



In 2020, looking back on this decade, what will be the single most impactful technical advancement driving business growth?

In my opinion, when we look back on this decade eight years from now, the "single most impactful technical advancement driving business growth" will be the combination of new chip technologies and the advancements in cloud-computing that enabled the mobile revolution to become a reality. Let me explain.

The development of the full function and energy-efficient chips based on ARM® designs and similar technologies enabled the creation of powerful mobile devices such as the iPhone®, iPad® and Android®-powered devices. The availability and proliferation of these devices led to what the late Steve Jobs termed the "Post-PC era." Considering how quickly the mobile platforms have been adopted, I have no doubt that by 2020 they will be the dominant end-user computing devices. The "post-PC" devices have already changed the way corporations and individuals access, process and handle information, and there is every reason to believe their impact will expand. Mobile computing gives more personnel access to critical information and improves efficiencies, both of which drive growth. In addition, as compared to using traditional PCs, the overall cost of using hardware based on the new chips, including mobile devices and servers, reduces overall computing costs which in turn can drive corporate profits and growth.

Cloud computing also changed the computing paradigm and already has had a significant impact on corporate and personal computing. The cloud naturally enhances the value and functionality of mobile devices as it provides access to information and applications without the constraints of a closed network or packaged software. This in turn makes corporate operations more efficient, both on an operational and cost basis. However, the impact of the cloud far transcends mobile computing. Cloud applications tend to be scalable and flexible. Whereas traditional applications typically have a fixed set of features and capabilities, cloud-based software can often be tailored to meet the needs of the specific enterprise, regardless of its size. For example, large enterprises, and mid-sized enterprises have begun to realise that "out of the box" solutions really do not fit their businesses requirements closely enough, and the savings from deployment of "out of the box" solutions are a false economy. Companies such as xAssets represent a new wave of easily configured enterprise solutions that solve the problems without substantial investment in services or product acquisition. Beyond the flexibility and scalability of cloud applications, the software tends to be priced in a manner that is more economical than

standard software licensing models, providing another platform that enables growth.

The combination of the mobile devices and cloud-based apps will surely be looked on as technology's contribution to business growth in the second decade of the 21st century.

With various forces combining to transform the IT landscape, how do you see the role of the IT department evolving?

The IT department may be one of the most dynamic areas of an organization. Over the decades it has transformed from a group that developed custom applications and hardcopy reports needed to run the business on highly centralized systems to a group that oversaw the acquisition and management of server farms, networks, end-user devices and packaged software. Now, with the advent of the "consumerization of IT", cloud-computing and the "post-PC era", the role of the IT department will undergo another radical change. In the past, the IT group literally owned the computing hardware and provisioned the software. Today, as employees continue to bring their own mobile devices to work, the IT group needs to adapt. It will be required to create policies that accommodate personal devices, particularly in the areas of data access, approved software and supported devices. As more tablets and smart phones find their way into the office, the IT group will have less of a role as a technology provider and more of a management and oversight role. Likewise, with the advent of infrastructure as a service (IaaS), the actual computing hardware, including the servers and hard drives, need not be resident on the company's premises. The IT department moves from operating and maintaining the actual physical devices to managing the relationship and service level agreement with the computing service provider. With the changes that the IT landscape is undergoing, and the overall direction it seems to be headed, I think the IT group will assume more of a management function and less of a direct provider of computing and data resources.

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