Data-Driven Fitness

by Chris Dixon, M.Ed.

I'm old enough to remember a time pre-internet. I remember phone books, video rental stores, and compact discs as well. Technology continues to change the world in which we live, work and play. These days we have the ability to collect more information about our health & fitness than any time in history. Collecting data however is just the start. Without proper use of this data the technology is essentially worthless.

Big data is the term used to describe the collection and utilization of information. Grocery stores, credit card companies and fitness centers all use data to help them understand more about their customers. Tech in the fitness industry makes it possible to analyze data regarding personalized health, fitness & nutrition. Activity trackers, smartphones, heart rate monitors and exergaming are examples that technology in fitness is here to stay.

It seems more and more people are using wearable technologies to collect data. The question is, *"does all this technology actually help us improve health?"* The use of tech in the fitness industry is great, yet it's important we use this data to create better health outcomes. For example, if you hire an accountant for your business to help you understand profit/loss, tax savings, etc., this seems like a smart choice. But if you don't use the information the accountant provided the value of such information is greatly reduced. Similarly, what is the purpose of wearing an activity tracker if you are not using the information it provides to train more efficiently?

Here are a few bits of data you should focus on daily for general health improvement:

- **Physical activity:** Many wearable technologies and smartphone devices allow you to monitor physical activity. The most common measure is tracking the number of steps one takes per day. In a society where many people sit a majority of the day, tracking your movement is crucial. You've probably heard you should try to get 10,000 steps

Chris Dixon is a nationally-recognized health & fitness educator, certified strength & conditioning specialist and certified personal trainer residing in the Twin Cities, MN. Chris has held fitness certifications from ACE, ACSM, NSCA and USA Track & Field.
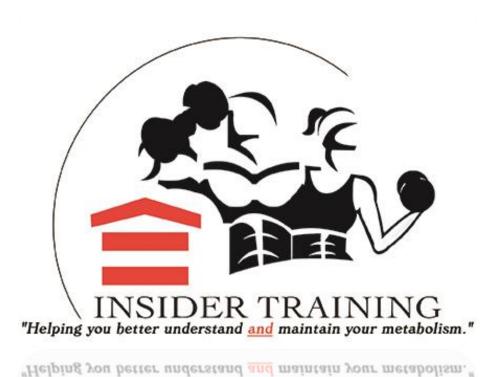
or more each day. The number of steps you take isn't necessarily important as long as you are making progress over time.

- **Daily calories:** Nutrition applications exists that now make it simpler than ever to journal food. The number of calories one intakes can help you understand if you are at the appropriate energy level. Weight loss happens when one consumes less calories than they expend (over time). So think how difficult it could be to lose weight if you are not aware of the amount of calories you consume and/or the amount you expend. Food databases allow you to itemize food consumed and portion sizes. This provides the journaler a daily or weekly report of the total calories and ratios of macronutrients. This can be a wealth of information for those seeking to make nutritional change.

- **Heart rate:** Exercising is good but you want to make your exercise efficient. One tool that can be extremely helpful in the quest for better fitness is a heart rate monitor. Monitoring heart rate allows an individual to see their training intensity. For example, running around the lake is good cardiovascular exercise, but the intensity at which you run can play a major role in determining the type of results you will see. Training with little intensity can minimize results achieved while training too intensely can lead to overtraining and possible injury.

Data-driven fitness is about being intentional on collecting and using personalized data to achieve better health outcomes. It's about becoming more educated on performance metrics (KPI's) and how we choose to use this information to get results. So whether you are training for weight loss or a marathon, it's a safe bet that collecting data can aid you in obtaining your goals. It's what you do with the data that will make all the difference.

Chris Dixon is a nationally-recognized health & fitness educator, certified strength & conditioning specialist and certified personal trainer residing in the Twin Cities, MN. Chris has held fitness certifications from ACE, ACSM, NSCA and USA Track & Field.

INSIDER TRAINING

"Helping you better understand __and__ maintain your metabolism."

Chris Dixon is a nationally-recognized health & fitness educator, certified strength & conditioning specialist and certified personal trainer residing in the Twin Cities, MN. Chris has held fitness certifications from ACE, ACSM, NSCA and USA Track & Field.