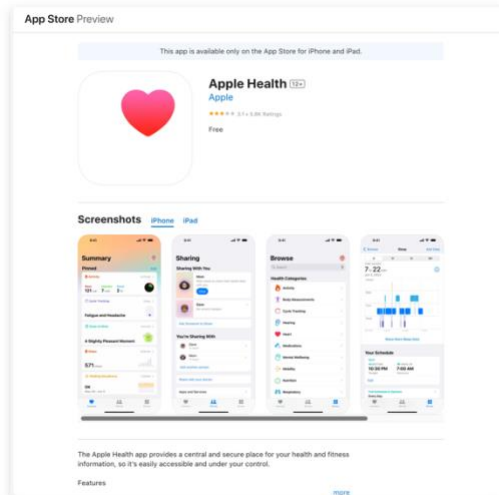


DEI Failure Analysis

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DEI Failure Overview



In 2014, Apple launched its Health app – **Apple Health**, designed to be a comprehensive health and fitness tracking tool. However, upon its release, it was quickly criticized for a major omission—there was **no feature for tracking women’s menstrual cycles**, a key health metric for millions of users.

This obvious oversight highlights a significant DEI failure to **consider the needs of female users**, especially in a tech industry that often lacks female representation

Analysis

◆ Description of the case

Apple Health app, was first launched in 2014 running on iOS 8, is being marketed as an innovative health informatics tool for tracking various health metrics such as physical activity, sleep, steps, and blood pressure, among other vital signs (it can pull data from fitness trackers)

Despite these features, **the app lacked the ability to track the menstrual cycle**, an important aspect of women's health. This oversight was widely seen as a DEI failure to consider the needs of female users, sparking outrage and criticism of gender bias in the app's development.

◆ Cause of the DEI failure

This failure can be attributed to the **lack of diversity** within the Apple’s product, development, go-to-market teams. This oversight likely happened because those responsible for the app’s PRD/feature design did not include enough female or failed to gather feedback from female users. Consequently, a critical health function was missing, indicating a significant gender gap in decision-making.

This case illustrates how a lack of diverse perspectives in product development or even within in the company can result in features that neglect the needs of certain user groups and leads to globally impacts.

◆ **Impact**

The exclusion of the menstrual tracking feature has led to widespread public criticism of Apple. Many believe it reflects gender bias in the tech industry, as tech products often fail to take women's needs into account.

The oversight also damaged Apple's reputation, especially in terms of its commitment to inclusion and diversity. After the backlash, Apple recognized the mistake by adding menstrual cycle tracking in a 2015 update, but the initial damage to its public image had already been done.

In the long run, Apple's response will help mitigate some of the negative effects. By admitting its mistakes and correcting them, Apple has shown that it is willing to listen to its users and make changes. However, the broader discussion about the lack of diversity in the tech industry sparked by this incident continues. Since then, companies such as Apple have increased their commitment to diversity, but this incident serves as a reminder that such efforts must be proactive, not reactive, in order to avoid similar missteps in the future.

In summary, while Apple may not have faced direct financial losses, the social and reputational losses were significant. This incident indicates that the needs of more diverse teams and inclusive product design, of which ultimately has both economic and social benefits for companies to be successful.

◆ **Lessons learned for DEI and Product Development**

Apple's failure indicates the need for companies to create more inclusive work environments, where diverse perspectives are actively sought out and included. This means that address how DEI efforts can directly contribute to product success by ensuring that products can serve the needs of all user base.

There are few steps that tech companies can do for fostering diversity such as:

1. **Diverse hiring** – increase representation of women as well as underrepresented groups in product/development teams.
2. **Inclusive decision thinking and making:** Employing user-centric design practices that incorporate feedback from a wider range of users.
3. **Bias training:** Training teams such as the GTM on unconscious bias, as this can be the last barrier of DEI failure before public release.

Diversity Bias (DEI Failures) in Tech

This failure of missing menstrual tracking in Apple Health is part of a larger pattern of DEI failures/diversity bias across the tech industry. Historically, many tech products have been developed by male teams, leading to design choices are made by them, and may leave out underrepresented groups.

This issue is not unique to Apple, many other tech companies have also faced similar criticisms for their handling diversity in product development. This means that building diverse teams is important and so how provide a wider range of perspectives during the product development, ensuring that products server all users, not just a select few.

Conclusion

Apple's omission of menstrual tracking in Apple Health indicates the importance of diverse perspectives in product development process. This DEI failure could have stopped internally if the go-to-market team have a diverse testing group that included women and other underrepresented voices. A diverse testing group would have been more likely to identify the missing feature ensuring the product is taking care of all users before its public release.

This DEI failure underscores how neglecting the need of underrepresented groups can ended up products/features that do not server all users equally. By failing to include an important feature to women's health, Apple not only missed out a large portion of its user base but also led to a broader conversation about gender diversity in tech.

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