



TOP TECH TRENDS

BY SARAH LINNEY

AS TECHNOLOGICAL APPLIANCES AND APPLICATIONS EVOLVE, SMART COMPANIES WILL EVOLVE WITH THEM.

With rapid advances in technology, businesses across Australia are determined to capitalise on the latest tech trends and developments. *The CEO Magazine* spoke to some of Australia's leading tech experts on the biggest tech trends of 2012, how they'll develop in 2013, and how businesses can seamlessly incorporate them into their operations.

SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES

Social media has now reached critical mass in Australia with over 60 per cent of the online population using some form of social media. Co-founder of mobile platform MiiBrand and Social Media Manager at Suncorp Ben Howden claims that Australian businesses will have to adapt to meet these new forums.

"With the advent and sudden growth of social media, the old ways of doing business behind closed doors is quickly disappearing. Transparency and authenticity in social media are essential, and the opportunity to engage with customers in two-way dialogue is now more important than ever.

"Businesses that view social media as too risky and complain that it's too hard to measure the ROI fail to realise that conversations about their business will happen in social media and online with or without them. Every conversation is an opportunity to engage with your customers, and in many cases a potential opportunity to turn a disgruntled customer into a happy customer."

Ben states that social media will present a variety of opportunities. "More and more we will start to see social media ingrained into existing departments throughout the business. The customer service team will be trained to respond to inquiries via channels like Facebook and Twitter. The corporate affairs team will be using social media to get the latest company announcements out to the market. The marketing team will be taking their existing campaigns and designing them to work in a social environment.

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UP IN THE CLOUDS

With cloud computing and solutions dominating the business world, many experts are now looking at how to regulate these new technologies. Servcorp COO Marcus Moufarrige sits on the Australian Government's National Standing Committee for Cloud Computing and believes that the cloud is an astonishing resource.

"With privacy legislation, the *US Patriot Act*, and compliance issues in the spotlight, regulating cloud-providers and making the process more transparent to customers is critical. This will make huge changes to the existing ways that cloud vendors and cloud customers do business. New Zealand recently introduced a voluntary CloudCode, and Australia is planning formal cloud certification."

Marcus claims, however, this process is quite complex. "Regulating cloud solutions is an extremely difficult task. The cloud, by its nature, means that any service-provider, or data associated with that service is not tied to a geographical area. This presents questions regarding which regulatory jurisdiction controls the tax, the service quality, the privacy, and security of data. Heavy regulation on the cloud will be a substantial weight on the government's time. Instead, what they should be focusing on is informing cloud-users about the risks."

Despite these concerns, Marcus states that local businesses cannot ignore this technology. "I believe there is a great opportunity for Australian businesses to use the cloud to deliver services to the large population base to our north, specifically Asia. It will in fact become essential.

"We have an enormous opportunity and we need to build policy around helping Australian businesses export their skills, service, and innovation - connecting Australians with the world, not just with one another. This means that Australian companies will need to take a global view when it comes to regulatory and compliance issues. While geographical diversity, legal jurisdictions, and point-of-service delivery complicate the picture, businesses should still make their best efforts to protect a customer's data security and privacy."

GET SMART

Smartphones and mobile devices are becoming intrinsic to everyday operations, both at home and in the office. Reload Consulting Director Craig Somerville says the business world is changing.

"The 'old days' of the desktop computer are disappearing as businesses move towards more hot-desking style arrangements or staff working remotely from mobile devices. It's certainly blurred the lines around where work ends and personal life starts. With staff connected to their emails and work programs 24/7, getting that balance right can be tricky."

To cater for this proliferation of mobile devices and the changing nature of the workplace, many Australian companies have introduced 'bring your own device' and 'bring your own apps' policies. These new policies allow employees to use their mobile devices such as iPhones and iPads and their own software and applications during work hours to enhance productivity and efficiency.

Good Technology Vice-President and Corporate General Manager Jim Watson says BYOD and BYOA policies will quickly become the norm in coming years.

"We've been seeing this trend proliferating in Australia and elsewhere, with businesses keen to leverage the productivity benefits of an always-connected workforce. Companies embracing mobility are more responsive and competitive, as they share critical information more widely and rapidly than less-connected rivals.

"Being able to choose your own device for work, be it an iPad or Android, also significantly boosts staff morale and is becoming a key differentiator for employers trying to attract and retain talent. Contrary to popular belief, it's not only Gen Y who are taking to the latest smartphones and tablets; increasingly, CEOs and other board-level executives also want to use the mobile device of their choice."

However, Jim admits, these policies do have their drawbacks. "The problem with the rise in BYOD and BYOA is that enterprises need to secure and control a myriad of employees, apps, and devices, or else risk commercially and legally sensitive data leakage, which can result in intellectual property theft, legal liabilities, and reputation damage.

"Research firm Telsyte found that 28 per cent of Australian businesses allow some form of BYOA. It certainly makes business sense to give workers the tools to action more tasks on their mobile devices rather than chaining them to a desktop or laptop. The problem is that many of these apps were originally designed for the consumer space. And even more business-oriented solutions such as file sharing apps Box.net and Dropbox can present a security risk as they directly or indirectly access and share corporate data with other third-party apps and cloud services, even if the device itself supports data encryption and is protected with a strong password." •

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