



*What will the software industry look like in 3, 5, even 10 years from now?*

The pace of innovation in software is constantly accelerating. I think that we are now on the cusp of another great leap in this acceleration. As more and more of the underlying hardware and operating system infrastructure is being abstracted away with virtualization and cloud technologies, software is being detached from the anchors of the slow moving hardware and OS world. Software developers and software companies can now focus more than ever on providing real value through software and deal less with the necessary underlying support and "making it work" functions that were simply rebuilt for every program and solution.

I believe that in 3 years, most software development will leverage the public cloud for almost any software that can be provided as a service (which is the vast majority), keeping locally running (on-premise) software to the absolute bare minimum in business environments. A couple of years after that, you will have a hard time finding employment if you are not cloud software development savvy, and you will find it hard to make the business case to buy non SaaS or Cloud based solutions.

This is truly a win-win situation for both sides of the software industry, both the builders and the buyers. Developers can build better, smarter, faster, and more valuable solutions at a fraction of the cost it would have been just a couple of years ago. On the other hand buyers' dollars will go a longer way, as they will be paying less and less for things like compatibility, support, configuration, implementation, and more for the value components they needed in the first place.

As for what the distant future (10 years in software is several generations), it's very difficult to tell. Software innovation will continue to accelerate and abstraction will be the mode of transport for that acceleration. The major cloud and platform providers will have gone through several rounds of consolidations and expansions, and disruptions will continue to keep the industry on it's toes. I expect that public clouds will flourish and private clouds will be gone, having given way to 3rd party offerings that simply provide a better experience and probably at a lower cost. Just look what happened in other areas, as it wasn't too long ago that businesses owned their own dedicated communications lines, hosted their own voicemail systems, printed their own paychecks, and other non-core activities.

*And what customer demands and business trends will drive changes in software products, how they're developed, and the industry that provides them?*

Businesses are more competitive than ever, employees are more data and technology savvy, and the pace of innovation needed to win in the market is driving aggressive requirements from IT and the software solutions the business uses to run it's operations.

Gone are the days that the CIO or IT can veto business decisions that depend on technology implementations if the business justification is clear (ROI). Those CIOs that are truly focused on providing the business with the competitive edge by leveraging the latest technology are embracing the software movement to the cloud, as they know they can move faster, and retain the flexibility they need for the ever changing business requirements. Those CIOs and IT leaders that are fighting to hold on to their silicon kingdoms, patch management, and job security will, in fact, get the opposite.

These demands of faster, more agile software solutions that are provided from the cloud, are available instantly and provide the flexibility to adapt, integrate, and mash-up will force software companies to think differently. The titans of the industry will either adapt to agile, SaaS, and cloud, or become extinct.

Businesses will be laser focused on value, will no longer be willing to pay for (in time or money) supporting or maintaining the software they are using, or wait for upgrades and extensions. This isn't to say that all of the worlds software problems will be solved, on the contrary. The new problems will pop up, but they will be of a higher order, and they will be addressed faster than

ever before.

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