

BetterUs

The Mental Health Platform

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Market Research

1. Global Online Therapy Services Market Research

1.1 Global Online Therapy Services Market Definition

Online therapy services are mental or health services that are provided online with the help of an internet network connection. These services can be undertaken through online video calls, audio calls, email, real-time chat, and video conferences. Online therapy is a practical substitute for conventional in-person therapy and is swiftly rising in popularity as a method of receiving mental health treatment. The top online therapy services give users access to a variety of qualified therapists who can conduct remote sessions over the phone, in an online chat, through text messages, or via live video. At this time, online therapy services play a vital role in providing services to clients wherever they are without making them visit hospitals for a light checkup or inquiries.

There are various benefits of online therapy services. It is one of the good options for remote areas, i.e., for people who find it difficult to visit a hospital or clinic in the city for treatment. Consequently, the online therapy services market helps in such a situation by providing services to customers at their doorstep, sitting at home. It is also convenient, affordable, and accessible. Nevertheless, there are also some cons; the insurance company may not provide coverage, certain states may not allow out-of-state providers, and a lack of response to crises.

1.2 Global Online Therapy Services Market Introduction

With the rapid development of relevant technologies and people's needs for online therapy, the global online therapy services market has grown at an unprecedented pace. According to Statista, total U.S. expenditure for mental health services from 2010 to 2020 has increased from USD155 billion to USD238.4 billion. According to *Online Therapy Services Market Analysis 2022*, the global Online Therapy Services market size is expected to expand at a CAGR of 28.42% during the forecast period, reaching USD4240.41 million by 2027, valued at USD945.51 million in 2021. In accordance with this, the client receives extensive knowledge of the industry and firm from past, present, and future perspectives, allowing them to invest money and deploy resources wisely.

In addition, data showed that more and more people are inclined to try online therapy services. According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, while most Americans have heard of telehealth as an option for treating mental health issues, only 7% have reported using it. When asked if they would be open to using it, almost half, or 45%, of Americans who have not already tried telehealth services said they would be open to the idea of trying a service to address a current or future mental health need.

1.3 SWOT Analysis for Online Therapy Services Market

1.3.1 Strengths:

1. Good option for remote areas

Online therapy offers access to mental health treatment to people in rural or remote areas. Those who live in rural areas might not have access to any other form of mental health treatment because there are few or no mental health practices in their area. Having to drive long distances and take significant time out of a busy schedule to seek in-person therapy can be a burden for people needing help. If you have reliable internet

access, online therapy gives you relatively quick and easy access to treatment that might not have been readily available to you otherwise.

2. Online therapy may be as effective

Research shows that online therapy can be just as effective as in-person therapy for various mental health conditions (Psychother Res, 2021). More specifically, one literature review of studies found online cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to be just as effective as in-person therapy in treating moderate depression (Luo, 2020). Another review found that online CBT was equally effective as a face-to-face treatment for panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder (Andrews, 2018). Online therapy is even shown to be effective in reducing problem gambling behaviors (Maas, 2019).

3. Accessibility for people with physical limitations

Online therapy provides accessibility to individuals who are disabled or housebound. Mobility can be a big issue when it comes to accessing mental health care. A therapist practicing out of their own home, for example, may not be set up to accommodate clients of all abilities.

4. Convenience and Affordability

Online therapy is usually relatively affordable and convenient. Since you will be attending therapy sessions online in the comfort of your own home, you can often schedule your therapy sessions for times that are the most convenient for you.

Today, many states require insurance providers to cover online therapy just as they would traditional therapy sessions. Also, therapists who only treat patients online likely have fewer overhead costs, such as renting office space. Online therapists, therefore, can often offer affordable treatment options for those not covered by health insurance.

5. Treatment can be more approachable

The internet makes mental health treatment more approachable. People may feel comfortable talking to friends and family about physical health care issues but may not feel the same when discussing mental health concerns that are just as important. Online access makes it easier to overcome the stigma that has historically been attached to mental health issues (Baumel, 2015).

Teletherapy can be an essential tool to help people learn more about mental health. Even if you feel like your mental well-being is strong, online therapy can help you become psychologically stronger. You can learn more about health behaviors and coping strategies that will lead to better psychological health.

1.3.2 Weaknesses:

1. Lack of Response to Crisis Situations

Since online therapists are distant from the client, it can be difficult for them to respond quickly and effectively when a crisis happens. If a client is experiencing suicidal thoughts or has suffered a personal tragedy, it can be difficult or even impossible for the therapist to provide direct assistance.

2. Not effective enough for serious psychiatric illnesses

E-therapy can be helpful in various situations, but not when it comes to people requiring immediate and direct treatment or in-person intervention. For example, suppose you have a serious addiction or have more severe or complex symptoms of a mental health condition. In that case, online therapy may not be recommended unless other in-person therapies or treatments are also involved in your plan. The scope of online therapy can be limited, so it may not be adequate for more complex situations.

3. Overlooks body language

In text-based therapy, therapists are unable to see facial expressions, vocal signals, or body language. These signals can often be quite telling and give the therapist a clearer picture of people's feelings, thoughts, moods, and behaviors. Some delivery methods, such as voice-over-internet technology and video chats, can provide a clearer picture of the situation. However, they often lack the intimacy and intricacy that real-world interactions offer.

1.3.3 Opportunities:

1. Contracting with large corporates for their employee mental and behavioral health needs

Since mental health has become one of the most prevalent topics in modern society, online therapy platforms can cooperate with big enterprises to offer excellent services to their employees. This kind of cooperation could be a significant resource for telemental health platforms to boost their interests and build their brand image.

2. Use emerging technologies to understand better and effectively implement treatments

By utilizing data science and relevant technologies, online therapy platforms can offer extensive services based on their preferences, like helping users find appropriate therapists efficiently and recording their mental health conditions. In addition, wearable devices allow doctors to gather real-time data on a number of health measures, including activity levels, heart rates, blood pressure, sleep cycles, and glucose levels more directly from their patients. With all this additional data about a typical day in their patients' lives, doctors can make more insightful diagnoses and recommendations.

3. Increased patient utilization

As of July 2021, telehealth utilization has stabilized at 38 times higher than pre-pandemic levels (Bestsenny, 2020). Even pre-pandemic evidence supported the increased use of telehealth (American Medical Association, 2020). In a survey conducted by McKinsey, 76% of patients said they would be interested in using telehealth moving forward. Furthermore, over half of respondents in a study from the Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare said they would utilize telehealth to; refill medications, prepare for an upcoming visit, review test results, or receive an education (Ebbert, 2021). We can expect to see healthcare providers and insurance companies working together moving forward to broaden the availability and accessibility of telehealth.

1.3.4 Threats:

1. Insurance companies may not cover it

Insurance coverage for e-therapy can depend upon the state where people live and the insurance that people have. Some insurance policies do not cover online therapy, and some online mental health professionals do not accept insurance as payment. Paying for psychotherapy services out-of-pocket can add up quickly.

2. Some states do not allow out-of-state providers

Many states do not allow out-of-state psychologists to provide services. In such cases, people's providers would need to be licensed in both their home state as well as people's home state. In an article for the American Psychological Association's Monitor on Psychology, Deborah Baker, a legal expert for the APA, explained that some states allow psychologists to provide out-of-state mental health services for a limited time; this usually consists of only 10 to 30 days per year (DeAngelis, 2012).

3. Confidentiality, privacy, and unreliable technology

Keeping personal information private is a major concern in psychotherapy, but online treatment adds a layer of complexity. Confidentiality is just as important in online therapy as in more traditional treatment delivery forms. Since information is being transmitted online, the situation makes privacy leaks and hacks more of a concern. Technological problems can also make it difficult to access treatment when you really need it.

