

TELUS Ventures invests in Canadian company **Sprout** to help a balanced lifestyle take root



In an era of endless email and overflowing calendars, the idea of work-life balance can be hard to imagine. But some of the same sources of modern stress, like rivers of data and non-stop connectivity, can be part of the cure because they are fueling a growing corporate wellness movement.

Today's leading corporate wellness programs sit at the intersection of big data and an emerging suite of tools and techniques to manage all of this information — giving employees the resources they need to lead healthier lifestyles, and providing management teams with solutions to manage and measure the impact of wellness programming.

Sprout helps TELUS expand its focus on preventative health

Investing in the corporate wellness space is part of TELUS's commitment to enabling better health for all Canadians by embracing innovative healthcare technology to encourage smarter lifestyle choices. **Sprout** is a Canadian corporate wellness program used by progressive companies to improve the health of their employees and their business.

An investment in Sprout expands TELUS' focus on preventative health by promoting user-friendly tools that allow employers to invest in the physical well-being of employees. This encourages healthier, more productive lives, to yield better financial returns for their business.

TELUS Ventures has provided two rounds of funding for Sprout, first in 2015 and again in 2016. This funding is helping Sprout to expand the reach of its platform to more companies, accelerate its roadmap for new feature and functionality build, as well as grow its engineering, account management and customer success teams.

Happy, healthy employees are more productive

Sedentary behaviour, lifestyle-driven chronic disease and mounting stress cost employers every year in decreased productivity, workdays lost and rising healthcare costs. Currently, less than 20% of adults get the recommended amount of physical activity. Unhealthy employees are unproductive at work for an equivalent of 57.5 days per year. In contrast, healthy employees take 27% fewer sick days and report 14-25% fewer disability days.

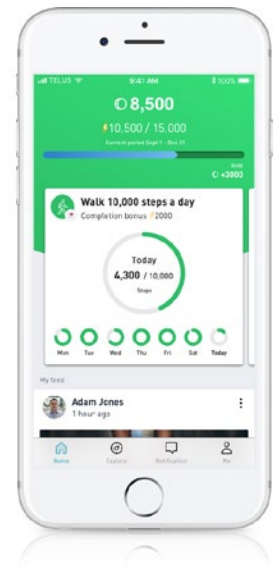
Source: Participaction

"Sprout embodies our investment thesis at TELUS Ventures," says Richard Osborn, Managing Partner of TELUS Ventures. "As an organization, we know we can perform better over the long run if we do our work to find, fund and support innovations that are redefining whole industries. Corporate wellness programs are going mainstream, and leaders like Sprout have the potential to put TELUS at the centre of a new approach to how we all work."

TELUS Ventures is helping Sprout expand its reach

Support from TELUS and other investors has seen Sprout expand its operations to include some of Canada's biggest employers. BC Ferries, one of the world's largest ferry operators, with about 20 million passengers a year, is using Sprout to help overcome some of the inherent challenges in managing a large workforce of shift workers spread over a wide geography.

Sprout is helping staff to focus on their nutritional, physical and mental habits at any time and in any place. More than 1,000 BC Ferries' staff have registered with Sprout and as a result, managers at BC Ferries report a drop in overall workplace injury trends along with happier and more energetic employees ([see video](#)).



The benefits are in the numbers



TELUS Ventures and Sprout are leading the way to a more holistic, people-centered work culture that also delivers better bottom-line results. Data analytics are giving Sprout the ability to design programs that reward people for making healthy choices. For example, if an employee chooses to wear an activity tracker like a Fitbit and sets a measurable goal of walking 10,000 steps a day, she could get discounts on workout gear or lower her health insurance premiums.

"Sprout is excited to be partnering with TELUS as corporate wellness evolves into a core part of how companies do business," Switzer says. "A big part of our success comes from showing how Sprout can unlock the potential of corporate wellness to support an organization's key goals. TELUS Ventures is helping us take a strategic view of wellness and incorporate it into our customer's three-to-five-year planning horizon."

TELUS Bench Program gives Sprout access to thought leadership

TELUS Ventures also gives Sprout access to a talent pool through its TELUS Bench Program. "Our Bench gives the Sprout team the opportunity to work directly with, and exchange ideas and expertise with, thought leaders across our organization," Osborn says. "We have a team of TELUS members who support portfolio companies as resources, sounding boards, advisors and, in Sprout's case, serving as a board member."

The TELUS Bench Program is one important aspect of the way TELUS stands out among telecoms providers for its decision to focus on investing in the healthcare sector. With a deep commitment to helping improve Canada's healthcare system, and as the largest health technology vendor in Canada, TELUS Health has, with the active support of TELUS Ventures, acquired, developed and partnered to create a suite of complementary technologies serving healthcare professionals and patients across the country. TELUS Ventures was recently ranked as one of healthcare's Global Top 10 corporate investors by CB Insights.

