

This Wristband Knows When You Eat, Run and Sleep



A new health-tracking product called larklife wants to be the everyperson's fitness monitor. The company's CEO and founder Julia Hu said she sees a flaw with devices that use social competition to motivate people.

"The problem is that that type of motivation is actually incredibly demotivating to the 95 percent of us who are not hyper athletes," she said.

Lark, the company that made the device, launched its latest product, larklife on Monday. Larklife is two wearable wristbands that track your fitness, diet and sleep through a free [iOS app](#) [1]. Rather than focus on big goals like "lose 20 pounds" or "run a marathon," larklife focus on smaller milestones.

"For us, we believe that the power of wearable health is not in its ability to just track everything about you, but rather motivate and empower you to feel great and be happier, healthier, and more productive," Hu said. "We're taking the world's best experts in fitness, dieting, productivity, stress and sleep, and putting them in the palm of your hand to give you personalized, real-time advice."

There is one waterproof wristband for day and a cozy, soft wristband to wear while you sleep. These health trackers are similar to other fitness and life-tracking devices like the [Fitbit](#) [2] and [Nike FuelBand](#) [3], but have a few key differences.

To encourage users to change their behavior, Hu and her team tapped health experts and developed a complex algorithm to provide recommendations to wearers throughout the day on the wristband's sleek screen. The Lark team thinks you'll be more likely to take the recommendations from experts with a little encouragement from the in-app coach. In fact, Lark wants users to develop a

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relationship with their device, which will make them more accountable. (It *does* encourage you and celebrate victories just like a good friend would.) The virtual coach “chats” with you throughout the day on the wristband’s screen. It also passively monitors sleep, diet and lifestyle.

For instance, she told me if I went to bed at midnight and woke up at 6 a.m. for a run, my wristband might explain to me in a message that I should eat a protein-fueled breakfast due to the fact I didn’t sleep much and also burned energy running.

By reminding users of small goals and milestones, those big goals don’t seem so intimidating. Hu says the average person will be more motivated to continue on their quest for a healthy lifestyle.

There are a number of [gadgets](#) [4] to track your mile time and how many flights of stairs you’ve climbed throughout the day — (and we should mention that the social aspect of other [devices](#) [5] is not mandatory to get the full use out of them.) The hassle with many of these types of devices is you have to remember to press a button when you start a run. Lark aims to make larklife more intuitive so it can differentiate between when you’re running and when you’re walking. It’ll be interesting to see how well this technology works since people walk at different speeds (I wonder if my fast walk to work would appear like a run on the larklife).

Hu said the less work the user can do, the better. (We agree!)

The company says the wristband can even track your diet with the touch of a button — but what it really does is track meals, not calories. Just tap to record when you’ve eaten. You can categorize what you ate by selecting general food groups like “protein,” “fruit,” “water,” etc. at the time you record a meal, or at a later time. The purpose of this was to avoid typing in each food item, which can be tedious, Hu said. But this seems like an ineffective way to monitor your diet — if that’s your goal. However, there’s really no technology to get around that time-consuming yet useful step in order to count your calories.

Initially, the lark products were marketed to insomniacs.

The company started by launching the [lark original](#) [6] (first called LARK, like the company) in May 2011. The first lark was a silent alarm clock in the form of a [wireless wristband](#) [7] that worked with a device dock, online portal and free iOS app. The wristband would not only track sleep patterns through the app, but also gently wake the wearer with vibrations (the larklife does this too). The entire package cost \$129. The second iteration, the LARK Pro, was developed with [Cheri Mah](#) [8], who coaches [Olympic](#) [9] athletes on their sleep patterns in order to be stronger performers. The Pro costs an extra \$60 and includes a seven-day sleep assessment plus a sleep coach. The items are still available for purchase as the company expands its product offerings.

“If you use the product for a month, it’s as effective (as) if you go to a sleep therapist for one month,” Hu said. After they mastered the sleep technology, the

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company decided to tackle other [fitness](#) [10] and health related issues with their products.

Hu said they crammed all sorts of advanced health data in the larklife app with help from a Stanford neuroscientist who coaches Fortune 500 executives, as well as an expert in circadian rhythms. One of the most unique aspects of the new larklife is that it learns as you use it — combining its “machine learning” plus a pedometer algorithm and over time it will get more accurate. The brains of the product are in the core, which you clip to the “day” and “night” wristbands. Users charge the wristbands, not the core. Each wristband can make it through more than one day - they’re rated at approximately 48 hours battery life.

The problem with a lot of these fitness gadgets — no matter how advanced they are — is that users don’t keep up with them. It seems lark is headed in a smart direction with its goals for its latest product, which is less work for the wearer.

So, how much will this life-tracking gadget cost? Hu says larklife costs are still being negotiated.

Do you use any wearable fitness gadget and how long have you been using it?

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