

Association for Business Communication

2024 Student Competition Writing Prompt



From Microsoft to New Heights Tech: The Case of Wearable Technology in the Workplace

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Recently, Microsoft made a commitment to improving employee health and wellbeing by using a holistic wellness approach – and it paid off. Microsoft employees reported a 47% increase in physical activity and a 5% reduction in body mass (Bihani, 2023). Microsoft understands the importance of a holistic health and wellness approach that involves not only an employee’s physical health, but also their financial, mental, and emotional wellbeing (Kawamoto, 2023). Employee health and wellness initiatives have also proved to be beneficial to the organization. Some organizations have reported a decrease in lost days work and worker’s compensation claims (Berry et al., 2010). Healthy employees can save an organization money. These impressive results have inspired other organizations, like New Heights Tech, to invest in health and wellness incentives for employees.

New Heights Tech

New Heights Tech (NHT) is a mid-sized organization with 250 employees located throughout the Midwest. NHT specializes in providing internet, TV, phone, and home security services to residential and commercial customers. Recognizing that the majority of their employees are engaging in sedentary work, NHT chose to invest in their employees by way of a new health and wellbeing initiative. The initiative focused on physical, mental, emotion, and financial health by way of technology-driven software and wearable devices.

Implementation of New Initiative

At the beginning of the year, NHT employees were provided access to the new software platform and issued their own smart watch to track their individual goals via the platform. NHT leveraged the technology to gamify the new wellness initiatives. The overwhelming majority of employees embraced the gamified approach and were motivated to actively participate in the initiative. What could go wrong?

Unexpected Consequences of Wearable Devices

NHT provided training for how to use the wellness software platform and how to actively participate in the wellness initiative. Most employees were wearing their smart watch all day – including in meetings with co-workers or customers. A number of customers had complained about NHT employees being distracted. There was one instance of an NHT employee inadvertently taking a personal phone call from their smart watch in front of a customer.

Your Assignment

NHT understands the benefits of their new health and wellbeing initiative. They have invested in their employees and want to see the program continue. However, NHT is considering ending the use of wearable devices if the devices continue to negatively impact the customer experience and office culture.

The NHT Talent Development Department created a training on best practices for using wearable devices. This training includes adapting smart watch settings, smart watch etiquette, and NHT expectations for using the wearable device. As an employee within the Talent Development team, you have been asked to write an email to all employees. Persuade employees to complete the training within one week while reinforcing the benefits of the wellbeing initiative. Use an audience-centered approach. NHT does not want to discourage employees from participating in the wellbeing initiative.

You are welcome to use evidence from this case or evidence you have found on your own to help support your message. Your message must follow email conventions, use professional tone and style, and persuade employees.

References

- Berry, L. L., Mirabito, A. M., & Baun, W. B. (2010). What's the hard return on employee wellness programs? *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2010/12/whats-the-hard-return-on-employee-wellness-programs>
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