

WEARABLES WEEKLY: MARCH 30 - APRIL 3, 2015

IBM Launches US\$3 Billion Internet of Things Unit

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On March 31, IBM announced investments of US\$3 billion over the next four years to create an Internet of Things unit. With IBM predicting that 90% of all data generated by mobile and other smart devices is never analyzed, the IoT Unit will harness and study data collected from smartphones, tablets, connected vehicles, and appliances. IBM is collaborating with other partners to develop cloud-based data services and tools. One example is IBM's partnership with Twitter, which aims to predict purchasing habits using Twitter data in combination with economic and weather data. IBM's announcement represents the company's shift from hardware to analytics, cloud computing, mobile services, and security.

Alibaba's Finance Arm Partners with Xiaomi on Wearable Payments

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Alibaba's finance arm, Ant Financial, has partnered with Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi to develop a mobile phone payment system with wearables. Xiaomi and Ant Financial (which includes China's online pay service Alipay) will enable users to link Xiaomi's wearable, the Mi Band, with the Alipay Wallet mobile application to make payments while not requiring passwords. The Alipay-Mi Band connection will be available on Alipay Wallet for Android, with the next version being compatible with Apple's iOS.

US FDA Lightly Regulates Apple Watch

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The US Food and Drug Administration (which oversees the regulation of devices and applications) has indicated it will adopt a light – almost entirely hands-off – approach to regulating the Apple Watch. The FDA's Associate Director for Digital Health, Bakul Patel, indicated that: "If you have technology that's going to motivate a person to stay healthy, that's not something we want to be engaged in." When the Apple Watch later this month in selected countries, it will already have at least 19 available mobile applications, with many focused on health. Examples include: Nike + Running (measuring distance, duration, and pace while wearing the Watch), Green Kitchen (helping individual cook meals by offering healthy recipes), and Runtastic (measuring speed, distance, duration, pace, and how many calories users burn). Others range in tracking medication adherence, alcohol intake, and water consumption.

Funding for Digital Health Slows For First Time Since 2010

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Start-up incubator, StartUp Health, reported earlier this week that digital health funding slowed in Q1 of 2015 for the first time since 2010. Although funding for start-ups declined, investment in later-stage companies increased. With Barack Obama's Precision Medicine Initiative announced earlier this year (which aims to create a massive database containing the genetic data of at least one million volunteer participants), funding for genomic analytics companies also increased. Finally, StartUp Health noted that the San Francisco Bay Area remains the most active digital health market, followed by San Diego, Boston, Salt Lake City, and New York City.

New Devices Entering the Market

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BSXinsight: An individual's lactate threshold is the level at which the body cannot flush lactic acid out of the bloodstream faster than it is being produced. It is a useful measure of workout intensity. The BSXinsight is the first – and only – device so far that can measure lactic acid. The device is attached to a user's calf, which periodically shines light into his/her skin to analyze muscle composition. The device can tell how much lactic acid is in the muscle.

OLIO: Wearable startup Olio has announced its new high-end smartwatch, Model One, earlier this week. The device will connect to iOS and Android devices, which the Android Wear or Apple Watch cannot accomplish. The battery will last for two days, and the company is taking pre-orders starting this summer.