

Module Title:

Understanding and Engaging Stakeholders

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Assessment Title:

Understanding the Importance of Stakeholder Engagement in the Successful Commencement
and Completion of a Project

Project Scenario:

Launch of a New Fitbit Wearable Device (Heart Rate, Oxygen-Level & Sleep Tracking)

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Introduction Fitbit (Google Health)

Fitbit, which is currently under Google health, after Google acquired it in 2021, is a global manufacturer of wearable health technologies and has an excellent presence in the United Kingdom. Founded in 2007, Fitbit was the first consumer access to health monitoring by incorporating sensors with the ability to monitor physical activity, heart rate, sleep patterns among other new features like oxygen saturation and notifications about irregular heart rhythm. The company is a digital health ecosystem business, which includes wearables and software analytics provided through the Fitbit app and the Fitbit Premium service, which is a subscription platform.



The distribution channel that Fitbit uses to facilitate its operations in the UK includes extensive distribution channels that include Google store UK, Argos, Boots and special electronics retailers. Its compatibility with Google Health allows it to further integrate with artificial intelligence, cloud computing and data analytics, and progress on the possibility of personalised health insights and preventive care solutions. Fitbit has not finished with research and development in response to the rising demands of the population to remotely monitor and actively manage their wellbeing through digital health programs and is supporting academic institutions and health organisations with digital health activities. This makes the company a key competitor in the consumer health technology sector in the UK, especially since the organisation is set to introduce a new wearable device with improved heart rate, oxygen-level and sleep-tracking functionalities.

SWOT Appraisal of Fitbit (Google Health)

Fitbit under Google Health Fitbit has been one of the most powerful organisations in the global market of health-technology wearables, which are regulated by Google Health since its acquisition by the latter in 2021. SWOT-based strategic appraisal will give a better understanding of the internal strengths and external environment of the company, particularly at the time when it is about to introduce the next generation wearable in the UK.

Strengths

One of the key advantages of Fitbit is that it has a good brand and an early-mover advantage in the health-wearables industry. Being one of the first in the field of consumer fitness tracking, the firm has created a strong pool of loyal users and a database of insights into the health-behaviour that allow the company to keep on improving the product. Studies indicate that accuracy to interpret health data is greater when the wearable is used by the user, which poses a competitive edge to the already known and popular products such as Fitbit (Patel et al., 2021, The Lancet Digital Health). The other strength is that Fitbit is a part of the overall technological ecosystem of Google. Complex computing, AI and cloud deliver the platform to provide real-time analytics, personalised health insights and enhanced device performance. Furthermore, Fitbit has a wide distribution network covering the Google Store, the Boots, Argos and UK online platforms, all of which facilitate good access to the market.

Weaknesses

Fitbit has a variety of internal challenges, notwithstanding its strengths. Among the most notable flaws are increased attention to the issue of privacy and data control since the acquisition of Google. Researchers note that consumers in the UK are highly worried about the use of their health data by the big tech firms (Veale & Borgesius, 2021, International Data Privacy Law). Any uncertainty about the compliance with GDPR may adversely affect consumer confidence. The relatively small ecosystem of the company is another weakness, as the rival companies (like Apple) possess a highly connected hardware-software platform, which makes it easier to keep customers. Fitbit also counts on battery-efficient sensor technology, which at times inhibits the processing capabilities of the device, which results in a possible drawback in the addition of advanced biometric capabilities.

Opportunities

There are good growth opportunities of Fitbit, especially in the UK, due to the presence of external conditions. The NHS Long-Term Plan promotes digital health implementation, such as remote monitoring and wearable, which is an indicator of future collaboration or pilot programmes. Continuous health monitoring demand is also growing because of the growing popularity of preventive healthcare and health of sleep among the population. According to Statista (2023), the UK wearables market has been growing remarkably on a yearly basis, due to a stronger consumer perspective on health and hybrid work trends. In addition, the progress of AI-based diagnostics and biosensing technology can offer Fitbit an opportunity to market its next product as more of a medically pertinent, health-supporting product instead of a fitness device. Corporate wellness programmes are also a good way to expand as the UK employers are increasingly investing in the wellbeing of their employees and the market is scalable.

