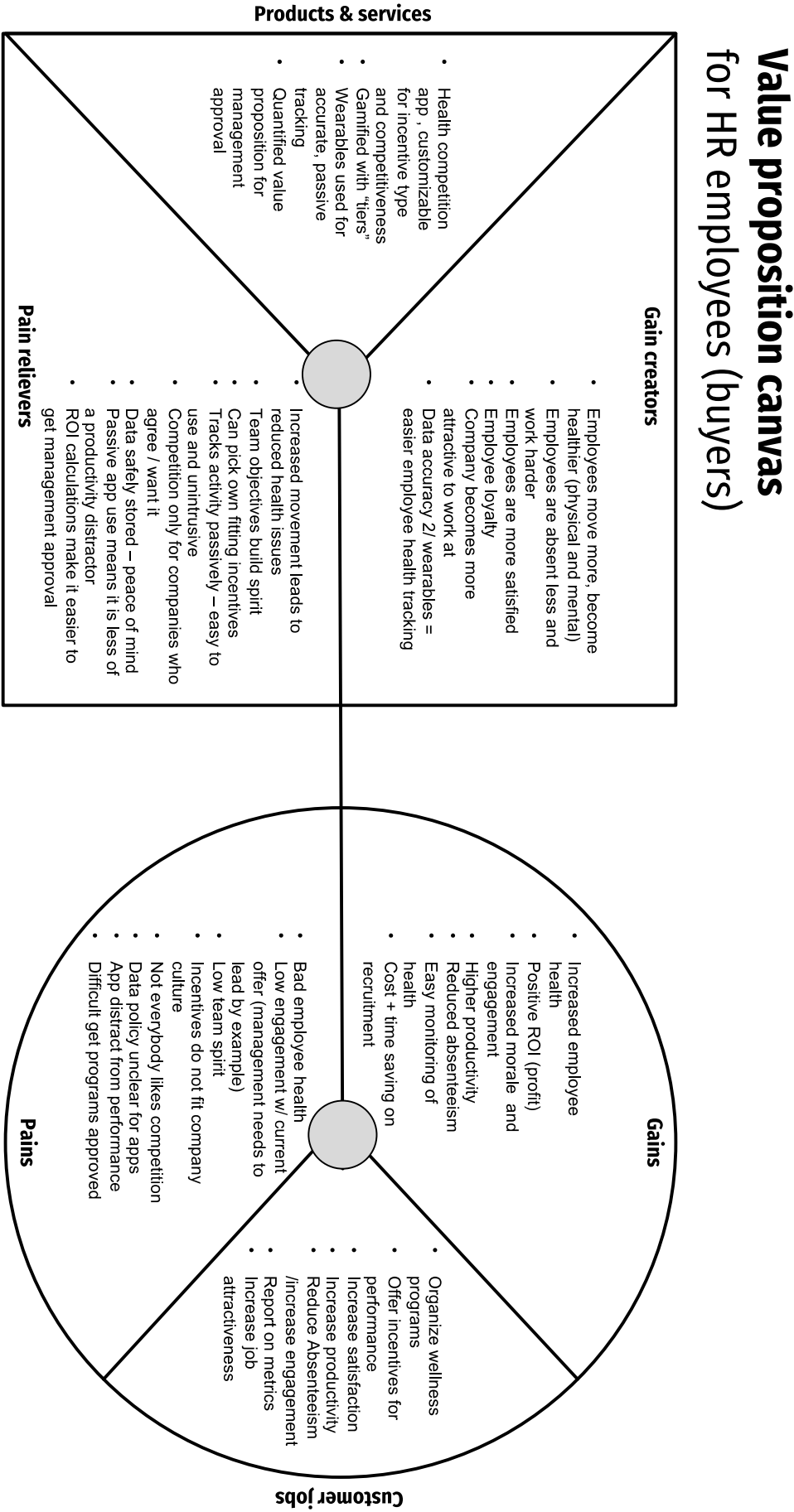
Ending

- 13 Would you be interested in a pilot program to test the app's effectiveness within your company?
- 14 Are there any other comments or suggestions you'd like to provide regarding this health app idea?

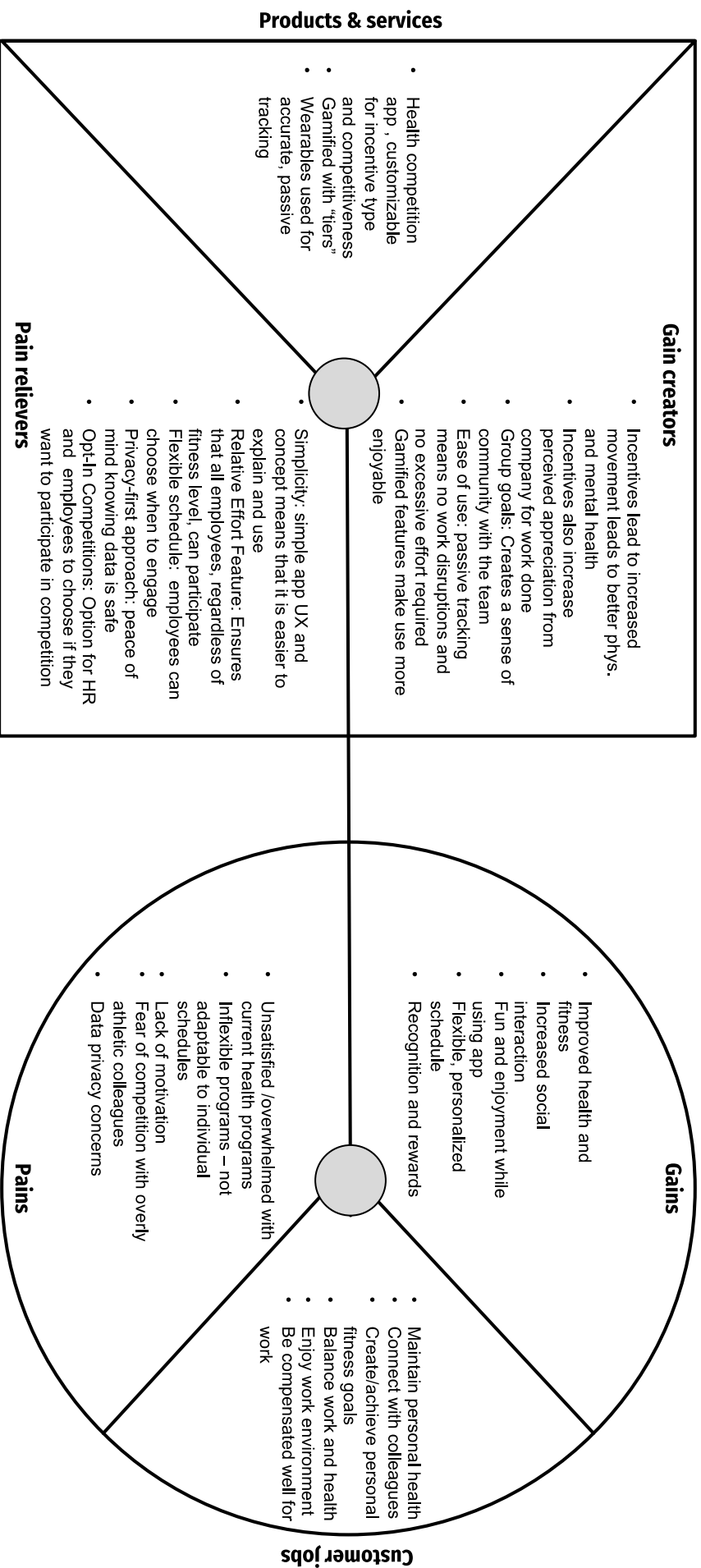
Appendix C – Problem Tree



Appendix D – Value Proposition Canvas (Buyers)

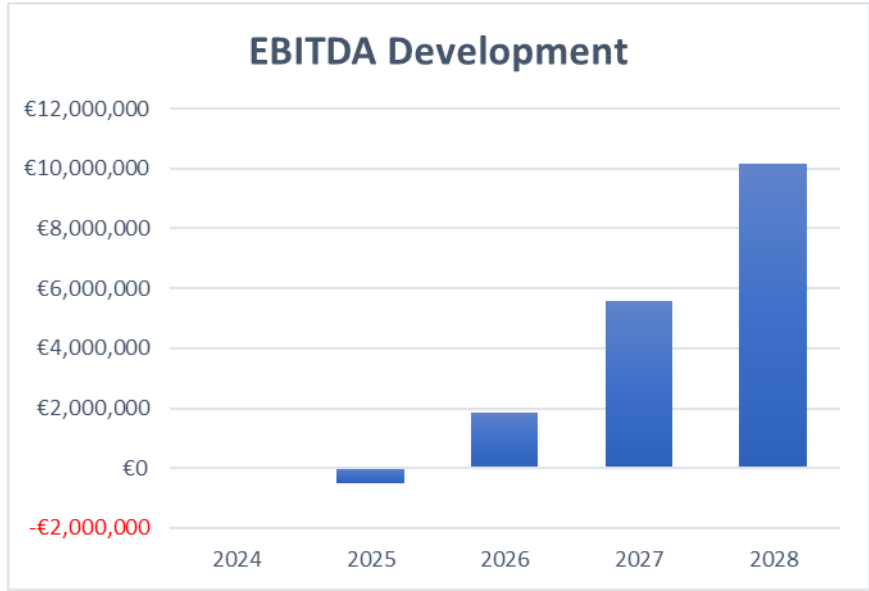
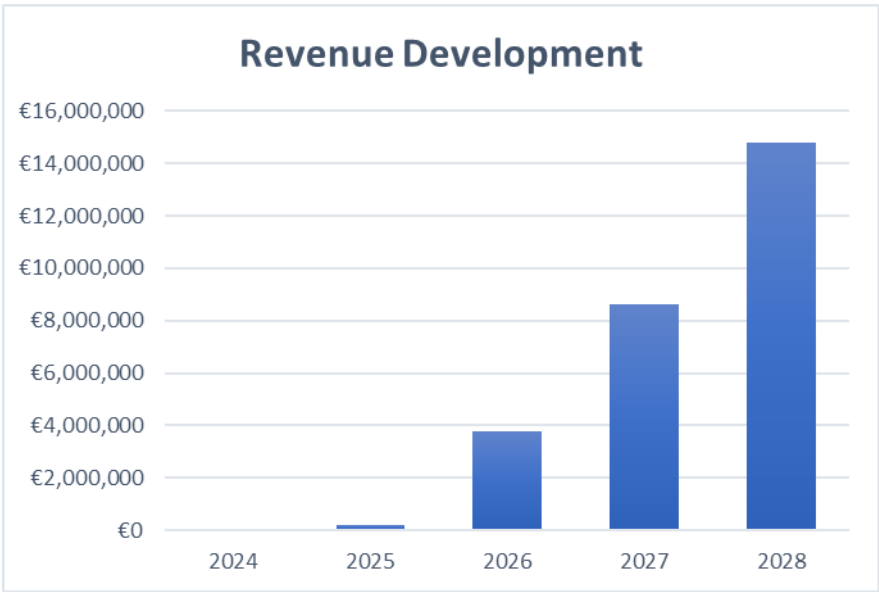


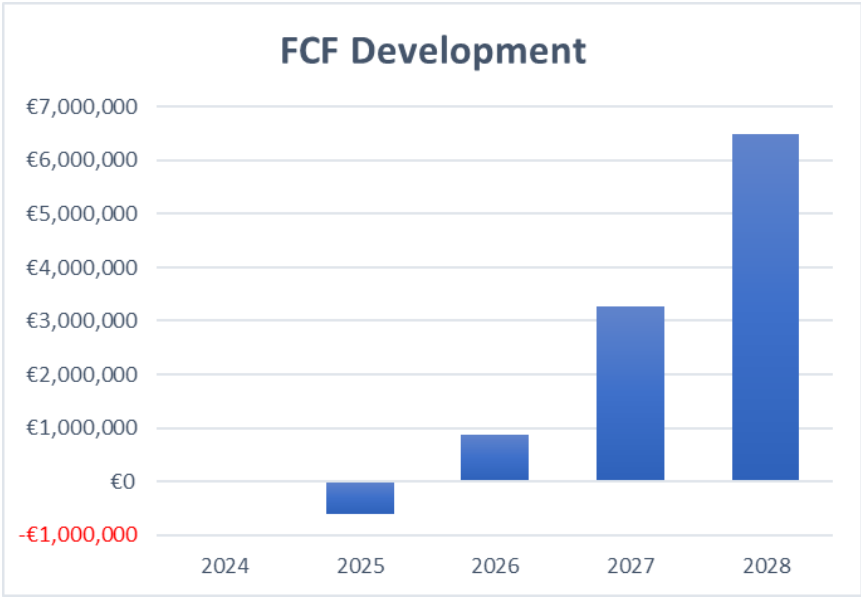
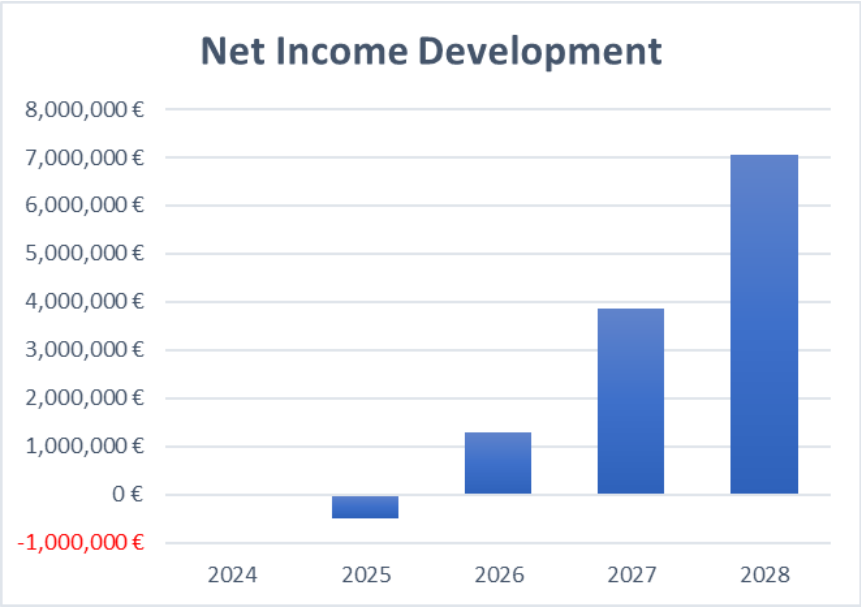
Value proposition canvas for all other employees (users)

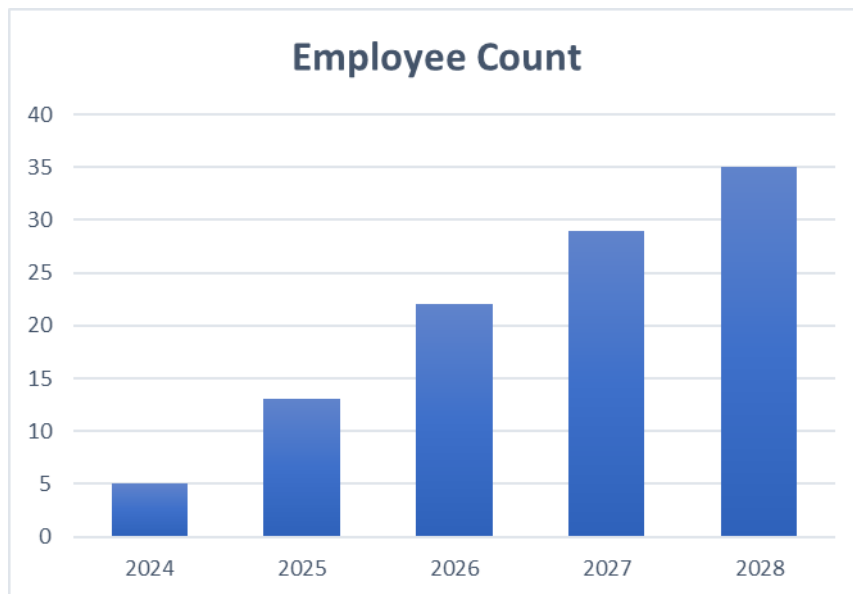


Appendix E – Value Proposition Canvas (Users)

Appendix F – Visualisation of Financial Development Over Time







User Count in Upside Case					
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Sales personnel	5	7	12	17	22
Companies acquired per sales manager	5	5	7	7	7
Average users per company	25	50	500	500	500
Total new users	625	1,750	42,000	59,500	77,000

User Count in Base Case					
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Sales managers	5	7	12	17	22
Companies acquired per sales manager	5	5	5	5	5
Average users per company	25	40	425	425	425
Total new users	625	1,400	25,500	36,125	46,750

User Count in Downside Case					
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Sales personnel	5	7	12	17	22
Companies acquired per sales manager	3	3	3	3	3
Average users per company	25	30	300	300	425
Total new users	375	630	10,800	15,300	28,050

Appendix G – Interview Transcripts

Candidate #1 – Shannon Tutko

Attendees

Finn Blacklaws, Shannon Tutko

Transcript

Finn Blacklaws: Hi Shannon, thank you so much for taking a half an hour's time.

