

How wearable tech is changing HR



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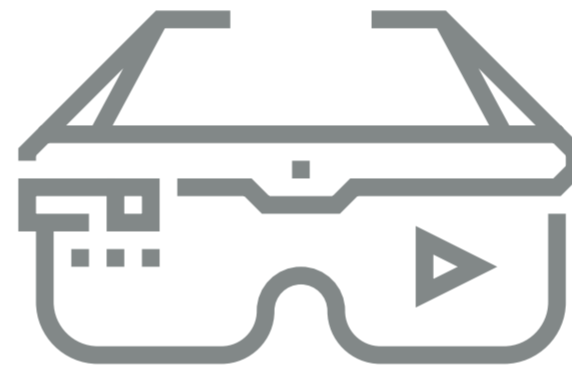
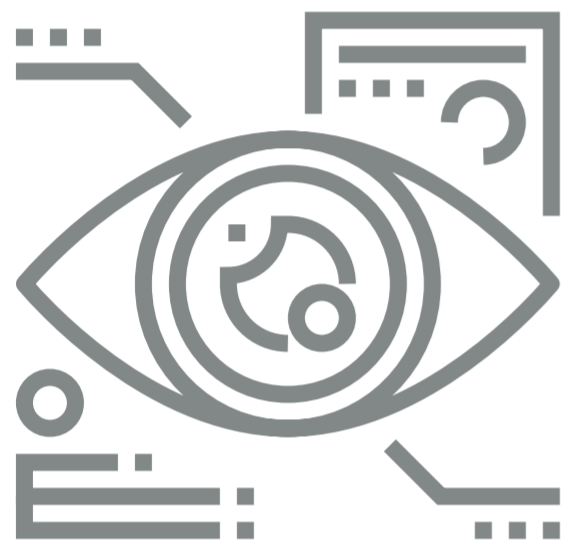
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INTRODUCTION



It's no secret that our professional landscape is evolving more rapidly than ever. The marriage between wearable tech and the world of work is one of the most exciting developments taking place, and the technological tidal wave shows no signs of slowing down.

A recent **eMarketer** study predicts that, in the US alone, almost 82 million people will leverage some form of wearable tech in 2018, and HR professionals, hiring managers and small to medium business owners are jumping on board faster than ever.

Offices are abuzz with talk of various wearable devices, from wrist tech and 3D eyewear to more radical offerings like digitally connected suits. The benefits for HR and employers are wide-ranging; lightning-fast communication, optimised efficiency and even quicker



emergency responses. What will and won't stick is anybody's guess, but wearable tech is here to stay.

In this eBook, we look at what the future (and increasingly the present) of wearables holds for the workplace.

Wrist tech: Building on a classic accessory



At least for now, watches and smart bands are leading the charge when it comes to wearable tech trends. It's not difficult to see why, given they are simply a modernised version of an accessory that's existed for centuries. Retail markets are flooded with options including Fitbits, Apple Watches, Samsung Gear and more. Yet despite their popularity and availability, companies are increasingly adding wrist tech to their welcome packages and employee benefit programs. Here's why:

Health and fitness tops the list

According to **Personnel Today**, companies including eBay and BP provide wrist tech to their employees as part of their corporate wellness plans. Employees could be encouraged to engage in a daily threshold of activity (typically measured in steps, heart rate or calories), which is then recorded as HR data. **According to Fitbit**, about 30 Australian companies used its technology for corporate health programs in 2017.



Wrist tech: Building on a classic accessory



But as anyone who's made a fitness-related New Year's resolution knows, embracing a fitter lifestyle can be tough, so some companies are also rewarding employees for utilising the tech. For example, those who work out can reduce their mandatory healthcare plan contributions.

Fitbit's social feed helps users get motivated by allowing them to share achievements, recipes and photos with their Fitbit communities.

Creating a better workplace

Besides workplace wellness, wrist technology could also be used to track workforce movements. While good for safety and productivity, it conjures a potential privacy nightmare. **PwC research from 2015** found that just 38 per cent of Gen X workers would share wearable data with their employer, but this rises to 51 percent if it would be used to improve the workplace environment.

The key to success, according to PwC, is ensure you have the trust of your employees, and to set clear rules about how the data is gathered, used and shared, and to clearly communicate to employees the benefits the technology offers.