Threats

Fitbit is a company that is working in a very competitive industry with large technology players. Competition at Apple, Samsung and Huawei is still high with the companies investing heavily in health-tracking capabilities, increasing the competitive innovation threshold. Another threat is regulatory complexity: the UK GDPR and MHRA regulations may lead to the risks of compliance delays or the inability to approve a product. Economics, such as decreasing consumer consumption when there is inflation, can decrease the demand of the high-quality wearable. Also, there is a high technological change, so the life cycle of products is short; otherwise, they will be rendered obsolete. It has been found that consumers tend to change the brand when other competitors have better features, battery life or integration (IDC, 2023).

Key Internal and External Stakeholders

The key stakeholders are recognized as the key elements of successful project governance, especially in a highly technological world like developing a new Fitbit wearable device. In the classic Stakeholder Theory, developed by Freeman, stakeholders are any group or person, who can influence or be influenced by accomplishment of organisational goals (Freeman, 1984). The stakeholder identification helps to communicate better, align resources and cut down project uncertainty which is essential in digital health high-speed markets (Mitchell, Agle and Wood, 1997).

Internal Stakeholder

Leadership (Google Health and Fitbit Management).

Top leadership is the one that has strategic decision making powers and its members are those who approve of budgets, set time lines and decide the overall course of the project. They fit in the high power-high interest attributes as explained in the stakeholder matrix of Mendelow meaning that they need to be managed closely (Mendelow, 1991). Strategic visibility, availability of resources, and fast tracks to escalation are among the benefits. The key issue surrounding it is associated with conflicting organisational priorities, which could limit decision turnaround.

Product Development and Etc.

These stakeholders develop the device architecture, hardware sensors and ergonomic. They will also require their technical know-how to provide correct heart rate, oxygen saturation and sleep-tracking feature. Nonetheless, they do struggle with technical limitations, time limitations and repetition cycles common to product innovation (Ulrich and Eppinger, 2016).

Teams. Software, Data Science and AI Teams.

The quality of algorithms and data-processing models is the source of competitive advantage of Fitbit. Such teams are sources of machine-learning capabilities that form the basis of predictive health. On the one hand, they improve the quality of products, but on the other hand, they also struggle with the problem of algorithmic bias, data protection compliance and the combination of several streams of data (Patel et al., 2021).

Regulatory and Legal Teams.

Such stakeholders make sure that they are compliant with the UK GDPR and MHRA health-device regulations. Their intervention minimizes legal risks and secures consumer faith. The difficulties are usually caused by the rigorous regulatory schedules and the frequent changes of the digital-health recommendations (Veale and Borgesius, 2021).

Marketing and Sales Teams.

Stakeholders in marketing develop the product story, plan launching campaigns and liaise with retail partners. Distribution forecasts and retailer contact is handled by sales team. They are advantageous because they push towards adoption and market presence, and they have competitive pressures in an oversaturated wearables market (Statista, 2023).

Customer Support Teams.

They offer after sales services and get the feedbacks of the users to guide them in future product development. One of the issues is how to deal with customers who have high expectations at the time of launch.

External Stakeholders

Consumers (End Users).

The major beneficiaries are consumers and they play an important role in the success of products. Their input helps to refine the design, and their anxieties, especially related to data privacy, create behavioural adoption issues (Piwek et al., 2016).

Regulators (MHRA, ICO).

They guarantee the protection, legal and moral management of biometric information. Their control is very essential, yet lengthy approval delays product schedules.

Suppliers and Manufacturers.

These partners bring about sensors, chips and manufacturing capacity. Their performance has a direct impact on the quality of devices and delivery times. Global supply-chain volatility is a common problem (Christopher, 2016).

Retail Partners (Boots, Argos, Google Store UK).

Accessibility and visibility are enhanced by retailers. Nevertheless, the fight against shelf space and matching of logistics is operationally difficult.

Health Organisations (NHS, UK Digital Health Programmes).

Collaboration with health organizations increase validity and possible clinical applicability. Rigorous requirements of evidence and low rates of institutional adoption are issues that make challenges.

Partners of Technology Ecosystem.

The device has third-party developers and integration partners who enhance the broader value proposition of the device. The key difficulty here is to achieve interoperability and alignment of data-security.