1.4 General Guidelines and Regulations for Online Therapy Services

1.4.1 Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology

The American Psychological Association (APA) offers Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology, which include eight guidelines: competence of the psychologist, standards of care in the delivery of telepsychology services, informed consent, the confidentiality of data and information, security and transmission of data and information, disposal of data and information and technologies, testing and assessment, inter-jurisdictional practice.

1.4.2 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that requires the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued the HIPAA Privacy Rule to implement the requirements of HIPAA.

The HIPAA Security Rule protects a subset of information covered by the Privacy Rule. The Privacy Rule standards address the use and disclosure of individuals' health information (protected health information or PHI) by entities subject to the Privacy Rule. The Privacy Rule contains standards for individuals' rights to understand and control how their health information is used. A primary goal of the Privacy Rule is to ensure that an individual's health information is appropriately protected while allowing the flow of health information needed to provide and promote high-quality healthcare and protect the public's health and well-being. The Privacy Rule permits important uses of information while protecting the privacy of people who seek care and healing.

2. Societal Issue and Market Gap

2.1 Societal Issue: Limited Accessibility for People to Get Mental Health Treatments

In the wake of the remarkable development of people's awareness of mental health issues, mental health has become a critical topic in people's lives. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year (Rockville, 2016). However, according to Mental Health America (MHA), over half (56%) of adults with a mental illness receive no treatment, meaning over 27 million individuals experiencing a mental illness go untreated.

2.2 Barriers Contributing to the Number of Individuals Not Receiving Treatment

2.2.1 High Cost and Insufficient Insurance Coverage

According to the National Council of Well-Being, 42% of the population saw cost and poor insurance coverage as the top barriers to accessing mental health care. 1 in 4 Americans reported choosing between getting mental health treatment and paying for daily necessities. Due to the insurance policy, nearly 17% of Americans have to choose between getting treatment for a physical and mental health condition. The majority (64%) of Americans seeking treatment believe the U.S. government needs to do more to improve mental health services.

2.2.2 Limited Options and Long Waits

Access to face-to-face services is a higher priority for Americans seeking mental health treatment than access to medication. Ninety-six million Americans, or 38%, have had to wait longer than one week for mental health treatments. Furthermore, nearly half of Americans, or 46%, have had to or know someone who has had to drive more than an hour roundtrip to seek treatment. The most radical reason for this prevalent phenomenon is the shortfall in psychiatrists and an overall undersized mental health workforce.

2.2.3 Lack of Awareness

While most Americans seek treatment, a large portion of the population has wanted to but did not seek treatment for themselves or loved ones (29%), partly due to not knowing where to go if they needed this service. Furthermore, 53 million American adults (21%) have wanted to see a professional but could not for reasons outside their control.

Furthermore, younger Americans (i.e., Gen Z and Millennials) are less sure about mental health services resources than older generations. The younger generation is also more likely to find it hard to figure out legitimate resources online. Instead, many turned to unreliable resources for information, including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

2.2.4 Social Stigma

Nearly 31% of Americans had worried about others judging them when they told them they had sought mental health services. Over a fifth of the population, or 21%, have even lied to avoid telling people they were seeking mental health services. This stigma is particularly true for younger Americans, who are more likely to have worried about others judging them when they say they have sought mental health services (i.e., 49% Gen Z vs. 40% Millennials vs. 30% Gen X vs. 20% Boomers).

2.3 Market Gap: Lack of Platforms that Combine the Communication Function, Recommendation Mechanism, and Online Therapy Sections

Upon research, we found that many platforms offer online therapy services related to people's mental health conditions. However, there are no online therapy platforms that provide an authentic channel for people to learn more knowledge about mental health issues and truly connect to others. To fight against social stigma related to mental health illnesses, we think it is essential to output authentic content like articles and videos published by professionals for users to normalize their cognition of mental health conditions. In addition, we believe that sharing experiences and interacting with others can help people build special bonds with others and make them feel resonated, which can further improve people's perception of mental health issues.

3. Competitive Landscape

3.1 Key Players in the Online Therapy Market

3.1.1 BetterHelp

Betterhelp is the world's largest online therapy platform, with over 23,000 mental health providers (including therapists, counselors, social workers, and psychiatrists) serving clients around the globe. Its standard membership includes weekly virtual therapy sessions that can be done via video, phone, or messenger. When visiting the site's landing page, people must fill out a detailed questionnaire with questions from different aspects to find their therapists. This service allows people to get matched to licensed therapists based on their demands and offers financial aid to individuals who meet specific criteria. Nevertheless, their prices may vary based on people's location and preferences, and the therapist's availability may be limited due to high demand.

3.1.2 Pride Counseling

Pride Counseling features an extensive network of fully licensed therapists who specialize in helping members of the LGBTQ+ community. Individuals have been matched to therapists thanks to a comprehensive and inclusive questionnaire, and the service includes unlimited encrypted chat and phone and video calling. The prices are comparable to other providers, and financial aid is available for those who need it and meet specific criteria.

3.1.3 ReGain

ReGain is an online relationship therapy platform for couples and individuals. It offers people facing relationship difficulties a convenient, discreet, and affordable way to access help from a licensed therapist without having to leave their homes. ReGain has an impressive matching process to connect users with a suitable therapist. All therapists are licensed and highly experienced, with an interest and expertise in couples counseling. However, Regain does not offer three-way live sessions, so users cannot chat in three different locations. Also, the platform does not regulate counselor services and has no live chat for assistance on the site.

3.1.4 Faithful Counseling

This platform combines traditional therapy with Christian perspectives and Biblical wisdom. The degree to which faith plays a role in people's therapy sessions can be discussed with their therapists and is entirely up to users. Faithful Counseling's therapists are fully licensed, and sessions can be conducted by phone, video, or messaging. Pricing is on par with competitors, and financial aid is available to those who meet the requirements. However, this platform does not offer customer chats or phone support, and their prices may vary based on the user's location and preferences.

3.1.5 Cerebral

Cerebral is an online therapy platform that offers medication and weekly therapy sessions with licensed therapists and prescribers. Unlike other alternatives, it is covered by many insurance plans, which means users may only have to pay \$29 per month out of pocket. Reviews are somewhat mixed but are positive overall. Many people have found the combination of medication and therapy effective in treating depression, anxiety, insomnia, and more. Nevertheless, therapy plans and medication for specific conditions are unavailable in all states. Also, their customer service and refills are often cited in negative reviews.

3.2 Competitive Edge

3.2.1 Community building

The most important thing is to improve users' intimacy with our platform and make them feel a sense of belonging. By carrying out group functions, we can build an online community for people to discuss various topics, making users feel deeply connected to others. There will be different groups for different subjects, such as career development, sexual orientation, and depression. These functions also aim to improve users' mental health conditions.

3.2.2 Explore authentic knowledge related to a wide range of mental health topics

As mentioned above, a social stigma is still related to mental health illnesses. *BetterUs* can help eradicate all the barriers by normalizing mental health care, especially among generations accustomed to interacting with people using technology. To break this type of discrimination and bias, we reckon it is vital to incubate a platform that could deliver diverse content related to mental health to users. Consequently, our application allows users to explore content by selecting relatable topics, such as romantic relationships, career development, bipolar, depression, and anger. The different content on our platform must be monitored and authorized before posting and publishing by verified users, such as mental health organizations and professionals.

3.2.3 Users have more options according to their preferences

After research, we found that it is difficult for people to find therapists or professionals who conform to their requirements. *BetterUs* offer free chat services to users. They are able to set up free 15-minute consultations to find the right therapist for their unique needs before starting treatment.

In addition, *BetterUs* allows users to choose the way they want to attend their therapy sessions. For users who live in remote or rural areas, *BetterUs* allows them to choose online sessions with professionals through text chat, video chat, voice chat, and live chat. For users who prefer face-to-face treatments, we can help users make offline appointments with therapists within our network.

