

## The continued technology evolution

Next Generation IT's Jason Connolly takes a look in the technology crystal ball and gives us a peek at what innovations are around the corner



**A flurry of new technology has been announced for the coming year including the new Microsoft Surface Pro 4 tab, a new supersize Apple tablet (13" iPad Pro), the long awaited replacement to Windows 8 (Windows 10) and a more collaborative Microsoft Office 2016.**

We are also promised self-driving cars that charge as they drive (Google and Apple); 5G (wireless gigabit); drone deliveries (could lead to more cross channel air traffic); wearable tech (continuous digital health monitoring); and the internet of things (fridges and TVs) with a forecast that 50 billion 'things' will be connected to the internet by 2020.

**Remote Working** - On a business level, technology will continue to blur the work/home boundary by enabling people to connect to their systems from any device anywhere in the world. Technology is allowing people to fill spare time with work, e.g. waiting for a plane or working from home, which is driving a shift in working patterns. This is allowing people to stay in touch with work, improve productivity and in many cases spend more time at home with the family.

**Opening new offices** - In recent years many local businesses have attempted to diversify their customer base and business offerings. With a fixed pool of business in Guernsey, many businesses are looking further afield and expanding into new jurisdictions. Of course there has been a slowdown of growth in China, but the Far East is still growing quicker than the world economy. The trend to open offices in Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Mauritius etc. is only going to increase in 2016. Technology is a key enabler in this expansion allowing Channel Island businesses to keep control of their data and applications locally, but providing effective remote access from offices across the globe.

**Outsourcing** - In an increasingly competitive

world, the drive to reduce costs and improve efficiency is leading to a trend towards outsourcing non-core functions, especially HR, accounting, compliance & IT. 2016 will see a strengthening trend towards outsourcing so staff are freed up to focus on their core business.

**Cloud Computing** - 2015 has seen a sharp increase in businesses moving to local cloud computing services. When their existing servers need replacing the vast majority of our small to mid-size clients are opting to move to NGIT's Office Anywhere hosted service. This desktop as a service (DaaS) reduces costs (especially capital expenditure) allowing small businesses to pay only for services as they need them, whilst also improving reliability and performance. This also means these smaller businesses need not worry about IT, as systems monitoring, backups, updates and support are all taken care of as part of the service.

But DaaS can be too inflexible for larger organisations. When an organisation is large enough to employ its own IT staff, it needs to retain control over its IT systems. Plus the complexity of larger businesses will lead to more customised and complex IT systems. Recognising this need, service providers have evolved their services to provide Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS)

The next evolution of cloud computing, IaaS, enables local mid to large businesses to move their IT systems into a resilient data centre, avoiding the need to purchase equipment. Instead, they pay for virtual servers on a rental basis, as used. In the data centre, systems are protected against power outages, hardware failures and other environmental factors, ensuring that systems are always running and accessible. 2016 will see an increasing trend towards IaaS which spreads the cost of the supply of IT hardware, software and maintenance, ensures a consistently high level of service

and support, and provides access to advanced services usually only available to large enterprises.

**Backups** - Coupled with these changes will be a big move to ditch legacy backup systems. Most businesses are moving away from tape-based backups and in 2016 we expect to see a large move towards online backups. Where a business has onsite equipment we generally install fibre links between the client's site and our disaster recovery (DR) facility, allowing backups and replication to our DR system at NGIT. As an illustration of this trend, our Office Anywhere DaaS and IaaS services include online backup from the datacentre to our disaster recovery facility as part of the service.

**Focus on Security** - Local regulation and client demands are driving local finance businesses to focus on security, procedures, auditing and monitoring more than ever before. Many audits now assess businesses against stringent ISO, ISAE and PCI DSS standards for security and measure local businesses IT systems and procedures against IT best practice. This will lead even more businesses to consider hosted services in 2016 where best practices in security and procedures are 'baked into' the service.

Beyond 2016 - What does the future hold? Well certainly a sustained increase in competition from other jurisdictions onshore and offshore. Local businesses will continue to innovate, for instance differentiating their service by providing personalised and up-to-date reports for investors, and will use technology to offer new products and reach new marketplaces. Automation will become important in driving efficiencies and performance, for example it won't be long before we see AI and predictive analytics being used to aid investment decisions. In the future, not only will our fridges be able to keep track of what we eat, automatically reordering food online from the supermarket as it is consumed, they may even be able to offer finance advice over breakfast.