



WINTER IS COMING!

The technological revolution is set to continue in 2018. Jason Connolly, business development director at Next Generation IT, sets out the threats and opportunities facing local companies.

2018 may pose challenges familiar to Game of Thrones fans. Trump is relying on a wall to keep his country safe, but has overlooked the threat from the north (Korea) from the air and he may need to enter into alliances with old enemies (China and Russia) to deal with this new threat.

The British PM is caught up in a power struggle to retain her crown, but has bungled the threat from across the narrow sea, putting her in a precarious position; losing the support of the common people while interlopers vie for power. No-one seems to have married their sister yet, but there's still time!

For business, the threats and opportunities may be less fantastical – but do focus on adaptability and security.

GDPR

The EU's General Data Protection Regulation takes effect on 25 May 2018 and will be an overwhelming focus for many businesses. Organisations will need to invest time and money in systems to meet its requirements, including 'the right to be forgotten', 'the right to access', 'privacy by design', 'breach notification', 'data portability' and 'data protection officers'. We're investing heavily to ensure our hosted services are compliant and to help clients can provide gap analysis, compliance audits and a data protection officer.

FOCUS ON SECURITY

Security challenges are increasing with many local organisations succumbing to ransomware attacks in 2017. Interestingly, local business and the regulator are being proactive and view cyber security as a competitive advantage.

We're implementing more advanced threat detection and prevention systems to provide a much more proactive approach to preventing, detecting and reporting data loss. We've recently appointed an information security officer, while more businesses are considering migrating to hosted services in 2018 where best practices are 'baked in'.

BIG DATA & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Technology capability doubles under Moore's law, meaning larger leaps forward each year. The internet's estimated size is 11.6 Zettabytes (11,600,000,000,000,000,000 bytes) but its growth will accelerate. With luck, local telcos will recognise this trend and significantly increase bandwidth. Fibre to every business and property would be a real benefit.

2018 will be a big year for artificial intelligence. Most mobile phones will ship with AI chips next year. Combining AI with big data will generate more business opportunities, including robotic process automation, roboadvisors, virtual agents, decision management and cryptocurrencies. Machine learning is increasingly important for IT security systems in spotting sophisticated hacking and phishing attempts. In addition, many local organisations are connecting with high value clients and partners through online reporting, web portals and collaboration.

CLOUD COMPUTING

An increasing pace of change is inevitable, but businesses that invest in technology can bring their ideas to fruition faster, disrupt markets and gain market share. However, technology change is expensive and traditional fixed capacity onsite IT systems

cannot adapt rapidly or cost-effectively. Cloud computing provides affordable access to flexible IT infrastructure that grows with a business, driving digital transformation.

The islands benefit from their offshore location in close proximity to London and Europe. The ability to keep data in this jurisdiction is key to security and performance, and is why Next Generation IT has built an extensive offshore cloud spanning both the Sure and JT data centres.

MOBILITY

5G rollouts will begin in 2018, providing gigabit connectivity via the mobile network. Increasing battery life driven by improvements in nanotechnology will lead to ever sleeker and portable devices. Mobile technology and increasing bandwidth allow business to employ and retain top talent globally. Technology will continue to blur the work/home boundary by enabling people to connect to their systems from any device anywhere.

Smartwatches, glasses and clothing are creating opportunities around mobile payments and security. The Internet of Things (IoT) will take off in 2018 as Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, Amazon and Google focus on home automation.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The key to survival isn't to kill the proverbial White Walkers from Games of Thrones, but to transform technology and company culture rapidly, building an agile business model that takes advantage of new growth opportunities. ■