Shannon Tutko: Sure, no problem.

Finn Blacklaws: So basically we'll keep the subject intentionally somewhat vague just to avoid a bias and about halfway through I'll tell you kind of what we're doing and what it's all about, but the general subject is health and being in the workplace. If you feel that questions aren't relevant or want to skip a question feel free. So if you could, **1) Just give me an idea of If Amazon currently offers any sort of corporate wellness program and which initiatives are included?**

Shannon Tutko: Yeah, So some of it will vary from one country to another but if I talk about global offerings and programs, we have an EAP which is an employee assistance program, and as part of that That We started a new website that's called support from anywhere. It's a website that we have that's accessible to all of our employees and they can get help at any time. There's live chat and also that's accessible to family and then there's an app called "Twill" that employees can access and that's sort of self-driven mental health and wellbeing program for employees to use and that is also accessible to family members.

Finn Blacklaws: And are you aware of anything to do with exercise and diet that Amazon's involved with or this mostly stay out of that as far as employees are

concerned?

Shannon Tutko: Yeah, that's again where it does vary. A lot of our programs and our benefits are going to be kind of market-driven. So just as an example: some of the eastern European countries like Czech Republic and I think Slovakia, maybe Poland having a gym membership is sort of Market practice, so all companies do it. So we offer that as well. But in other countries where it's not so much Market practice, we don't and through the EAP that I was talking about. There will be programs in terms of kind of helping people to get on track with health and diet and things like that, but we don't necessarily have gym memberships or things like that. There may be exercise rooms that people can use and some people might organise classes around yoga or other things, but it's not necessarily something that Amazon pays for or offers in all of the countries.

Finn Blacklaws: And do you have any idea of **2) how many people sort of engaged with these offerings just roughly?**

Shannon Tutko: To be honest, I know that generally for an EAP, or the employee assistance program, usually take up is pretty low. You'd be surprised. I mean even during covid there weren't a lot of people who were engaging with that and now with offering of "twill" that's relatively new and I don't know what the take-up is on that. But I think a lot of it is the stigma of people engaging with an employee assistance program or perhaps just the concern that it's not completely anonymous just not being aware that it's available. And so actually one of the things that we're really focused on here at Amazon is just Employee Engagement and discoverability of some of these benefits.

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah, that's kind of what

we are digging into as well a little bit. 3) **Are there any reasons looking into that engagement and things like that as to why engagement is high or low?**

Shannon Tutko: The Employee Assistance programs have really evolved out of a hotline where employees can call if they're depressed, but there are really a lot of services that are provided through the EAP and there's videos and streaming and things that employees can access. So I think it is just employees not really understanding how comprehensive and holistic the support that can get from an EAP is and the other thing is just like I said discoverability finding it, we have a lot of information on our intranet and sometimes it can be difficult for people to find information. And so that is another initiative is to build some awareness.

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah.

Shannon Tutko: Some of our own in-house technology includes mobile apps. So people can really find and access this information easily. Okay.

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah, that makes sense. And do you know obviously again this varies from region to region but 4) **Is there a fund for employee well being and benefits? If so, how much is that roughly per employee? Do you think this fund is sufficient?**

Shannon Tutko: Yeah, no, not really. We're piloting something like that. And I think it's India where we would give employees a set amount per year and they can choose different benefits and how they use it sort of like a Marketplace for employees. But generally we provide a set of benefits for a country and employees can either choose to take up the benefits or not. Some of them require what you call a copay where they have to contribute a little bit to the annual fees or monthly fees for it. But no we don't have a set budget that the employee can choose to use other than what

we're testing in India.

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah, find final question before I sort of break the ice and tell you what we're actually doing in a little bit more detail,

Shannon Tutko: Okay.

Finn Blacklaws: Which is you've told me about what was the mental health app, Twill. 5) **Are there any other corporate health apps just finally that you're aware of that just off the top of your head? Perhaps that Amazon offers?**

Shannon Tutko: No. I mean I think there was one each country may have their own EAP because a lot of it is cultural and what's locally relevant for people.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, good. So what we're doing is we're looking at a health app that provides value to businesses by increasing employee health maybe through reward based exercise challenges. So that's sort of what we're dipping our toes into now and obviously there's a vast landscape of existing Solutions. With that in mind, I'll ask you a few questions going forward in that context and again if they're at any of them don't feel free to feel free to just say skip. 6) **Have you ever used or experienced an app like that within Amazon? If yes how long did you use it for and what were the reasons for stopping?**

Shannon Tutko: I have not participated in it myself, but I know we've have them

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, you've had them right and was that something that sort of lasted or just was a fad and faded eventually

Shannon Tutko: I think it was kind of a fad and stopped.

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah, and okay, so not sustained - they did it and then weren't too perceptive about it going forward. Didn't sort of last as much as the Twill app it seems. What do you think makes maybe an

app like Twill globally relevant for Amazon vs something that isn't?

Shannon Tutko: I guess it's with the campaign that we were talking about before or the contest. I think it was kind of part of a campaign for this month. We're going to have this challenge or whatever something like twill would it's self-driven. So the employee can engage with it and any time and it's not going to be kind of time bound if you will.

Finn Blacklaws: Right, so I mean you touched on it already there with the employee being able to sort of Engage with it at any time and it being more open, but we're trying to gauge what the challenges could be from an HR perspective. When you say okay, we're doing an app. 8) **What would be your concerns when implementing such an app within your company?**

Shannon Tutko: And with an app where the employees can just be sure the employees can engage in a contest?

Finn Blacklaws: So let's just say with health apps in a corporate environment in general, probably more so because there are so many different solutions and we're still playing with where we can innovate.

Shannon Tutko: A lot of concerns that we always have with employees is data as privacy, so that might be one concern that employees will have - "is someone tracking me?" and yeah, they want their data to be private.

Finn Blacklaws: Right.

Shannon Tutko: Another obstacle might be just having no time and not being able to do something like that consistently.

Finn Blacklaws: And speaking of time. One of the things we definitely found out through the literature as well as a senior management is super instrumental in getting others to participate. 9) **How I**

likely do you think do you think Senior Management is to participate in these things? Just your general impression.

Shannon Tutko: that's a good question. I think I mean yes when senior leaders Model Behaviour or the standard - it's helpful. And what comes to mind for me is taking time off. If employees see their managers taking time away, not checking in on email when they're supposed to be on vacation, that sort of thing. It's a good Behaviour to model, so I guess if I think about an app like this - if it is supported by the manager or if they encourage their employees to take time at lunch to go walking or whatever. Then I think that would be helpful for engagement.

Finn Blacklaws: 10) **The next question is kind of about the competitive nature of an app like that. If you do do some kind of competition or something, is that something that exists at Amazon already in some form some kind of rewards-based competitions within teams? Is this something tha would gel well with Amazon's culture?**

Shannon Tutko: That's a good question. Not within my department but I think there are in different areas of Amazon. I'm sure in our fulfillment centers and customer service. Organizations like that. They'll have competitions for the employees with Rewards. Particularly around Peak Seasons where employees are busy, to keep things light and fun and to keep employees engaged. If it's an area where there are sales incentives or customer satisfaction ratings that you're getting that sort of thing when whereas in software development there may not be that much, I would imagine.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, so almost finally on the incentive side, we're looking at what actually drives people. And the first question there is 11) **Would Amazon be open to providing incentives or rewards, for maybe employee health and engagement with an app has that been done in the past? And then also 12)**

Which incentives just from your perspective you feel would be most useful? Some examples are virtual trophies or I know that Amazon has badges as well monetary incentives. We can even be looking at a employee stock options.

Shannon Tutko: So in terms of Rewards we don't have any Global or even country-level programs around rewards through compensation and that's not really our culture and not our style. Things are going to be badges or phone tool icons and things like that. And then you can kind of send a note a Kudos or congratulations to an employee through one of our tools and I think it's called Accolades. So that's kind of our style. If we do reward, we try to keep those rewards under a certain value because if it's above a certain value you then have to report it in payroll. You have to pay taxes. So keeping them kind of low value rewards simplifies it all around, or non-monetary rewards, as I mentioned.

Finn Blacklaws: Right, right. It's good to know that and in larger companies, especially things like taxes and all those extra rules come into play if you're targeting larger organizations.

Shannon Tutko: Yeah.

Finn Blacklaws: So finally, is we're looking at a range of solutions here, but in general a health app for companies. Could even be rewards or we're looking at something where you have a general fitness score. That's sort of a holistic Mental Health Plus diet plus exercise score for you. **13) Is that something that you would be interested in it all or would you prefer to just focus on your work and keep that separate?**

Shannon Tutko: I like the idea of having kind of a holistic score. I think that would be really interesting.

Finn Blacklaws: Good to know, and finally **14) Any other comments or**

suggestions as a footnote? Any feedback that you feel that pops into mind that is relevant?

Shannon Tutko: Yeah, I mean there are a lot of apps I think out there as you probably know, and I guess just one thing if you're talking about a corporate environment and a lot of Times you will need to kind of go through at least for us at Amazon a thorough Security check right. Is your app compliant in terms of the privacy in terms of everything else. It's usually a pretty stringent process that we have to go through to ensure that it's a secure app. And in fact, I know that we've had in the past decline vendors or stop working with vendors because they could not comply with our security standards. So that's one thing to keep in mind. especially if you're kind of looking for large multinational companies.

Finn Blacklaws: Huge thing to keep in mind.

Shannon Tutko: Yeah.

Finn Blacklaws: I mean you've given me a lot of insight there especially into what's going to take to tackle a bigger company that's sort of the perspective that I was looking for from you. So I really appreciate the time Shannon. I think that about wraps it up.

Shannon Tutko: Sure. Thank you Finn.

Candidate #2 – Maren Schwarzkopf

This transcription has been translated from its original German version into English by the Interviewee, Finn Blacklaws.

Attendees

Finn Blacklaws, Maren Schwarzkopf

Transcript

Finn Blacklaws: First of all, I would like to thank you very much for taking the time to do this today.

Maren Schwarzkopf: Of course.

Finn Blacklaws: The master's thesis is about our topics such as wellness programs, sports, mental health and that's all quite vague and that's also kept quite vague for the first few questions that I have for you, simply to influence you as little as possible, but I'll give you a little more detail about what we do and then it's about you and maybe your perspective.

Maren Schwarzkopf: wonderful

Finn Blacklaws: by the way, we can also switch to the “you” (informal tense) if that suits you?

Maren Schwarzkopf: Maren's totally okay.

Finn Blacklaws: Perfect, so let's dive right in. **1) Are you currently offering a corporate wellness program? Which initiatives are included and do you use a mobile health app?**

Maren Schwarzkopf: So there's something we're doing at the moment, I have to be honest and admit that we've fallen asleep a bit on this in corona times.

Some things are; we have different sports groups, we sponsor a regular badminton group. In other words, we sponsor the location, we have a soccer team where we sponsor the soccer pitch. We also have the hall where they play, so it's not an official soccer team, it's such a small group, they kick a bit together. We had a bike and a running group that actually fell asleep with Corona, but what we still do is we organise together with health insurance companies, like a kind of small health days, where we also want to focus a bit on health. There are days coming up again where there is advice, where there are smaller sports groups. These days are then to be implemented permanently afterwards if enough volunteers from colleagues sign up accordingly and then we also subsidize the membership in two gyms that we have here in the region.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay. To what extent are these offers also digital? You spoke about corona times and team based initiatives. Do these have anything to do with apps?

Maren Schwarzkopf: Sadly, all of this has nothing to do with digital or apps.

Finn Blacklaws: Alright, you mentioned a point where enough people are using the app. **2) How many people are engaging with these offers at the moment?**

Maren Schwarzkopf: So I can't tell you an exact number because of course, gyms and the like are no longer tracked and, of course, but on an ongoing basis, I would estimate that perhaps ten percent of the total workforce take advantage of these offers.

Finn Blacklaws: **3) And why do you personally think this attendance number is where it is?**

Maren Schwarzkopf: Probably a combination of busy and no interest in such offers. The majority of our employees are not white-collar, so we have the majority of

our employees are blue collar workers, i.e. shift workers and they may also be interested in other topics or are less interested in such health-promoting measures. We are now also trying to approach this target group a little more with the cooperation with the health insurance company that we have, but I think that's also a big reason for a lack of participation - that out of 1,100 employees, around 800 are blue collar and production oriented.

Finn Blacklaws: Of course, it's really interesting that this isn't relevant for everyone.

Maren Schwarzkopf: Well, I don't want to say "less relevant". More like less accepted.

Finn Blacklaws: Got it. So 4) **Is there a budget or a song for the well-being of the employees? or**

Maren Schwarzkopf: We don't have a fixed budget, so we always look at what we think makes sense, so that we can continue it or that we can implement it, but unfortunately we don't have a fixed budget for such topics here.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, and now maybe a personal question, the first one, what corporate health apps do you know personally?

Maren Schwarzkopf: I've heard a lot, but I can't think of any off the top of my head, also because we don't use any, of course.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, then I can introduce the idea of what we have. Namely, we're building our master's thesis business model and we want to create a corporate health app that offers added value to companies in that it somehow increases the health of their employees through, for example, reward-based exercise challenges. So, 6) **have you previously used an app like this? It sounds like perhaps no?**

Maren Schwarzkopf: No, but I have heard of bonus programs from health insurance companies, who offer bonus programs for smokers or sports courses, or who offer certain basic health measures. These would be from the AOK and the Techniker health insurance companies. But the DRK and KKH also offer it, I believe, so many big insurance companies.

Finn Blacklaws: Thank you, that's also interesting. 7) **But how open-minded and receptive will your 400 out of 1200 employees who are now "white collar" and also the others who be towards participating in such a fitness app?**

Maren Schwarzkopf: Yes, I'm just thinking about it and I wouldn't want to exclude the blue color in principle. I would estimate from the total workforce, with team challenges, you could definitely get 15 20% of them, that would certainly be interesting, roughly estimated. I could be completely wrong, obviously, that's a very rough estimation based on intuition.

Finn Blacklaws: Sure, but that's but that's always valuable, even as a rough estimate from someone who maybe has several years of experience in the company. 8) **What are the problems that you might see with the introduction of such an app? We've talked about the time factor.**

Maren Schwarzkopf: Yes, basically the introduction of the app from the employer's perspective. The data protection issues, "what data of mine is going to be included?" "who is going to see it all?" these are always the first hurdles that come to my mind as a member of staff. Otherwise, in terms of handling, it always has to be simple, easy for people to understand and easy to implement so that they can then participate accordingly.

Finn Blacklaws: Absolutely yes, interesting to see that data tends to play a role in bigger companies.

Maren Schwarzkopf: Yes, questions arise like Where does it go? Who does what with the data, who sees the data? So, these are all things that have to or would have to be clear beforehand if such a comparable app is used in our company, it has to be agreed with the data protection officers. Our works council also has to agree to it.

Finn Blacklaws: 9) So as an HR manager, perhaps also as a team leader, how likely do you see it being that senior members of staff and team leads will interact with these kinds of apps?

Maren Schwarzkopf: Things thrive or fall with this. Leading by example is essential when getting people to participate. What we often experience here is that if managers don't go along with certain things, employees naturally don't go along with them either.

Finn Blacklaws: 10) So what about a healthy competitive aspect to an app like this, or to Stanley in general?