3.2.4 The use of various technologies

BetterUs can help users record their biometric data, which can help them finish self-monitoring and self-assessment processes to check their mental health conditions. Additionally, we advocate for users to use wearable devices like the Apple Watch and Fitbit. Upon noticing the increased number of wearable device users in the US in recent years, we decided to utilize this trend to assist our users better. We are advocating normalizing the monitoring of mental health conditions through functions they are already familiar with, like logging exercise data and sleep quality on wearable devices. By analyzing users' stress levels, mobility patterns, heart rate, brainwave, and muscle-bio signals, we can use this data to identify physiological markers associated with mental illnesses. Thus, these data can be used as references for therapists' diagnoses.

Business Strategy

1. Proposed Solution

The proposed product is *BetterUs*; a social networking application focused on promoting mental health and well-being. *BetterUs* aims to become the leading online platform that provides peer-to-peer support and affordable professional mental health help. *BetterUs* creates a stark difference from other available social networking platforms in the sense that *BetterUs* is built to encourage, harvest, and protect a positive communication environment for users who are in need of a comfortable space to voice their concerns.

Comprehensively, the application includes five main functions: anonymous feed sharing, community building and group chats, consultations and therapy sessions with verified medical professionals, a resource database with credible articles and a medical network, and access to personal medical data.

At its core, *BetterUs* promotes mental health for everyone with the mission to provide a safe platform for users to share, explore, and support each other's thoughts and feelings. To build the *BetterUs* brand is to build the *BetterUs* community. Our community is one that offers mutual support and compassion judgment-free. Essentially, the platform is built on confidentiality from the understanding that users utilize our space to discuss sensitive topics. The anonymity of the feed sharing and group functions allows users to personalize their accounts without sacrificing privacy. However, to achieve that, trust is to be built and maintained. Not only does this encourage authentic postings and storytelling, but it aids the reduction of the stigma on speaking about mental health issues.

Each of us goes through things in life, whether coping with a particular problem or feeling stuck in long-term patterns; *BetterUs* is equipped with multiple functions to help navigate them. To better help users personalize their experience on the platform, each app function can be categorized into separate discussion topics to connect users with similar interests, concerns, and experiences. Some of the discussion topics, as illustrated in figure 1, include but are not limited to clinical conditions such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, bipolar disorder, chronic insomnia, eating disorders, panic, personality disorders, phobias, self-harm, substance use, trauma, and PTSD, as well as general topics that include relationships, parenting support, bullying, partnerships and intimacy, work stress and burnouts, life transitions, grief, self-esteem, body acceptance, cultural identity, racial trauma, loss of purpose, and breaking patterns. Users are free to choose any and every topic of their interest to better personalize and navigate through resources on the platform.

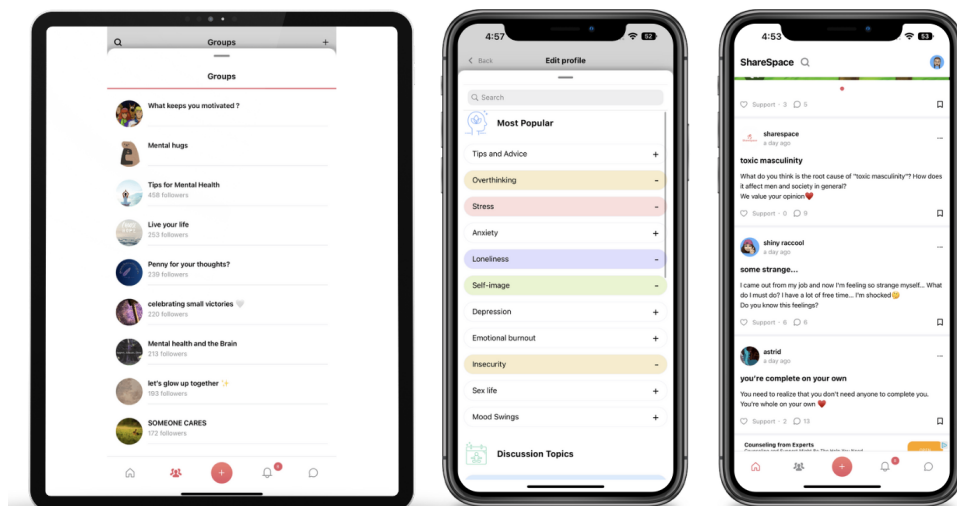


Figure 1. Groups, Discussion Topics, and Feed feature on *BetterUs*

In addition to the feed sharing and group functions, our platform also provides therapy care for registered users. Dedicated to getting users the right resources and care based on their unique needs and situation, newly registered users are prompted with a survey to find out their objectives, preferences, and the type of issues and topics they are dealing with or wish to learn more about. While interchangeable at any time, our platform uses the survey results to match an available professional with expertise that fits each user's needs. Thereafter, users are encouraged to set up a free 15-minute consultation to discuss their needs, wants, and goals before deciding if they wish to design a care plan with their paired professionals to track and measure progress. Undeniably, therapy is built on trust and confidence, as is our platform; for that reason, the free 15-minute consultations are for registered users to determine if they are satisfied with the medical professional that *BetterUs* paired them with. In the case that users prefer a different professional, a rematch may be requested until they are satisfied to start the process.

Apart from professional care, *BetterUs* is also equipped with a selection of free content for users regarding the topics that are discussed on the platform. To better serve the part of our community that does not seek, require, or desire professional help, *BetterUs* supplies them with a wide range of audio, print, and video resources from our partnering organizations and medical professionals. Similar to the screening process of all our published content, we source and work with publications that provide credible and scientifically-backed content for all our users to consume.

To further enhance users' experience on the platform, the app is built to support the integration of wearable technology to provide in-depth insight into biometric data for personal and medical use. Although the app remains available to smart device users without wearable devices, those who possess such devices have options to the extended offerings from *BetterUs*. For users without wearable devices, the same level of access is possessed by them to build their personal electronic medical record (EMR) on the app for the review of medical professionals within our ecosystem. Details of technological integration and online data use will be discussed in a later section.

2. Target Market and Audience

The target market for *BetterUs* are individuals who currently have or may struggle with mental health issues, seek a safe platform to express their thoughts, and or wish to receive professional help in an online setting. Staying true to our mission, *BetterUs* serves not just those suffering but everyone above our age restraint. Whether potential users are going through mental health challenges like anxiety, stress, and depression, or general challenges like relationship issues, bullying, or burnout, *BetterUs* has a space for them. As much as we wish to serve a larger market, phase one of the project focuses on serving the North American market as we strive to build the platform exponentially to serve the global market better (refer to the Timing section below for a detailed project timeline).

In accordance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) prohibiting companies from collecting personal data online from children under thirteen years of age (Federal Trade Commission, 2013), the *BetterUs* app is made available to all users above the age of thirteen who possess some sort of smart device with mobile application compatibility. Moreover, as mentioned in the proposed solution and to be discussed further, *BetterUs* is built to be compatible with wearable devices, actively targeting owners and users of wearable devices to our platform and its added functionality.

However, due to differing state laws within the United States, some states do not allow minors to consent to treatment on their own, requiring a parent or legal guardian to provide informed consent on the

minor's behalf. Therefore, to keep the community and its users safe, *BetterUs* are unable to provide consultations and therapist-matching services to users of certain ages per their respective state laws.

Although *BetterUs* is a platform designed to aid users in finding the resources they need, *BetterUs* also serves the market of licensed medical professionals who wish to leverage their training, experience, and expertise to help further build our community. To ensure the safety and security of our platform, therapists and all medical professionals on *BetterUs* are licensed, trained, experienced, and accredited individuals in their respective fields (i.e., psychologists (Ph.D./PsyD), licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFT), licensed clinical social workers (LCSW), or licensed professional counselors (LPC)). Our team takes all the necessary steps to ensure that every provider on our platform is in good standing. Potential providers apply by providing proper licensure documentation and proof of identity that we then cross-check with their respective state or country licensing board. Once approved, we will display the full licensing information of each provider on their pages to make it easier for users to do their own due diligence on their therapist.