All in all, these stakeholders can be located and probed to facilitate a more strategic approach of the engagement, minimise the uncertainty of operation and facilitate a more unproblematic rollout of the products.

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders, Benefits and Challenges

The management of Fitbit new wearable device project lifecycle involves the effective understanding of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. The definition of the stakeholder role helps in coordinating the activities, minimizes conflict and also maintains strategic alignment. The Stakeholder Theory of Freeman (1984) notes that the effectiveness of delivering a project is based on its ability to identify the interests of various stakeholder groups and address them.

Top Management (Google Health/Fitbit Management)

The top management determines the vision of the project, spends the money and gives the consent of significant decisions. Their participation gives them strategic direction and organisational legitimacy. Cross-departmental alignment is also aided by leadership, and it is essential in innovation in health-technology. Though, there are problems such as competing organisational priorities and the possible delays in decision-making because of the high-level governance structures (Bryson, 2018).

The Product Development and Engineering Teams.

These departments develop the hardware structure, incorporate biosensors and make the devices durable. Their role is to test the validity of heart rate, accuracy of oxygen saturation and sleep tracking. Their participation will add a lot of technical know-how and hence the project will be performance and reliable. These challenges are technological constraints, high turnaround and integration of various sensor modules within a short time scope (Ulrich and Eppinger, 2016).

AI, Data Science Teams and Software.

These teams are in charge of creating machine-learning algorithms to interpret biometric data, whereby the device offers valuable and personal health information. Their input is competitive advantage in terms of better user experience and accuracy of data. The issues comprise overcoming the problem of algorithmic bias, maintaining the quality of the data and addressing the GDPR in the context of responsible data processing (Veale & Borgesius, 2021).

Regulatory and Legal Teams

These stakeholders protect the adherence of MHRA devices standards and UK GDPR rules. Their efforts save the organisation penalties, civil law suits and tarnishing of reputation. The opportunities and threats they encounter are related to the changing regulations and the necessity to develop a huge amount of documentation to prove the safety of the product and its data management (Patel et al., 2021).

Marketing and Communications: Teams.

The marketing department will be tasked with the responsibility of creating the go-to-market strategy, product positioning and promotional activities. They introduce market intelligence and the value of products is well communicated. This is because their weaknesses are stiff competition within the UK wearables industry and consumer sensitivity in terms of data protection (Statista, 2023).

Sales and Distribution Partners.

These retailer and internal aligned teams make sure that there is synchronisation between inventory forecasting, retail placement and logistics activities. The advantage is that they spur accessibility and revenue generation. The factors can include volatile consumer demand and disruption of supply chain (Christopher, 2016).

Customer Support Teams

These stakeholders will handle customer enquiries, troubleshooting of devices and get customer feedback to improve on the products. They will increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. The primary challenge is aggravated by the fact that the customers are more demanding about real-time support and privacy issues (Piwek et al., 2016).

External Stakeholders

The consumers provide information on usability and trust, the regulator compliance, suppliers essential parts and NHS organisations bring the prospects of digital-health interventions. Both of them offer high value but at the same time come with some difficulties associated with approval process, inefficient supply-chain and strict data-security rules.

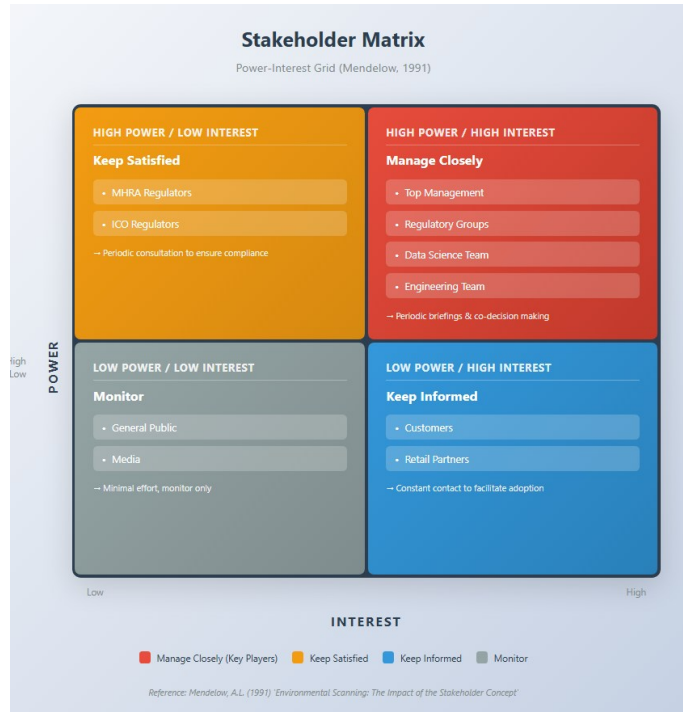
Overall, these stakeholders can provide the Fitbit new device launch with a necessary experience, control and assessment, proving the paramount significance of a well-designed engagement policy.