Microchipping: The corporate frontier

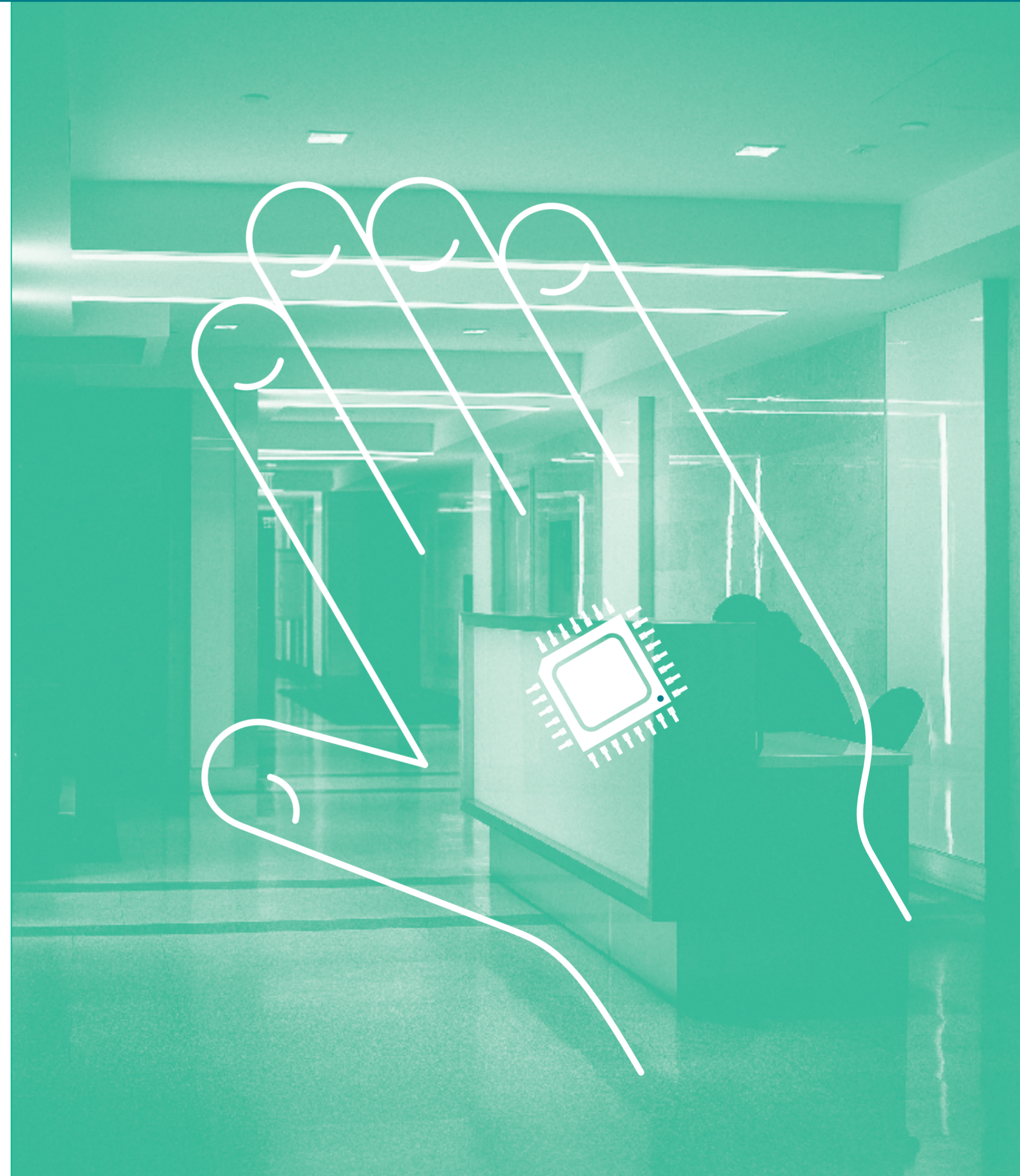


If you asked your employees to be guinea pigs for microchip tech in the workplace, you might expect a few blank stares and even some agitated responses. But at US-based company **Three Square Market**, a massive 50 out of 80 employees agreed to have rice-grain-sized microchips inserted in their hands by a tattoo artist.

The ultimate convenience

The Three Market Square chips allow employees to bypass company logins, open office doors, access restricted areas, confirm office attendance and even make purchases from company vending machines with a swipe of their microchipped hand.

Of course, punching in a code or reaching to pull an ID badge from a pocket only takes a few seconds. But when those savings are spread out across daily activities over the whole year – and the entire office – the amount of time saved becomes significant.



