

Gadgets



Finally, a sports watch/fitness tracker hybrid

I've owned sports watches that work for me, but definitely aren't day-to-day accessories, mostly because they are big and ugly. And I've owned fitness trackers that do cool things, but never manage to stay on my wrist for more than a few days before irritating me, either by their judgey reminders to move, or because the band is incredibly uncomfortable.

But I think the Suunto Spartan Trainer might have cracked it as the perfect hybrid.

It has most of the functionality of a sports watch, and a multi-sport watch at that. And, despite its size, it is perfectly wearable as a day-to-day fitness tracker, with most of the tracking you need here too, as well as a decent battery life.

Functionality-wise, there are two big highlights for me. The watch has a built-in heart-rate monitor that takes a reading from your wrist, and not one of those ridiculous chest bands. This is becoming more common in sports watches and fitness trackers, but is still pretty noteworthy.

Second, when you are in training mode, say running, the watch has an auto stop/start function, based on how fast you are moving. No more half-tracked runs or hikes because you forget to restart your watch after a break!

Another tick in its favour is how fast it locks onto GPS before getting started.

The Suunto Spartan has a heap of exercise types to choose from, including triathlons, and some that are pretty obscure, for South Africa, anyway: cheerleading, American football or Telemark skiing, anyone? Small disclaimer: I'm not a swimmer or a cyclist, so I used the watch for road running, trail running and Pilates.

There are some oddities, like you can only set an exercise target by time, and not distance. And, if it alerts you when you hit certain milestones, such as 50% or 90%, they were very discreet and I missed them completely, which is a problem on an out-and-back run. However, the breadcrumb navigation functionality is pretty nifty for finding your way home after adventuring on trails or road running in a new area.

Finally, there are a lot of options packed into the watch, but it's still pretty easy to navigate through the menu system without breaking my 'you shouldn't have to read the manual to get started' rule.

Available from actiongear.co.za for R3 999 to R4 499.

By Vanessa Clark

Explainer Going bananas for ICOs.



Okay, I'll bite; what the heck is an ICO?

Say an IPO — initial public offering — and crowdfunding hooked up and had a baby. Their offspring is an ICO, or an initial coin offering. So, it's a way to fund your startup using crowdfunding principles, where, instead of offering shares, you offer your investors cryptocurrencies in exchange for regular money or cryptocurrency. You promise them the coins will be worth more than what they invested, at some point in the future, thanks to the success of your startup.

But why?

It's unregulated, so it's quicker and cheaper to raise capital compared to typical fundraising processes like venture capital investment or an IPO. Also, it's disruptive, counterculture and a little bit sexy.

And where do the bananas come in?

Well, a recent ICO linked the value of the coins it issues to the price of a kilogram of bananas. Bananacoin claims to have run the first eco token pre-sale where it sold a million tokens, equivalent to \$500 000. Its business model is to increase cultivation of organic bananas in Laos, and export them to China, which has a banana shortage. But ICOs are not only for bananas, and include startups offering dating, real estate, pets, and, ironically, real gold bullion products and services.

How big of a thing is this?

According to ICO Tracker, since 2014, \$2.4 billion was raised from 177 ICOs. Of these, \$1.5 billion was raised in the first nine months of 2017, from 120 ICOs.

You mentioned unregulated...

And there's the rub. In September, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) closed down two fraudulent ICOs, where neither the diamonds or the real estate startups existed. Around the world, governments and regulators are scratching their heads about what to do: ban or regulate ICOs?

