



8 CIOs reveal top line predictions for 2020

Some hot projects to watch for include AI, machine learning, blockchain, automation and workplace collaboration

Jennifer O'Brien (CIO) | 28 November, 2019 10:28



Tech chiefs are influencing rapid change across their organisations. They're at the coalface, driving technology projects that use technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, machine learning, virtual reality, data analytics, automation and robotics to change the way their organisations operate.

CIO Australia asked Australian technology bosses about their top line predictions for 2020, the technologies that will have the greatest impact next year, and what top trends will impact the IT and business landscape.

Here are the predictions from eight leading CIOs.

Simon Reiter, CIO, Defence Health:

From my perspective, I see both IOT/wearables/drones and AI/machine learning/process automation having the greatest impact on organisations in 2020. A lot of enterprises including Defence Health have invested in getting their technology such as core platforms, integration points and data systems uplifted over the past 12-24 months so that they can now take advantage of these now commonplace technologies in 2020.



Simon Reiter

This allows organisations to provide more accessibility and personalised services to their customers, while reducing costs and allowing staff to focus on the more critical and high value activities by automating repetitive manual tasks.

I think the continuation of the digital transformation journeys that most companies have already commenced will see greater impact and acceleration throughout 2020, with more industry disruptors coming into the market.

We are already seeing disruptions starting to occur in the retail, banking and insurance sectors which are all highly regulated, so no single industry is immune to disruption. My advice is for organisations to take a step back and look at the market that they're in and try and think like a start-up.

This will allow them to map out how they would disrupt their own company which they can then leverage in developing their transformation strategies or to validate their existing transformation strategy.

Oliver Schmill, CIO, Mercedes-Benz Australia/Pacific:

The year is already coming to an end and 2020 is waiting with exciting new topics. In one sentence, 2020 might look like: IT in 2020 will be driven by the next level of sophistication of automation including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). Autonomous things will continue to disrupt and create opportunities.



Oliver Schmill

Hyperautomation and autonomous things will both continue to drive the security space with more requirements. Cloud computing will - even more - realise efficiencies and scalability in IT. Mercedes-Benz will drive its sustainable luxury strategy and bring electric vehicles to Australia and NZ and change the way we do business. Exciting times ahead.

Tom Leyden, global leader information technology, Woods Bagot:

My top line predictions: SAAS everywhere. The power of SAAS delivered through high speed internet will become so compelling to business users that it becomes the default way of working. IT will need to work out the role they play in this world and build new value propositions with their business counterparts if they're to stay relevant. This value will be built on security guidance, data governance and automation, but will be hard won as the business tends to be quite sceptical of the real value on offer.

Workplace collaboration goes to the next level. MS Teams or Slack will become mainstream for most organisations as they look to break the back of inefficient email practices and improve engagement with the next generation of professionals. Leading firms will work out how to incorporate their processes into these tools through bots, automation and conversational AI. Bot sprawl is inevitable.

Hackers will not stop at email and will extend their capabilities to exploit SAAS interfaces and workplace collaboration tools that are outside traditional email protection. Once existing revenue streams slow down, their attention will turn to exploiting the next generation of technology - and will no doubt find a way to break through.



Tom Leyden

IOT growth continues as devices become cheaper and business cases become more apparent and easier to explain to non technical audiences. New IOT business cases will emerge that deliver more efficient asset management, and better decision making.

Top trends that will impact the business landscape:

Work from home becomes the default for most knowledge workers. High speed internet and workplace collaboration tools make working from home a better option for most knowledge workers. Employees will need to work out what their traditional office space will look like when most staff would prefer to work from home (or the café, or the beach house).

The business is IT - people who have avoided IT issues for most of their working life find themselves actively engaged in the IT decision making. How can we help them skill up and understand the complexities of IT?

China's social platforms cannot be ignored or dismissed as marginal - and should be considered as viable business platforms for firms outside of China if they're interested in engaging with China and other trading partners. They bring a new paradigm to user interface

and engagement that needs to be understood and then integrated into traditional IT systems.

Andrew Atkin, head of information technology Asia Pacific, Lindt & Sprungli (Australia):

The top line predictions and trends answer depends a bit if your organisation is willing to be an early adopter or not.

If your organisation is an early adopter, then 'latest' technologies would be considered. However, Lindt is very conservative and, as a result, wouldn't consider the 'latest' technologies.

We're extending our RPA capabilities to automate more processes across the business, and obtaining greater insights from our proprietary data.

Meanwhile, any technology that can do a better job of predicting the future, based on historical data will have an impact on the IT and business landscape.

