From the December 2009 Issue

And so we come to the second decade of the second millennium, having witnessed the rise of Google, YouTube and Facebook. We have seen the introduction of smartphones,
the advent of broadband Internet, the redesign of light bulbs, and the first
trials of a primitive form of teleportation.
For people who work in the technology field, this has been one of the most fascinating
and disruptive decades since ... well, since the last one, which witnessed
the birth of the commercial Internet, the rise and fall of AOL, and the emergence
of TurboTax, QuickBooks and Microsoft Windows.

The point is that every decade, and every year of every decade, will bring
change to the field of technology. The trick is to be able to anticipate the
major changes and manage the change process as it occurs. Okay, no one expected
Twitter, but in reality Twitter is not an innovation but rather an extension
of existing technologies. And it remains unclear whether it will be world-changing
or simply a blip on the tech radar screen when the dust settles.

Last year was tough to predict because the meltdown in the housing industry
dragged the entire economy, including tech companies, into the biggest recession
in 75 years. Added to that was the uncertainty of an election year and the pace
of technology innovation ground to a virtual standstill. Nonetheless, we still
managed to score 8.5 out of 10 in last year's predictions.

2009 PREDICTIONS & RESULTS	Score

for others, such as Verizon's cellular-based Wi-Fi hardware.

PREDICTION: Windows 7 will suffer a dreary and slow introduction.
ACTUAL RESULTS: It finally made it to retail shelves last October, but by then almost everyone was aware that this is just an upgrade to Vista. Better security, perhaps, and a few bells and whistles. But mostly Windows 7 has been a yawner. In my opinion, it's still bloated, over-priced and less agile than its competitors.

+1.0

PREDICTION: WiMax won't go much of anywhere.
ACTUAL RESULTS: WiMax was supposed to be the future of wireless Internet access, but it just sputtered and died. Sure, Sprint made a big deal out of deploying WiMax in Baltimore, but even there it has not caught on.

+1.0

PREDICTION: Technologies for environmental action will move to the forefront.
ACTUAL RESULTS: Green, green and more green tech. Even if global warming is debunked, there is

+1.0

a dozen. And while one of them is a technology czar of sorts —
or CIO for the white house — the idea of a single person being
in control of government tech proved a bit unwieldy. This is just
as well, in an administration with 30-some "czars" already trying to run things.

+0.5

PREDICTION: Small computers will continue to grow in importance.
ACTUAL RESULTS: Can you say Netbooks? The emergence of these low-cost, stripped down laptop computers has been the biggest
story in computing hardware in the past year, as consumers discover
that all they really need is a machine that can connect to the Internet.

+1.0

PREDICTION: Tech will get cheaper. Much cheaper.

+1.0

ACTUAL RESULTS: Netbooks (referenced above)
led the way by dropping the price of a decent laptop to under $200,
but the price drops didn't end there. In the midst of a recession,
virtually every device saw massive price drops. The most

It is an open-source system that is fast and flexible and based
on the Linux kernel. The problem with the Android is that
it simply
doesn't break any new ground or offer substantially better
features. Oh, well.

+1.0

PREDICTION: VoIP companies will die.

ACTUAL RESULTS: That is, the VoIP companies
that cater to the general public. While VoIP overall remains
a strong
technology, market leaders Vonage and Skype are both in
trouble.
Vonage is on its last legs, and Skype is on the auction block
for
sale. Neither appears likely to find an effective business
model
in the near term. While I have used both services, and like
very
much what Skype has to offer, I don't like it well enough
to pay much for it. Apparently others agree.

+1.0

**PREDICTION: Internet companies will
begin a new wave of consolidation.**

0

ACTUAL RESULTS: Well, they would have
were it not for that pesky recession. The reality is that there
are simply too many broadband companies in the top tier

of service.

political process leading to the November elections. From Facebook and the Web to Twitter and the BlackBerry, technology energized the voting masses. And if our own predictions only came to the 85 percent correct level … there is always the year ahead.

