



***In 2020, looking back on this decade, what will be the single most impactful technical advancement driving business growth?***

While there are many areas that will shape the IT landscape of the future, such as cloud computing, mobile business and security, when we look back on this decade the most far-reaching technical advancements driving business growth will be in the area of business analytics.

Today, businesses are struggling with a growing problem: they are drowning in data. Extensive digitization and advances in microprocessor, storage, sensor and communications technologies has resulted in a wave of unstructured data that is growing exponentially.

This data is packed with meaningful information about ways to improve products, services and customers' experiences, but businesses lack the tools or skills to quickly make sense of it all. Business analytics fills this void by enabling organizations to rapidly mine vast amounts of data and uncover hidden insights and patterns, which offer a roadmap for business growth.

We are already seeing major advances in this technology, such as IBM Watson's deep analytics capabilities. Hundreds of universities around the world have started developing curricula to address the growing need for business analytics skills, which help students to understand how analytics can be applied to their field of study. IT developers are busy improving their skills in business analytics as well, identifying it as the most "in demand" area for software development in the coming years (Source: [IBM 2011 Tech Trends Survey](#) )

Industry analysts predict that enterprise data will experience a 29-fold increase in the next 10 years, so business analytics tools will continue to advance in the coming decade as businesses turn to this new and seemingly limitless source of insight.

***Social media and social business are big themes for 2012. In which areas of business will the social movement have the most impact (or most potential for impact)? Why?***

From the apps on our mobile phone to the way we get news and work with colleagues around the world, social media tools are everywhere. Now, businesses are starting to realize the power of bringing social concepts into the enterprise. From building communities of influencers to gaining customer insight and analyzing external social networks with social analytics tools, the results of this social business revolution are wide spread. Our clients are seeing positive changes to their culture, processes, risk management, leadership development, and overall strategy.

This revolution also presents great opportunity for people with social business skills.

With the adoption of new internal and external social business tools, there is a growing need for people to manage the new processes and communities, to measure their effectiveness, and to educate and enable the workforce to participate. Organizations are quickly realizing they need employees with social business skills to take on the role of building, maintaining and activating members online around common interests and topics. Does your organization have the skills it needs to take advantage of social business technologies?

***Does Mobile fall into one of your top 5 priorities for 2012? If so, how will you be attacking it? If not, why not?***

Mobile has been and continues to be a priority for IBM and our clients.

According to IDC, the burgeoning mobile workforce is expected to reach more than one billion people by 2013, and nearly one trillion Internet-connected devices will be in the market by 2012. This growing mobile workforce means that people are bringing their smart phones and tablets to work and expecting enterprise connectivity. The "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) to work trend is exploding and companies need to be prepared to meet the demands.

IBM is supporting these organizations and our employees by providing new social networking

and collaboration mobile apps designed with enterprise, security and compliance requirements in mind. Now, businesses can put enterprise-class social networking, real-time collaboration and online meeting capabilities into the hands of their employees.

The result? A mobile workforce that has moved far beyond just gaining access to email and calendars, to being able to collaborate and generate new ideas and be more efficient anytime, anywhere.

### ***What's the future for hybrid cloud strategies?***

Hybrid clouds are rising in popularity as more companies embrace cloud computing. After keeping the cloud at arm's length, CIOs are starting to embrace cloud computing to provide broader access to resources, house huge amounts of data more efficiently, streamline operations, and spot new market or product opportunities.

According to IBM's 2011 Tech Trends report, during the next two years more than 75 percent of organizations will be engaged in cloud computing and close to 60 percent of respondents cited flexibility and scalability as the top motivators for embracing cloud technology. Hybrid clouds combine flexibility, scalability and security with openness, while providing unique opportunities to connect with partners and clients and ferret out unexpected insights.

As companies jump into the cloud, they're realizing that while they want to be able to tap into applications and services available through the public cloud, they also want to securely manage and integrate those applications with their own in private clouds or elsewhere. Organizations want an easier way to share and manage their business critical information, no matter where it sits. A hybrid cloud computing model helps companies do just that.

Pioneering companies lead the way with hybrid clouds, but they are projected to quickly become the cloud of choice for many organizations as they blend cloud computing with legacy systems and services. More than half of business executives believe cloud computing enables business transformation, and leaner faster business processes. Through cloud computing, businesses can create new marketplaces, smarter business services and profitable new revenue streams. Using hybrid clouds makes it just that much easier to attain those goals.

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