Progressive companies are improving employee health and corporate performance

"Corporate wellness meets employer and employee needs by providing ways to increase productivity while enhancing both work culture and employee health," Switzer says. "Corporate wellness manages information to offer education, support and accountability for employees to sustain lasting behaviour change."

The Sprout platform leverages social media and usability best practices, gamification, rewards and incentives to build participation in corporate wellness programs from the ground up. Sprout also measures results with real-time risk-factor prediction. The platform can be used to integrate benefit claims, absenteeism, engagement and performance data to obtain even deeper insights, action plans and real time returns on investment.

The wellness portal provides employers with a communications platform to keep everyone up to speed on the latest company wellness information. The portal also allows employers to collect valuable aggregate workforce data to stay in tune with the overall health and fitness of their whole staff.

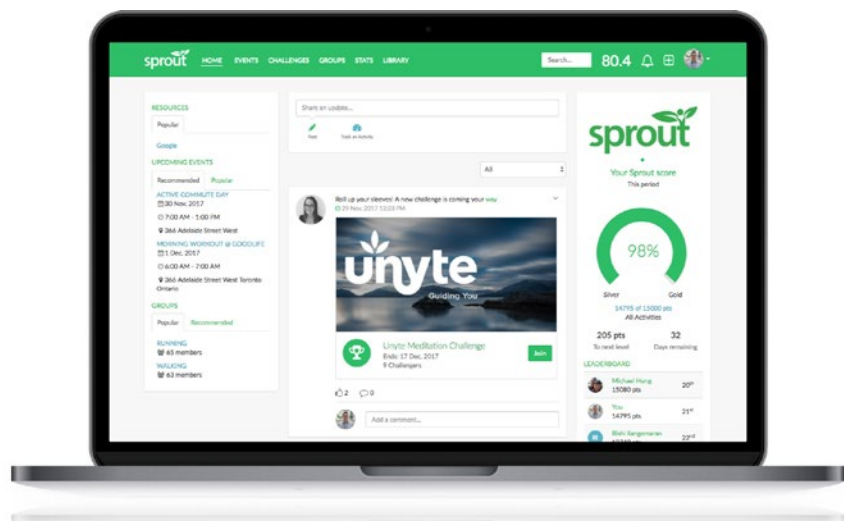
Exercise, nutrition, sleep and stress

There are many variables that can affect productivity at your office. Employees who exercise before work enjoy a 15% productivity boost¹. Good nutrition can result in a 25% bump in job performance². In contrast, each year sleep-deprived workers lose 11.3 days of productivity, and stress costs employers on average \$600 per employee³.

Sources: ¹ Fortune ² Business News Daily ³ Forbes

Gamification motivates employees with fun

Gamification applies game elements and digital design techniques to non-game problems, like motivating employees to make healthy choices. The goal is to maximize engagement and enjoyment by capturing the interest of learners and inspiring them to continue learning. Gamification relies on interactivity that allow participants to win awards and be acknowledged.



TELUS is also a Sprout customer

In addition to TELUS Ventures being an investor and advisor to Sprout, at a corporate level, TELUS is one of the companies that uses Sprout to enhance employee health, wellness and productivity.

“We are excited to advance our partnership with Sprout, and to see the benefits firsthand here at TELUS. Together, we continue to strengthen the emphasis on health and wellness and improve long-term results for individuals and the organizations they work for,” Osborn says. “We also see a powerful synergy between our efforts to boost workforce wellness through wearable devices and Sprout’s growing contribution to social health technology.”

Engaging employees delivers ROI

Companies with an engaged workforce enjoy stronger customer ratings, increased productivity and more secure profitability. Research from NAME also points to a correlation between employee engagement and earnings-per-share (EPS) with top companies enjoying up to a 147% increase in EPS compared with poorly engaged competitors.

Source: Gallup

The future looks bright as Sprout helps set the course for 21st century employee wellness

In many respects, “easy” is a defining feature of the Sprout platform. As a wellness portal that brings together an organization’s health and wellness programming in one centralized, online location, the opportunities to improve health and productivity are compelling. Users can access it online from their favourite device to sign up for wellness challenges, connect with colleagues or access health resources. Sprout also allows for custom branding so wellness programs can be fully integrated into existing company systems.

“At Sprout, we continue to exceed our own high expectations for growth as a company. The future looks bright as a more holistic approach to health becomes the norm in a world where trends in mental health awareness, fitness and technology are converging,” Switzer says.

