

Technology to watch for 2015

Industry experts share their thoughts on the innovation that will have an impact on business in South Africa in 2015.



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With cloud computing, big data, mobile adoption, and developments around local telecommunications infrastructure, this has been an exciting year in the local ICT industry. But what do the coming months have in store for business?

Greg Vercellotti, Executive Director of Dariel, believes that 2015 will be the year when several interesting technological innovations will be adopted by more businesses in South Africa.

"Machine-to-machine (M2M) will become part of the mainstream. Decision makers will increasingly use this technology, which allows both wireless and wired systems to communicate with a variety of devices to track, measure, and monitor the mission-critical aspects of their organisations."

Business-aligned solutions

And while mobile apps have been become part of daily life for many, Vercellotti says that next year will be the one in which business-aligned solutions come to prominence. "Businesses will be looking to build small apps quickly that deliver measurable returns. This will see an incremental investment in mobile apps in 2015 that are designed to reduce costs and improve service."

Armande Kruger, Sales Director of PBT, agrees: "Mobile devices are no longer seen as a tool, but rather an extension of an individual. Looking ahead, mobile is definitely becoming more personal and becoming the electronic fingerprint of people. We will see mobile devices used for verification, tracking, commerce, classification, identification, and so many other components."

Grant Theis, co-founder of trumpet, says that the drive towards mobile apps will lead to the creation of a more immersive shopping experience through location-based technologies: "Consumers will be turning on their 'discoverability' buttons to

link brands, businesses, and retailers. Geo-fenced content and iBeacons will allow consumers to interact with brands in shopping centres and high streets. For example, if you are within 100 metres of a coffee shop you may get a push notification across your screen that you can swipe with a free Wi-Fi session - no sign up, just instant connectivity.

"This increasing connectedness will see an increased focus in 2015 on the software and cloud services to make the Internet of Things (IoT) connect, upload data, and drive analytics that generate insights and enable business improvements."

Wi-Fi technology

As part of this push to live in an IoT world, Wi-Fi technology will have a continued impact on consumers and businesses of all types. "The smartphone revolution continues to remake the wireless landscape as users in all geographies and all socio-economic groups flock to these devices, which can do so much more than place a voice call," said Michael Fletcher, Sales Director of Ruckus Wireless sub-Saharan Africa.

He believes that Wi-Fi has become a utility like running water or electricity. "You expect it to be there, and if you don't have it, you are at a serious quality-of-life disadvantage. In the case of the business world, lack of reliable Wi-Fi puts you at a serious competitive disadvantage."

In the case of service providers, none have been quite as aggressive as cable operators (MSOs), who have come to regard Wi-Fi as strategic to their businesses, adds Fletcher. For him, it is yet another service that these operators add to their bundle to reduce the amount of customer churn. "Mobile network operators have also been aggressive in this space as they look at Wi-Fi to offload macro cellular networks in high-density locations. An obvious example of this is stadiums, where the legacy networks have nowhere near the capacity to handle tens of thousands of smartphones and all the video uploads to social networks that occur during high-profile sporting events and other festivities where thousands of people, armed with mobile devices, gather."

Wi-Fi will continue evolving at a breakneck speed. With 802.11ac Wave 2 expected to emerge in 2015, Hotspot 2.0 Release 2 poised to completely redo the Wi-Fi user experience, and value-added services around location, Fletcher says that next year will herald a significant change in business strategy when it comes to the technology.

"Wi-Fi is the perfect solution for the data challenges that are coming from a worldwide infatuation with and insatiable demand for more and better wireless data services of all types," said Fletcher.

Data remains the key

PBT's Kruger goes on to say that data will become an essential part of doing business. It will no longer be just about marketing campaigns but will become all encompassing. "Think of things such as buying patterns, stock-keeping levels, fraud detection, incentive programmes, consumer manipulation, and preferential treatment. These will not only see mass consumption of data, but will also drive adoption of data."

Given the focus on data in recent times, the potential for information overload still remains. As such, Kruger believes that developers will focus efforts on creating algorithms that will automate 80% of all decisions, such as which emails or messages to read, which photographs to keep, and so on. "There will also be faster and more real-time analytics through in-memory analytics and in-memory processing. Inevitably, the big data hype bubble is going to burst, making way for a more realist adoption of analytics only where it makes business sense."

Moving beyond hard technology, Gys Kappers, CEO of Wyzetalk, says companies will continue to look for greater efficiency, simplification, consolidation, expert advice and intelligence from big data input.

"Next year will see an increasing focus on engagement, knowledge and partnerships. Companies need to bring their networks of suppliers and customers closer to the core; we're already seeing high demand for the new social intranet that is

anything but social. The interest in developing strategies to bridge the generation gaps within organisations is increasing as the skills shortage remains an inhibiting factor to growth. Innovation is still a key word as companies look for new revenue streams, optimise processes, insight from big data strategies and talent to interpret and fast track results. We see an increase in the role that consultants and professional services will play in guiding companies and crafting strategies," concluded Kappers.

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