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HLTH-E Project Proposal

The global fitness industry is a large one, and there are always more and more diverse services and offerings being created to help people get fit. With the start of a new year, a staggering amount of new year’s resolutions probably revolve around losing weight, getting in shape, eating healthier, etc. Many different types of hardware and services claim to be the best at helping a user keep track of their fitness goals. There is a pattern with most services/products one can find online. First, the user would likely have to buy a piece of hardware loaded with this functionality. Next, use online and/or web services that often want them to create accounts and share some form of information just for the service it provides. And finally, many services immediately found online seem to do one thing very well, be it counting calories, logging exercise activities, or just providing useful information about nutrition, exercise, and so on. All in all, it seems that many things specialize in doing one section well, but there are very few that seem to put together a complete package that could give a user a larger overall view of the things their doing pertaining to fitness and health. If one example would indeed have more of a complete package, then in turn it seems to have the price tag to match. HLTH-E (pronounced “healthy”, name subject to change) seeks to motivate and encourage users by aggregating all of these types of tracker concepts together.

This application seeks to fill the gap between many different types of fitness tracking services and furthermore to use the information the user logs to motivate and encourage users into the future. By making a service that simply counts calories, one can show that a user’s habits change over time, but by using a larger variety of metrics, the user could be given a better idea of the situation they are in. In today’s society, people want results fast, and by providing several forms of fitness tracking, this application has a better chance at giving them the instant gratification that they desire. Since any example user would be anyone that is interested in tracking the “fitness” aspects of their life, the user base would be very diverse. Obviously, direct users would be stakeholders, but these can also include indirect users, such as a user’s personal trainers and coaches, who can looked over the detailed information that the main user keeps track of. This can be especially true if for any reason the direct user has some form of medical condition that requires these metrics to be looked over. If in any case there is a large amount of interest in this application, any investors that are interested in funding the project are also very important stakeholders to consider. Finally, the only other possible stakeholders are possible consultants from the fitness industry. For example, a personal trainer working with developers to create a more easy to understand but thorough graph for users. Some of the stakeholders discussed are not likely to happen (investors) in a situation such as this, but in a larger scale are quite important to address.

The absolute goal of this application is to help users who want to get fit by allowing them to review as many self-entered statistics as possible, preferably in more visual ways. It will be a one-stop shop for viewing their recorded fitness metrics while collecting as little personal information as possible. The application will feature several sections of different statistics that can be logged and kept locally. For most of the features that are added, there will ideally be a way for the user to generate a graph out of the data, and select what period of time it should encompass. This way, a user can better visualize their progress and analyze what they’ve done up to that point to improve their habits/activities in the future. More than likely, the data that will be stored locally for ease of access and for an overall proof of concept. At least for now, the application will be a smaller scale desktop application, there won’t be a real integration of broader scope utilities such as Amazon Web Services or website hosting of any kind. To start off, it will simply be a locally stored Java application that uses Swing or JavaFX for GUI’s. Towards the end of the period, if time permits, possible “higher-end” solutions can be explored. Ideally, the perfect platform for an app such as this is mobile, since everyone has their smartphone basically all of the time. For the current scope though, a local desktop application is more suitable.

As said previously, there are many other services in the fitness field that are offered to keep track of a user’s variety of statistics. The biggest and most similar competitor to an application such as this is Under Armour’s MyFitnessPal. This service describes itself as a “Free online calorie counter and diet plan,” and also appears to let the user keep track of exercise routines as well. After reviewing images of its features and interfaces, it is obvious that it is a well put together and albeit similar application. To differentiate though, HLTH-E plans to be even more visual than MyFitnessPal. There are still some features that appear to be subject to better organization and visualization. Another solid competitor to this application is the FitBit. It states that it’s products “help you stay motivated and improve your health by tracking your activity, exercise, food, weight and sleep.” To use this software though, one must purchase a wearable bracelet that interfaces with its mobile app to display the number of steps someone has taken, calories burnt, heart rate, sleep cycles, and more. However, many features are unavailable without the purchase of the watch/bracelet. FitBit’s application can take advantage of the sensors in a smartphone, but can only give basic data compared to what is possible with the bracelet. Compared to FitBit, this application is meant to keep track of slightly more things that the regular mobile application, and not have to purchase a $50-$200 piece of hardware. In conclusion, the goal of HLTH-E compared to other services is to simplify the interfaces of the statistics offered as well as cost little to nothing for a large amount of data, as well as exist locally under the direct user’s control.