Maren Schwarzkopf: We were just talking about it the other day, we're an American company in the USA, we often use Facebook for workplaces and then you always see posts from colleagues or America, of course, because culturally there's also the whole other more competitive side, like a pumpkin carving competition. I was just talking about it with one of the managers who was also there and they said, yes and that's a team event I'd like to see. It's a bit of a fifty-fifty, so it's still a cultural issue, we're a relatively old company here. It really always depends a bit on the corporate culture, we have an average of 15 years plus of service here. That is of course also noticeable in the mindset and in the way we approach certain things or how we have to state certain things, and many people are not so open to new cultural aspects, so yes, I'm not so sure about the acceptance rate.

Finn Blacklaws: So, to concretize that a little bit. That means in Germany competition less acceptable, and perhaps also with more tenured folk?

Maren Schwarzkopf: Exactly, I think so too. Of course, it depends on the company, I think a young startup has a very different approach and a different target group of employees and deals with things like that in a very different way than a start-up.

Finn Blacklaws: 11) So for competitions like a pumpkin carving competition, are there already rewards? Or are there perhaps also rewards for performance?

Maren Schwarzkopf: In the USA I don't even know whether the prize is fame and honor and it's just more about the team event or whether there are competitions for performance. We have our sales area, they have now launched a competition and the prize is a team event that is divided between two teams and whoever reaches x goal in a period, then wins a team event for the entire team. This is not just a dinner, but trips to Florida have even been mentioned.

Finn Blacklaws: Oh wow.

Maren Schwarzkopf: Yes, well, that was the first thing that came to mind, a trip to Florida would be cool, but it has since been rejected.

Finn Blacklaws: One of our last questions now: 12) from your perspective as someone who already works very closely with a lot of people. If you were to offer incentives like that, which ones would make the most sense perhaps in the form of team events, which you've already mentioned, which are of course great, then sometimes there are somehow badges or trophies or even money?

Maren Schwarzkopf: So two perspectives: from the HR perspective we

of course like the team events, because from an entrepreneurial point of view it makes the most sense to reward the team together when the team has achieved success. In the team competition, I would clearly always put a team event behind it, so something where the team celebrates together in individual competitions. So the suggestion is not to just have a team event but an individual aspect within that too. A sales employee would potentially show up at every sales event, but other employees may not be as enthusiastic, so this part also depends on knowing the target audience. But you can't go wrong with a monetary reward, even with a small one.

(no comment on question 13)

Finn Blacklaws: Very good insights in any case. **14) Are there are any comments or remarks or suggestions from you about an app that you can think of spontaneously?**

Maren Schwarzkopf: So my first thought just now was, I think such an app would be cool if there were both, if individual contributors could then do contests, where a team competes against each other, but also teams against each other. So that you really have both possibilities.

Finn Blacklaws: A running challenge could marginalize a lot of employees, do you see that as maybe more effective if you start with something like running, or do you think it might be cooler if you had an all-encompassing app which maybe keeps track of your diet and fitness score, and is more all encompassing?

Maren Schwarzkopf: So for a challenge, I think it's nicer if it's individual, if the running challenges and I don't know whether diet challenges are going to be so good now. I think it would be nicer if they were all a bit more suitable. There could be some courses, on mental health or something like that?

Finn Blacklaws: I've noted the suggestion of a mental health aspect too, thank you for your insights today and your time.

Maren Schwarzkopf: My pleasure.

Candidate #3 - Philip Simpson

Attendees

Finn Blacklaws, Philip Simpson

Transcript

Finn Blacklaws: 1) Are you currently offering a corporate wellness program? Which initiatives are included and do you use a mobile health app?

Philip Simpson: Wellness being benefits?

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah, like anything to do Beyond work, meditation Health whatever it is. Just maybe give an overview of what's included.

Philip Simpson: Okay, what I know on the wellness side, we have things like Urban Sports Club subscriptions, different ones. The one I use is M the smallest one and I end up paying 14 euros per month instead of I don't know 55 or something.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay.

Philip Simpson: We have a collaboration with mocha care. That's probably the biggest Wellness one. Mocha is a coaching and counseling service where you get I think up to eight sessions with a coach or counselor. Or four guaranteed and then you can extend it to eight something like that, of remote counseling and coaching plus a whole library of Mental Health. workshops and trainings and resources.

What else do we have? for the leadership team. We have personal coaches as well. they meet regularly. I don't know how frequently though. And so that's like career coaching.

Yeah, and I mean then there's a lot of other benefits like companie shares and stuff like that, but that's not really well-being right?

Finn Blacklaws: We're more looking more

employee wellbeing. so that means you do connect with mobile Health apps as well. But they're sort of fragmented? There's not an all-in-one app or something that doctor would use this to track health or something like that.

Philip Simpson: Not to track Health, but the author for Health it would be mocha care. And then we also collaborate with aliens for what's it called a health insurance basically like an add-on.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay.

Philip Simpson: So I think we have up to 600 euros per year that we can spend on subscriptions on medication on. eyeglasses contact lenses And stuff like that.

Finn Blacklaws: It's an unbelievable range.

Philip Simpson: Yep.

Finn Blacklaws: 2) How many are people engaging with the current corporate wellness offerings at your company?

Philip Simpson: What I can tell you is how many people participate in online meetings and we had this month for example mental health month. We had two Keynotes. We have massages at the office. We had a steps challenge where if you get certain number of steps, we donate something to a charity. So I can tell you how many people participate there and that's roughly I would say maybe a fifth or sixth.

Finn Blacklaws: That's still very helpful, thanks.

Philip Simpson: With the health insurance - I'm sure more people do that. We also advertise for that regularly.

Finn Blacklaws: It seems like a fifth I don't really have any numbers to compare it to but it seems like there's definitely some room there for more people to join. **3) Why do you think this engagement rate is high or low?**

Philip Simpson: If you need active involvement people are less likely to participate. They have meetings. They need to be with customers and so on but if it's something they can do on their free time, or I don't know just claim their money back. Then people are usually more involved. Because it's really hard to find something that Everyone likes and that is relevant for everyone. So Keynotes can be really cool, but they will always just cover a certain number of people, not everyone.

Finn Blacklaws: That's true.

Finn Blacklaws: 4) Is there a fund for employee well being and benefits? If so, how much is that roughly per employee? Do you think this fund is sufficient?

Philip Simpson: Yeah, there's definitely budgets for things like that. But again, that would be with Marina actually discover that she's awesome with health insurance is for example to make things like body scans where they scan your body fat and give you feedback on your health physically or massages or breast cancer screenings at the office flu shots things like that. We do that too.

Finn Blacklaws: No, it'd be cool to talk to her then just for this. I guess more specific questions, but you've given me an overview.

Finn Blacklaws: 5) What corporate health apps are you currently aware of? Any that Doctolib isn't currently using or that we haven't mentioned?

Philip Simpson: The first that one that comes to mind is better up, who do coaching and counseling, but also mental health awareness. And I think Urban Sports Club is just a really popular one as a benefit gets people to be active

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, so I can sort of reveal what we're looking at in a little bit more detail now, We are currently exploring a health app that provides value

to businesses by increasing employee health through reward-based exercise challenges (with the potential addition of diet). 6) Have you previously used an app like this? How long did you use this app for? If you stopped using this app, what were the main reasons for stopping?

Philip Simpson: I don't personally so much with food, but just sports related like Nike running and Nike fitness app, for example, and I'm not sure which one but I think it's like **Gym Lib**. One we used the app as a step counter for the Step Challenge for example this month, with a charity donation reward. And then we have people from mocha care come in and talk to us about nutrition and how to eat properly to keep concentration up for the entire day and not dip into the food coma low after lunch, but that was more keynote and not so much an app.

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, So in terms of you seem to be like neglectly run Club you use privately how long do have you use the app or you still using and continuously?

Philip Simpson: I'm still using it. I know it's individual. But for me, it just really works well to get those little check marks or little trophies When You Reach another 100K when you reach a certain number of kilometers per month and so on. We have your anniversaries that just kind of motivates me into also compare how much I run compared to other friends peers. It's also moving.

Finn Blacklaws: 7) So you've let me write to my next question with that which is how receptive you believe, employees at Doctolib specifically would be in participating in a company set Health Challenge goals?

Philip Simpson: People love rewards people love challenges. We try to make as many offers that we have turned them into some sort of challenge. That's where we had the Step Challenge I think.

Finn Blacklaws: right And what was the reward of the Step Challenge just briefly or was there one or what was the sort of incentive there?

Philip Simpson: Yeah, if you hit a certain number of collective steps in one month, we donate money to a charity.

Finn Blacklaws: 8) What would be some concerns for implementing such an app in your company?

Phillip Simpson: I think the biggest obstacle would be time, like if it's something you can do quickly, that's fine, but people are working all the time and they're in meetings all the time. So if you really need them to engage in behaviour during work that's not the best idea. You could always exchange worked or Sport hours or something for goodies. People like goodies... they like free stuff and they like to work for things but Ideally, they already do it.

Finn Blacklaws: Any other obstacles that come to mind?

Philip Simpson: having a broad offer. So when you say because it's focused just on Sports for you or health.

Finn Blacklaws: There has to be an minimum viable product. And we haven't created the product yet, which is why we're doing interviews because we're trying to get a gauge what people even want.

Philip Simpson: So I know that Sports is not always popular for everyone.

Finn Blacklaws: Yeah.

Philip Simpson: So you will definitely want to have an alternative offer.

Finn Blacklaws: right.

Philip Simpson: So if it's nutrition if it's just gaining more knowledge on a specific topic without having to be physically active. So even if it's just walking or

standing up at your desk for an hour instead of sitting for the entire day and things like that. Just a cater to more people. I think that would be another obstacle. Usually things that are easy to do on the spot or where you don't have to travel somewhere. So if it's something close to the office or even in the office or that you can do at home.

Finn Blacklaws: Ok.

Philip Simpson: And something that you could do together with other people too. So where it actually connects people. That could be a good one.

Finn Blacklaws: So one of the things that we looked at as well is that senior leadership is really important in sort of motivating others. 9) How likely do you foresee senior management or leadership to support and promote the use of the app?

Philip Simpson: I think very likely that people would do it more if leaders the walk that they talk, you know what I mean? And I actually work in I still do the onboarding now... but I'm also in internal comms and internal events and we are actively leveraging the leadership to send out our communication and say hey, I'm attending this Workshop or talk on Mental Health next week. I hope to see you there. and that really has a big effect.

Finn Blacklaws: 10) Fantastic, and would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list, be appealing for your company culture?

Philip Simpson: I think to certain extent, yes. So if you have a company like Doctolib at least half of the employees are in sales that's always a good idea, you sales these love comparisons and competition...

Finn Blacklaws: Okay, the next question would have been would your company be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who participate I feel like we've sort of answered that because it already

does, but **12) which incentives do you feel would be the most useful? (monetary, trophies, ranking, ESOP?)**

Philip Simpson: I think some sort of money back or something like that is always effective because we have lunch vouchers. For example, you might remember those Sodexo ones. We upgraded that by now. Now we have a new app where you just scan the receipt and then you get the money back with the next paycheck. But that's always good. So that's what I mean by things that you're already doing. you're already spending money on groceries or on lunch. But if you get money back, then that's cool and as little commitment. So that works and then goodies always work. too. I mean I gave out all the old goodies last month because we're updating we're getting new goodies basically and they were like hot potatoes everyone wanted them and I was fighting for them. So that's always cool to also in turn.

Finn Blacklaws: Were they company branded goodies?

Philip Simpson: exactly. Yeah. And that creates this Unity more and everyone's proud to wear reduction gear. And a greater purpose. So again, if it's something you can I don't know donate or work towards also for others. that's another leverage or lever you can pull.

Finn Blacklaws: and in terms of the lunch app, is that Doctolib's own app, or is that also like an external one?

Philip Simpson: Ah that's an external one called Selfie. That's Salfy.

Finn Blacklaws: **13) Is a pilot program of the the sort of app that I described something you'd be interested in personally in participating in if there was a exercise and diet challenge for your team with Rewards?**

Philip Simpson: Yeah, I mean it's what

we're kind of doing anyway,.

Finn Blacklaws: Right and just the way you're doing it right now is through steps, right? But there's no other exercise like related metrics or there's no all in one app with a health scores like that.

Philip Simpson: No, just your Urban supports. Yeah, and then mental well-being would be mocha care.

Finn Blacklaws: **Okay, 14) Are there any other comments or suggestions you'd like to provide regarding this health app idea?**

Philip Simpson: Yeah, I think the distinction. I mean my background is psychology. So I'm always gonna be gonna keep an eye on mental health, so don't forget about that. And at the same time there's a lot of competition already. So anything coaching online counseling and so on that already exists. find your Niche then, that would be my advice. on the physical health with Urban sports with the networks already and especially through covid they had to offer Sports classes and so on as well, so that covers a big Variety in person and remote. Nutrition-wise, I'm sure there's things out there and I'm sure you've done your research, but I feel like that's at least for us still terrain that could be discovered. Where I don't know, Ideally you bring all three together and display how nutrition impacts obviously your physical health. But then also your mental health and what you can do. I personally think training plans and things like that are always extremely cool. So having your own nutritionist or someone who feedbacks you on your behaviours, maybe you log your you're eating behaviour and then someone has a look at that and gives you feedback. This could be in remote. Even you don't even need to like one counselor to be a cool algorithm that gives you feedback on Something like that could be nice and maybe a bit more new. Yeah, but apart from that I do think there's already a lot done.

Candidate #4 - Thomas Dannenberger

Attendees

Philip Stockmar, Thomas Dannenberger

Transcript

Philip Stockmar: Are you currently offering a corporate wellness program? Which initiatives are included, and do you use a mobile health app?

Thomas Dannenberger: Yes, we do have a wellness program and many different offerings are included. We offer to pay 50% of our employees' sports club, fitness club, massage and even bicycle helmet. Our massage offering is the most well accepted offer I would say. No, we do not use a mobile health app. People just have to bring the receipts and then they will get their money back. We had mandatory but also voluntary wellness programs.

Philip Stockmar: How many people are engaging with the current corporate wellness offerings at your company?

Thomas Dannenberger: I would say the engagement rate was about 30% which is pretty good in my opinion. It was perceived as something very positive by our employees.

Philip Stockmar: Why do you think this engagement rate is high or low?

Thomas Dannenberger: I think it is high because people really appreciate what the company is offering them. Of course, some people maybe think that the 30% are low but I think it is a good number and it is also due to us creating a good awareness for these offerings.

Philip Stockmar: Is there a fund for employee well-being and benefits? If so, how much is that roughly per employee? Do you think this fund is sufficient?

Thomas Dannenberger: We do not really have a dedicated fund. We just go with the amount that we had last year and evaluate if this was enough and if there need to be made some changes for this year. Normally it pretty much stays the same. We have a committee which meets every 3 months to discuss our wellness program and if changes need to be made. Also, the budget is dependent on the location of the office.

INTRODUCTION OF IDEA: We are currently exploring a health app that provides value to businesses by increasing employee health through reward-based exercise challenges.

Philip Stockmar: Have you previously used an app like this? How long did you use this app for? If you stopped using this app, what were the main reasons for stopping?

Thomas Dannenberger: We have done the company steps challenge tracking over the phone against other companies but other than that at Novartis or also personally I have not used any apps of this kind.

Philip Stockmar: How receptive do you believe your employees would be to participate in company-set health challenges and goals?

Thomas Dannenberger: If the challenges are supported by senior management and also HR, it would work well within the company. Employees like the competition aspect especially if it is against other companies. That's why the steps challenge was so successful as well.

Philip Stockmar: What would be your concerns you when implementing such an app within your company?

Thomas Dannenberger: Data protection privacy would be a huge issue in my opinion as we deal with very sensitive data. For example, many people would not be

comfortable entering their weight into a health app from their employer.

Philip Stockmar: How likely do you foresee senior management or leadership to support and promote the use of the app?

Thomas Dannenberger: Not sure how likely, but convincing the CEO, the board, or senior HR managers is key to implementing a new policy. If the CEO wants something to be implemented, it will be implemented. At Novartis for example, 15 years ago the CEO said that the company area is a smoke-free zone and it was implemented with no questioning.

Philip Stockmar: Would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list, be appealing for your company culture?

Thomas Dannenberger: Yes, I think as long as it is voluntary and the people that want to compete can do it and the ones who do not want to compete will not be discriminated in any way.

Philip Stockmar: Would your company be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who actively participate and achieve set goals in the app?

Thomas Dannenberger: Yes, for sure, when the company can see the benefit of the app they will provide rewards and also invest money into this project to motivate the people.

Philip Stockmar: Which incentives do you feel would be the most useful? (monetary, trophies, ranking, ESOP?)

