

Problem:

There are many exercising application on the mobile app market today. If you are a hard-core runner, you might use the SmashRun or MapMyRun mobile applications to track distance, route, and other relevant metrics. If you are focused on nutrition and dieting, you might use FitBit or FitWatch to track your intake and measure your progress. However, the 'general' population is not comprised of hardcore runners or people strictly focused on nutrition. It is difficult for this population to adopt these applications because they are looking for results, not the ability to self-quantify themselves. I propose an exercise / nutrition application that will enhance what has already been accomplished by existing apps. However, I plan on furthering the use of sensors and data visualization, and adding gamification to enhance the user experience. I believe that introducing friendly competition could motivate the 'general' population to live healthier lives.

Analysis of Problem:

It has been said that America is the most obese country in the world. What is causing the American population to be so obese? According to the Food Research and Action Center, two thirds of the American population is obese (Flegal et al., 2012). An article in CBS News states "doctors are blaming America's obesity on...to much [of the wrong] foods and too little exercise, with too much time in front of the TV." (Keith, 2006). There was, and still is, a lack of motivation to eat healthy and a lack of motivation to part from the comfort of our homes.

Have you heard the phrase "friendly competition"? As humans, we love to compete with each other and strongly dislike being outdone by others. Did you know that fantasy football is the most played fantasy sport? 33.6 million people play fantasy football in the United States (2013). Why did the population adopt this game rather than others? Fantasy Football combines America's love for football with competition among friends, family and peers. Many of my friends will spend countless hours in front of the TV watching football and track their players. They are engulfed in this game because of the competitive aspect.

So why are these facts relevant or important? Go to your mobile devices' app market and search for fitness, what do you see? On the Apple app store, there are thousands of results that I have never heard of or imagined myself downloading. Many of these apps are static and informative, and are meant as references or guides. In the US there is a large market for fitness applications, but what is going to motivate user adoption? The answer is the competitive nature of people.

Recently, I heard about NikeFuel associated with Nike+ technologies. There is amazing progress in the field of sensor technology; people can track activity, movement, and location through systems such as Nike+. It is truly amazing what we

can do with sensors, but the technology is growing rapidly, and I believe that we can see more advanced applications, such as tracking food intake, very soon.

Suggested Improvements:

In this new application I will focus on changing a few things. I will create a sense of gratification by gamifying this application so users can compete against their friends, family, and peers. Many of the successful applications and games incorporate a sense of competition and involve leader boards. However, the application will not award points based solely on physical activity, but nutrition and food intake as well. I want people to earn points for eating appropriate portions of nutritional foods, and lose points for over indulging on unhealthy foods.

I believe that this will work because of the competitive nature of young adults. My initial target audience comprises of college students at the UW and motivation is abundant. Guys want to impress girls and girls want to impress guys. No one likes loosing, so they try to be top 'dawg'. People want to eat healthy, but sometimes they backslide. This new application will track all of these metrics. It will allow users to connect with friends and allow users to track each other's progress.

Scenario Walkthrough:

Bob and Todd are best friends and they have been using this new application for the past week. Bob currently has 250 points and Todd currently has 230 points. Bob is watching Monday night football and munching his way through a bag of potato chips. Without much warning, Bob has lost points for consuming too much unhealthy food. All of a sudden, Todd gets a notification that he has passed Bob in the leader board. Todd then sends Bob a quick SMS and pokes fun at him. Bob is irritated and decides to go to the gym instead. However, Bob views Todd's activity visualizer and notices a negative trend. Bob surfaces this bit of information to Todd and they decide to go to the gym together.

References:

Ogden, C. L., Carroll, M. D., Kit, B.K., & Flegal, K. M. (2012). Prevalence of obesity and trends in body mass index among U.S. children and adolescents

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Keith, S.W. "International Journal of Obesity," advance online publication, June 27, 2006.