Providing services using the *BetterUs* platform brings value to therapists who prefer to work in online settings, share their own content, and take part in building a supportive community while generating income and advancing their careers in the age of online therapy services and telehealth. *BetterUs'* business model is not only sustainable for us but also for providers as it promotes unlimited growth in terms of audience and earnings once the community is established. Similarly, providers can also transfer their audience from other platforms to *BetterUs* in order to utilize all our functions. Differing from traditional therapy services, providers on *BetterUs* are not required to set up an office space for consultations; given the freedom, these providers are able to charge affordable prices for therapy sessions.

2.1 Target Personas

To better attain a picture of who *BetterUs'* target audiences are, below are five target personas that describe the different characters our app is trying to acquire as early adopters. It is important to note that our target audiences are not limited to only the mentioned character traits.

2.1.1 User struggling with mental illness not wanting to verbally seek help from friends and family

Amanda is a 19-year-old college student who has just moved across the country for school. Having experienced several anxiety attacks and body image issues, she has long wanted to speak to someone about her challenges. Growing up in a judgemental society, she is afraid and unwilling to ask for help from her friends and family. As much as she is struggling herself, she does not want it to be known by those around her and to discuss these issues with those closest to her. Throughout the last two to three years, she has remained silent on her mental health condition and sees that it has gotten progressively worse without any help or consultation. Now that she is away from home and has more freedom, she wishes to finally seek medical help and get a consultation that is supported by her school's health insurance. Realizing that the school's mental health center has a six-month waitlist, she is eager to find a clinic or platform that will allow her to try the process at affordable prices. She remains shy and skeptical of traditional in-person therapy practices due to the fear of social stigma.

2.1.2 User without a mental illness interested in learning and discussing mental health topics

Jenny is a 26-year-old working female with everyday challenges such as stress at work and relationship issues. Although she does not have a mental illness, she has watched her best friend struggle with depression for years. As she tries to support her best friend verbally and physically, she is eager to learn more about

mental health and how to help friends and family who suffer. At the same time, she wants access to verified, authenticated information and a platform to voice questions and concerns if needed. However, she only wants access to mental health content tailored to her topics of choice at no additional cost and at the utmost convenience. She is looking to learn and understand at her own pace.

2.1.3 User looking for help but restricted by time, distance, and high cost

Ben is a 35-year-old male working a nine-to-five job that he spends two hours a day commuting to. After having struggled with a couple of mental breakdowns and panic attacks, he decided that it was time for him to address his mental health and seek professional help. However, Ben does not have health insurance from his job and realized that the high cost of in-person consultations is out of his budget. Additionally, due to his work schedule, he is unable to find time off work to see a professional, as there are no practitioners within a 30-minute drive from his place of residence. As he has no prior experience visiting a mental health professional, he does not feel comfortable traveling a long way to get a trial consultation, unsure if he is willing to commit to them long-term. He is looking for an affordable, less time-consuming, and comforting experience.

2.1.4 Licensed professional without commitments to a physical clinic

Dr. Jacobsen is a 37-year-old licensed professional counselor who has just left his practicing clinic to start providing services online. Due to the high rent cost, he was not able to sustain his clinic; therefore, he is now exploring ways in which he may provide services in a safe and secure virtual space with his current and future clients. Additionally, as a new father, he hoped that this change in the format of service delivery would allow him more flexibility and better time management while working from home. As a professional counselor, he is aware that he either has to set up his own platform with privacy policies in place to ensure confidentiality for his clients or enroll in a trusted online platform that supports such services. He believes that once he finds the right platform, he would be able to sustain this practice in the long run by building his client network without a change in service quality.

2.1.5 Licensed professional with a desire to help people by consulting and providing verified articles

Dr. Randy is a 56-year-old licensed psychologist experienced in treating patients with anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. Although Dr. Randy works at a practicing clinic, her hours are short and allow her to have a lot of free time. For the past two years, she has been working with some mental health publications in sharing certified, helpful articles on the topics that she is qualified for. Now she is looking for ways to help more people by consulting and providing articles. Because she already has a day job, she wishes to provide said services on the side without taking away too much of her free time.

3. Revenue Generation

As part of the consultation offerings, users are given options for various paid and unpaid functions within the app. Essentially, the app provides two types of paid services: paid group consultations and private one-to-one consultations. In par with community building, the group function within the app enables users to pick their desired mental health topics to further connect with users with similar interests and concerns. If desired, users can pay for group consultations regarding special topics with a corresponding specialist. Within these paid groups are a chat function that allows users to ask questions, voice concerns, and share

experiences with other group members and the assigned medical professional. Contrasting to one-to-one consultations, these paid groups are charged on a subscription basis for direct access to health specialists and share a common chat with other users on their chosen topics.

In addition to paid groups, the app also provides paid private consultation and therapy sessions with verified health professionals. Prior to paying for a subscription, users can schedule a free 15-minute consultation with a preferred professional, after which they can choose whether to continue the session or consider a different professional. The initial consultation provides users the opportunity to find the right professional for their needs; as users find their match, both users and the paired medical professional are able to book and pay for virtual and in-person appointments through the app.

On top of the mentioned sources of user revenue, the app will also seek payments from partnering medical professionals and organizations that provide supporting articles and content for the app. As a mediator between users and service providers, the app charges a 3% fee on all transactions to support the platform's operations. Initially, medical professionals whose credentials are verified will pay a set-up fee of \$25 before being able to set up initial consultations and appointments. Following set-up, medical professionals will pay the assigned rate for every booked consulting session. For organizations, *BetterUs* act as a promotional platform for publications and associations that wish to utilize *BetterUs*' trusted platform to reach their target audience. Once the content is approved and processed to be published on the app, *BetterUs* charges a pre-established advertising fee to each organization.

In par with the business' growth plan, to be discussed further, the continued development of the app seeks to obtain funding from the government and its official organizations in support of improving mental health within the United States. Once established as a trusting and leading platform, we aim to gain support, financial funding, and content from governmental entities. With such funding, *BetterUs* will be able to secure its place in the industry and gain a competitive edge in acquiring strong partnerships to maintain the platform and its growth.

4. Potential Partners and Partnership

4.1 Introduction to the Existing Healthcare Model in the US

American healthcare system consists of two parts - public and private. Public healthcare programs are primarily financed by government taxes, including Medicare and Medicaid, mainly for elders, disabled, and low-income people, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which is for children under 18 years old who are not eligible for other insurance plans. Besides, there are numerous national private health insurance plans and regional and self-insured plans (LaFontaine & Spinner, 2020). Private healthcare programs are common for employers to maintain employee group health coverage in the workplace. Some individuals also buy private health insurance for themselves. In this case, insurers pay medical providers for health services at agreed-upon amounts, and the payment types often include a deductible, coinsurance, copay, etc.

Mental healthcare has been taken advantage of by private insurance companies, especially employer-sponsored group insurance, that impose more restrictive annual or lifetime limits on mental health benefits than on medical or surgical benefits (Rapfogel, 2022). Fortunately, the 1996 *Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA)* and the 2008 *Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act* helped with the situation, but the gap still exists.

In seek of partnership, at the first stage of development, *BetterUs* aims to collaborate with private insurance providers. Current mental healthcare coverage mainly incorporates in-network and out-of-network.

In-network coverage can typically cover both clinical therapy and teletherapy but varies by the insurance company. The prevalent coverage means for out-of-network services is to give reimbursement at a specific rate.

4.2 Values of *BetterUs* for Potential Partners

Mental health treatment centers and clinics tend to be concentrated in urban areas. Rural parts of the country tend to lack access to more specialized treatment options. This disparity of mental healthcare resources among different places makes it difficult and ineffective for insurance companies to collaborate with clinics. Therefore, telehealth coverage can be a better alternative.