Microchipping: The corporate frontier



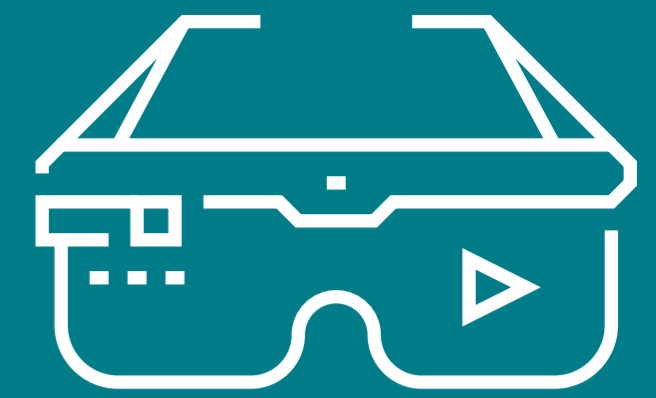
Reducing privacy concerns

A big concern around microchipping is that the technology might be used to track employees without their consent. To allay these fears, the Three Market Square chip does not contain GPS technology that would allow this.

Australian laws currently provide safeguards against allowing companies to track employees' movements. For example, **the NSW Surveillance Devices Act 2007** forbids employers from making use of “any electronic device capable of being used to determine or monitor the geographical location of a person or an object”. While this law doesn't rule out a voluntary employee microchipping program, it's clear that when implementing any such program, privacy must remain paramount.



Virtual eyewear: Augment your reality



An innovation that is already seeing widespread acceptance is virtually augmented eyewear. Volkswagen recently took the lead in this emerging domain with its **Group Digital Factory**, which allows vehicle production to be planned out in virtual “3Dworkshops”.

Creating virtual life-sized workspaces

Each team member is assigned an avatar – a 3D character they can use to interact with their virtual surroundings. Real locations are recreated at 1:1 scale, within which users can test optimisation methods, exchange ideas and information, and more from locations that may be hundreds of kilometres apart.

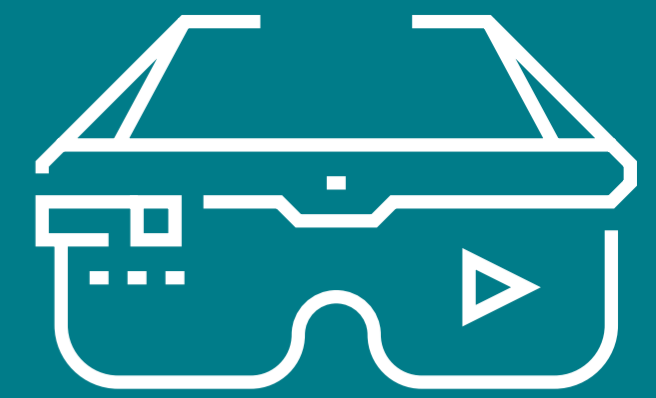
The technology allows employees to save time, along with the costs that would otherwise be incurred for travel, equipment and training material. According to a user in VW’s logistics group, this approach “makes it much easier to work as a team every day”.

Australian control room design company **Jumbo Vision** uses a similar approach with its **CADwalk** virtual reality tool. Clients can compare and evaluate alternate room layouts at full scale and in real-time, reducing a months-long design process to a matter of days.



Image courtesy Volkswagen.

Virtual eyewear: Augment your reality



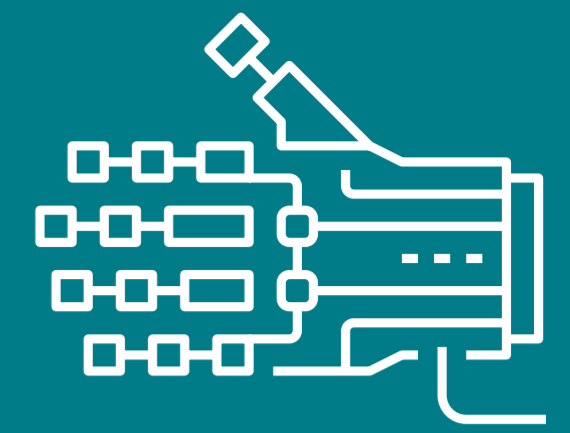
A new age of education and training

Immersive VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality) are also spurring innovation in the training and education space. Since 2013, Alzheimer's Australia Victoria has delivered experiential learning to aged-care workers through its **Virtual Dementia Experience**, which allows trainees to experience patient scenarios ranging from going to the bathroom to cleaning teeth and showering. At Griffith University's **School of Pharmacy and Toxicology**, AR software and smart glasses help students experience workplace scenarios not possible in normal teaching environments.

