

## IT trends will impact your business...

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If there is one constant in life, it is change. When it comes to business, this is even more pronounced. It's important to keep watch on trends that will impact your business over time, especially your information technology.

As the baby boomer generation begins to age out of the work force and the younger generations begin to move in, they will demand technology adoption at an unprecedented rate. The generation that has been raised on smartphones and tablets will demand that these devices be supported in the workplace. They will expect to work in a paperless environment and one that is up 24/7, allowing them to work whenever and wherever they wish.

These new entrants to the work force will challenge established practices and systems and demand more agile and efficient solutions to even the smallest business challenges. They expect technology to enable and support their work, and rightly so. They have learned and grown with technology as an integral part of their life experience and they will carry this into the workplace, challenging the businesses they work for to change, in some cases radically, to meet the changing demands of an increasingly connected and technology-based economy.

Technology will drive our economic growth and recovery. We need to be prepared to embrace new technologies that will allow our business to grow and adapt. Mobility continues to push traditional IT infrastructures. The widespread adoption of smartphones has brought with it requests for access to sensitive company data in real-time. You need to be prepared to support this and do so securely.

Historically, companies would issue mobile phones only to those employees who required one to do their job. Today, most employees have their own smartphones and want access to company resources from these devices. You need to have a policy and strategy to address this. Building on this concept, there will be increasing pressure on all businesses to provide mobile support to your customers. Health-care providers are already adopting portals to provide patients with access to their medical records as part of federal health-care legislation mandating the implementation of electronic health records.

Consumer-facing companies are adopting mobile applications and mobile Web sites to interact with their customers. The business-to-business market is following suit. Customers want to access your business in whatever manner is most convenient for them. Often this means mobile access while on the go.

Those that don't recognize this and adapt to provide their customers with the access they expect will be at risk of losing market share to those companies that do.

Along with this rapid rate of change, increased government regulation will have a large impact on your use of technology as well. In direct relation to the new technology services you will need to support comes increased regulation and scrutiny by federal, state and potentially even local government.

Over the past few years, we have seen the increasing adoption of stringent data-privacy regulations on the state level. States like Massachusetts and Nevada have enacted some of the toughest data-privacy laws in the country. Many of these new laws have been a direct response to the increase in breaches of data privacy that some have argued are the direct result of the increase in mobile access. As new technologies come to market that enable easier access to data, they don't always come with the necessary security to keep this access secure.

In the face of this, the government has stepped in to try to force the issue. In some cases this is good, in others, not. Clearly, security needs to be at the forefront. If there is not credible security, technology and business will suffer. However, the downside of the current regulatory environment is that it has created a very difficult burden for businesses to manage.

There is a move to create a uniform code across the nation and I strongly endorse this effort. There needs to be a uniform standard that businesses follow. To expect businesses, especially small businesses, to follow differing regulations across multiple states is to set up a model for widespread failures. The HIPAA, the privacy regulations for health care, provide a credible model for addressing this.

As technological change continues at an ever-increasing rate, it will be an ongoing challenge to stay on top of the developments and adapt your business to take advantage of the opportunities ahead of you.

It is sure to be a wild ride, but one that will be enjoyable and deliver benefit for us all.

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