Price is another advantage of teletherapy. Studies have shown that telehealth and teletherapy have been effective in treating many mental health conditions and can save money for people seeking mental health services. For example, the world's largest online therapy platform *BetterHelp* has therapy sessions that can cost less than traditional in-person therapy, with pricing ranging from \$60 to \$90 per week (Leonhardt, 2021). It is a reciprocal edge for both the insurers and the providers.

BetterUs, as aforementioned, aims to provide everyone with affordable and professional online mental healthcare. On the one hand, given the rising awareness of mental health issues and people's willingness to seek help online, we have significant growth potential. On the other hand, covering telehealth and teletherapy sessions is strategy-wise for private insurance providers nowadays. Accordingly, we look to establish partnerships with not just big but affordable insurance providers in order to bring our users a better experience, as well as achieve our business goal. A non-exhaustive list of our intended insurance partners includes Aetna, Anthem Inc, HealthNet, UnitedHealth, and MHN.

Moreover, according to the *2022 Workforce Mental Health Trends Forecast* by Lyra Health, 84% of workers said mental health benefits are important when considering a new job, and 59% of employees said they would stay at a job if it provided robust mental health benefits. Recognizing the increasing importance of mental health issues at the workplace, *BetterUs* would also collaborate with large corporates to provide mental health services for employees.

More intended partners are listed and elaborated in the following section.

4.3 List of Potential Partners

4.3.1 Partners for *BetterUs* Function Development

Mental health organizations: As aforementioned, one of the key features of the *BetterUs* app is recommending pertinent articles to users with interests in specific mental health issues. The majority of mental health organizations have access to verified professionals who can provide the high-quality mental health contents we need. Therefore, in order to demonstrate our professionalism and enhance the recommendation function, *BetterUs* intends to collaborate with those organizations. **Active Minds** is one possible business associate that we suggest.

Active Minds is the nation's premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults. They have a mental health professional team that includes national institution researchers and school professors on mental health issues that have helped over 8 million students over the course of 19 years. Like Snap.Inc. and Pinterest, *BetterUs* might join Active Minds as a "catalyst partner," offering their content (articles and videos) a platform to be viewed by people who are not just students on campus. This would be in line with Active Minds' overall mission of educating people about mental health issues and encouraging them to actively seek help for such issues. In addition, professionals from Active Minds could

also host special events on *BetterUs*, such as online/in-person lectures, peer-to-peer shout-out activities, “mental health awareness day/month,” etc.

4.3.2 Partners for *BetterUs* Future Growth

Academic institutions: *BetterUs* sees academic institutions as one valuable partner, recognizing the growing awareness of mental health among college students. For example, “**thehappyhour**” club at USC is a student organization dedicated to improving the mental health and well-being of USC students. On occasion, the club invites mental health professionals to lead workshops or discussions. As for *BetterUs*, we see an opportunity to sponsor thehappyhour events and become the designated app that thehappyhour participants are advised to use so they can create their own private USC group chat and discuss mental health issues. Additionally, *BetterUs* could become a club associate of thehappyhour and show up on campus when they attend the USC events, such as the involvement fair. This gives the new mental health student club a new branch of official partnerships while also drawing more users to the *BetterUs* platform.

Insurance companies: Even now, mental health is not sufficiently covered by insurance. This issue can be attributed to one of two things: first, inadequate mental health care providers. Particularly, lengthy wait times before receiving appropriate care, lengthy travel times to see a professional within their network, and the high out-of-pocket expenses associated with seeing a professional outside of their network. Second, the requirements for receiving mental health coverage are too strict. Even insurance companies with mental health coverage plan occasionally apply stringent criteria to the coverage. Unless a plan member is gravely ill, the requirements are frequently very difficult to meet. (Bogusz, 2020) *BetterUs* can help alleviate these concerns by offering accessible, low-cost mental health care online with a variety of resources gathered across the nation or, eventually, the world. In this instance, we anticipate working with **Aetna**, a well-known American insurance provider that covers mental health in almost all of their healthcare plans. In-network and out-of-network coverage are the two main types of mental health care in healthcare plans. We conducted extensive market research and discovered that the majority of insurance company-affiliated mental health platforms reimburse between 50% and 80% of costs. As the reimbursement rate is negotiable as a healthcare provider, *BetterUs* would like to raise the figure as a competitive advantage, as well as to uphold the promise of our “affordable mental health service.”

Employees care: 80% of workers, according to a Glassdoor survey, would rather have more benefits than a pay raise. And as mentioned in the last section, 84% of workers said mental health benefits are important when considering a new job. This indicates that employees are beginning to value their benefits more than their pay because they offer a better experience and contribute to greater job satisfaction. (Labitoria, 2021) In this case, especially given the population that is affected by mental health problems, mental health services can undoubtedly enhance the standard benefits a company would offer. **Zappos**, an American shoe and clothing retailer, is renowned for its comprehensive benefits for staff members. They offer above-average healthcare coverage and on-site wellness services. For a business like this, it is very likely that they will cover online mental health care in the near future in order to give employees a more convenient option. *BetterUs* seeks to become a mental health care provider/partner with Zappos where we can provide education and training for staff members, including hosting events, workshops, mini-therapy sessions, and the platform's original features.

Government/National entities: We plan to partner with governmental organizations once *BetterUs* has gained widespread acceptance as a platform in order to enhance our reputation and expand our international business. **The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)** is the lead federal agency for research on mental

disorders. “NIMH values opportunities to engage in dialogue with the advocacy community whose members act as advisors, educators, fundraisers, practice association leaders, and public policy advocates.” With a user base that is vocal and concerned about mental health issues, *BetterUs* has a distinct advantage, which may offer the advocacy platform that NIMH seeks. As part of the collaboration, NIMH may list *BetterUs* as an outside source for mental health support, and *BetterUs* might promote NIMH research findings to continually raise awareness of mental health issues. Ultimately, it can be one of the stepping stones to growing our global business, given the prestige and integrity of an institution like NIMH.

5. Sustainability and Scalability

In terms of how *BetterUs* is dedicated to creating long-term value addressing mental health issues, along with committing to improving offerings and technology in the telehealth industry, the business aims to be sustainable and scalable.

On the users' side, *BetterUs* build communities for users to anonymously share their concerns regarding mental health. Users can join the communities based on their interests or current problems, making the platform a go-to space for people aware of mental health issues. The platform also provides professional mental health resources, such as articles and videos on a variety of topics to satisfy diverse needs. Besides, *BetterUs* combines communication functions with online therapy sessions with an extensive network of verified professionals, which means there is a comprehensive ecosystem that helps users find groups, voice concerns, browse useful resources, and take action to reach out for help. These functions give users easy access to every stage of addressing mental health issues, keeping the platform “sticky” and sustainable. Given the global prevalence of mental health issues and our devotion to gathering international resources, we are confident that *BetterUs* is a scalable platform. On top of that, the integration of wearable technology and users' biometric data is another highlight of *BetterUs*, especially with data that indicates the upsurge of wearable device users in recent years; we believe there is immense potential in this technology.

On the partners' side, the partners' community we build will be stable and professional. *BetterUs* is inclined to look for long-term partnerships with reliable mental health organizations and clinics at the early stage of development, with whom they can provide valid mental health resources. The partnership is mutually beneficial because *BetterUs* aims to offer our users helpful resources, and in return, the platform has the perfect pool of target audiences for our partners. In future development, we anticipate partnerships with governmental mental health associations according to their stability. Also, working with governmental associations is conducive to our scalability because our image would appear trustworthy when expanding the business to other countries.

