

Technology developments outlook for 2020

 By [Brendan McAravey](#)

3 Feb 2020

2019 was a significant year for the technology sector. It brought rise to numerous technological innovations and new business models that have changed the face of global economies. 2020 promises even better technology.



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We're on the edge of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), where the speed of technology and the way it impacts business is going to be like nothing we've ever seen before, and simply has no historical precedent.

Based on what Citrix has seen in 2019 through our customers' and partners' businesses, these are the developments we believe will grow in 2020.

People-centric computing

In 2020, our focus will shift towards people-centric computing. This long sought-after balance between user demand and the needs of IT will finally be met by delivering an adaptive workspace, one that learns deeply how an individual prefers to work, that is productive in nature, and is contextual by delivering the right tools, information, and applications, and drives high levels of productivity.

Using analytics to fully understand the needs of employees, and tailor the workspace, the next-generation workspaces will cater to unique individual requirements.

The people-centric computing approach will get technology out of the way, and focus on how an individual wants to work and adapt to that individual's preference throughout the span of their employment.

Employee experience

Organisations have in the past spent a considerable amount of financial and human resources to focus on the customer experience. They built digital platforms to engage with customers and used them to retain customers, thus improving their customer Net Promoter Score – an index measuring customers' willingness to recommend a product or service to others.

And yet, in 2020, we're going to see a shift from the customer experience to the employee experience. From our engagement with our global customers, Citrix has learned that many of them find that their customers' experience is better than that of their own employees.

It's for this reason that many digitally mature organisations are already starting to place importance on enabling technologies and processes to drive employee experience.

Eighty-five percent of workers globally are disengaged. Employees are often detached from their workplace because of the frustrating user experience resulting from a lack of necessary tools and from the use of complex applications. Enterprise applications need to be unified in order to ensure efficiency, which ultimately will create a great employee experience.

Our research has shown us that improved employee experience certainly boosts customer experience but also improves internal Net Promoter Score, which is extremely important for the war on talent

It's no secret that if you can't build an environment that supports the needs of your employees, they're going to find that at another company. Fundamentally, ease of use and flexibility are key pillars to enabling employee experience. The trend will result in new methods of tracking behaviours that can inform new technologies and processes; ultimately improving the value to the organisation.

The future of work will put employee experience first.

Currently, as many as 11 different apps are used to do work in a day. This results in employees spending too much time – almost 10 hours a week – searching for information and navigating apps that may be complex. This hinders employee experience leading to reduced employee engagement.

Organisations investing in improving the employee experience will gain competitive advantage.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and bots

AI will most likely not take over the world. The chances of us being subsumed into a world of artificial general intelligence any time soon is extremely unlikely. However, think about what we see every day – our interactions with voice assistants, with recommendation engines that get smarter and smarter, helping us to buy more things we don't really need.

In 2020, AI will continue to grow, but in the context of narrow AI, and the context of machine learning. The real question is not how many jobs will be replaced by 2020, but how many new opportunities are created, how much more innovation will we get from our staff when we can use the machines to our advantage.

If we can let the bots take the menial tasks, this allows us to free up human capital. It frees you up from mundane things that tie up many hours in your workweek. It helps you as organisations to deliver better customer service, better customer engagement.

Hybrid cloud – Multicloud

In 2020, we'll finally concede that hybrid cloud will be the predominant mode going forward. For a decade or more, we've argued about public versus private cloud. The African cloud market is valued at \$1.7bn with the African public cloud growing 3x faster than the global average. The private cloud is still dominant though but the public cloud is picking up, according to the 2019 report 'The Rise of the African Cloud'.

The reality is that hybrid cloud, probably even in your own organisations, is the model today. Because what experience tells us, is that we deploy the right tools to the right cloud at the right time and for the right reasons.

Not every hybrid cloud requires low-level network connectivity or VPN connectivity between multiple points. Every time you acquire a new SaaS application, you're adding another cloud to your environment. After all, the world is by definition, hybrid cloud.

Everything-as-a-Service (XaaS)

At Citrix, we've seen an increase in the adoption of XaaS technologies replacing existing on-premises applications. Yet paradoxically, we see lots of applications still being developed by in-house teams, but in a much different way.

The monolithic architectures of applications are a thing of the past and have given way to micro-service applications. These, of course, require brand new development approaches and approaches to operations. The big cloud vendors are slowly creeping into the corporate data centre, bringing the promises of delivering "everything as a service" for the new world that we're rapidly entering.

In the local context, the XaaS model is beneficial to SMEs, especially in the current economic climate. Having and maintaining hardware and software in-house is just not economically viable for small businesses. However, through XaaS technologies, businesses are able to have access to a wide range of advanced technologies worldwide.

The gig economy

2019 saw a shift in what it means to do work and how work is done. The workforce of today is adopting an any-time any-location, any-device style of work.

Working gig to gig, this new generation of freelancers and solopreneurs will keep redefining the conventions of work in the digital economy. Work will no longer be a place people go, but merely a thing people do – and technology will be a huge enabler of this.

An emergent market, the gig economy has redefined the concept of work, and many of the people in these new work set-ups may never appear in physical offices. According to a 2019 Citrix report – The potential economic impacts of a flexible working culture – 65 % of respondents working part-time said they would be inclined to work more hours if they could work remotely. The question is, how do we prepare for the shift presented by the gig economy? And how do we provide IT services to people that may never be met in person?

Gig economy companies play a big role as well – The likes of SweepSouth and Uber. With their main asset being software

interface, they've created business empires through matching continent workers with those looking for specific services in different markets and industries, thus creating job opportunities and sustaining the gig economy.

Evolution of the CIO

Firstly, we'll see the evolution of the CIO role. For many years, we've had CIOs that operated in control of the 'Department of No'. The new CIO will wear the hat of an innovation officer, much more than an information officer.

They will be a change agent at the very core, helping to remove those existing final barriers between IT and the business. They will focus primarily on the 'why' of technology, rather than getting bogged down in the 'how'.

The end of digital transformation

Last year, digital transformation much raved about. But businesses can be in a state of digital transformation for years and never get anywhere. Three-quarters of digital transformations fail to generate returns that exceed the original investment, and of those that fail, 70% are due to a lack of user adoption and behavioural change. It's time to separate the reality from the hype.

We've all heard how the promise of digital transformation will change user experience across the globe. Yet, when we engage with our customers it's very rare that we hear a story about how technology will enable their new business models in the next three to five years.

Many enterprises that are stuck with legacy technologies, and are piling on more technology for the sake of it without thinking about how that's affecting emerging business models, are doomed to fail. Nearly a quarter (24%) of organisations are still defining their digital transformation strategy while only 4% have completed their transformation.

These are just some of the developments we can expect in 2020. If anything, 2019 showed us that it's a great time to be in the technology industry.

ABOUT BRENDAN MCARAVEY

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