Thomas Dannenberger: I feel the most effective way to reward employees would be to give them something symbolic like a certificate or tickets for an event or a dinner would be nice.

Philip Stockmar: Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the health app idea?

Thomas Dannenberger: Mental Health is a big issue nowadays. Maybe try to include this if possible. Health and safety in the working space is something companies have an eye on such as stress relief, how to sit properly, back health, eye health, and so on. Especially stress relief as many illnesses come from too high stress levels. I would avoid including diet as there are so many different beliefs on what is right and what is wrong when it comes to diet. Try to sell the companies the bigger picture that healthy employees are better employees and this can only be achieved by including regular exercising into your life.

Candidate #5 - Julian Wagner

Attendees

Philip Stockmar, Julian Wagner

Transcript

Philip Stockmar: Does your company currently offer any wellness programs or initiatives, like a health or mobile health app?

Julian Wagner: No currently, we do not have anything in this direction. At the moment we are too small to offer such programs but in the future we for sure want to implement wellness programs. Right now, our main focus lies on other parts of the business.

Philip Stockmar: Even though you do not offer these programs what do you think the engagement rate is within the company in these programs and initiatives?

Julian Wagner: I think the engagement rate is rather low because the people in the company who do sport anyways are the ones engaging in these initiatives and not the majority which is not so interested in sports or wellness anyways. I do not think or see that people change their mind about doing sport in general due to these offerings.

Philip Stockmar: What corporate health apps are you aware of?

Julian Wagner: I am not aware of any specific corporate wellness apps. I just personally know a personal trainer who is big on social media and offers personal training and training plans for companies. He is really successful with what he is doing in this space.

INTRODUCTION OF IDEA: We are currently exploring a health app that

provides value to businesses by increasing employee health through reward-based exercise challenges.

Philip Stockmar: Have you used any similar app like this before? If yes are you still using it or have you stopped? What were the reasons for stopping the use?

Julian Wagner: Personally, I use many health apps that go into this direction like Apple Health, MyFitnessPal, strengthlevel, eightsleep, breathwrks. I think the idea is very interesting, but you really need to design it well to make it engaging in the longterm I think.

Philip Stockmar: How receptive do you believe your employees would be to participate in company-set health challenges and goals?

Julian Wagner: I think doing challenges within the company would have the possibility to create a toxic environment as there are big imbalances between the people. Doing the competition aspect on a company basis where companies compete against each other would be way better in my opinion because then individual performance is not so visible.

Philip Stockmar: What would be your concerns you when implementing such an app within your company?

Julian Wagner: Creating a USP would be challenging as I suppose there are some similar competitors out there and also handling the data will be a challenge.

Philip Stockmar: How likely do you foresee senior management or leadership to support and promote the use of the app?

Julian Wagner: If senior management can see a real benefit, also financially, then they

will implement the app I am sure. It will be senior management you need to convince.

Philip Stockmar: Would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list, be appealing for your company culture?

Julian Wagner: For me competition within the company would lead to a rather toxic than healthy environment and therefore as I already said I would only integrate the competition aspect against other companies. Maybe for some sales teams who really love competition this works but for a whole company it can be harmful to the atmosphere.

Philip Stockmar: Which incentives do you feel would be the most useful? (monetary, trophies, ranking, ESOP?)

I feel like monetary incentives could work but something like a team event or team prize is more useful. If the prizes are only individual some people might quit, that's why I think a team prize helps to get everyone to push towards the same goal.

Philip Stockmar: Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the health app idea?

Julian Wagner: As I said I think no competition within the company but against other companies would work well. If within the company it would need to be designed very carefully to not offend or discriminate anyone. I would have an idea which would be that you can win lots which can bring you different prizes. Everyone gets to draw a lot but when you complete your fitness challenges you get to draw more lots making it likelier to win a prize. That gives everyone a chance but just increases the likelihood of a win if you do more challenges. This might be fairer. In general, I also think that the aspect of gamification is super relevant and including it would

help you to also engage people who normally don't do sport. In my opinion gamification aspects are so powerful they can really bring somebody to start doing your challenges or sport in general.

Candidate #6 – Anonymous

Attendees

Philip Stockmar, Anonymous

Transcript

Philip Stockmar: Are you currently offering a corporate wellness program? Which initiatives are included, and do you use a mobile health app?

Anonymous: Yes, we offer an inhouse gym at a reduced price and also some sports classes. We do not offer an app. People just get our services at a reduced price.

Philip Stockmar: How many are people engaging with the current corporate wellness offerings at your company?

Anonymous: I do not know exact number, but I would guess that about 10% of the employees are using the offerings. It is perceived well though I have the feeling cause for some it is practical to have a in house gym or sports classes they can go to right after work.

Philip Stockmar: Why do you think this engagement rate is high or low?

Anonymous: Probably most people want to separate work and free time and that's why they do not go to the gym at the office. Most people do not want to see their colleagues when going to the gym. Also most people have their gym or sports club already before joining the company and then do not want to switch.

Philip Stockmar: Is there a fund for employee well-being and benefits? If so, how much is that roughly per employee? Do you think this fund is sufficient?

Anonymous: The wellness programs were just part of our company culture and that's why they are in place. There also is a budget

which is allocated for every office, but I do not know how much this was. I had the feeling it was sufficient though.

INTRODUCTION OF IDEA: We are currently exploring a health app that provides value to businesses by increasing employee health through reward-based exercise challenges.

Philip Stockmar: Have you previously used an app like this? How long did you use this app for? If you stopped using this app, what were the main reasons for stopping?

Anonymous: No, I have not used anything similar to this at work or in private. I only use Apple health which maybe is kind of similar.

Philip Stockmar: How receptive do you believe your employees would be to participate in company-set health challenges and goals?

Anonymous: I think it can work well if not too much pressure is put onto the people and nobody is getting discriminated. It has to be voluntary then it can work out well and some kind of team spirit can emerge out of this.

Philip Stockmar: What would be your concerns you when implementing such an app within your company?

Anonymous: As I said you need to watch out that nobody gets discriminated. But this kind of risk will always be there in a company setting. Of course, you also need to make sure the data is protected.

Philip Stockmar: How likely do you foresee senior management or leadership to support and promote the use of the app?

Anonymous: It has to be measurable for management to implement it. HR needs to

see that it decreases days of illness or improves employee health or satisfaction with the company.

Philip Stockmar: Would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list, be appealing for your company culture?

Anonymous: I think there can be a competitive aspect on the team level but not on an individual level. On an individual level there should be no names seen and all the data should be anonymous and protected. A ranking between teams can be cool though.

Philip Stockmar: Would your company be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who actively participate and achieve set goals in the app?

Anonymous: Yes, the company would be willing to support this if it can lead to significant increase in employee satisfaction and health.

Philip Stockmar: Which incentives do you feel would be the most useful? (monetary, trophies, ranking, ESOP?)

Anonymous: In my opinion money alone is not a good incentive. Team events are the best incentives as a group dynamic gets triggered. For individual incentives things such as tickets to games, dinners, vouchers are universal and can get people to engage with the app.

Philip Stockmar: Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the health app idea?

Anonymous: I would suggest implementing an analysis or evaluation aspect into the app in order to track the progress of the individual. That way people can see if and how they have improved over time. This will lead to further motivation I

think. Also including articles or links about nutrition maybe or healthy behaviour could help. Including this people get the feeling that it is not only about burning calories but about being healthy.

Candidate #7 - Julian Born

Attendees

Lennart Stöppler, Julian Born

Transcript

Lennart Stöppler: Good day. Yes, let's start with the first question then. **1) Does Küchenheld currently have any Corporate Wellness Programs, and if you do, what are they?**

Julian Born: Well, kind of, so, what do we do? We have sports memberships for all employees, meaning we subsidize them quite significantly. Beyond that, not really. Okay. So, the only thing we have is Urban Sports as a benefit, basically.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay. So, that as a benefit, but **2) do you somehow monitor how many people use it, or do they just have access?**

Julian Born: Exactly, they access the link where they can sign up, like [kitchenhero.urbansports.whatever](#), and then they can sign a contract directly with Urban Sports. Urban Sports sends us a consolidated invoice once a month. We do check to some extent.

So, we do look into it occasionally, ensuring that employees who are no longer with us are not still using it, and so on. But we don't actively track how many people are actively using it. Maybe in the initial phase, but eventually, it just ran smoothly, and people either used it or not.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, nice. **3) What do you estimate is the engagement among employees when you say you don't actively monitor it?**

Julian Born: Well, I think you need to differentiate between operations and overhead. In the overhead area, I would say that probably a third or even half use it. In

the operations area, I believe almost none do.

But that also has to do with the fact that many live somewhat outside the city, and, for example, a typical kitchen seller only transcribes it for you and uses it, but they aren't the typical gym or Barry's attendees. So, it's mainly in the overhead area where you find more creative people, like in marketing, people, finance, and I think about a third to half of them use it, but in the operations area, it's marginal.

Lennart Stöppler: But, as you mentioned, Urban Sports Club is not exactly cheap. **4) Is there an overall fund that you have for employee well-being?**

Julian Born: Not currently. It's a bit like steering a ship, especially when you're still growing and not fully established. You steer towards what is essential, and whether you spend an additional 500 euros on employees or less becomes somewhat irrelevant. You spend where the need is, and if someone suggests something that makes sense for everyone, and half the people think it's fantastic, you would consider doing it.

So, you don't necessarily cut something else. It's not like you have a budget of thousands of euros to distribute. You are more focused on keeping the overall burn within an acceptable range and then seeing what employees appreciate. If there are productive suggestions, you would probably incorporate them. But to be fair, you don't deal with it enough because you have many other concerns when everything is in flux and funding might be at risk.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, good. So, would you say someone had a great idea, and then the funding was secondary; you took it because the majority wanted it?

Julian Born: Exactly. If you believe that offering such benefits can help retain more

employees or attract new ones, and that's your incentive, especially if you're growing and want to track new people, then you would make it a business decision rather than just a budget question.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay. 5) **Any corporate health apps that come to mind? In general?**

Julian Born: Gym Pass. Um, actually, not really.

The question is, what falls into that space? I know there are things like subsidizing lunches or providing job bikes, where you can optimise tax benefits, but that's not in the health sector, really. Um, there's not much that comes to mind in that regard.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay. In German, it's called Betriebliches Gesundheitsmanagement (Corporate Health Management). Our idea, or what many people are already doing, especially in the USA, it is quite popular. It involves having an app that can be white-labeled for your company, where you can connect it to devices like the Apple Watch or Garmin. You can set challenges, like, for example, someone has walked 10,000 steps today, that's great, he gets so and so many points, and you can use those points as rewards, like lunch vouchers, Urban Sports Club, and so on. Have you heard of anything like this?

Julian Born: I can't think of a solution for that right now, but I have heard the term Betriebliches Gesundheitsmanagement, and what you're saying makes sense. Yes, having something like that would be interesting, but I'm not aware of who offers it.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay. So, 6) **you haven't used anything like that in Küchenheld yet, right? Just because it's still in our question.**

Julian Born: No, we don't.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, perfect. 7) **How do you think something like that would be received at Küchenheld? In terms of challenges, like health challenges and collective goal-setting.**

Julian Born: I think it would be quite divided. For many, it would be good, but for those coming from the overhead creative area, maybe a few people in the ops area, I doubt they would actively use it.

And then you have the, let's say, not just business graduates but academics, those who have studied and work in a somewhat creative field, who live in the city. They would use it and find it cool. We once had a Slack group where we announced a challenge every day, like walking 1,000 steps or something, and it was about posting your jogging photo or whatever. And the split was exactly like that.

About a third of the company used it—those who already do sports, go to a gym, and personally value it. They enjoy it in the corporate context. The others, for whom sports is not a significant part of life, it didn't matter to them. I'm simplifying it a bit, but I think my point is that it's quite divided.

I believe those who appreciate it privately and also engage in sports, finding it important, would find it cool. If you engage in sports, you find it cool; if you don't care about any of it, you probably wouldn't use it. Unless you start turning people around because they have fantastic incentives and can get an additional bonus. But, if you're into sports, you find it cool, and if you don't care about any of it, you probably wouldn't use it at our place.

Lennart Stöppler: We had the same that getting a broad engagement will be one of our main challenges. 8) **What would generally be your concerns in**

implementing such an app at Küchenheld?

Julian Born: Again, you will need to come up with something that catches various users and then keeps them engaged over a long time. I think the trend is on your side though. You see these various formats popping up everywhere in the cities—Cycling, Yoga, Pilates, there are countless studios now. Generally, in our generation, hardly anyone doesn't engage in some form of sports, at least in the city where there's an offer for everyone.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, cool. Thank you for sharing that. The next question is a bit broader and more open. How would you estimate the importance of employee wellbeing and **9) how likely do you see senior management to promote such an app?**

Julian Born: Well, first of all, I believe it will remain crucial. It's about employer branding, about making sure that you can still attract people. You have a great offer if someone can choose between four or five companies.

However, the difference in quality is only marginal, and you're competing in terms of what you offer. If you can't match the big corporations' salaries or the older ones with a high burn rate, then you need to stand out with something else. And it doesn't even have to be expensive. Maybe it's a matter of looking after your employees better. I can see senior management taking a very active stand to create something fun for their employees that is fun and effective. I guess it depends on the company culture as well though.

This is probably the first point. The second point is that I believe that health is going to play an even more important role in our lives in the future. And not just in terms of companies but also in terms of the insurance system, how people will be

treated, what will be paid for and what will not.

I think it will be even more on the agenda, and especially in the startup scene, where we all work incredibly hard and have a high burn rate. It will be even more in focus.

Lennart Stöppler: **10) Would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list, be appealing for your company culture?**

Julian Born: Well, I guess it divides itself again. I suppose for our white collar workers it is definitely more appealing, but if you are not working out anyways, why would you bother? Generally, I would say it adds to the fun of it and most people here are very ambitious, so we would support a ranking.

Lennart Stöppler: Would you say that in addition to classic sports activities and health, how would you evaluate the aspect of mental health?

Julian Born: Yeah, I think that would be even more so. And that is probably the most challenging part because sports can be easily measured, and you can set it up like you mentioned earlier. You can even motivate people by giving them benefits, but mental health is a bit tricky because you can't necessarily measure it easily. You can't tell if someone is depressed or just having a bad day. It's tough, and it's probably one of the main reasons why many companies shy away from addressing it.

Lennart Stöppler: And what do you think? This is something we're still figuring out. You're one of the first people I've talked to, and we're trying to understand whether a holistic approach is better, meaning covering mental health, sports, and nutrition, or if it's better to focus on one of these aspects.

Julian Born: Well, if you think about it,

probably the most efficient would be a holistic approach because if you look at mental health, and I'm speaking out of my own experience, I don't do much about it. I probably could do more, but I don't even have an app for my mental health, whatever that would mean.

But if someone said, "Hey, I have a running group," or, "We have a yoga class that's happening at 6:00 PM every Monday and Wednesday," I'd probably join because it sounds like fun. And then, all of a sudden, you do something for your mental health, which you wouldn't necessarily do otherwise.

So, I think the holistic approach makes a lot of sense. If you offer various things, then people can choose what suits them. Maybe there's a person who has a lot of energy and likes to do sports or go to the gym, and there's someone else who's more into mindfulness or yoga.

I believe offering a broad range would be the most effective. Again, you can't force anyone to do anything, but if you make it interesting and it doesn't feel like an obligation, that's when people are more likely to participate.

Lennart Stöppler: Exactly. I think you've hit the nail on the head. What we're also thinking about is that there are certain topics that people don't necessarily want to discuss or share.

We went through several papers on data sensitivity and there is a wide gap between how many people would use a service versus how many people are willing to share their data, such as how many hours they sleep or how many steps they take. I think we need to be careful and find a good balance.

Julian Born: Exactly. I think the boundary is a bit blurry because it can quickly become a gray area where it's not 100% clear

whether it's still part of your private sphere or if it's already work-related.

And again, this probably also divides between generations. People who are 40+ probably have a different attitude towards it than those who grew up with social media, where you share everything.

Lennart Stöppler: It's true. We see the same thing. You're 32 now, right?

Julian Born: Yes.

Lennart Stöppler: So, you're probably still in the middle, where you've experienced both sides.

Julian Born: Yeah, I grew up with computers and had an email address quite early, but it's true. We didn't have Facebook when we were 15, 16, and all of that. It was a different world back then.