Additionally, automation solutions - anything that can be accomplished without human interaction is another one to have an impact on businesses.

Ivan Bate, technology transformation manager, Western Earthmoving:

Just as everyone will be saying - machine learning/AI technologies will start to move from the innovative business pillar to the operations.



Ivan Bate

On the trends front, small to medium business will start to jump on board the technology transformation journey. Sadly, many are still yet to take that plunge. This is particularly pertinent in the construction industry where technology adoption is still poor. However, there's momentum for change and although in its infancy, once the industry gets on board, the potential to impact the construction industry is significant. Key technology partners in the construction space are reporting that construction businesses are starting to realise they must change and there are new products entering the market that challenge the old school players.

As construction gets on board, demand for technology skills and tech analysts with industry knowledge will increase. Hopefully, the industry recognises the need to engage the correct technology skills and are able to draw them into their businesses. Traditionally, construction has relied on their internal engineering staff to make key technology decisions. This has typically happened without a full company technology vision or broad understanding of technology industry trends. As such, there are many legacy and disjointed technology environments in the construction industry.

Ian Oppermann, CEO and chief data scientist, Data Analytics Centre, Data, Insights and Transformation Customer Service Cluster:

The No. 1 top line prediction: We have moved along the hype cycle of data and analytics. We are all going to take it more seriously, so are likely to see more organisations going back to fundamentals, and more organisations actually undertaking the data and insights transformation. Second, blockchain is likely to remain "interesting" but still struggle with uptake. Thirdly, we will see de-hyping of AI and greater use



Ian Oppermann

The top trends to impact the IT and business landscape include: automated machine learning will become more commonplace; data fabrics will be discovered by more organisations; and cybersecurity will continue to see under investment.

Rohan Penman, global head of technology, T2 Tea:

I'm sensing a ground swell around affordable and unified collaboration and communications tools; I keep hearing the words 'we're thinking of moving to Microsoft Teams'. This seems to be a really hot topic at the moment and it's building momentum.

Personally, I also see 2020 as a year where many more businesses pull the trigger on SaaS solutions and move away from on-prem, if they still have this solution in place. Many other technology leaders who I've spoken to now admit the benefits of SaaS financials, ERP or CRM solutions is becoming evident in the greatly accelerated increased functionality and enhancements lifecycle. Solutions in Salesforce, NetSuite and Microsoft Office365 families now release hundreds of changes in a calendar year - exponentially faster than I think the industry has ever seen before.



Rohan Penman

On the trends front, working in retail I've been pushing a unified commerce strategy for some time and I've also been thinking 'what's next' for this strategy.

I believe businesses that can provide a unified communications solution for their customers will now get the next opportunity to push their customer experience ratings up higher and provide value and satisfaction to their customer base. If I'm shopping online and I want to ask a question or want to make an alteration to a sales order, I want flexibility and responsiveness. Just having email or a phone number isn't enough. I want WhatsApp, WeChat, SMS or chatbots - I want flexibility and options for the right time of day and for the right moment in my shopping journey.

Personalisation in the actual online shopping experience will also be trending. If you're a shopper who always reads reviews, wouldn't it be great that the reviews are up near the top of my digital shopping journey instead of having to scroll to the bottom. If you always care about pricing and discounts, put it onscreen and at the top - it's what I'm after and when I want it. It's a personalised shopping experienced customised and optimised for me.

Bradley Blyth, CTO, flybuys:

Some top line predictions include: customer relationship management systems (CRMs); personalisation engines and creating more contextual experiences that are cross channel. Merging online and physical interactions between organisations and customers; and identity management systems (IDAMs) - PII data security and customer consent capture and management will be critical path for digital organisations. Another top prediction involves APIs and process automation – these will continue to be a critical technology strategy item for technology teams.



Bradley Blyth

On the trends front, regulation will be key. Changes in regulation from the ACCC, especially Open Banking, Consumer Data Rights and Digital Platforms Inquiry are likely to disrupt many digital companies and their business models. Business leveraging common digital marketing technologies such as cookies and other data collection and tracking mechanics may find they need to drastically change their solutions, and companies will need to invest in new methods and better customer transparency on data collection and usage.

Customer Expectations is another one to watch. Customers will continue to raise their expectations on companies being digitally enabled, being available 24x7 and contextual. Businesses and IT departments will drive to push these concerns as continual investment areas rather than projects.

Meanwhile, look to the economy. The instability in the economy and diminishing retail trade will push more pressure on business to look further into automation and cost saving strategies.