Frameworks, Models and Theories to Engage the Stakeholders

The process of involving the stakeholders involves the strategic application of analytical tools and communication models. Such a project as the launch of the new wearable device by Fitbit would need appropriate models like the stakeholder matrix, engagement plan, communication plan and RACI matrix to present a structure and clarity to the project

Stakeholder Matrix (The Power-Interest Grid of Mendelow)

- The Matrix presented by Mendelow (1991) is applied in order to classify the stakeholders according to their power and interest in the project.
- High power-high interest: top management, regulatory groups, data science, engineering. Such stakeholders need constant control in form of periodic briefings and co-decision.
- Low interest-high power: MHRA and ICO regulators. They should have periodic consultation to make sure that they are in compliance.
- Low power- high interest: customers, retail partners. They are supposed to get constant contacts to facilitate adoption.
- This framework helps the project manager to focus on engagement and resource allocation.



Plan of Stakeholder Engagement.

An engagement plan describes how various groups of stakeholders would be consulted, involved or informed. Bryson (2018) points out that structured engagement decreases resistance, fosters trust and increases legitimacy of the project. In the case of Fitbit, the plan will consist of:

- interaction goals of every stakeholder group.
- channel of communication that is preferred.
- satisfying frequency and participation requirements.
- processes of feedback and escalation.

Examples include weekly cross-functional engineering meetings, monthly regulator updates and ongoing data collection based on consumer-insight.

Communication Plan

Communication plan will be used to ensure that there is free flow of information among the teams. The Project Management Institute (2021) provides the communication failure as one of the primary causes of project delays. The following should be outlined under a Fitbit-specific plan:

- what needs to be conveyed (progress reports, risks, design alterations)
- to whom it is to be communicated
- the time (weekly reports, sprint reviews)
- the media (email, dashboards, Google Workspace, stakeholder workshops)

Good communication will reduce uncertainties and helps to facilitate alignment between engineering, regulatory, marketing and supply-chain teams.

RACI Matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed).

- The RACI matrix helps in simplifying who does what, and avoids conflict of roles.
- Others in charge: engineering, software and AI (developing the device, integrating the sensors).
- Responsible: project manager (general coordination and the attainment of milestones).
- Consulted: legal/regulatory, marketing, supply-chain partners.
- Knowledgeable: customer support, retail partners, leadership.

The application of RACI provides transparency, in particular, in a multi-disciplinary project setting where the distribution of responsibilities can be unclear (Ulrich and Eppinger, 2016).

Other Applicable Theories.

The Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1984) helps to justify all the decisions related to engagement and to prioritize the necessity to balance the interests of stakeholders. The Stakeholder Salience Model presented by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) also aids in prioritising the engagement towards the power, legitimacy and urgency.

Collectively, these frameworks contribute to the well-organized, evidence-supported stakeholder engagement strategy that would help Fitbit to address the needs in expectations management, reduce risks and improve the chances of a successful product launch.

Stakeholder Engagement Process and Conflict Management Using the 4Cs Model

Stakeholder involvement is key to the successful debut of the new wearable product of Fitbit, especially considering that the project is multidisciplinary, there is the complexity of regulation, and the timeframe is shortened to six months. The proactive, structured and continuous engagement as project manager should be active. A comprehensive approach that can be used to facilitate this engagement process and overcome possible clashes between the groups of stakeholders can be offered with the help of the Four Cs Model, which was originally conceptualised by Ellis, Gibbs and Rein (1991) in the context of groupware systems: it is based on the communication, coordination, cooperation and collaboration concepts, which are interconnected and form the essential components of the model (Ellis, Gibbs and Rein, 2012).

