

## Consumer electronics drive business technology

By **MJ Shoer**

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With the turn to the new year, the technology industry is also about to debut its newest technologies at the annual Consumer Electronics Show, held annually in January in Las Vegas. Personally, I have never attended the Consumer Electronics Show, though a few of our clients go to or exhibit at the event.

What I find interesting about the Consumer Electronics Show is that its genesis is the consumer, yet its impact is squarely targeted at the business world, even if not intentionally. The event is the production of the Consumer Electronics Association and, as its name implies, its focus has always been on the growth of the consumer electronics industry. However, increasingly, the impact of this event and this organization is being felt in IT departments throughout the business world.

Consider the prevalence of smartphones and tablets. These mobile devices came to market as consumer devices and very rapidly found their way into offices large and small. Along the way, IT departments, many of whom had resisted supporting these devices, found themselves needing to support them as owners and senior managers demanded mobile access to their e-mail and applications.

One of things I find interesting about the Consumer Electronics Show each year, is looking for the technologies I know our clients will soon ask us to support, often after they adopt something in their personal life and want to use it for business. This year stands to be no different.

When I looked at the roster of keynote speeches at this year's conference, I did note something very interesting. Of course there will be keynote speeches and presentations from technology mainstays like Microsoft and Xerox, but there will also be speeches from companies like Facebook, Wal-Mart, General Electric and Ford, Verizon, AT&T and many more. What this points to is the continuing convergence of technology across all that we do.

Ford actively markets its partnership with Microsoft and the Sync service that comes in most of its car models. General Motors has its Onstar product. Both of these are bringing increased connectivity to the automobile, initially for safety and entertainment, but it's inevitable that it will push beyond. Whether or not this is a good thing is an excellent questions, but it's happening. Appliances are getting connected, and more is certainly coming.

One of the hot trends expected this year is the introduction of several new ultrabooks, or ultralight laptop computers. First we had the laptop, then the notebook, then the netbook and now the ultrabook. Ultrabooks promise impressive computing power along with reduced energy consumption, making them ideal for people who travel a lot. There have always been tradeoffs between portability and productivity, but that reality has been changing over recent years and this is one of the latest evolutions of this trend.

As the world continues to be more connected and mobile, many technologies will focus on ensuring you are able to do what you want to do, when you want to do it and where you want to do it. Today, you can carry your entire music and video collection with you wherever you go. Businesspeople carry more of their important data with them, to enable them to remain productive, perhaps even when they should not be, like during a family vacation. The Cloud factors largely into all these developments, as one of the keys to these trends is maintaining reliable connectivity to your information. The cellular carriers play a critically important role here, as they continue to increase the bandwidth of their mobile networks, allowing data and applications to be accessed virtually anywhere.

All of these trends bode well for our ability to progress in both our business and our personal lives. I do believe technology is a great enabler. I have the good fortune of seeing this every day in my chosen career. Personally, we need to remember how important it is to periodically unplug and recharge the non-technical parts of our lives, but overall, technology brings great advantages that we are lucky to be able to experience. I hope 2012 will be a productive and exciting year for you.

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