Virtual eyewear is set to greatly transform how we perceive and interact with the digital world. Technology research company, Gartner, has identified immersive experience technology as one of its **top 10 strategic technology trends for 2018**, based on its potential to boost productivity and enhance training and visualisation.



The future of wearable tech: Where do we go from here?



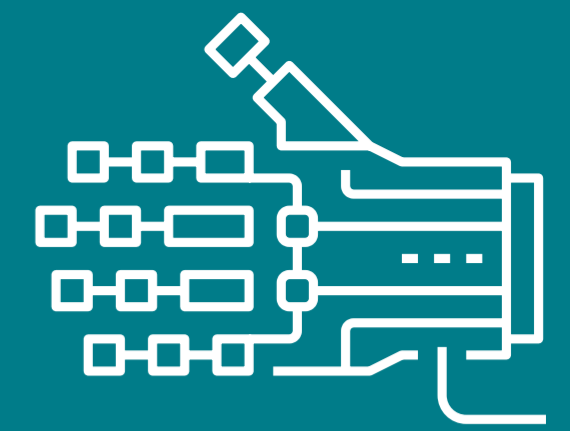
As much as the innovations we've covered promise to revolutionise the HR world, they are just a hint of what the future holds.

Streamlining the workplace: Amazon's haptic wristbands

Future wearables are likely to employ a range of human senses to facilitate our interactions with the digital world. Already known as a leading innovator in workforce management, retail giant **Amazon** is leading this trend with its **patented ultrasonic wristbands**. The bands use haptic feedback to guide workers to items that need to be picked and processed, with the wider aim of reducing human error and facilitating better monitoring of worker performance.



The future of wearable tech: Where do we go from here?



The next phase: Smart clothing

Heading towards 2020 and beyond, wearable tech is poised to become more powerful, convenient and invisible, weaved into not just our accessories, but the clothing we wear every day. **Samsung** has **designed a smart** suit with implanted NFC tags – the same kinds of tags that smartphones use for contactless payments. According to **Finextra Research**, the suit's tags will allow the wearer to open phone apps and transfer digital business cards, among other functions. Meanwhile, Levi's and Google have joined forces to create a touch-sensitive, Bluetooth-capable **smart jacket** that can be used to control a range of smartphone apps.

The wearables boom

Mobile technology research and analysis firm **CCS Insight predicts** that the global market for wearables will grow from \$10 billion in 2017 to almost \$17 billion by 2021. For the management of people, office environments and company culture, this new era of digital transformation will create an abundance of opportunities.



Image courtesy Google.

Making the most of your opportunities

From biometric wrist tech to virtual eyewear, microchips, smart suits and more, wearable tech is a wide sea of innovation, with much for HR professionals, hiring managers and small to medium business owners to be excited about. But not all companies have adventurous employees willing to be chipped, nor the budget for wearable technology welcome packages.

Here are some simple ideas to encourage health, efficiency and technologically forward thinking on the part of your team and staff, and to help your company stay ahead of the wearable technology curve:

- ▣ **Health & well-being** Encourage employee health and well-being by having fitness competitions tracked on their personal Fitbits and similar devices. For example, the employee with the most steps at the end of the month could win a \$100 bonus or a gift card.
- ▣ **Research devices before purchasing** Once you've decided to make wearable tech part of your corporate culture, make sure you research the markets frequently for your device of choice before purchasing. Whether it's wrist tech, eyewear or that 'smart' shirt you've been considering, new technologies build on previous iterations, and new innovations are always around the corner.
- ▣ **Take the plunge** Remember that early adoption is key, and it carries plenty of potential benefits with it. When you come across an especially intriguing or revolutionary piece of wearable technology that could give your company a genuine advantage, don't be afraid to take the plunge.



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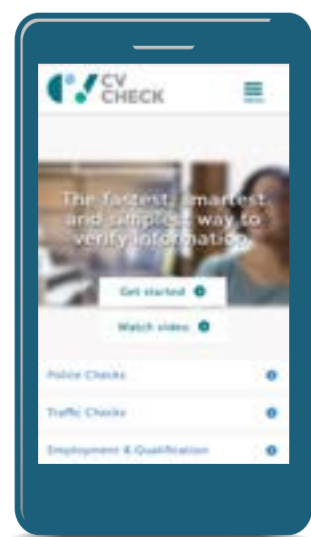
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