Digital Wellness Initiative Briefing Paper 2017

What is the aim of your initiative?
The goal of the Digital Wellness Initiative is to bring together thought leaders from wellness, healthcare, technology, government, and education to serve as a think tank, evaluating research and advocating for policy and education on the healthy use and adoption of technology.

What or who are the current "news makers" or trends in the initiative's industry/sector?

- The iOS Moment app is helping users monitor their technology use.
- The DuckDuckGo search engine that doesn't monitor your data has been growing in popularity.
- The Screenagers award-winning documentary was released about "growing up in the digital age."
- Ransomly creates a "Space for Humanity" Beacon app to help users "reclaim" areas of their home for non-digital interaction.
- Saent creates a "distraction blocker" device and app to boost focus and productivity.
- Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group launches a worldwide "Digital Wellness" initiative.

Name some (high level) challenges facing your industry/sector?
Technological optimism: We are enamored with the benefits achieved through technology so it is easy to turn a blind eye to the risks or downsides.
Inevitability: There is a feeling of inevitability in our evolution into the technological age, which leads us to feel we are not in control of our own destiny.
Lack of awareness and mindfulness: In some ways, our technologies are designed to distract us from other things in our lives. By design, we tend to become immersed into technology without being consciously aware of what we may be sacrificing in our non-digital lives.

Where do you see the opportunities for industry/sector?
There is a growing cadre of experts from across a variety of disciplines, including digital ethics, digital citizenship, digital mindfulness, digital nutrition and digital education, who are beginning to think about these issues. A need is emerging for a new field of digital wellness that brings together diverse

viewpoints on the relationship between technology and well-being, and seeks to establish a holistic and unified approach to these issues. The goal is to create healthy guidelines and boundaries for our relationship with technology, allowing us to maintain elements of our non-digital humanity in the age of technology.

Are there any "heroes" (either companies or individuals) who stand out in your industry/sector?

- Author Nicholas Carr has written highly acclaimed books on how technology is impacting humanity.
- Design ethicist Tristan Harris on *Ethics for Designers* i.e., designing technology to create well-being rather than capture attention.
- Social psychology researcher and author Sherry Turkle on communication and relationships in the age of technology.
- Arianna Huffington includes *Unplug & Recharge* on her Thrive Global wellness platform.
- Lawrence Ampofo hosts a website and podcast on Digital Mindfulness.
- Tech ethicist David Ryan Polgar on Mental Obesity.
- Psychology professor and author Jean Twenge on the impact of technology on younger generations.

Is there noteworthy investment happening in your industry/sector?
This sector is too new to clearly identify the investment opportunity, but it is interesting to note that the technology industry itself seems to be interested in this. Perhaps one of the biggest risks to the big technology platforms (Google, Apple, Facebook, etc.) would be an anti-technology backlash caused by a perceived reduction in well-being from the use of their products. Many tech companies are aware that these issues are rising and want to learn how to develop their products in a way that supports human well-being rather than detracting from it.

Name any key accomplishments (milestones) made by your initiative?
We are working on a 10,000 word white paper on *Wellness in the Age of the Smartphone* to look at the research on the impact of technology on human wellness and to lay a foundation for the further work of this initiative.

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