Lennart Stöppler: We're also trying to find the right balance there, not pushing it too much. Okay, cool. Thank you for sharing that.

I want to come back to engagement rates.

11) Would Küchenheld be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who actively participate?

Julian Born: *Asked to have details removed.* I could see rewards being a very motivating factor though as long as it is fair and everyone can gain something. You also need to ask yourself what do the people get who do not participate. It should not feel unfair that some others are all the sudden getting something just as they are working out and people who choose not to work out are not getting anything.

Lennart Stöppler: That is a good point. We need to put some thought into the fairness aspect. **12) One more thing regarding rewards, such as monetary rewards, vouchers, trophies or such**

things, which do you think would be the most useful?

Julian Born: Difficult to say. I guess it depends a lot on the effort and time frame that something was achieved over. I could see all three things being a viable reward for a team. It should be something they care about though.

Lennart Stöppler: Yeah, thank you. The last question I have for you is, do you think it's possible for a venture like us in the corporate health sector to make a significant impact on employee well-being?

Julian Born: I think so. I believe it would be difficult to target the bigger corporations directly, but it might work better with the younger companies.

If you manage to become an integral part of their organization, especially in the initial phase, that's when people are still trying to find out what works, what doesn't, and what could be exciting. If you manage to establish yourself there, you might stay on for the long term, even if the company grows and things change.

Because if you look at the individual person and think, "Okay, in this company, I don't just get a decent salary, but I also get all these benefits. And if this company offers it, why wouldn't the next one? So why would I change?" I think it can be a powerful tool to attract new talent and also to keep your existing team.

Lennart Stöppler: Exactly. And that's a decent idea, to become part of the journey from the beginning.

Julian Born: Exactly. If you manage to establish yourself at a younger company that's growing, and you stay with them, that's when you can become a vital part of their culture. It can be challenging for a new startup because there's so much going on, but if you manage to find those companies

and integrate with them, it could be a very successful approach.

Lennart Stöppler: Lovely. Thank you for your time and insights, we will consider your ideas carefully and I'm sure we can build something cool out of it. It was great talking to you.

Julian Born: You're welcome. I hope I could help a bit. If you have any more questions, feel free to reach out.

Lennart Stöppler: Absolutely. Thanks so much.

Candidate #8 - Neele Weitz

Attendees

Lennart Stöppler, Neele Weitz

Transcript

Lennart Stöppler: Great that the interview is working out. We talked a bit beforehand, and as you mentioned, your company isn't really focused on fitness.

1) So, do you currently have anything in terms of a corporate wellness program? Have you made progress with the yoga mats you mentioned?

Neele Weitz: No, we're still waiting for our new built-in cupboard to make sure we can store the mats properly. Currently, that's the argument for not buying anything yet. But we've also discussed lightweight dumbbells.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, and you're looking into acquiring physical items rather than exploring Corporate Health Apps or something similar?

Neele Weitz: Yes, I mean, in the end, you still have to do some exercise. I'm not exactly sure what Corporate Health Apps are, whether they provide home exercises listed in the app or...

Lennart Stöppler: Exactly, something like that, or what your company might pay for, like a fitness program or services from Urban Sports Club—things that generally fall under corporate health promotion.

Neele Weitz: No, not that I know of. I think it was considered because people inquire about it, but so far, it has never been a decisive factor for someone to say, "Oh, that's awesome, I'm joining because of that." Everyone has their own thing; some ride bikes, others prefer no exercise at all, and people like me do home workouts and

have their equipment at home.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, and you're probably mostly IT professionals, right?

Neele Weitz: About half, or even less. We're 40 people, and including me, there are 8 IT professionals.

Lennart Stöppler: How would you assess your team? Are they generally active, in a sports sense?

Neele Weitz: Privately?

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, privately, in terms of sports activity.

Neele Weitz: Yes, I'd say about 90% of them look pretty fit. I couldn't tell you exactly what sports they do, but...

Lennart Stöppler: Okay. When you're looking at the dumbbells and figuring out what to get, do you have a specific budget in mind for that? Something that's already defined?

Neele Weitz: No, I think it will be more freestyle, as long as it's not too expensive. I mean, sports equipment doesn't cost a fortune nowadays. I estimate it will be around 200 euros for overall equipment, some mats, and maybe something small.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay. **4) Do you think it would make sense to expand this, saying that more funding should be available for the right product?**

Neele Weitz: I don't think so because, in the end, you don't really need anything complicated. I mean, sometimes you don't even need a mat to do proper back exercises in the office. So, I see this trend of needing more expensive equipment as unnecessary. The same goes for those big machines in the gym. In the end, you can do enough with your body weight. And since employers tend to want to spend less money, I believe

that would be more interesting. Especially because you don't have to pack anything away.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes.

Neele Weitz: On the other hand, it's boring, and then you need someone to lead it because otherwise, no one will participate.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, that's fair, especially if you want to do it in the office during working hours. Let me briefly explain what we're considering and the direction we want to take. It involves what is called company health management, which can also be tax-deductible in German. We are looking at an app where people can participate in various challenges within the company. These challenges could include working out, taking a certain number of steps, or biking for leisure or to work, for example.

And depending on how many challenges someone completes, how active they are, it would be compensated with small rewards, like a hoodie or something, especially for those who have been consistently active and have also participated in online courses.

Lennart Stöppler: But now the next question, as you mentioned, **6) you haven't used such a system, but have you heard of something like this?**

Neele Weitz: I think in my last job, there was some running program where we formed teams and accumulated points over time. Then there were teams that won in the end. I didn't participate, so I can't say much about it. That's the only thing I know. Otherwise, I haven't really dealt with the topic myself, but it hasn't come up in our company in the last three years.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, but based on what you've heard, **7) would you say this is something that might be interesting for you? Or for your staff, in general, the**

idea of health challenges and goal-setting that you can achieve together?

Neele Weitz: Mixed, probably. I think because, in a small company, maybe only 30-40% of the people might be interested, and then the group becomes so small that it might not be as entertaining as in a larger company. So, the question is, do you need something that tracks steps, and does everyone have what is available, or can it be done with smartphones? And then again, everyone is different in terms of fitness, so if there are challenges among colleagues, it can be demotivating if there are two or three top performers who are very good.

And the rest are like, well, I'll give it a try. Even if you don't do any sports on the side and start because of the app, you might be way behind others. That was the case in my last company; there were two people who were really good and ran half marathons all the time, and their teams easily won. It doesn't matter how much effort the rest puts in.

There might be some who participate, but I think there probably wouldn't be a lot of enthusiasm, I believe.

Lennart Stöppler: Apart from the tracking device, **8) can you think of any other challenges in implementing such a program? And regarding compatibility?**

Neele Weitz: No. I find it interesting in general. For example, Techniker has the same concept.

I don't know if you're familiar with it, where you earn money by taking steps. It's always an incentive when there's something free to gain. I'm not sure if, in the end, it really changes anything. Or are you just rewarding those who already do a lot of sports? I believe that many would do it more for the financial aspect.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, there are cool

matrices to convert that. It's called Relative Effort. Because the problem is exactly what you mentioned; some people do a 5k run, and for them, it was as strenuous as someone else doing a 10k run.

And you can do that quite well with wearables, looking at oxygen saturation, checking the pulse over the entire period. This way, you can compare different activities quite well. But that will also be one of our main problems.

Neele Weitz: Yes, then you need reasonable trackers for everyone so that you can assess it at all. Exactly. So, I would say that the people I work with are not really up to date in terms of technology.

Only about 30% of people may have a fitness tracker band like an Apple Watch or something comparable. Most people wear traditional watches and nothing else.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, we were just dealing with that earlier, considering that FitBits, for example, can be leased quite cheaply on a monthly basis. It's less than 5 euros, so you could distribute those to get something comparable. Something like steps; you already carry your phone with you, which you can sync over Apple Health.

9) Alright, but I have another question since you're also part of the senior management. How would you see the likelihood of supporting something like this and taking a pioneering role?

Neele Weitz: Difficult. I think in general, being part of something cool, you're up for it. The biggest problem in early-stage companies is that you simply have too little time for things you want to do anyway.

So, if you're doing something nice-to-have on the side, it has to be super straightforward in implementation. And where it doesn't end up creating more tasks

or problems. I can imagine that companies where it's just too busy, and there aren't enough resources for the employees, might not be so keen on it, especially if it's still in the pilot phase and something might break, not work, and a feedback loop is required.

Because the pilot phase is supposed to help someone and provide feedback to further develop the product. What I can imagine is that it might be well-received in startups where there is funding and relatively many resources. So, you have your own HR people who are into such things and have the time and interest.

I think for us, it's less likely because we don't have any HR resources that have the capacity to do anything. You always need someone who is responsible for the implementation and accordingly.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, to get back to the part about challenges. **10) What do you think about having company-internal challenges and a ranking, or do you think that's something that wouldn't fit well into your company culture?**

Neele Weitz: I think it would be fine as long as there's some way to implement it fairly. I find it more motivating if there's a ranking because it's a bit more fun, and you could also promote it. I'm not sure if you make everything visible, especially the last ranks, or if you say, only the top 3, for example, and the rest is not visible.

I think you would probably need to find some kind of compromise so that it's not awkward for those people who end up at the very bottom. But I think healthy competition makes it somehow more appealing, in my opinion.

Lennart Stöppler: Let's go one step further with the challenges. **11&12) Would your company be open to providing incentives and rewards to employees who actively participate and achieve their**

goals and which ones would you find appealing?

Neele Weitz: Difficult to say. Generally I would say yes as long as it is not getting out of hand and everybody can get rewarded instead of just the top three candidates. I think a hoodie and such things you mentioned are pretty cool or paying a share of new running shoes for example to keep people motivated to work out. I don't think I like the aspect of returning just money, I feel like it gives false incentives and that people should rather work out for the sake of working out.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, cool, thank you for that. Then we've almost made it. **13) Second to last, would this be something that would be interesting for Trisor to test?**

Neele Weitz: Maybe, when things have calmed down a bit. I believe, in the next six months, probably not, as I mentioned, the issue is, you have to deal with it, someone has to roll it out internally properly, there has to be someone around when there are problems and questions, someone has to take care of using things internally. It's not just about, well, it's the same as with an event, for example, our problem is, we organise some event, spend money, and make the event really cool, but we don't have the time to create enough content during the event that we can use in marketing or use it as qualitatively as we actually need.

So, somehow we manage to kick it off, but then, I would say, to use it sensibly, which you would have to do here as well, regularly check how things are going, someone from HR needs to make a bit of a fuss about it, promote it internally, fully cool, and celebrate. I believe that no one here has the nerves for that in the next six months.

Neele Weitz: Yes, regardless of whether it's from someone in the study or in general, I

mean, that's why we currently have nothing. I think if you think about it, it's clear that it's cool. Many companies have it, but it's just not a thing for us because no one has the nerves for it.

This was more like, okay, I started with Apple Fitness Plus, so I can do something every day and thought, then you can just turn it on for 20 minutes, primarily for myself during lunch break, I don't say lunch break, but somehow turn it on in the middle of the day and say, who's up for it, let's do some back exercises, core workouts because you can turn it on the TV and it's 15 minutes, done. You don't have to tinker around with anything big, just say, okay, turn it on now and done, and whoever wants to join, joins, and whoever doesn't, doesn't.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, that is in fact a very simple and basic solution. **14) Do you have any other comments or recommendations that you may have thought of during the conversation just now?**

Neele Weitz: Yes, definitely look into the competition. I think there's a lot that has emerged in the core market in recent years. Maybe also check what went wrong with people, with those who went bankrupt, if you can find anything, that's always quite helpful.

Some also write a nice article about it. Exactly, otherwise, I believe, if you really want to try to implement this and do it somewhere, you have to try to generate as little friction as possible because people always have their own job to do, and then this is something on top. So, you have nothing to do in terms of content, but a lot to prepare.

Candidate #9 - Arash Houshmand

Attendees

Lennart Stöppler, Arash Houshmand

Transcript

Lennart Stöppler: So, let's start with the first question. You're not currently working in a larger corporation, but rather starting your next venture. Therefore, I believe your past experience is very relevant or interesting. **1) Have you ever come into contact with corporate health management and perhaps with apps that you've used in that context? In a corporate environment?**

Arash Houshmand: Corporate and occupational health management, yeah, the term rings a bell. Personally, I've had relatively little to do with it. I think it was a topic in the HR department. As I said, I probably only used it and didn't have much direct involvement.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, what did you use?

Arash Houshmand: What did I use there? I'm not sure if it falls under corporate health management, but there was a Health Check Manager at Helios Clinic. That's what I used, exactly.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, what did you do at the clinic?

Arash Houshmand: You voluntarily checked into the clinic for two days, and they did a complete check-up.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, wow, that's quite comprehensive. Do you know if many people in your company did this?

Arash Houshmand: From the Managing Director level upwards, so only the board and the top management level, I think they

were supposed to do it. But I'm not entirely sure.

Lennart Stöppler: Ah, okay. I see.

Arash Houshmand: It was more about whether decision-makers could be absent. I think it was more for the corporation than for the individuals, but of course, you benefit too if you find out about something that wasn't diagnosed.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, definitely. **2) Okay, but do you know if there was something for the general workforce, for people who weren't in the managerial level?**

Arash Houshmand: I'm not sure about that, no idea. I had the Ampolon team, and we had, I believe, things like height-adjustable desks, which also count as occupational health management, right?

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, exactly. Yes, some of it fits in there.

Arash Houshmand: So, I'd say, at Ampolon, we did basic things. At Aareon, there were surely more initiatives, but I wasn't deeply involved there. But I assume there were some contact persons, and if there were issues, something would have been done. I've heard they've recently set up a Mental Health Day, mental health topics for everyone.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay.

Arash Houshmand: But don't ask me for details because I was already out of the operational side when they proposed that.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, fair enough. **4) But then at Ampolon, do you remember how the financing worked when something like that was acquired? Did someone say, okay, that's cool, we'd like to do that? Or, because the desks aren't cheap, was there some kind of fund that**

could be used for that?

Arash Houshmand: Yes, basically, it was my decision. There wasn't a specific fund, those were just work tools. Those were work tools, so in Ampolon's case, it was never a big deal, there were only about 25 people at its peak. I'd say it was rather small. Or the smallest company, Ampolon was just a subsidiary. Actually, we did look into those Mental Health apps. Or meditation apps. Andreas did that back then.

But somehow, we didn't quite decide to get one because not everyone wanted it either. But if I saw that it made sense and the team wanted it, those were always investments in the people and they were always worthwhile.

So, I'd say it's different in an organization with 500 or 1,000... Aareon has grown to 2,000 people now, so you have to approach it differently there. But for a team, a small team, 20 people, you can be quite pragmatic about it.

Lennart Stöppler: Yeah, I believe so.

Arash Houshmand: And we weren't bound by corporate policies. So, we could use them if they helped us, but we weren't bound. And in that area, I think, as I said, apps weren't that common back then. It was mainly about the workplace. How was the workplace equipped? How were the working hours?

How did you deal with issues that didn't fall clearly under the "I'm sick or not sick" category, that was more of a leadership issue, I'd say. But less about the primary corporate health management. Like your office setup, your working conditions, lighting, those kinds of issues.

Lennart Stöppler: Yeah, there are many different sectors that contribute to that in the end. Do you recall these meditation

apps you mentioned or are you currently aware of any other corporate health apps?

Arash Houshmand: No, as I said, I was on the operational side and didn't look into this area. I have heard of the concept but could not name you a specific company operating in this sector.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay that's also fair. Let me briefly present our idea of what we've thought about. Specifically, it's about a corporate health management app that covers various areas.

explains business idea

Arash Houshmand: Okay, I understand.

Lennart Stöppler: Okay, good. I seem to have network problems, can you hear me well?

Arash Houshmand: I can hear you well. So, a few spontaneous thoughts.

Lennart Stöppler: Sure.

Arash Houshmand: So, I believe, fundamentally, it's definitely useful if the company deals with these issues. One has to consider which issues you can delve into and want to because there's a line between what's private and what I take care of myself. I think that's also more individual and depends on the company culture.

If you have a very young team that likes to track and compare, that's different from an organization like Aareon, where the average age is over 40 among 2,000 employees.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes.

Arash Houshmand: I believe it always depends on which target group you're addressing. There are certainly topics that are relevant to everyone, but those are probably few among the things you mentioned. I'd say the exercise theme is

relevant to everyone.

