Should companies track employee health?

1 Warmer

- **Do you have any health apps on your phone? What do they do?**

- **Do you own an activity tracker, such as a Fitbit? What information does it give you?**

2 Key words

Write the key words next to the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

approach	assessment	corporate	diversify	empower
intervention	nutrition	returns	sensitive	tick-box surveillance

1. a way to check what people do, and how they live their lives, by asking them to make a mark in boxes

    _____

2. a way of dealing with or thinking about something _____

3. a situation in which somebody else becomes involved in order to influence what happens

    _____

4. give someone more control over their life _____

5. include more people from different cultures or races _____

6. relating to large companies _____

7. the process of making a judgment or forming an opinion after considering something or

    someone carefully _____

8. food when considered as something that keeps you healthy _____

9. needing to be dealt with carefully _____

10. profit (and success) from money that you have invested _____

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Should companies track employee health? YES

Companies are turning to tracking measures in order to protect their employees. Some people see this as a way for employers to strengthen the control they have over our social lives; others see it as a way to improve our well-being.

JULIAN EARWAKER provides the arguments for both sides.

YES

"Health and well-being are key indicators of productivity in the workplace" Kevin Thomson

1 Employee health and well-being are the most important assets of any business and key indicators of productivity in the workplace. In the past ten years, organizations have moved away from tick-box surveillance of employees to a well-being approach. About 60 per cent of organizations in the UK now have a health and well-being strategy for their employees. Health tracking can give an overview of employee health. It can identify key risks so that interventions can be put in place.

2 In the UK, 1.4 million workers suffer from work-related health problems. From 2017 to 2018, there were 541,000 workers suffering from new cases of work-related illness, and 26.8 million working days were lost because of work-related ill health. Employers have a responsibility to support and empower staff to live healthier and longer lives, particularly as the working population ages and diversifies.

3 Technology has transformed corporate well-being programmes. Personalized health assessments are helped by artificial intelligence to produce an accurate picture of individual employees. Employees get secure information about their lifestyle, nutrition and mental health; employers get an anonymized summary of that data to help them shape workforce health interventions. Using digital tools, organizations can identify risks and encourage positive changes in behaviour.

4 Most people carry a mobile phone, and tracking devices are readily available if they want to manage their own health. We need to be careful that monitoring people's health doesn't become a surveillance tool to track employees. Staff should be made aware in advance what their data is going to be used for. We need to encourage employees by using trust, respect and empowerment. The large tech companies that have supported this culture are the ones doing best in the marketplace.

5 Businesses struggle to find platforms that gather health data in one place. It's a logistical challenge, and the platform must meet GDPR (general data protection regulation) requirements. Privacy is a sensitive subject, and staff may be careful about giving out personal information.

6 Employers want to support individuals, but they also want to see the economic returns that may be associated with some of these corporate healthcare programmes.

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3 Information sharing

a. **Write the arguments from your text into the Student A column. Include simpler explanations or synonyms for any words and expressions you think you might need to explain to someone who hasn't read the text.**

Should companies track employee health?	
Student A – Yes	**Student B – No**

b. **Talk to a Student B and complete the Student B column.**

c. **Discuss the two authors' opinions, say who you think makes the strongest case and decide what part of his argument most convinced you.**

4 Phrases

a. **Ask someone who read the *No* article to find and highlight the following three phrases and read out the sections they appear in.**

1. worst-case scenario

2. data-driven decision-making process

3. as a whole

b. **Talk about what these phrases mean, and write a definition for each one.**

c. **Use each phrase in a new sentence of your own.**

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5 **Discussion**

- **What types of work-related illnesses are most frequently seen in your field of work?**

  - Are these illnesses that you would see in other industries or are they specific to your field of work?

- **Your company wants employees to install health-tracking apps on their phones. It also wants them to allow the company access to this information.**

  - How do you feel about this?

  - What assurances would you require from the company in order to allow them to track you?

- **Even if it is company policy to track employees' health and well-being, are there any specific people, or groups of people, who you think should be exempt from this policy?**

- **How do you feel in general about your company advising employees on how to lead a healthier life?**

- **Should management be required to set a good example to their employees?**

6 **Writing**

Write an email to the staff in your company trying to convince them to share their health data with the company. Write about the benefits this will bring to the company and offer them some kind of reward in exchange for their information.