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announced.

Roman Kepczyk • Mar. 13, 2014



The year 2014 started off awesome with my annual pilgrimage to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas where future trends and bleeding edge products are announced. Many of these products will make it into the consumer market this year impacting us and our clients in our homes, and some will eventually impact the accounting profession and make their way into our firms.

Our three-day mission was to canvas through the massive show floor (3,200 vendors spread out over an area about the size of 35 football fields) to identify key technology trends and comb through all the gadgets that could impact accountants someday. Below we highlight Ten Trends worth watching and the products that may some day change our world.

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Surface 2 Pro Tablet, as they have the potential to make it the “single” device needed for the next generation of accountants. One of the most interesting prototypes displayed was Toshiba's “Shape-shifting Concept PC” which could be used in five different configurations ranging from the traditional laptop, to tablet, convertible, canvas mode, and entertainment mode, allowing us to use the device in whatever format is most suitable for the work at hand.

Curved Screens

This year's trend in high definition displays is curving them to optimize the viewing angle, including flexible screens from LG and Samsung that bend on command. While the first round is too expensive for office/PC use, it won't be long until multiple desktop displays “wrap around” our desks with ultra-high definition optimizing our view of spreadsheets and tax source documents on our desktop and turning our desktops into a CPA cockpit which could be used in five different configurations ranging from the traditional laptop, to tablet, convertible, canvas mode, and entertainment mode, allowing us to use the device in whatever format is most suitable for the work at hand.

Wearable Technology

Since most of us are carrying a smart phone with Internet connectivity, why not use that to integrate with wearable devices that can notify us of events such as upcoming meetings, inbound emails, or incoming calls. These features are being integrated into jewelry (FashionTEQ Zazzi) and watches (Galaxy and Burg Smart Watches) allowing us to keep our phone holstered. The amount of micronization that is happening in Internet-enabled devices is phenomenal and smart phones such as the Neptune Pine Smartwatch have so much built into them that they are actually billed as the world's smallest tablet that you can wear on your wrist!

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While there is a lot of hype around “additive” or 3D printing, based on the number of vendors and products at CES, there is definitely a consumer market developing at the home “prototyping” market with devices such as the da Vinci 3D printer starting at \$499 and industry leader MakerBot delivering “Cube” units at close to a \$1,000 price point. While creating small plastic prototypes is one side of the 3D market, tasting custom “printed” sugar candy from 3D Systems' ChefJet was a new CES experience.

HealthTech: Another popular pavilion at CES was the Health technology section where biometric devices that monitor your heart rate, movement, and speed are being linked to your smartphone giving you a recap of your daily activity. Approximately one-third of all smartphones and tablet users already have a health-related application loaded (my personal exercise favorite is the 7 minute workout), showing that the market for integrated biometric tracking devices is huge. On a more practical note, I've heard of firms providing masseuses during busy season to help people relax so they could be more productive. Inada, maker of massage chairs was one of the most popular booths at CES and we would guess this would be extremely popular in any firm's break room.

Robotics

Most of us have heard of personal robotic devices such as the iRobot Roomba vacuum or Scooba floor scrubber that automatically clean up when no one is looking. Well, they now have window cleaning robots such as Ecovac's WinBot that cover your windows as well. For those of us wondering how robots can help run your practice more effectively, there was a product from Double Robotics that lets you see what is going on, even when you are in another office or at home. Their Telepresence Robot for Telecommuters allows you to “move around the office and talk face to face” to your personnel, from the comfort of a remote site.

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Automobile Automation: Verizon and AT&T are developing partnerships with the major automotive manufacturers to integrate digital 4G capabilities within your car to make them one more component of the "Internet of things" which will keep us connected with information resources in real time. With three states now allowing driverless cars, commute time can become work time (if you chose it to be).

New Scanning Tech: No CES review would be complete without looking at Fujitsu's scanning tools which have been a favorite of auditors for a long time. While last year's wireless ScanSnap ix1500 made it easier to transfer scanned images without the cord, this year they added the SV600 which is a book scanner with auto-flattening technology to quickly capture images such as historical ledger pages without having to take them apart!

Virtual Reality: Finally, the world of virtual reality is closer than ever before, particularly with devices such as Oculus Rift's High Definition Prototype Goggles we were able to experience, twice! Imagine future auditor training by being able to look in any direction and move with Virtuix's Omni device. Training trends are moving towards the concept of gamification and could be a way to optimize auditor training such as client interviews and inventory observations.

Well, that concludes another round of cool technologies from the annual Consumer Electronics show; we hope you are having a productive and profitable busy season.

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