That means if you offer gym memberships or a sports club, or there were always these sponsored company runs and so on. I'd say that's relevant to everyone. Or it could be an offer for everyone, but if you say you want to track your diet and compare it with your colleagues, I'm not sure how many would participate.

That's the question, so at least in competition, for yourself, that's cool, of course, but then the question arises, why shouldn't I always do it? You can do that yourself if you're interested. So, I'd always try to differentiate which topics are private and which I do for myself.

Then I can give recommendations, but what is offered as a sponsored thing for everyone should be relevant to everyone and understandable within the context of the topics. Because you won't come across as if you're taking pictures like in that hospital scenario. It's important to know that our executives are healthy. But you can't do that with the wider workforce.

Even financially, I think that stay cost around 2,000 euros. Most companies can't do that either.

Lennart Stöppler: That becomes very expensive very quickly.

Arash Houshmand: Then you're more in the range of 30 euros per month, I believe, for employee benefits or whatever the terms are.

Lennart Stöppler: Exactly, it's 50 euros that you can deduct tax-wise.

Arash Houshmand: Exactly, so you'd have to fall under that somehow, and then it could work quite well. The question is, what competition is there in that field? I can imagine there's quite a bit of competition in that area.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, especially since the government passed the new health law, there have been many startups that have entered that field. But I just want to briefly come back to the challenges. Maybe it came across wrong, it was mainly about the activities, the sports that one does.

But how would you see that? **7) Would you generally say challenges are good in a team, or maybe it could lead to conflict potential?**

Arash Houshmand: Challenges mean, employees comparing themselves with each other?

Lennart Stöppler: Exactly.

Arash Houshmand: Or what do you do with challenges?

Lennart Stöppler: Exactly, for example, we do a Step Challenge or there's something called Relative Effort, because not every workout is the same for everyone. Someone runs an easy 20 kilometers or someone else struggles with 5 kilometers, so Relative Effort makes it comparable. But that would also apply to doing challenges on a Relative Effort scale.

Arash Houshmand: Yes, exactly, that would have been my concern. Relative Effort, sure, and especially if it's associated with charity, it's always good. So, I would view that very positively.

If you say, okay, when the team achieves the goal, we do charity. That's, I think, also the common mechanism. I believe what's more challenging is if you say, you have to compare yourselves, and the winner, the question is, what do you want to achieve?

You actually want to encourage people to move and not necessarily create a performance comparison. That means anything heading towards individual

comparison, I think, is more playful, more about coming together and doing something good. Or sometimes there are competitions, teams against teams, I wouldn't see issues with those, as long as they are anonymized, designed for fun, and to motivate individuals.

Lennart Stöppler: I have one more question about charity, do you mean charity in the traditional way of donating?

Arash Houshmand: Charity, so if we've run 100 kilometers as a team, the company donates 500 euros to the German Red Cross. Or something like that, yeah. So, there are both, I believe.

The question is, is it part of an onsite or offsite team-building, then it's more like, when we achieve this, we'll do that. The question is, what if you don't achieve it, or if the goal is too ambitious, or even too little. Those are the detailed matters.

The other option is you can do it company-wide, saying, as a company, we'll collect, I don't know, this many kilometers of running, and for every kilometer, we'll donate a euro to this or that. And through our app, we can track, manage, celebrate, gamify, and I don't know, all the things we can do.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, exactly, our plan goes in that direction as well.

Arash Houshmand: The question then is, who is your contact person within the corporation? Then you say, the Occupational Health Management officer or something like that. The question is, where are these topics on his or her priority list? That's hard for me to estimate.

Lennart Stöppler: Yeah, I believe so. We still need to figure out how to approach people.

Arash Houshmand: And I'd say, in a

corporation, anything not in the top 3 or top 5 priority is difficult. So, I'd always first look into how big is the pain in those departments, looking for solutions, and then what solutions they are actually seeking. So, more from the need, rather than what would be cool to have, because in a corporation, unfortunately, people try to only work on their priorities, and everything else falls behind. That's my experience.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, I believe you. Especially now, when many people are cutting costs, it might not be that conducive.

Arash Houshmand: Exactly. You have to maneuver within the planning field.

Lennart Stöppler: 8) Can you think of any challenges that might arise during the implementation within a corporation?

Arash Houshmand: So, challenges, do you mean problems with the introduction, not competitions?

Lennart Stöppler: No, problems with the introduction and the implementation.

Arash Houshmand: So, as I said, I believe the biggest challenge will be identifying the person who prioritises this. That would be my feeling. Perhaps you might also need a different approach because this idea of competitions and collecting, if you say, this is our solution, where every employee is reminded every day to sit on the ball for 10 minutes.

Or to move at the workplace, to move during the day. I believe that's much, much more critical, ensuring that you're not sitting at the computer for eight hours, especially when targeting white-collar workers, so that you stand up, walk around, meet colleagues. That's meaningful for health too.

So, I would assume that definitely, or not easier, but definitely more critical, than these, let's say, event-based benefits. I believe that would be one. The other question is, how can you make something sustainable?

As I said, event-based things work, they're done. Here in Frankfurt, there's the JP Morgan run, I think 3000 companies participate, bring their teams there, works great. But it's not, if you say, you want to reach the largest part of the workforce, and that's actually the goal of Occupational Health Management.

That you don't offer niche options, but rather things that are relevant to as many as possible. And I wouldn't see that as a challenge, but that would always be a criterion for me to introduce something new. It should be relevant to many people.

Lennart Stöppler: But it's definitely a good point that you say, okay, how could you possibly incorporate it into the daily work routine, to move a bit, do something different than just 8 hours.

Arash Houshmand: That these aspects come with small steps. Because that's, if you establish them as a habit, I believe that's much stronger than if you run 20 kilometers once.

Lennart Stöppler: Yes, yes, it adds up over time.

Arash Houshmand: And that means, if you manage to say, okay, we'll get something where most people in the team say, hey, I enjoy this, it's easy, I'll do it. And my team moves forward. I can imagine something like that.

Event-based works, but then the question is, how does your business model sustainably work? Because acquiring corporations repeatedly for an event is labor-intensive and probably not so profitable. You want

something that is regularly used and implemented.

And there's an issue, so now Occupational Health Management, I think an adjacent topic is Employee Benefits. That's always a problem. You introduce an employee benefit and no one uses it, or only one or two, which isn't so relevant.

And then eventually, it gets abolished. Essentially, it's about employee satisfaction, and specifically, health satisfaction or health care, and that's an original issue. But the question is, how do you create a relevant Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that lands on the priority list?

After that, I would align the pitch, align the business model, and then try to generate a simple entry first, without integration into existing systems, without issues, so that you can just start and see, hey, this works and then expand it.

Lennart Stöppler: Great thought. I have one last question about potential rewards. **11&12) Would you be open to give rewards and what could you imagine would be the most attractive incentives for employees or organise for them?**

Arash Houshmand: Yes, I think rewards are great if they get the people going. Of course, it needs to show improvement on the productivity and wellbeing side of the employees, but then it definitely makes sense. A double-edged sword with quick value would be a bonus. It's derived from Sales. I'm not sure if it fits. That needs consideration. Otherwise, totally unbiased things are the charity topics I mentioned. If you achieve this, we'll donate or do something good. For the common good. However, direct connection is usually difficult there. Why, if I run, are you donating now? Why don't you just donate anyway? That's why I say these topics aren't so straightforward.

On the rewards side, you can of course also say, we'll reward the athlete in the team of the year. That would be more individual. Or the team, which is the most active?

I believe, regarding specific rewards, it doesn't matter much, as long as they authentically align with the company culture. If the company culture is one where bonuses are paid, then bonuses are cool. If you have a Sales organization, where all people are incentivized by bonuses.

That obviously can't be the main theme, but you get 5% more if you also manage this. But if the company culture is that, then it's a main theme.

Or a company is totally purpose-driven, they do good things for the common good. That might be a donation theme. I'd base it more on authenticity.

Of course, you don't want to introduce something where they say, while we're craving for lunch, now you want to drive us towards sports. It must all fit into the overall picture.

And it's also about the people who drive it as role models. You need that too. If the board says, what nonsense is this, I'm not participating at all. Then it's different, compared to when the board starts running and says, who's running with me? That's why I say, the topics must align. That's why, from my perspective, it's very complicated to drive these topics in a scalable approach.

These are often consultations that Occupational Health Management or other improvements for companies do. They look into the company culture, what fits you, what topics. Then they proceed.

Then your solution hangs under this pool of options of topics that your company can address. Then you need to be at the top of that list so that you can get into as many

companies as possible.

I imagine it to be very complex, similar to all B2B topics from a Sales perspective. You'll find the first customers for sure, but then getting it widespread, you need to really be the solution where everyone says, this is the first thing you should do as a company. There, you need focus again.

Because the requirements of a company are different than those of a small company.

Lennart Stöppler: Yeah, it'll definitely be interesting. **9) But when you say you definitely need Senior Management, that's something where you could see yourself, if it's a good product, presenting it to the workforce?**

Arash Houshmand: Yes, absolutely. I don't have a fear of presenting something that doesn't look good or doesn't fit my style. But there are, of course, other leadership issues.

Lennart Stöppler: That's true.

Arash Houshmand: I've always had very authentic leadership issues. At least that was my claim. There are many others who are basically in the complete role at work.

I find that difficult. Those who say, work is work, and apart from completing work, I don't want to do anything else there. Therefore, I would suspect that it is better received by small and medium-sized businesses than it would be by a huge corporation or different people.

So, the homogeneity of the workforce for such topics, I would also consider. Or just try out. Just talk to different types of companies and see how they react.

Maybe my assumptions are wrong. So, I don't want to say that this is right, but maybe the CEO who always wears a tie is actually waiting for someone to ask him to

take off the tie and run 20 kilometers. You have to be careful. I don't want to say that's how it is.

Lennart Stöppler: It kind of leaned towards what we found out in the other interviews. It's more for small companies, perhaps also with a young workforce, who have recently received funding, who are still quite liquid and just want to do something cool for their employees.

Arash Houshmand: So, Next Generation Companies. In that regard, I would definitely see it. But for a company like Aareon, I'd be rather skeptical.

But you can still talk to them. Perhaps they also want to give this topic a modern touch, and then it might make sense again. So, it's hard to predict.

Lennart Stöppler: That'll become evident when the product is further along. Then we're already at the end. **14) Would you have any other comments or ideas?**

Arash Houshmand: No, I think it's a great topic. Did I understand correctly that initially, a student is doing a thesis or are you now really focusing on this?

Lennart Stöppler: I'm at NOVA in Lisbon now, and this is our Master's thesis. I chose an Entrepreneurship Stream. Now I'm writing with 4 classmates, and we have to develop and validate a business plan of our choice.

This is now our Master's thesis, and we've taken this on here. It's actually difficult to find any unique selling proposition (USP) there. That's what we're struggling with.

Arash Houshmand: Health and mental health topics are huge. You can surely build a real company out of that. The new challenges with health will continue to evolve and become more relevant in the long term.

Lennart Stöppler: That's true, the field won't get smaller.

Arash Houshmand: If you're interested in those topics, I'm curious about what you're doing there.

Lennart Stöppler: Thank you very much for taking the time, even though you're quite busy. It was important for me to talk to someone like you, so experienced with your own start-ups and also in larger corporations. I'm really glad this worked out.

Arash Houshmand: Me too, all the best. Keep me posted when you're back here.

Lennart Stöppler: Good luck with your ventures. Thank you.

Arash Houshmand: Thanks. See you soon.

Candidate #10 - Maximilian Kamp

Attendees

Jan Wetzel, Maximilian Kamp

Transcript:

Jan Wetzel: Hi Maximilian, thanks for joining me today. I'd like to start by asking about your company's wellness programs. Specifically, are you offering any corporate wellness programs and which initiatives are included? Do you use a mobile health app?

Maximilian Kamp: Yes, we have a program that features online mental health courses, ergonomic assessments, and discounted gym memberships. We've considered a health app but haven't implemented one yet.

Jan Wetzel: Interesting. Can you tell me how many people are engaging with these wellness offerings at your company?

Maximilian Kamp: About half of our team utilise some aspect of the wellness offerings, though it's rare for employees to engage with all parts of it.

Jan Wetzel: Why do you think this engagement rate is high or low? Any specific reasons?

Maximilian Kamp: The engagement is higher for mental health resources, likely due to recent remote work transitions. Less immediate, tangible benefits might account for lower engagement in other areas.

Jan Wetzel: Is there a specific fund for employee well-being and benefits at your company? If so, how much is allocated per employee, and do you think this fund is sufficient?

Maximilian Kamp: We have no fixed budget but rather try to offer a well-rounded

program.

Jan Wetzel: Moving on to health apps, what corporate health apps are you currently aware of?

Maximilian Kamp: I've seen apps like MyFitnessPal and Strava being used informally by our employees, but not necessarily in a corporate context.

Jan Wetzel: Let's talk about our solution. Have you personally used an app like this? How long did you use it, and if you stopped, why?

Maximilian Kamp: Personally, I've never tried any app in this segment. I felt like we haven't had the time as a young startup to think about it extensively.

Jan Wetzel: How receptive do you believe your employees would be to participating in company-set health challenges and goals?

Maximilian Kamp: They'd likely be enthusiastic at first, especially if we can clearly communicate the benefits and make participation straightforward.

Jan Wetzel: What concerns do you foresee in implementing such an app within your company?

Maximilian Kamp: My main concerns would be the additional administrative overhead and ensuring the data privacy of our employees.

Jan Wetzel: How likely is senior management or leadership to support and promote the use of the app?

Maximilian Kamp: I'm part of the senior management, and I'm supportive. The key will be to ensure that any implementation is not disruptive to our operations.

Jan Wetzel: Would a healthy competitive aspect, like a company chart and rank list,

be appealing for your company culture?

Maximilian Kamp: Healthy competition can be motivating, but it must be balanced with our collaborative culture to prevent any negative impacts.

Jan Wetzel: Would your company be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who actively participate and achieve set goals in the app?

Maximilian Kamp: Yes, we are definitely open to that. Recognising and rewarding engagement is something we value.

Jan Wetzel: Which incentives do you feel would be the most useful? Examples include monetary rewards, trophies, ranking, or Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOP).

Maximilian Kamp: Probably experiences or additional learning opportunities, aligning with our focus on personal growth and education.

Jan Wetzel: Finally, would you be interested in a pilot program to test the app's effectiveness within your company?

Maximilian Kamp: We're always looking to innovate, so we'd be open to a pilot if it aligns with our goals and budget.

Jan Wetzel: Any other comments or suggestions you'd like to provide regarding this health app idea?

Maximilian Kamp: Integration with existing tools and ensuring that it's not just another app to manage will be critical for adoption.

Candidate #11 - Tim Seifferth

Attendees

Jan Wetzel, Tim Seifferth

Transcript

Jan Wetzel: Hi Tim, thank you for your time today. Let's start with your company's wellness initiatives. **1) Are you currently offering a corporate wellness program? Which initiatives are included, and do you use a mobile health app?**

Tim Seifferth: Yes, we've implemented a wellness program that includes various activities like virtual yoga sessions and a running club, tailored to cater to different interests. We also provide access to a sleep coaching app, which is particularly relevant given our focus on health and wellness. However, we haven't yet adopted a broader, general mobile health app for more comprehensive fitness tracking or wellness purposes.

Jan Wetzel: That's quite interesting. **2) Can you tell me about the level of engagement with these wellness offerings at your company?**

Tim Seifferth: We've seen about 30% of our employees consistently engage with our wellness offerings. This is a moderate level of engagement, and we're constantly looking for ways to boost this. The initial interest is usually high, but maintaining long-term engagement is challenging. Employees often find themselves too occupied with work or other commitments, leading to a gradual decline in participation.

Jan Wetzel: **3) What are your thoughts on why this engagement rate isn't higher? What could be the reasons?**

Tim Seifferth: From what we've observed, the engagement tends to ebb and flow. The novelty of new programs sparks interest,

but as the novelty fades, so does participation. Our employees have demanding schedules, which can be a significant barrier to consistent engagement. We're exploring ways to integrate wellness more seamlessly into their daily routines.

