TECHNOLOGY

2011 Predictions: The Technology World to Come

Randy Johnston • Sep. 05, 2014

Column: From the Trenches

From the Dec. 2010 Issue

2010 was a year of significant hardware changes. Our hardware recommendations now include Intel i7 processor chips, USB 3.0, solid state or hybrid drives, and the

initial implementation of touch-screen monitors. In fact, we have no hardware recommendation for 2010 that is the same as 2009. 2011 looks to be the year of notable software improvements and more web/Internet enablement without a lot of hardware changes. In addition to the annual updates of software that maintain compatibility with new operating systems and productivity software like Microsoft Office 2010, attempts are being made to make software easier to use, provide better security and backup, enable better reporting, and provide more mobility. Let's look at some of the probable improvements.

1. Access from smartphones and tablets – Web access is continuing to become more prevalent whatever your device of choice. Whether it's Google Android, Apple, BlackBerry or some other company and product that is driving your mobile device(s), each has become better at browsing, email and remote access in 2010. We'll see competitive tablets to the Apple iPad or Dell Streak and innovative apps for all of the phones and tablets. Expect a breakthrough that will make these devices more like a computer and less like a media browser. Further, some users will decide that they don't need anything other than a smartphone or a tablet, particularly if a smaller tablet at a lower price is released to the market.

My prediction: Within two years, your idea of what can be done on a mobile device will change, and you will do more from a mobile product than you perceive possible today.

2. Browser enablement – Another change in the coming year will be new generation web browsers with new versions of Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome. The key feature improvement will be support of HTML5, the new hypertext markup language that will enable more video sound and interactive web. Some are suggesting this will launch Web 3.0.

My prediction: Websites will be rebuilt to take advantage of the new features and performance of HTML5, delivering a faster, richer Internet experience.

3. Video and conferencing services – Cisco, Google deliver key new products – We have begun to see personal video conferencing emerge on phones like the iPhone 4 and with tools like Skype with webcams. 2011 will bring portable conferencing to corporate America with the Cisco conferencing system. Competitors will have lower-end offerings with similar capability within the year. Additionally, products like Google TV, Boxee, Adobe Connect and others will lead the way on streaming video across the net for both conferencing and personal viewing pleasure. As streaming becomes more common, technologies will improve, and even more services will

become available to compete with Netflix or Hulu. Affordable, high-quality video conferencing will emerge.

My prediction: More than half of this publication's reader base will watch some form of streaming video over the Internet this coming year.

4. Analytics in dashboards or Excel components – We often use Excel to get reports to look just the way we want them, even though it can be time consuming to create repetitive reporting using Excel. Office 2010 gave us new tools like Spark Lines to create single cell graphing. Microsoft is working on improving its business analytics capabilities in both Excel and SharePoint. In the meantime, companies like BizNet Software have created a family of products like BizInsight, BizContent and BizBroadcast. Rivet Software has updated Crossfire capable of reporting XBRL financials via Excel. And CCH, Intuit and Thomson Reuters have enabled more Excel reporting.

My prediction: Expect an easy-to-use generalized dashboard tool using Excel components within the coming year.

5. Paperless integration – Content Management and Document Management companies have integrated portal and email technologies into their products. They have also integrated more deeply into accounting software. All of the CCH, Intuit and Thomson Reuters products have paperless integration. And third-party add-ons are available for most accounting software products, providing some form of paperless integration.

My prediction: Expect expansion of handheld support, while paperless integration shows up in even more places in more products.

6. Workflow improvements – Workflow software to control business processes will be one of the breakthrough technologies of the next decade. We are already seeing improvements in products like XCM and FirmFlow from Thomson Reuters, and through the introduction of new products like CCH Workstream. If you have not reviewed workflow in the last year, it is probably time to jump on this bandwagon to organize and control day-to-day processes within your organization.

My prediction: Automating workflows more, doing more approvals and reviews from smartphones and tablets, and deeper integrations into other products will be accomplished in the coming year.

7. Security from Portals as well as disk and email encryption – We may be forced to buy and implement encryption because of new federal legislation in the coming year. Whether this technology is forced on us or we choose to use these technologies simply because it is good business, we would recommend disk encryption using PGP or Microsoft Bitlocker, email encryption with products like CPASafeMail, email2 or Secured-Accountant.com and implementation of a portal. If you can obtain your portal from your document management system vendor like Thomson Reuters or CCH, that's great. If you need a quick and easy fix to creating a portal, ShareFile is an inexpensive way to get a secure, branded portal. Most of these portal products have appeared in columns and articles in the past year.

My prediction: We will implement these technologies because of regulations in addition to these products making business sense.

8. Backing up data on the Internet – Internet backup will continue to gain momentum. Web-based products like Abacus, Gillware, eFolderBackup, NetStore, and others will continue to become easier, less expensive and will replace many traditional backups. Hardware-based backup will also become easier with more in-house appliances like NetRescue, or simple appliances like PogoPlug used with USB Drives, set up to replicate to off-site locations owned by the business or over the Web.

My prediction: The economics of web-based backup will continue to make more economic sense while becoming easier to use. Backing up over the Internet will be a more viable business approach than using pure in-house technologies for backup within the year.

9. Protection – anti-virus, spam and other threats – The need to protect our systems will become greater. There will be fewer good competitors, and the attacks from outsiders with spam and malware will increase. We expect a major security breach or break-in to occur within the next few years, which will slow down some of the adoption of Internet-based technologies. Once the technology companies have regrouped and repaired the issues, adoption will resume at an increasing rate.

My prediction: Expect to be forced to change anti-virus and spam strategies because products will become ineffective, and vendors will discontinue offerings.

10. Synchronization of offline data – The next major strategy shift that has been occurring is making your data available anywhere you want it with minimal effort. Whether it is backup data as cited above or software that enables replication, Google Gears, Adobe Flex, Microsoft SharePoint, Microsoft Sync Center, CaseWare, CCH

ProSystem *fx* Engagement and other products will make synchronization easy or automatic.

My prediction: More of your data will be synchronized between more of your devices and workplaces automatically within the year.

11. Virtual Desktops as a replacement for Remote Desktop Services (formerly Terminal Services) – If progress continues as expected, corporate America will get more virtual desktops, and less locally installed applications. Competitors will start to virtualize desktops in data centers to make virtual desktops affordable for smaller businesses. The economics will change enough to make virtual desktops affordable for mid-sized businesses. This will signal the real arrival of Cloud Computing. Licensing from vendors like Microsoft and Intuit will drive these business models.

My prediction: Our need to replace desktops and laptops will decline, and our performance, consistency and reliability should increase, all while costs go down.

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The new technologies of the coming year will not be revolutionary, but evolutionary. Ease of use, integration, synchronization, security and the ability to work from anywhere will improve. Although we'd love to see technologies like voice recognition and other game changing technologies work as promised, we believe that this won't happen in 2011. However, if they do, what a fun column this will be a year from now! May you have the greatest success possible in the coming year. n

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