



A flurry of new business technology has been announced for the coming year, including the new Microsoft Surface Pro 4 tab, a new supersize Apple tablet (the 13" iPad Pro) and the long-awaited replacement to Windows 8 (Windows 10). 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 (Samsung is launching a smart fridge with 21.5 inch touchscreen), with a forecast 50 billion 'things' connected to the internet by 2020.

Blurring the work/home boundary

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, when 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.

Expanding into new jurisdictions

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 and Mauritius 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 provide 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 and IT. 2016 will see a strengthening trend towards outsourcing so staff are freed up to focus on their core business.

Cloud computing

2015 saw a sharp increase in businesses moving to local cloud computing services and this trend is set to continue throughout this year. 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, while 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. 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).

Infrastructure-as-a-Service

IaaS enables local mid to large businesses to move their IT systems into a resilient data centre, and avoid 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.

Online backup

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 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 standards for security and measure local businesses IT systems and procedures against IT best practice. This will lead to 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. It will not be long before we see AI and predictive analytics being used to aid investment decisions.