Jan Wetzel: **4) Regarding funding, is there a specific budget allocated for employee well-being and benefits at your company? And do you think this amount is sufficient?**

Tim Seifferth: Currently, we don't have a dedicated budget for wellness programs. However, as we grow and evolve, we recognise the need to establish a specific fund for employee well-being. This will enable us to expand our offerings and enhance their quality, ensuring we're providing the best possible support to our team.

Jan Wetzel: **5) Moving on to health apps, what corporate health apps are you familiar with?**

Tim Seifferth: I'm aware of several health apps that are popular in the corporate space. These include general fitness trackers like Fitbit, which offer a range of features from step counting to sleep monitoring. I'm also familiar with sleep-specific apps like Sleepio, which are beneficial for managing sleep patterns, and mindfulness apps like Headspace, which provide guided meditation and stress relief exercises. We're always looking to see how these kinds of apps could integrate with our existing wellness initiatives.

Jan Wetzel: Let's discuss the potential of implementing a new solution. **6) Have you used a fitness challenge app before, and what are your thoughts about its long-term engagement potential?**

Tim Seifferth: We haven't had the opportunity to use a fitness challenge app in

our company yet. I'm quite intrigued by the concept, especially considering its potential to sustain engagement over time. An app that could provide ongoing challenges and adapt to the evolving interests and needs of our employees could be very beneficial in keeping them engaged and motivated.

Jan Wetzel: 7) In your opinion, how would your employees react to participating in company-set health challenges and goals?

Tim Seifferth: I believe our employees would be quite receptive to participating in health challenges, especially if the app is user-friendly and the challenges are appealing and relevant to their personal health goals. The key would be to ensure that these challenges are accessible and can be easily integrated into their daily lives without overwhelming them.

Jan Wetzel: 8) What concerns might you have about implementing such an app within your company?

Tim Seifferth: My primary concerns would revolve around the privacy and security of health data. It's crucial that any app we introduce respects and protects our employees' personal information. Additionally, we want to ensure that integrating a new app into our wellness program doesn't become a burden or create unnecessary administrative overhead.

Jan Wetzel: 9) How likely do you think it is that senior management will support and advocate for the use of this app?

Tim Seifferth: As part of the senior management team, I can say that we would likely be very supportive, provided the app demonstrates clear benefits for employee well-being and productivity. It's important that any new initiative aligns with our company's values and contributes positively to our workplace culture.

Jan Wetzel: 10) Would incorporating a competitive aspect, like a company leaderboard, align with your company culture?

Tim Seifferth: Integrating a competitive feature could certainly add an interesting dimension to our wellness program. However, it's essential that we manage this carefully to maintain a healthy balance. We want to ensure that it fosters a spirit of motivation and inclusivity, rather than creating undue pressure or a sense of exclusion among our team members

Jan Wetzel: That's insightful. Now, let's talk about incentives. **11) Would your company be open to providing incentives or rewards to employees who actively participate and achieve set goals in the app?**

Tim Seifferth: Yes, we would definitely be open to that idea. Incentives can be a great way to encourage participation and recognise employees' efforts. We believe that providing tangible rewards for achieving health and wellness goals can significantly boost engagement in the program.

Jan Wetzel: In line with that, **12) which incentives do you think would be most effective in motivating your employees?** Are there particular types of rewards you have in mind?

Tim Seifferth: From my perspective, non-monetary incentives could be very effective. Things like extra vacation days, flexible working hours, or public acknowledgment within the company could go a long way in motivating our team. We also might consider tangible rewards like fitness-related products or company merchandise, but we would prioritise incentives that align with our overall wellness goals and company values.

Jan Wetzel: 13) Shifting focus a bit,

would you be interested in a pilot program to test the app's effectiveness within your company?

Tim Seifferth: Definitely. A pilot program would be a great way to gauge the app's impact on our team's health and engagement levels without making a full commitment right away. It would allow us to see firsthand how the app aligns with our needs and how well it is received by our employees.

Jan Wetzel: 14) Finally, are there any other comments or suggestions you'd like to share regarding the idea of a health app for corporate wellness?

Tim Seifferth: I think it's important to consider the diverse fitness levels and interests of our employees. Not everyone is at the same level of fitness, so having a flexible and inclusive approach is key. An app that can cater to different levels of fitness and provide personalized challenges would be ideal. Also, involving employees in the development process, perhaps through a flexible model where they can contribute ideas, could be very beneficial. It would not only enhance the app's relevance but also foster a sense of ownership among the users.

Jan Wetzel: Thank you, Tim, for sharing your valuable insights. Your feedback is incredibly helpful for our research and the development of our wellness app.

Candidate #12 - Interview Folke Grigo

Attendees

Jan Wetzel, Folke Christoph Grigo

Transcript

Jan Wetzel: Hi Folke, thank you for sparing some time to contribute to my thesis.

Folke Grigo: No problem at all, happy to help.

Jan Wetzel: Let's start with a general overview. Could you share if everphone has any corporate fitness programs in place, and what do they encompass?

Folke Grigo: At everphone, being a dynamic tech scale-up, we do have a wellness program, though it's more tailored compared to larger corporations. We offer gym subsidies and occasional health-focused workshops. We also have a mental wellness app accessible to employees and their families.

Jan Wetzel: Interesting. How is employee participation in these programs at everphone?

Folke Grigo: Participation is quite variable. Our team loves a bit of competition, and it certainly boosts performance.

Jan Wetzel: Moving on to rewards and incentives, what's your view on their effectiveness in wellness programs?

Folke Grigo: In my opinion, having a choice in rewards is crucial. People have different preferences, and a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work well. A model where we could choose rewards would be cool because I think not everyone wants the same rewards.

Jan Wetzel: And about the app's design and functionality?

Folke Grigo: A flexible model would be cool because then we could almost build the app ourselves. This would allow us to customize the app to suit our specific organizational culture and needs.

Jan Wetzel: Given the varying fitness levels of employees, how should a wellness app address this?

Folke Grigo: It's important to consider different fitness levels. Not everyone is equally fit, perhaps we could look at making the effort relative. An app should be inclusive, allowing everyone to participate meaningfully.

Jan Wetzel: From your HR perspective, what are your concerns about implementing a health app at everphone?

Folke Grigo: My main concerns would be ensuring data privacy and fitting the app into our existing ecosystem without it being too intrusive or time-consuming for our employees.

Jan Wetzel: And how likely do you think senior management at everphone would participate in such a program?

Folke Grigo: Senior management's involvement is crucial. If we lead by example, it encourages wider participation across the team.

Jan Wetzel: Does everphone currently have any internal competitions or incentives that would align with a health app?

Folke Grigo: We do have internal challenges, mostly informal. Integrating them with a health app could enhance their impact and visibility.

Jan Wetzel: Regarding incentives, what

kinds of rewards do you think would work best at everphone?

Folke Grigo: At everphone, non-monetary incentives like additional leave days or recognition within the team would likely be more effective than financial rewards.

Jan Wetzel: Lastly, how do you feel about integrating a general fitness score into everphone's wellness strategy?

Folke Grigo: A holistic fitness score could be interesting. It would provide a comprehensive view of an employee's health and well-being.

Jan Wetzel: Any final thoughts or suggestions regarding corporate wellness apps?

Folke Grigo: Security is paramount. The app must comply with our data privacy standards. Also, it should be simple and integrate well with our employees' daily routines.

Jan Wetzel: Thank you, Folke, for your insights. They will be very valuable for my thesis.

Folke Grigo: You're welcome, Jan. Best of luck with your thesis.

Candidate #13 – Felix Huber

Attendees

Benjamin Rehwald, Felix Huber

This transcription has been translated from its original German version into English by the Interviewer, Benjamin Rehwald.

Transcript

Benjamin Rehwald: 1) Are you currently offering health programs or any initiatives at your company?

Felix Huber: Yes, are you referring to employee benefits or B2C?

Benjamin Rehwald: Employees within the company.

Felix Huber: I'll just list some things. You can tell me if it makes sense for you or not.

So we have regular stretching groups every week. Stretching is a big focus for us. It's key to everything for us. Because musculofascial tension leads to pain, arthritis, herniated discs, which should be reduced.

That's why we regularly do stretching at our place. I must admit, I don't do it quite as regularly. But no one hears that.

Then we have a health center, a practice connected to us, where therapists work according to our method.

And as employees, we can also get discounted visits there and can easily book

appointments through an online tool and say, okay, I'd like to get treatment or get a check-up.

And then the usual things, a fruit basket, and so on. And we also have our own Liebscher and Bracht app, which employees get for free, where we get exercises every morning, every Sunday, for all kinds of pain, preventive exercises, nutrition tips, and so on.

Exactly. So we're quite well set up there. The app is also one of our main focuses at the moment, because it's just a super cool product and should be. And as employees, we of course have access to it. It's not only for employees, I must say, it's mainly for B2C, but we benefit from it ourselves.

Benjamin Rehwald: What does the app include? What is there?

Felix Huber: So this is the app. There are the trainings of the day with Roland, new training lives go on every day. It's set up so you have the category "Introduction", how everything works, how to stretch, how to push and pull, important rules, create a playlist, so people can get along better in the app. Here you can set favorites, here you see past trainings of the day.

Exactly, and then we come to the different areas of pain. And that's self-explanatory here, from head to toe, as you always say, it goes down here in the different areas of pain and so everyone can just check, okay, I have pain in that area or I need to do something in that area. And then you actually know exactly where to go in the app.

And of course, it doesn't necessarily have to be pain, it can also be preventive work that is done there. And here we have exercise videos with our tools, we offer tools as well, we have trainings with our therapists, who are treated in the Liebscher & Bracht way, beginner programs, YouTube videos that are included, and the archive. Exactly, and that's pretty much the app.

Then we have a community area here, where people can exchange ideas, ask questions, where we as a company, yes, communicate proactively and just try to build a community, from the company's side proactively get a connection to the user, to achieve the best possible customer lifetime value.

It's of course not exactly measurable, how much a customer is bound, but we know that it works well and therefore we do it. Exactly, you have to tell me how detailed or undetailed I should make it.

Benjamin Rehwald: So far it's perfect but thank you!

Felix Huber: I can tell you a lot about it, you just have to tell me how it fits for you. Yes, exactly, so that's pretty much our app, yes.

So the main focus is health, yes.

Benjamin Rehwald: 2) Okay, how big is your community currently in the app, like how many app users do you have?

Felix Huber: It should be around 50,000, I think it's around 50,000, around that.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay, all clear, 3) roughly estimated, how many currently in your company percentage-wise take advantage of these offers?

Felix Huber: Yes, good question, honestly, I don't think many. Not because the offer isn't good or doesn't come across well, but especially with what we do, you have to overcome your inner laziness and just do it and you have to sit down and say, I stretch now, I do the exercises now, I proactively do something for my health. And I think, maybe you've already found out, it's difficult, people don't really want to.

People in our company do the exercises,

you want to hear a number from me probably, right? I can only guess, I would say, maybe 20%, let it be 30%. But I don't think it's too many, as I said, not because the offer is somehow

bad, but just because you have to overcome your laziness, you have to do something actively and that's just difficult for most.

That's why so many people have pain, I have to say that now, that's why so many people have pain because they only start doing something when the body already sends the alarm signals. When it says, hey, something's wrong here, then most people act, but do nothing preventively and I include myself there.

Benjamin Rehwald: That makes sense, yeah everything with you guys is really about stretching and that's a bit different than really doing sports, so we would probably focus more on sports in our direction. I mean, sure, stretching will also play a part, but probably it will primarily go towards sports.

4) Do you have a fund in the company that's available for employee well-being? Or how does that work?

Felix Huber: Not officially. I can't say much about that. I think, in principle, funds are available, but then it's simply said, okay, we'll do this and we won't do that.

So we only have one office squad, so squads are these work project management organizations that exist, which have different focus areas. And such things are usually decided in the office squad, where people take care of office, the well-being of employees, etc. But I can't say exactly. So there's no budget labeled for that.

Then ideas are discussed and then it's said, we'll do it or we won't.

Benjamin Rehwald: 5) Do you know any

other occupational health apps? Like any other directions outside of Liebscher & Bracht, that you've come across?

Felix Huber: Phew, no, honestly not. I can't name any for you.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay, so this was a bit of a test to see what the current situation is with you guys. And the idea with us is to develop a health app that provides value to companies by promoting the health of their employees through a reward-based movement challenge. And possibly with an extension in the direction of diet.

Exactly and we are just testing if there is a need, how it's received, in which form it would be organised. And exactly, that's why in our questionnaire, the next question would be **6) whether you have ever used such an app in that direction. How long you used it, what were the main reasons for it?**

But that falls away, because you mentioned that you are completely focused on your own app.

Felix Huber: Exactly, exactly, we are completely focused on our own project.

Benjamin Rehwald: 7) What do you think, how open would employees be to participate in such company internal health tasks or goals? So it's a bit in the direction that you have a kind of leaderboard and then a step challenge or something like that for example. Then you say, okay, company internally you have either a ranking or you say, okay, we do it company against another company.

Would that be something where you think employees would participate or what does it look like?

Felix Huber: So I think, what you just brought up, I had already thought of before. So I think it would definitely have to have

a cool gamification aspect to motivate people to do something like that. And if you want a simple answer, yes, I could imagine.

I think you really have to try to pick up the people and try to coax them out of their reserves to make such a topic attractive. We have the same issue. You just have to try somehow to coax the people out of their reserves.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, okay. **8) Do you see any problems that could arise with the introduction of such an app in the company?**

Felix Huber: I'd have to think longer about that. At first glance, nothing comes to mind. I would have probably related potential problems to the user.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, just the adoption by the employees, whether they see any problem with it. **9) Or in the second step from senior management, whether they say, hey, something doesn't work.**

Felix Huber: I honestly would say, at least also from the experiences we have made, that there is openness. That companies are also interested in integrating something like this into their company. Because something like this, even if it's in the form of an app, is a small tool that has a benefit without too much cost.

If you don't make it complicated, nothing would come to mind actually. I could even imagine it very well.

So some will have more and some will have less desire for it, but in principle, I think it's a cool thing. I could even imagine that it would motivate me to do something. Yes, I like it.

Benjamin Rehwald: 11) Do you think the company would be willing to provide incentives or rewards for employees? For example, vacation days, monetary

rewards, vouchers...

Felix Huber: I think that's not a straightforward answer. It's very company-dependent. I would tend to say that companies are prepared to do so.

Benjamin Rehwald: But speaking specifically about your company.

Felix Huber: Oh, just for us? Yes, I could imagine that. Theoretically, I could imagine that, yes.

Benjamin Rehwald: Even monetarily?

Felix Huber: Monetarily, probably not, I think. Not at the moment, at least.

Benjamin Rehwald: 12) Okay. And what do you think would be the most sensible incentives in your company? If we're talking about going the gamification route, trophies or leaderboards...

For other companies, you might consider shares in the company or something. I don't know how it is with you, but I think that probably doesn't apply to you.

Felix Huber: Yes, I believe something like a vacation day or a meal at the company's expense would be an appropriate reward.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay. Do you think you'd be interested in a pilot program to test the effectiveness of the app within the company?

Felix Huber: Tough question. I can't answer that here. I wouldn't rule it out completely, but I know we also have a very strong focus on our own product within the company.

We're developing our own app right now. As you saw, we currently have that solved with an external service provider. But we're looking at other apps right now to see, for example, what they do. And I believe that

wouldn't fit in right now. I wouldn't completely rule it out.

I'm just telling you how I feel about it right now. It could be that we would certainly look at what you do and see if it fits because we're very deeply involved in the topic ourselves.

Benjamin Rehwald: Which app have you come across? What features do they have that you say you'd adopt or they do well? Because I mean, that's exactly the direction we're going in.

Felix Huber: Unfortunately, I can't tell you because it's the responsibility of another team. That subject lies entirely in another project management. We are 150 people, and it's just in a different team. But I can check for you if it helps.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, I'd appreciate that.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the health app idea?

Felix Huber: You already told me, but could you give me a quick summary of what you want to do, and then I can think about it while you talk.

Benjamin Rehwald: Well, the idea was basically to promote the employees' fitness within the company.

Felix Huber: Sorry, does that then relate to strength training or to endurance sports or does it include everything?

Benjamin Rehwald: That's still a bit what we're trying to figure out, how to structure it. We said, okay, for one, strength training will probably only be trackable by the number of strength training sessions, or you'll need a wearable to track burned calories. And to approach companies, because they are our customers, we had to create something at the beginning that is

operable with just a phone.