Integration of Technology

1. Big Data

Big data analytics is the primary supporting technology behind *BetterUs*. It helps target audiences, identifies users' preferences, remotely monitors users receiving mental health services, gives real-time alerts for immediate care, etc. Generally speaking, big data analytics can assist users in effectively finding relevant resources, self-monitor their situations, and easily recording health data. For the platform, big data analytics can present analysis and data visualization that contribute to the adjustment and improvement of the app, as well as allow the app to respond timely to any potential emergency. However, as affirmed throughout this business plan, users' privacy is our priority. Our data collection will minimize the portion of users' personal information but instead emphasize general behavioral data, i.e., using quizzes to navigate users' interests. Additionally, to protect privacy, we will conduct data masking and anonymization before using data for any analysis.

It is worth noting that big data analytics has been proven efficient in predicting and preventing suicide attempts. In a 2018 study from KP and the Mental Health Research Network, a mix of electronic health record data and a standard depression questionnaire identified individuals who had an enhanced risk of a suicide attempt with great accuracy. Utilizing a predictions algorithm, the team found that suicide attempts and successes were 200 times more likely among the top 1% of patients flagged according to specific datasets (Kent, 2018).

2. Biometric Data and Wearable Technology

Amidst the digital age, consumers are now more than ever equipped with various electronic devices, from smartphones to portable computers, to wearable devices. Especially having lived through a global pandemic crisis, adults are growing more health conscious and regularly monitoring their health statistics. Figure 2 below shows the size of the wearable technology market in America. According to Statista, the wearable device market in the United States specifically has been growing annually, with research showing that it is expected to reach 67 million users in the year 2022. Realizing the high usage of such technologies, *BetterUs* can integrate such technology and devices to improve the user experience.

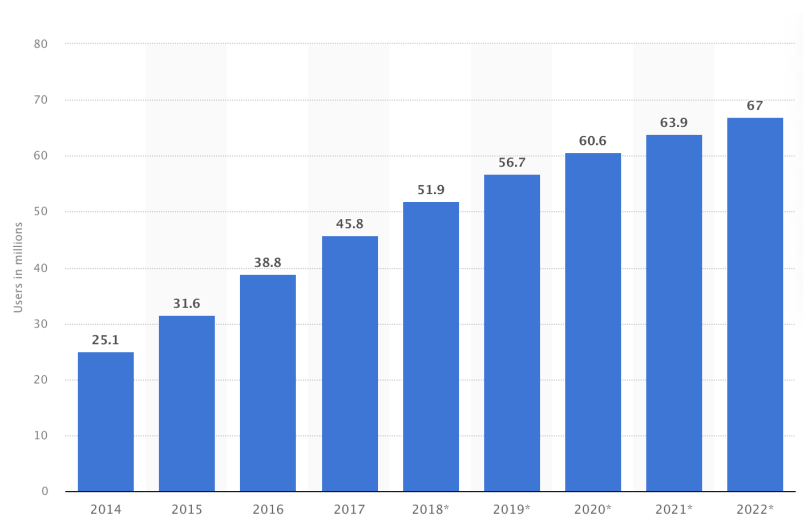


Figure 2. Number of wearable device users in America from 2014-2022 (Statista, 2022)

Taking advantage of the current trend of wearable technology, *BetterUs* has the ability to collect and securely store consented wearer's biometric and activity data, i.e., heart rate, sleep pattern, breathing pattern, physical activity, etc., which is convenient for users themselves to conduct self-monitor, make remote monitoring accessible for therapists, and allow the care team to intervene immediately if any trouble occurs. Leveraging on available product offerings in the market, users are not required to purchase separate wearables in order to sync their data onto the *BetterUs* platform. Specifically, users can manually record their "mood of the day" by simply clicking on emojis that pop up in the app, or they can use wearable devices to track their biometric health data.

In addition to allowing users to keep a record of their daily data, the *BetterUs* platform is a private sharing space for users to voice concerns and communicate different mental health situations. Thus, wearable devices are not mandatorily required to utilize *BetterUs*.

3. Resource Locator

Backend insights on user location will better help establish an extensive and sufficient medical professional network according to actual demands. Similarly, geolocation data on users improves the targeting of sponsored articles and supportive information, including hotlines, nearby clinics, and offline events. The integration of the resource locator is particularly helpful for users who prefer to schedule nearby offline therapy sessions, as well as for *BetterUs* to gather and distribute mental health resources around the globe in future stages. Geolocation data is particularly advantageous for streamlining the process of finding accurate information by customizing resources according to users' locations and community needs. Studies show that people needing mental health services and the public generally have similar needs that vary with location (Boulos, 2003).

4. Privacy Concerns

4.1 Medical Data Regulations

4.1.1 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), enacted in 1996, is a federal law that led to the introduction of standards in healthcare relating to patient privacy and medical data protection (HIPAA Journal, 2018). The act applies to all individually identifiable health information that is created, stored, maintained, or transmitted by a HIPAA-covered entity or business associate of a HIPAA-covered entity. Data types include paper records, films, electronic health information, and spoken information. In addition, HIPAA safeguards any information that could be used to identify the individual to whom the health information relates, such as IP address and email address.

As we might see in our daily life, HIPAA also protects patients by requiring healthcare providers to ask for permission and authorization before disclosing patients' information. Furthermore, HIPAA enables patients to take more control over their healthcare data. For example, when the patient requests to transfer their healthcare data to another healthcare provider, the patient can control where, who, and how the Protected Health Information (PHI) is transmitted, rather than letting healthcare providers decide what they want to do with the data.

4.1.2 Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA)

As biometric technology advances, there have been a number of lawsuits involving data collection methods and various levels of data protection. Therefore, the specific law for biometric data - Illinois Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA), was passed in 2008. It is initially used to regulate the collection and handling of biometric identifiers and data by private entities. However, this Act does not apply to government entities. BIPA requires private entities that obtain biometric information or identifiers first to inform the subject in written form that their information is being collected and stored, inform the subject of the specific purpose and term for collection and storage, and secure a written release from the subject (Shifrin & Tobin, 2022). Similar to HIPAA, BIPA also prohibits the disclosure of biometric information without the subject's consent. Private entities are prohibited to sell, lease, trade, or profit from a person's biometric information. Furthermore, BIPA requires a private entity possessing biometric identifiers and information to destroy biometric identifiers in a timely manner. The Act also grants people in Illinois the right to sue any party that has misused or exposed their biometric data, which is also referred to as a "private right of action."

4.2 Solutions to Privacy Concerns

Privacy concern is a universal and crucial issue when it comes to data collection and tracking, especially with medical and biometric data. To cope with the concern, *BetterUs* promise to ask for consent from users before targeting audiences, collecting personal information, and monitoring users' data. Users always have the option to respond with "ask the app not to track my data." Meanwhile, we will ensure that our data collection adheres to the existing medical data regulations mentioned above.

Another solution we propose is that users can choose how to utilize the recommendation algorithm to feel secure and private rather than "being watched." We have all had the experience of feeling heard by our phones when social media platforms push content that we mentioned in our private conversation to our page. To let users control the usage of the recommendation algorithm, for instance, users can turn off the recommendation function if they do not want the platform to generate content based on their browsing behavior or chats. In this case, users can enjoy privacy and select topics that best fit their interests.

Timing

1. Implementation Plan

Regarding the timeline and key milestones, we are breaking down our development plan into three phases, illustrated in figure 3 below. Phase one will target the North American market, as the Americas region has the highest prevalence of mental disorders among all the six regions worldwide (World Health Organization, 2022). In this phase, our goal is to accumulate and build trust with our first batch of users and establish a sense of community for communication. Additionally, phase one will also focus on developing robust partnerships, including insurance companies with affordable mental healthcare plans and organizations that provide professional supporting articles or videos for users to consume on the app and other partnerships mentioned in previous sections. Thereafter, within one to two years, by the time we establish *BetterUs*' trustworthy reputation, we will attempt to partner with verified mental health associations or NGOs, as well as provide mental health services to employees at large corporates in order to scale and attract more attention across North America. Phase two is set between years two and three, during which we will expand the professional network to other countries where valid data shows that mental health is recognized as a major issue. Finally, during phase three, within five years, we anticipate developing *BetterUs* into a global mental healthcare platform with exhaustive resources located around the globe while sticking to our starting point - a private space for sharing concerns with affordable and convenient mental health services. *BetterUs* values users' feedback and will absorb those feedback, revise and improve the app between stages. We grow together with our users.