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2010

PREDICTIONS

1. **Cellular broadband will begin to dominate wireless.**
It began with the BlackBerry, which enabled professionals to stay connected in new and interesting ways. Then came the ability to "tether" the BlackBerry to a computer and use it as a modem. Finally, Novatel introduced its MiFi personal cellular router, which services up to five computers with a cellular broadband connection. With WiMax dying, cellular broadband is poised to become the wireless technology of choice. Now all we need is enough bandwidth to support it.

2. **Multitouch screens will go mainstream.**

right, is believed to be developing a "mega-platform"
around this touch technology. Admittedly, it is only a small start,
but hardware makers are ramping up for touchscreen navigation to
be the norm in mainstream computers.

PDF files will dominate filing.

3.

More specifically, fillable PDF forms will become the gold standard
for all manner of forms. Adobe is finally getting around to cleaning
up the forms functions of its portable document system, setting
the stage for this platform to replace paper-bound forms entirely.
Microsoft's effort to counter with its own document system
seems to have failed (again), leaving Adobe firmly in control.

4. ### Telecommuting will finally get real.

If I had a dollar for every time I had predicted that one year or
another would be "the year of telecommuting," I could
afford a cup of coffee at Starbucks. But between cellular broadband,
the BlackBerry, fears of the swine flu and the global trend toward
mobile offices, this could actually be the year. The best way to
measure? Gartner says there are now 14 million telecommuters in
the United States in 2009. I'm willing to bet the number

increases

of nations have different cultures, laws and copyright policies. Joni Mitchell said it best when she sang, "I've looked at clouds from both sides now, from up and down, and still somehow
... it's clouds illusions I recall. I really don't know clouds at all." Amen.

6. **Google will introduce a new desktop operating system.**
In its never-ending battle with Microsoft for dominance of everything,
Google has introduced a web browser — Chrome — and an operating system for cell phones — Android. Both of these are in response to Microsoft's assaults on Google's primary search engine business with the new Bing search. Both Chrome and Android were released earlier than anticipated, and we can expect the new Google desktop to land early, as well. I'm betting next year.

7. **Intuit will push into the enterprise.**

Yes, there is already an enterprise version of QuickBooks. But I'm talking about a more significant push. Intuit has quietly beefed up its Quicken product to take a more commanding position in the small office/home office markets and small businesses. This frees

8. Sure, we've heard about the so-called "paperless office" for close to two decades now. But Adobe has finally settled in to making these portable document files more than just a photo of the printed page ... with more advanced editing options and better control over fonts and positioning when filling in the forms. Microsoft's efforts to dislodge Adobe as the leader in this marketplace have largely failed, but the market doesn't seem to care as increasing numbers of people flock to use online forms to handle their business chores. This could have an impact on the low end of the tax prep market.

9. **Internet capacities will increase dramatically, if you pay.**
The Federal Communications Commission is working on a national broadband plan, which they have been directed to present to Congress on February 17. But there's a sticking point to broadband deployment, and that is the difficulty that some users create by using far more bandwidth than the "normal user." The only rational solution — though unpopular with the "power users" — is to charge in some level of tiers, so that the more you use, the more you pay. In spite of much angst and wailing, such plans are almost certain to become reality in 2010.

consumers control what they buy. Eventually, data and video will
go to a larger capacity disk — likely whatever replaces the
DVD of today. But in 2010, look for a shift to occur as some companies
begin to release their content on SD cards that can more easily
be used in music players, computers and other devices.

Notably, SaaS (software as a service) is not on this list, because there remains some resistance to doing everything online. But accountants are warming to the idea, and 2010 will see an increase in the number of companies shifting to a web-based platform.

Of course, with the economy poised to show some level of recovery, it will be impossible to predict what all will happen this year, though I'd encourage you to keep your eye on telemedicine and distance learning as two areas that will show growth as the next decade unfolds.

Technology

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