Everyone has a phone these days, and the data it produces are enough to create challenges that incentivize employees to do sports. So, the primary focus will initially be the step counter, distance walked, and everything that can be tracked via the phone. Then, the expansion with wearables would be a project for the future to also track burned calories, heart rate, etc.

And that would give companies the added value that employees are happier because they exercise more, their productivity increases, and sick days decrease. From the employees' perspective, the benefit would of course be the sport itself, but then also either the gamification and thereby an incentivization, a leaderboard in the company to measure themselves against each other, and then possibly rewards in the form of going out to eat, vacation days, or something along those lines.

That was the rough idea, and we're trying to figure out how to structure it through the interviews.

Felix Huber: Yeah, I understand, cool. Yes, we've already talked about a few things. So I think for me personally, this gamification aspect would be very important in such an app.

I think the user interface would also be super important to me, preferably nicely and simply designed so that you get straight to the point. With me, it's always like this with sports, etc., it has to be made as easy as possible, and the barrier has to be as low as possible. If you are also a little prompted to do something by, for example, the community or the internal competition aspect, then it could really become something. So I can also imagine, this might not be your focus, but in itself, it would also be cool to do something not only for companies but also for groups of friends.

I don't know how you plan to make money from it, whether it should only be through company costs, but I was even looking for an app recently. A buddy of mine, Jonas, you know him too, he's studying in England right now, and we were looking for an app that we could use to motivate each other to do sports and push each other. If you had something where I could enter that I did sports, how long I did sports, and I'm trying to beat you somehow during the week and do more sports than you, that would be a cool thing.

But you probably have a focus on the B2B side for now.

Benjamin Rehwald: For now, yes. We considered different models and even originally thought about going to health insurance companies and saying that customers could get back a portion of their health insurance costs if they are more athletic and thereby reduce the rate of obesity and heart diseases.

Felix Huber: By the way, we just had a prevention course certified by the health insurance company, it took over a year, it was a complete horror to get a reimbursement.

Benjamin Rehwald: We then also said, you have very few providers in Germany, the whole thing is state-supervised, which means that although you have private companies, they are subject to legal regulations and then contacting them will probably be very very difficult. That's why we're focusing on B2B for now and will probably only be able to offer circles of friends within companies for the time being.

Felix Huber: I must say, the way you told me about it, I was quite taken with the idea. The most important thing for me is that there is an incentive to do sports, which competition already provides. Then you

simply say, I'm joining the competition and try to beat someone or see, for example, others are doing more than I am, I need to do more too. That's what would really trigger me, and then maybe you can build up a streak or get rewards over time, that would also work through the community aspect again, earning some community status symbols if someone has done a lot of sports. So there are many things that can be done. You just have to see what the focus is and what is feasible in terms of capacities.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, that's true.

Felix Huber: So yeah, but those would be the most important points for me. So if it's well implemented, with a good user interface, as simple as possible, where I have a start screen with maybe four buttons and a leaderboard overview and then a button to track my sports session, I think I would be happy.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, nice. Okay. Well, that's it for our questionnaire. Thank you very much!

Candidate #14 – Anonymous

Attendees

Benjamin Rehwald, Anonymous

This transcription has been translated from its original German version into English by the Interviewee, Benjamin Rehwald.

Transcript

Benjamin Rehwald: Do you currently have any health programs or initiatives in your company?

ANONYMOUS: Well, that depends on the location. We're a huge operation, and since we're globally represented, I can only speak for the few locations I've been acquainted with.

But in some places, we have fitness rooms that we can use. And discounts for gyms are offered. That's what I'm aware of.

Benjamin Rehwald: All clear. And from your circle of acquaintances, how many people would you say are currently taking advantage of such offers?

ANONYMOUS: Percentagewise? Maybe 20 percent.

But that's a complete guess.

Benjamin Rehwald:

What do you think is the reason for it being so low?

ANONYMOUS: Probably the question of sportiness. Many will do it outside of work if they do it at all. So they don't necessarily see the need to take advantage of the company's program.

And it's certainly also strongly dependent on the age group. Since I no longer belong to the 20-year-olds, I naturally have more contact with my age group.

And the level of physical activity is lower there. At least that's my estimate. But I know from various younger project team members that they definitely went to the gyms.

Benjamin Rehwald: I understand. Do you know if there's any kind of fund or something at your company? For the well-being of employees or something like that?

ANONYMOUS: A fund?

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, like a money pool that's used to support such activities. Or is there a certain amount of euros provided per employee? Or is it just something where you say, if many think it's cool and senior management confirms it, then it's done.

ANONYMOUS: Somehow it must be financed. I'm not aware of any head bounty, so to speak. But surely somewhere in the background, they calculate how much is spent per head.

But I'm not privy to that information. So it's not like I have, for example, 2,573 euros available per year for any sports activities.

Benjamin Rehwald: All clear. Do you know of any corporate health apps?

ANONYMOUS: That are directly offered through us?

Benjamin Rehwald: Just generally, that go in that direction.

ANONYMOUS: Well, whatever is on the iPhone. But otherwise, I haven't really looked into it because it's not really my thing.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yeah, all clear. And then there would be the point where I'd introduce the idea to you. Since we've already done that, we can skip that part now.

Then the question of whether you've used such an app also falls away. How long, why it's no longer used. That falls away.

Assuming we would introduce such an app in the company. Of course, it also goes back to what you mentioned about the age group. But what would you say, how open would employees be to something like this?

And how would their participation in such a company-internal health challenge be?

ANONYMOUS: So let's say, the question is, to what extent such an app competes with other apps that already exist. So if there's a benefit in it or some fun features that make it more attractive or offer more than the others, they would definitely do it. I would say that you need to be careful with data protection issues.

What data goes in and how you handle it.

Benjamin Rehwald: How likely do you think it is that the company leadership would support or promote the use of such an app?

ANONYMOUS: It depends on the added value. If they see an advantage in motivation and they don't see any risk from various aspects, like data protection or something like that, I can imagine it.

Because precisely the direction you are heading, employee health, satisfaction, performance is definitely a topic that is being highlighted.

Benjamin Rehwald: Ok and such a competitive aspect like a leaderboard within the company for the employees, do you think that would fit into your company culture or would you rather say not so much internally but a company vs. company thing might be more suitable? We would probably start with step counts and such at the beginning and then create a ranking

based on the data.

ANONYMOUS: You already have that in smartwatches. The question is, what makes your app appealing if I already have that somewhere else, why do I need it again? It must offer some innovation or an add-on, some added value.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, that was exactly the idea. If you take the Apple Health app or something like that, which we would also take data from at the beginning, they only show you a number of steps you've walked per day, but for many the motivation isn't there. The competitive aspect is a bit missing. That's why the idea was to push each other with a leaderboard in the company.

That you might also introduce rewards and thus set incentives

if at the end of the month you are in 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place. But that you just have this competitive aspect within the company and thus try to increase the sportiness within the company.

ANONYMOUS: I find it very attractive if you can set filters. That it can be configured whether the competition takes place in a team, in a department, or in an area.

So there are already similar things to some extent. Whether it's just as a comparison like a football betting group and they race against each other, who runs the farthest, the fastest. That definitely exists.

But this configurability, I consider it an attractive and important feature.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, that will also be difficult for a company of your size if you can't divide it well into groups. If there are thousands in a ranking list, the competitive aspect is somewhat lost. Ok but you find the competitive aspect wouldn't be something where you'd say, it should be left out, it

becomes too much?

ANONYMOUS: No, you have to address various stimuli and the competitive aspect is certainly one of them. But then the thing has to be easy to use, it has to be visually appealing. And then it also has to be reasonably attractive for those who don't necessarily want to compete.

Because if someone, let's say, is not so terribly athletic or not as athletic as his environment, the question is whether that person will participate or simply won't feel like it.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, we need to pick them up, exactly.

ANONYMOUS: For them, these filter options and different variants are very important.

Benjamin Rehwald: That's true. Do you think the company would be willing to provide incentives or rewards for employees who achieve such goals?

ANONYMOUS: I wouldn't rule it out.

Benjamin Rehwald: And what would you say would be the most sensible incentives? Is it a monetary reward or just if it stays on a gamification basis, some ranking, or experience points or something like that, or rankings?

ANONYMOUS: Yeah, something in the direction of monetary rewards, I would say.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay.

ANONYMOUS: Yeah, in principle, I can imagine everything at first. But for that, I know the company too little. But I would say, you have a decent lever if you reach and motivate a certain number of employees.

But of course, you can always reward the

top 3 accordingly. The question is just how much that motivates the five-thousandth person if they think they have no chance of competing at the front.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, that's true. We also have concerns that always the same three would win and the rest really wouldn't benefit from it. But then we have to find a solution for that.

ANONYMOUS: Yes, or you can divide it into different criteria or performance classes. So that not only the top people win. You have to come up with something smart to tier it. Across age groups or fitness level or something. That you have everyone in comparison groups and then people see chances again and have an incentive. It's important not to have everyone compete against the top performers who are constantly running marathons or doing triathlons.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, that's true. All clear. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for the app? We've already discussed it a bit.

ANONYMOUS: I think the entry barrier with us is quite high to do a pilot project with our company. Also, because we are in the IT sector, perhaps a company that is more sporty-affine, smaller, or more experimental might be better for you.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, okay. Well, that's actually it. Thank you very much!

Candidate # 15 – Vanessa Stockton

Attendees

Benjamin Rehwald, Vanessa Stockton

This transcription has been translated from its original German version into English by the Interviewee, Benjamin Rehwald.

Transcript

Benjamin Rehwald: Hello Vanessa, thank you so much for taking the time to do an interview with us. Let's start with where you are currently working.

Vanessa: I work at a large German Bank.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay, perfect, and in which department?

Vanessa: In the Financial Engineering department for corporate clients.

Benjamin Rehwald: All clear. 1) **Do you currently have any wellness programs in your company that you offer? Are health apps provided, or any initiatives?**

Vanessa: Yes, we now receive repeated hints about health offers. Both within the bank and from external service providers, and suggestions on what can be done to improve personal well-being.

Like little tips such as, hey, take the stairs again instead of always taking the elevator. These are things that are now quite regularly suggested in the bank. So the bank does pay attention, or tries more and more to ensure that employees pay attention to their health and feel comfortable.

Benjamin Rehwald: Do you also have any collaborations with fitness centers in the area, or what is it like for you?

Vanessa: Not with fitness centers, no. It doesn't go that far. There are only health days at the bank.

And then there are offers for example for back exercises or classes on how I can make sure that I move regularly.

There are also web challenges for companies all over Germany, where teams come together within the company and count their steps over a certain period. Such competitions and things like that are promoted and participation is encouraged.

Benjamin Rehwald: Do you happen to remember the name of this step-counting challenge app?

Vanessa: No, I don't know that, unfortunately. I can look it up for you again.

Benjamin Rehwald: 2) **That would be great, thank you. What do you think, what percentage of people have taken up such offers?**

Vanessa: I really can't tell you that, but I believe the health days have actually been very well received. The problem with us is that you have to take time out of the workday to participate in an offer. So if the bank offers something and the employees want to participate, then it has to be during working hours. It's always a difficult balance for employees and how they manage that.

I think there would be a lot of interest in principle, but the workload unfortunately doesn't always allow it, ironically.

Benjamin Rehwald: 4) **All clear. Do you know if there is a fund for employee well-being? Something that defines how much the company can spend per employee.**

Vanessa: I don't know if there is such a thing, but I don't think so. In recent years, my Bank has been extremely focused on cost reduction. In the past, for example, the entry fee for every employee at the JP Morgan Run was sponsored. I believe that's

no longer the case today.

Benjamin Rehwald: Oh okay, that's an important point. **5) Do you know any health apps by name that come to mind?**

Vanessa: Well, there are plenty of these apps. I believe, if I look into my phone now, there are all sorts of fitness apps. Like Fitbit or Garmin, you could probably install any apps from anyone, that encourage you to take more steps, drink more, sleep better and healthier, whatever else.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, all clear.

Vanessa: But honestly, I don't engage with it much.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay. So our idea is a bit in the direction you mentioned with step counting. We are currently exploring a health app that offers added value to the company by promoting the health of employees through reward-based movement challenges. For example, that there is an internal company leaderboard and then at the end of the month or quarter, employees who have reached a certain number of points receive rewards in the form of vacation days or a communal meal.

That's why the next question would be **6) whether such an app has already been used, but I think we've already covered that.**

Vanessa: Right, so with that team step challenge that was there before, we were tracked with FitBits, and I participated with colleagues. At the end of the day, it was a bit frustrating that in every company there are people who do triathlons, for example, and then you have to compete against such athletes in one category. Of course, they highlight their team among colleagues, but I mean no ordinary person has a chance to keep up.

So, if you're thinking about such a reward-

based system, it's certainly very nice, but it can also quickly lead to colleagues who run marathons making it frustrating for everyone else. As a result, the use of this app in the company quickly becomes spoiled because then, for example, I, who otherwise doesn't move much, compete against colleagues who run marathons and I won't catch them.

Benjamin Rehwald: That's true, we have to somehow see how we can pick up both sides of the spectrum. We were considering whether we could create a kind of threshold, so that everyone can reach certain goals, and thereby unlock their meal voucher or something, to also pick up the people who don't do much sports. Of course, the question remains how to deal with people who do triathlons, marathons, or something similar. We have to somewhat, well, hold them back.

So you mentioned that fitness days or health days were reasonably well received, but **8) generally, what do you think about how open employees would be to participate in such health tasks, assuming we could integrate both ends of the spectrum? Do you think people might be interested?**

Vanessa: Hmm, yes, there is definitely interest there. These health courses that are offered are actually booked up very quickly because they naturally also have a limited number of participants. And I mean at the Frankfurt location, where we have 6,000 employees, if you offer courses with only 20 places per course, then they are naturally very quickly full.

Benjamin Rehwald: **10) Okay, what about the competitive aspect, like a company leaderboard or ranking, would that fit into the company culture, or is that more of a thing where you'd say, okay, maybe not within the company, but company versus company might be more suitable?**

Vanessa: Hmm, interesting. For us, the whole topic of health is an HR matter, and so of course the HR department also looks at how to integrate it well into the company. Exactly the team-based approach is very well received because then colleagues work together in teams. Whether it's within their own work association or externally, or both, I think both are okay. So I would say doing it within the bank is also perfectly fine, but also naturally in competition with other companies, especially if it's companies at the same location, and if you maybe even know colleagues from other companies, then it's even funnier. So then the sporting challenge can really come up.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, all clear. **11) Do you think the company would be willing to provide incentives or rewards for employees?**

Vanessa: What I think I can say right off the bat, what there wouldn't be, are vacation days. That would be very difficult to implement.

Monetary incentives less so, as I said, it's difficult in the current environment of our cost reduction. I can't really imagine that right now, but on the other hand, the bank is of course very interested in continuously motivating employees. So, if there are incentives that don't cost much money, if you have creative ideas, then we would definitely be open to it.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, there's a nice tax allowance of 600 euros that can be spent per employee by the company each year. We were considering aligning our pitch so that it can also be included and the savings can then be passed on to the employees. But we'll have to take another look at that.

12) What do you think would be the most sensible incentives? I mean, of course, you can do it on a gamification basis and then say there are trophies or just a ranking. We've already talked about

money...

Vanessa: Actually, I believe the competitive thought alone is already fun if you can do it in a team-based way. On an individual basis, a meal voucher or something like that already goes down well with us. I mean it doesn't have to be big things.

Trophies, I would say, were better received in the past. I mean even a T-shirt or something wouldn't be enough. It would actually be something like a meal voucher or a voucher somewhere, maybe for a thermal bath or a wellness voucher. So, such things, that would probably be better received.

Benjamin Rehwald: Okay. All clear. Well, the next two questions I've already covered.

13) Do you have any other comments or suggestions on our health idea? Of course, we've already mentioned quite a bit, but do you have anything else you'd like to say?

Vanessa: Well, generally it's a good idea if it fits and helps companies adapt to the zeitgeist. I think then certainly HR departments would consider introducing it, so that the company can position itself well as an employer and thus also offer such deals.

And anything that relieves an employee from having to set up something themselves is good. So, I could imagine that if you design it attractively, then it could certainly appeal to various companies. Although there are already quite a few offers out there.

Benjamin Rehwald: Yes, the German market is not yet as densely populated as the American one. There it's much more common to offer monetary rewards.

Well, that was it. Thank you very much.