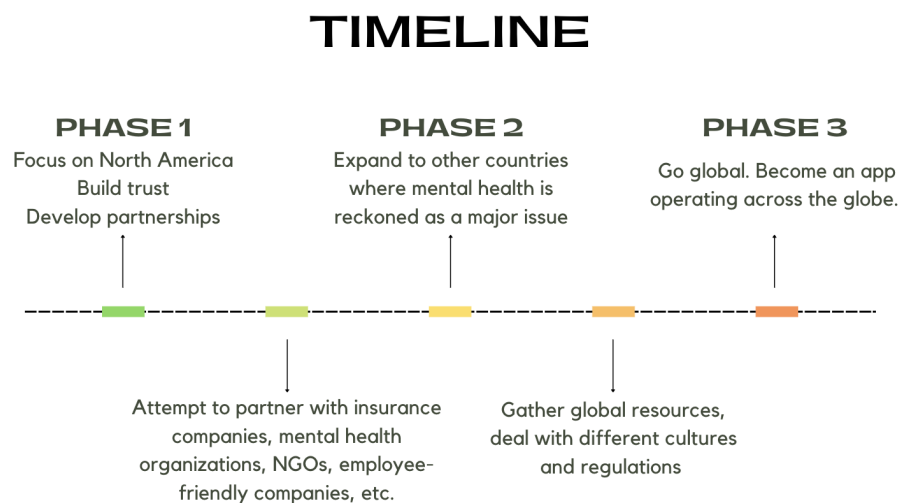


Figure 3. Timeline of *BetterUs*' launch and product development

In addition to the global expansion plan, the key performance indicators (KPI) and goals for *BetterUs* in a five-year timeline are discussed below. As a mobile app, we will measure the performance of the app with the following KPIs and engagement metrics: retention rate, churn rate, monthly active users (MAUs), daily active users (DAUs), daily sessions per daily activities user, stickiness by dividing the DAU to MAU, and customer lifetime value (LTV). With the above, these metrics measure the different levels of engagement throughout the customer journey; from downloading the app and attracting users to come back to building a usage habit, these metrics will give us an overview of how successful we are in achieving our purpose. Essentially, convincing users through marketing and advertising to download and open the app is half of the challenge. However, to be sustainable, the LTV determines how much the users are spending on our app in order to use our services.

Distinctly, the goal for the first year is to raise awareness for the app and drive downloads. As our target market is still new to the idea and platform that we are introducing, marketing efforts will be made towards advertising the app and its services on social media, where most consumers learn about new products. Initial planning will include Instagram and TikTok ads for young adults, and Facebook ads will be placed for the more mature audience. To kick off, the goal for *BetterUs* is to reach a retention rate of 20% within the first six months of launch with higher spending and focus on marketing efforts.

By year two, the goal is to reach 1 million users within the North American region and have provided over 200,000 consultation sessions from our platform. Having achieved this goal will not only raise awareness of our cause and solution but also show promising numbers of our growing community to our partners.

Between years three and four, advocacy of the brand will be crucial as we gather resources for a global expansion. Although the app would have reached at least three national markets already, marketing efforts in advertising our platform and services will be a priority to the new, untapped markets. The goal during years three and four is to leverage the earned media that we gained from our existing users and drive noise and desire for our platform overseas. The KPI for MAU during this period is to maintain 2 million users.

As *BetterUs* reaches the global market by year five, the goal is to have retained at least 70% of existing users, establish a close-knit community of loyal users, and reach an MAU of 5 million users. According to Our World in Data, the latest study from 2017 shows that 792 million people worldwide lived with a mental health disorder; this number accounts for more than one in ten people globally (10.7%) (Ritchie et al., 2021). Needless to say, due to social stigma and other factors, mental health disorders remain widely under-reported, meaning the number of people suffering worldwide is much more than the figures in the report. Therefore, a KPI of reaching 5 million MAU is indeed ambitious yet achievable, considering *BetterUs* to be a well-established platform with the resources of certified professionals, insurance giants, and other government entities around the world. Moreover, as part of *BetterUs*' offerings include therapy and consultation sessions, we predict the LTV to be high, with assumptions that our services are of quality and proved effective to both our new and existing users.

2. Risk Assessment

Supplementing the implementation plan, the risk assessment highlights the identified potential hazards and crises that *BetterUs* might face, analyzing what the potential impacts are resulting from unwanted situations on the platform or to its users.

2.1 Privacy, Confidentiality, and Security Issues

As a platform that is responsible for important data like medical records and identifying information, the overall security of the information presents a considerable risk. As mentioned in section 4, *BetterUs* is aware of the laws and regulations imposed on us in handling private information and has outlined steps to ensure the information of our users remains confidential. In general, other users and operators in the backend have no access to users' private information. Users' medical information recorded on the platform will only be shared with their verified personal medical professional upon receiving electronic, binding consent from the account holder. In accordance with HIPPA and BIPA, *BetterUs* remains responsible for the system, ensuring that activities on the platform and data collected from connected wearable devices ensure the latest security measures on par with each region in which we operate.

2.2 Communication Issues Specific to Technology

Technical difficulties and failure may be major concerns in the context of telehealth as they could possibly lead to frustration and anger. If therapists lack the skills to prepare and guide patients through possible connectivity issues related to technology prior to or during their sessions, users may be left unsatisfied with the services received. Another issue with technology concerns availability and access issues. Since therapists are given the freedom to decide their working hours and schedule with clients, it becomes difficult for therapists to guarantee permanent access. Especially in emergency situations, see 6.3 below, response time and delays are crucial. Lastly, as *BetterUs* expands its operations worldwide, accessibility in terms of technology, devices, and connectivity may be restricted for people of lower socioeconomic status or those unable to use certain technological equipment.

2.3 Emergency and Crisis Situations

Common concerns regarding online therapy and telehealth arise from whether an emergency or crisis situation involving a threat to self or others can be detected and addressed when the patient and therapist are at different locations. As *BetterUs* address and encourage conversation regarding serious health conditions, ethical issues regarding emergency and crisis situations that includes the verification of user identity and location are to be considered. Although *BetterUs* does not regularly monitor data and messages shared on the platform, monitoring of specific keywords that relate to emergencies like suicides, serious health injuries, and concerning biometric data that involve life-threatening psycho and physical biological markers are to be reported to nearby medical institutions if it is deemed dangerous to the user.

2.4 Legality and Verification of Age

It may be difficult to verify the identity of the patient, especially running *BetterUs* as a platform for anonymous feed sharing and community building. To eliminate the risk of deception, fraud, and situations where a therapist might inadvertently treat a minor without parental consent, *BetterUs* requires official verification of age through an online, automated identity check using the user's government identification to ensure that users are eligible to receive treatment. As mentioned in the Target Market and Audience section, each state and country has its respective laws regarding the age of consent and treatments. Although *BetterUs* operates in a virtual setting, users are still bound to the laws of their location, meaning certain users may not be allowed to provide consent to treatment if they are under the age of 18, while some in a different location are allowed.

2.5 Competitors

Mental health has become one of the most prevalent topics in people's daily life, and there are more and more products serving individuals' mental well-being. Although no application can offer online therapy sessions and make one-to-one, offline communications simultaneously, similar products and services may appear in the market in the future, creating competition. For this specific situation, we need to define our niche as narrowly as possible and become known for being the best in our narrow niche. Also, we will invest in deeper customer relationships, like taking every opportunity to engage with customers, be transparent with them, and personalize their experience.