Communication

Stakeholder engagement is based on communication. Open, timely, and focused communication minimizes vagueness, maintains alignment and inculcates trust. The Project Management Institute (2021) lists ineffective communication as one of the main reasons why projects fail across the world. In the case of Fitbit, in which cross-functional groups (e.g. engineering, AI/data science, marketing and regulatory team) need to engage with each other regularly, communication structures should be uniform and formalised.

Being a project manager, the multi-layered communication strategy is to be used:

- Cross-functional sprint meetings to discuss the progress weekly and identify arising risks and set the priorities within engineering and data-science.
- Regulatory compliance updates after every two weeks to maintain compliance with the standards of MHRA and UK GDPR.
- Monthly executive briefings to give a visibility on milestones, budget implications and strategic risks.
- Google Workspace stakeholder dashboards to give live project metrics, timelines, technical challenges and performance indicators.

Such communication process eliminates information silos and improves decision making. But there can be difficulties as well, including information overload, misinterpretation of technicalities or incompatible expectations of the stakeholders. Such challenges can be alleviated through standardisation of report formats, the application of visual tools of communication and customisation of communication styles between technical and non-technical stakeholders (Bryson, 2018).

Coordination

The second aspect of the 4Cs is coordination, which aims at aligning interdependent tasks, resources and schedules. Ellis, Gibbs and Rein (1991) make it clear that complex and multi stakeholders' environments can be managed only through the use of coordination mechanisms. In the case of Fitbit, coordination is especially important since hardware development, software integration, validation and marketing operations should be performed simultaneously.

The coordination activities as project manager should involve:

- Critical-path scheduling to determine dependencies CRM example regulatory submissions are based on the results of engineering and data-science validations.
- RACI matrices to explain responsibilities and authority of each deliverable so as to avoid duplication and confusion.
- joint product road map which co-ordinates engineering, design and marketing schedules.
- Synchronisation of the supply chain with the manufacturers and suppliers in order to ensure that sensor parts and microchips are delivered punctually

Facing difficulties with coordination can be caused by unexpected delays, bottlenecks of resources or conflicting departmental priorities. By implementing digital coordination tools, i.e. Jira, Asana

or Google Project Management dashboards, one will have the advantage of having tasks monitored centrally and making them visible to all stakeholders.

Cooperation

Cooperation entails stakeholders contributing to one another and having an understanding of the reciprocal advantages of bringing about the project targets. At Fitbit, collaboration would help to make activities like engineering and regulatory teams constructive and collaborative as opposed to defensive when problems emerge. The Stakeholder Theory provided by Freeman (1984) emphasizes the need to take into consideration the interdependent interests in order to generate value within the organisation

Cooperation may be enhanced by:

- Problem-solving exercises when the engineering, data science and legal teams address technical limitations and regulatory aspects together
- Feedback loops, which promote mutual input between departments.

Easy pathways of escalation that will avoid blame culture and enable quick resolution to conflicts

These issues are the departmental biases, mismatched priorities or resource competition. In response to this, a project manager is required to build a culture of psychological safety, and it focuses on shared ownership, not functional silos. Agreement to engage in cooperative interaction with stakeholders who hold high levels of both the legitimacy and urgency model/salience model should have to be put on priority using the Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) model salience. This is based on stakeholders such as regulatory teams who are expected to be highly legitimate and urgent.

Collaboration

Collaboration is the most advanced stakeholder engagement in which stakeholders advance together towards common goals instead of just sharing information or organising activities. Innovative industries are highly innovation-driven and associated with better creativity, quicker solution finding and more precise product elaboration outcomes (Ulrich & Eppinger, 2016).

Collaborative activities in relation to Fitbit involve:

- Interdisciplinary design reviews with the involvement of engineering, UX, AI and marketing in the development of product features
- Consumer testing to receive iterative feedback of early adopters.
- NHS or academic studies that confirm the biometric accuracy and clinical significance of the device.
- The use of shared decision-making committees that would represent all the high-power stakeholders identified on the Mendelow matrix.

Some obstacles in collaboration can be associated with the difference in professional language, the scope of role or data-governance limitations. These are mitigated by organized collaboration models, common standards of documentations, compatibility of non disclosure with external partners and routine interdisciplinary views.

