10 HOT TECH TRENDS

IN BUSINESS FOR 2015

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What new technology innovations do businesses need to be aware of in 2015?

In 2014 some of the most important trends included:
- wearable technology (think smart watches),
- security breaches,
- mobile payments,
- productivity apps,
- social media, and
- content marketing

What can we expect in 2015? Here is a look the our pick for the 10 Hot Tech Trends for the year ahead.

10. SMART DRONES

Drones may still be technology of the future, but it is looking like that may be the very near future. And this technology that has the potential to do a lot more than just delivering pizza and other goods. Some really unique applications are already starting to emerge, especially around healthcare.

Take a minute to watch the YouTube video that dramatizes a woman saving her father's life after a 911 call. Instead of paramedics, and "ambulance drone" arrives with a defibulator. A live operator then uses the camera and speaker on the drone to helps the woman use the device, saving her father's life.

The researcher behind the technology project explains that ambulance drones can increase the survival chance of a heart attack victim from eight per cent to 80 per cent. The main advantages are the drone's ability to travel without being delayed by traffic or road infrastructure, which reduces travel time from 10 minutes to just one minute.

The Internet of Things (IoT), where objects and machines have network connectivity that lets them send and receive data, has been emerging for several years.

Think beyond more common devices like the hands-free payment terminals commonly used in restaurants. At a recent IoT conference hosted by BC-based Wavefront, a national centre of excellence, IoT examples included:

1) Restaurant: A smart kitchen in a restaurant had sensors in several critical places that then sent real-time data to a central computer system. This helped the business reduce food waste and spoilage.

2) Condominium: Smart garbage bin monitoring reduced the cost of garbage pick-up by only initiating a pick-up when it was actually needed.

3) Agricultural: smart devices implanted in the stomaches of a herd of pregnant cows sent back temperature information that enabled farm-hands to know precisely when each cow was about to give birth.

8. SMART VIDEO SYSTEMS

Look for corporate video systems to evolve from their current focus that is primarily directed towards security monitoring to also act as a smart collaboration tool that can be used to enable active participation in real-time for people in different locations.

For example, an off-site project manager could connect to a live video stream and interact with software on his or her laptop to provide precise directions to staff on the job site. Think of it as a shared remote smart board, only instead of drawings both screens will display video footage from a smart camera.

Similarly, in the boardroom newer smart boards will enable remote collaboration where not only video, but also drawings on the board are synched to smart boards in different locations. Options like Google Hangouts (free) will help fill the gap for smaller companies with lower budgets.

Expect 2015 to bring in opportunities for collaboration amongst smaller companies that was previously not possible.

7. NEW MOBILE PAYMENT OPTIONS

Last year we highlighted digital currencies like Bitcoin as a hot trend for 2014.

In the year ahead, expect the trend to shift payment options away from paper and plastic to newer mobile payment options like Apple Pay and Coin.

Announced in September 2014, Apple Pay is a digital wallet that lets customers make contactless payments from an iPhone 6, using their existing credit cards.

Similarly Coin, while not commercially available yet, offers a digital solution to replace all your cards within a single app that lets you decide which one to use at checkout. (Coin will initially be available to US customers only.)

In the year ahead, expect customers to place increasing demands on businesses to provide payment options that suit them.

6. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT CLOUD

In the coming year, expect cloud to shift from a buzz word that many companies still do not understand to a viable option for data storage that many will start taking seriously.

Employees and customers are already bringing the cloud into the office. Amongst many Gen Y hires the cloud will be the obvious choice. While senior management may still be reluctant to shift, as businesses start to see how their peers are benefiting from a move to the cloud the thought process of considering cloud as a viable option will emerge.

Tiffani Bova, a top analyst at the technology research firm Gartner, told a gathering of cloud vendors in late 2014 that they need to be ready to share stories about how the cloud helps business and to recognize that Internet speeds will affect the viability of a migration to cloud.

Data storage, security, flexibiliy and seemless integration will be important considerations as businesses look to shift their data to the cloud.

5. ONE CODE BASE, ANY DEVICE (SAAS)

"We recommend using responsive web design"
– Google

Don't be surprised if businesses shift the conversation from "there's an app for that!" to "do I really need to download another app to do that?" in 2015.

While there are still ample opportunities for apps in the consumer market, businesses that need to provide employees and clients using a variety of devices with access to the same program may be better served investing in web-based software that runs in a web browser yet may also include an app.

Look for "deploy once, run anywhere" to be the new mantra of savvy businesses.

4. SEARCH, SOCIAL & PAID

As content marketing becomes more competive companies are beginning to understand the connectedness of search and social. Businesses are starting to recognize that effective online traffic building uses a combination of search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM or paid search), social media and killer content.

Expect to see social media optimize (SMO) emerge as a compliment to search optimization, with companies starting to invest the same type of effort to successfully develop these newer channels as they have done with search engines in the past.

Ad retargeting or remarketing, where you can track someone who came to your webiste using a special tracking code and then advertise to those vistors later through large networks like Google's ad network and Facebook, will get increasing attention as businesses begin to understand how effective this approach can be.

At the same time, as newer social networks like Snapchat shift the way people connect online, innovative businesses will look for opportunities to effectively leverage these new channels.

3. DASHBOARDS & DATA TOOLS

Why struggle to get insight from unfriendly spreadsheets if there are tools that can help you visualize what is happening in your company? As our reliance on technology increase, so does the data each business collects.

Businesses will look for new ways to quickly access that information to gain critical insights into the performance of their company. Expect to see customers demand software to be created with better user interfactes built around attractive charts, smart dashboards and data management tools.

These tools will help companies get insights into key points of their business, faster.

There is a very real benefit: companies that shift to a "dashboard world" will have the opportunity to more quickly measure key performance indicators, detect trends and adapt to market trends.

2. CYBER SECURITY

Did you know that the high-profile security breach at retailer Target, which led to 110 million accounts being compromised, happened through **_thermostats_** connected to the company's building management system?

After a year of high-profile breaches, expect businesses to get serious about putting measures in place to better safeguard their business data. Expect the risks to increase and come from new avenues, like hacking vehicles and machines. (And businesses to buy cyber security insurance!)

Meanwhile traditional attacks designed to steal money, including new "ransomware" attacks where companies have to pay a ransom to retrieve locked data, will continue to be a real threat.

As the war between hackers and businesses heats up, smaller companies will need to think carefully about having solid data recovery plans. They need to ensure that critical business data is regularly backed up to a location that is completely disconnected from their main computer system. (It's not very helpful to have your backups on your main computer network, because if the first is compromised the hacker can then access your backups as well!)

1. DIGITAL MARKETING

As social media and online gaming become some of the most popular pastimes, high-impact digital marketing will become even more important than it already has been. Gartner predicts that 2015 will see digital marketing budgets increase by 8 per cent. That money is expected to be spent on customer experience.

"The larger the company, the higher the marketing expense budget as a percentage of revenue — those with revenue of $5 billion or more reported 11 percent, compared with 9.2 percent for those with revenue between $500 million and $1 billion.

"Marketing budgets as a percentage of revenue varied widely, with 46 percent spending less than 9 percent of revenue, 24 percent spending between 9 percent and 13 percent of revenue, and 30 percent spending more than 13 percent of revenue. The 50 percent of companies planning an increase report their average 2015 increase will be 10.4 percent. Of those, the ones that report outperforming competitors said their planned 2015 increase will be 13.6 percent." - Gartner report