

Wearable Technology Could Make a Difference to Business Travel

Wearable tech is an incredible progression in modern technology that has given us access to information, contacts and applications in an even more convenient way than a tablet or smartphone. The more advanced and accessible these devices become, the easier it will be for business travelers. That is the hope at least. For now, there are some clear areas where wearable gadgets are helping and some clear gaps to work on.



Business travelers are keen on the devices but have reservations about their full potential. There seems to be no sector more engaged with wearable tech and more in line to benefit from ongoing expansion than businessmen – particular those that often travel.

A recent YouGov study shows that 12% of the population in the UK hope to own a wearable device of some kind by the end of 2015. This is a figure that sounds pretty realistic for emerging technology but the numbers are quite different in the business sector.

Statistics from a recent survey carried out by Buying Business Travel suggests that business travelers are already completely on board with these devices: a third of them said that they had a fitness tracker, a third had an Apple Watch and a third had a smartwatch from another company.

The question of course is why are business travelers so invested in this new form of technology? Mobile wallets and applications like Apple Pay have made a big impact on the way that people spend their money and are ideal for airport shopping and business lunches, although many would prefer the chance to add a virtual corporate card.

Many also use it for managing data and itineraries, which is where apps like Tripcase come in. This itinerary management app is now available on all major smartwatches, with future updates set to make it easier to use. There is a lot that can be done with these gadgets but there is still a barrier where the smartphone is more attractive in a corporate world.



The act of corporate divisions giving out Blackberrys, smartphones or tablets to key employees is nothing new but it may be a while until companies see the merit in giving out smartwatches. For some they are simply seen as too much of a new fad; for others the smartphone can simply do more. Business travelers want a greater ability to use tracking, messaging and data management via a wearable device, to the point where it is actually easier than using their phone. The ability to use a phone as a boarding pass or room key has saved travelers a lot of time and effort and is almost second nature on a mobile device so how long until this is the case with smartwatches?

Where does wearable technology go next in order to cater to business travelers further? Smartwatches and other devices are still in the early stages with plenty of room for improvement. The next step for developers is to take this current obsession with owning company-specific items such as the Microsoft Hololens and Apple Watch and open them up to third party applications, to essentially broaden their potential for users and consumers. The more apps and options that buyers have the more they will come to rely on their gadget like they did on their phone. There are 12,000 approved apps for the Apple Watch and this can only grow to give travelers to use their device in precisely the way they want.



A further statistic from that Buying Business Travel survey brings up another interesting point: participants believed that it will take between one and three years before this wearable technology is used in a significant way for travel needs. 3 years is quite a while in technological terms but 1 year is pretty encouraging for those that are keen to develop this business market.

According to market research firm International Data Corporation, after an impressive 26.4 million wearable devices were shipped in 2014, 2015 figures look set to be close to 72.1 million. It is also predicted that by 2020 this figure will reach 150 million. This is a staggering rise that shows that it will not be long until a large percentage of the population is using one. The level to which they use it for business travel is now up to the developers.

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