2.6 Going Global

Since every country has different legislation, it might be hard for us to access users' information to provide more personalized services. For example, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a law regulating how companies protect the citizens' personal data in the European Union, carries stiff penalties for noncompliance. We must be aware of the tenets of the law and adhere to them.

In addition, we need to gather worldwide resources, including medical resources, professional support, and regional data, to improve user experience. Thus, to enter markets that belong to different countries, we should conform to specific policies regarding these issues to avoid the restricted availability of our products.

2.7 Political Influence

The complex relationships between countries and governments could have devastating impacts on a company. Although *BetterUs* is an online service, drastic laws may be imposed in different countries. When assessing the entry to new markets, it is important to note the risks of operating overseas in compliance with local governments. Especially if said plans involve stricter governments like China and India, *BetterUs* will have to develop an entry plan approved by the officials to prevent being banned. An example of the mentioned risk includes the ban of TikTok, the short-form video hosting service, from both the Chinese and Indian markets due to their governments' concerns over the protection of data and privacy of its citizen. By remaining transparent and truthful regarding our privacy and data policies, an agreement could be made with respective governments to find grounds to operate in their countries.

Consequently, monitoring the political climate of other countries and lobbying, where possible, is invaluable. We should do an annual deep-dive evaluation of the risks in specific countries. While managing all the risks may not be possible, understanding what is happening can go a long way to protecting property and people.

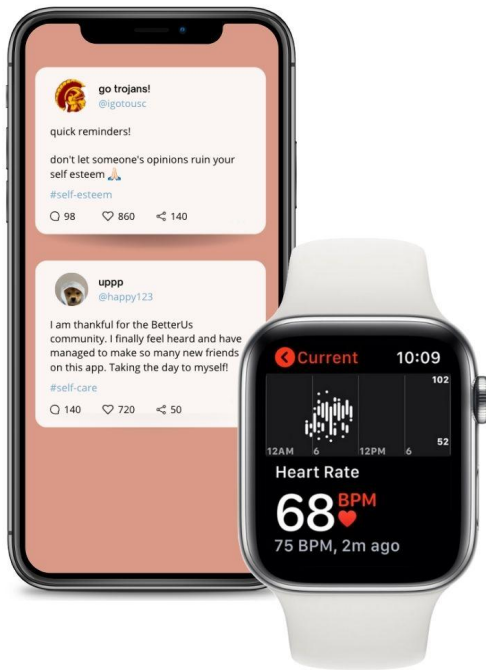
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Appendix

1. Product Pitch Powerpoint



DSM 520

BetterUs The Mental Health App

Xixin (Mera) Zhang, Prima Lo, Liyi (Katerina) Tong

Table of Contents

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Market Research
- Societal Issue and Market Gap
- Proposed Solution
- Key Functions
- Integration of Technology
- Future Growth

What are the common associations to the word

"MENTAL HEALTH"

Which of these commonly associated words stand out to you?

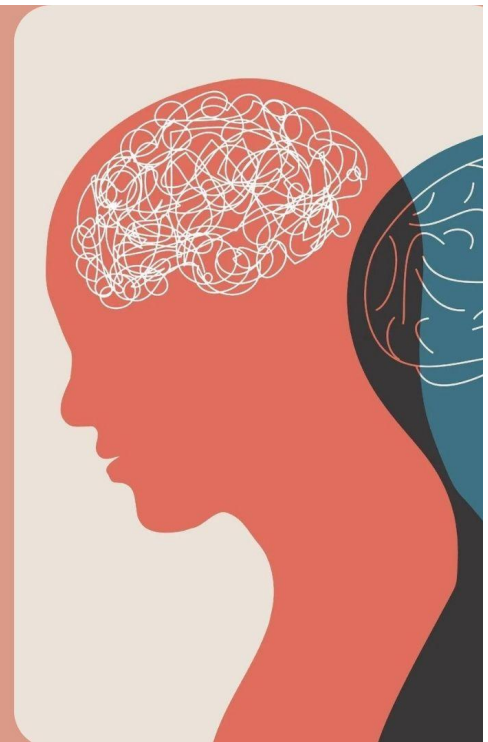


"1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness at a given year." - CDC

In the United States, over half (56%) of adults with a mental illness receive no treatment. - Mental Health America

Barriers

High Cost and Insufficient Insurance Coverage
Limited Options and Long Waits
Lack of Awareness



Research Data on the Social Stigma

Overall, what are people saying towards the topic of mental health and mental illnesses?

Results from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing



37% of Americans have worried about other's judgement



21% of Americans have even lied to avoid telling the truth



86% say the term "mental illness" carries a stigma

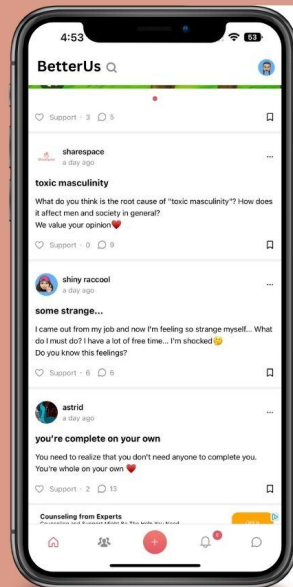


87% express that having a mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of



84% believe that people with mental health disorders can live normal lives

Introducing the BetterUs App



A SOCIAL NETWORKING APPLICATION

Focused on promoting mental health and well-being,

Aims to become the leading online platform providing peer-to-peer support and affordable mental health help.

Encourage, harvest, and protect a positive communication environment.

Functions of the BetterUs app

01

Anonymous Feed Sharing

Allow users to personalize their accounts without sacrificing privacy.

02

Community Building & Group Chats

Connect users with similar interests, concerns, and experiences.

03

Private sessions with Verified Professionals

Provide affordable, quality mental health care according to users' needs. Both paid and unpaid services are available.

04

Resource Database

Access to credible articles and an extensive, nationwide medical network.

05

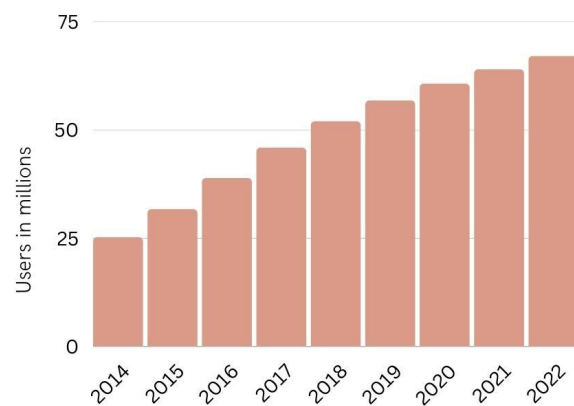
Electronic Medical Record

Build a personal EMR for the review of medical professionals within our ecosystem.

Integration of Wearable Technology



Number of wearable device users in the US from 2014-2022



Source: Statista 2022

Users without wearable tech

- Manually complete self-monitoring and self-assessment
- Users may manually log daily physical and mental data on the app
- Receive app notifications to log daily, weekly, and monthly data.

Users with wearable tech

- User experience made easier with users' existing wearable devices
- New tools enable access to biometric and activity data
- Users can opt-in for automatic sync on the app to store their data

On Company Growth

HOW WE PLAN TO EXPAND IN THE COMING YEARS



Develop Partnerships

Work collaboratively with governments, organizations, and insurance companies to improve offerings on the app.



Extend Offerings Globally

Acquire users globally and continue building a medical network of professionals from around the world.



Further tap into the Telehealth Industry

Continue developing our platform to broaden the availability and accessibility of telehealth.



Don't hide
your emotions,
let's kill the
stigma together!

— BetterUs