Inter-Stakeholder Conflict Management.

Cross-functional projects that are characterized by a variety of expertise, regulatory description and deadlines are bound to conflict. Effective stakeholder engagement involves the expectation of conflict. The common conflict sources in the project of Fitbit are:

- After differences in technical details between the engineering and data-science groups on the accuracy of the algorithms.
- Marketing pressure against regulatory lag.
- There is a conflict of resources between the leadership and the operational teams
- Legal teams that raise privacy and compliance issues that influence the development of features.

Conflict may be controlled using the 4Cs which include:

- The use of communication to explain misunderstandings before it gets out of hand.
- Improving alignment of expectations through strengthening coordination.
- Promoting collaboration to preserve common goals.
- Creation of participative frameworks where joint decision making and compromise is possible.

Impact of Stakeholder Engagement on Business Performance and Future Recommendations

The stakeholder interaction is an important aspect of defining the general performance and competitiveness of Fitbit (Google Health), especially in the rapidly changing UK digital health and wearables industry. Proper engagement leads to improvement of operational efficiency, products quality, regulatory compliance as well as long term strategic positioning. Bourne (2015) believes that unified approach to stakeholders in organisations increases the success rate of projects, minimises risks and improves innovation potential. Assessing the impact on various dimensions gives a better insight on the role of stakeholder engagement on the performance of the organisation.

Increased Quality of the Products and Innovation

The direct effect of the stakeholder involvement is the provision of the technical correctness, usability and applicability of the new wearable product by Fitbit. Intimate liaison of engineering, AI/data science, regulatory teams and consumption makes the company seem to combine the various expertise and feedback. A study by the Journal of Product Innovation Management demonstrates that the involvement of cross-functional stakeholders is highly effective in enhancing the functionality of products and consumer satisfaction (Cooper, 2019). In the case of Fitbit, it will be a more competitive device as it will be more accurate in its biometric functions, including heart rate, oxygen saturation and sleep analytics.

The involvement of end-users during beta testing and usability trials also help to ensure that the design decisions are made in accordance with the actual consumer requirements. Consumer feedback allows reducing flaws in the design and enhances human-technology interaction, which is essential in wearable adoption (Piwek et al., 2016). This is the good influence of innovation to market differentiation.

Increased Regulatory Adherence and Risk mitigation.

In digital health, regulation is critical in creating a safe market entry. Having good interaction with legal and regulatory stakeholders (MHRA, ICO) will help keep data governance, algorithmic transparency and device safety within the UK legal limits. Consultation at an early stage also minimizes chances of delay of compliance, fines or redesigning at high costs. Veale and Borgesius

(2021) emphasise that active stakeholder involvement into GDPR procedures can reduce regulatory risk significantly and enhance the level of trustworthiness.

Enhanced Organisational Alignment and Efficiency.

The involvement of stakeholders improves coordination within the internal departments by eliminating uncertainty and creating a common understanding of the target of the project. Structured engagement tools, such as stakeholder matrix, RACI, communication plan, ensure that tasks are well-understood, keep the number of repeat efforts to a minimum and avoid lack of coordination among priorities. Project Management Institute (2021) posit that organisations that invest in a formal communication system record considerably higher success rates of project completion and reduce costs related to rework.

Heightened Customer Confidence, Brand recognition and Performance in the market.

The consumer trust is one of the major factors that dictate the performance of a brand in the wearables segment, especially in cases where biometric data is at stake. Stronger trust can be achieved by communicating with customers openly, showing their protection of their privacy, and educating them on privacy protection. It has been proved that confidence in data control greatly affects the levels of wearable adoption (Patel et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Overall, the key to successful development and launch of the new wearable device in Fitbit is the proper stakeholder engagement. The inclusion of internal (engineering, data science, regulatory, marketing and leadership), and external stakeholders (consumers, suppliers and regulatory bodies) guarantee a better product quality, adherence and the market preparation. The use of structured frameworks, such as the Matrix created by Mendelow, RACI and the 4Cs model reinforces communication, coordination and collaboration during the project lifecycle. Finally, the high level of stakeholder engagement contributing to organisational performance leads to lower risk and more customer confidence, which place Fitbit in the long-term competing status in the UK digital health and wearable market.

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