

Riding the wearable tech wave



By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Inspired by the Internet of Things, [Quantifi](#) caters to the wearable tech market through the sales and distribution of everything from fitness devices and smart thermometers to digital health systems designed for the office.



Fiona Thorpe

Quantifi's managing director Fiona Thorpe lets us in on the emerging trends and the value of wearables in meaningful data analysis.

Tell us the Quantifi story. How was the idea born?

Fiona Thorpe: In December 2013, the founding members of Quantifi identified a growing trend globally – the Internet of Things. The Internet of Things can be described as the collection and connection of hardware that allows for the transfer of data between these devices. The idea behind the Internet of Things is that we all have things, cellphones, cars, TVs, etc., but how can we make our lives easier by connecting these devices to each other? One key area in the Internet of Things is wearable tech and this is where we decided to start. We identify and procure the best-in-class wearables in each category and deliver them to the South African market. These include Jawbone, Misfit, Moov Now, and Withings.

Since 2014, we have been delivering wearable devices across a number of different categories to South African consumers via nearly 300 retail doors. However, in 2015, we realised a need for these kinds of devices in a corporate environment whereby employers could deploy devices to encourage their employees to live healthier lives. In order to make the data meaningful for both the employers and employees, we sourced the best-in-class digital health systems that would gather, interpret and provide insights to employers on the health status of their organisations.

Through this analysis of the digital health market, we discovered digital health platforms that could be used by doctors to better manage their patients remotely, as well as tools that patients could use to better understand various treatment options available to them.

Describe Quantifi's product offering...

Thorpe: Quantifi has sourced the best in breed devices across a number of different wearable categories. Our focus is on the following key categories for wearables: lifestyle devices, advanced fitness devices, clinical devices, baby devices and we are also looking at bringing in some really great devices in the kids tracking and pet wearable spaces. Lastly, we have also secured the rights to distribute the best-in-class digital health systems such as CafeWell by Welltok, Tactio Health and WiserTogether.



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▣ *Why the focus on wearable tech?*

Thorpe: The wearable tech market allows us to bring real and meaningful data to the average Joe. There is so much data available and no one explaining what the data means or what you are supposed to do with it. These devices allow for both of these by telling you what you are doing right, where you are going wrong and what you can do to improve.

▣ *What are the emerging trends in wearable tech?*

Thorpe: There is a definite shift from the clunky-looking devices to a more sleek fashionable item that can be worn anytime and anywhere. Along with the fashion element, there is a definite move towards providing more clinical wearable devices to help chronic patients better manage their conditions. There has been an increase in the development of smart glucometers and thermometers along with blood pressure monitors and advanced smart body scales.

Lastly, there is a definite move towards devices that do more than just track steps. Multi-function trackers such are starting to emerge that provide you with a coach in your pocket allowing for detailed analysis of your swimming, running, cardio, boxing and cycling so that you correct your form and get the best workout.

▣ *What are the biggest challenges you've experienced running an online store in SA?*

Thorpe: Quantifi has definitely taught us a lot in terms of what customers expect from an online store. I think the biggest challenge is getting all of the features across to the customer without them losing interest (videos really help for this). There is also still those customers who would rather look something up online and then go to a bricks and mortar store to purchase the devices as they are afraid of card fraud.

▣ ***What has been your Quantifi career highlight?***

Thorpe: For us the highlight has been the way in which multiple competing brands have chosen us to be their partner in South Africa. It is nearly unheard of globally for a Jawbone distributor to also be the distributor of Withings or Misfit. We have established ourselves in the market as the 'go to guys' for wearables and it is really a testament to us that these brands have entrusted us with delivering their products to the market.

▣ ***What is your long-term vision for Quantifi?***

Thorpe: Whilst we may have started with the wearables side of the Internet of Things, our goal is to bring a full Internet of Things solution to South Africa. We are sourcing new technology daily that allows us to connect people's things to each other in a meaningful way.

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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