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Predicting IT Trends: How'd I do?

Kevin Lee Elder

In January of 2007, I wrote an article about upcoming IT trends. Let's look back and see how I did before I write my 2010 predictions .

Prediction 1 — We tend to overestimate the amount of change that will come in the next 10 years, while underestimating the amount of change that will come in the next 12 months. Information Technology (IT) is no exception to this rule.

In 1996, very few could have imagined the impact the Internet would have on business today. In 2004, Bill Gates told us we would have the problem of spam e-mail solved in the next year.

According to the Fortune Magazine article: "The most common prediction is that we will see — or rather, we won't see — computers everywhere, painted onto walls, in chairs, in your body, communicating with one another constantly and requiring no more power than that which they can glean from radio frequencies in the air.

"The cell phone is becoming more like a PC, while the PC is becoming more like a cell phone. In short, the next great era of computing — succeeding the PC one — will likely be about smaller, cheaper, more-powerful portable devices."

How did I do? Did you see the paper when they were talking about the brake problem in the Toyota Prius? Toyota was claiming it was a problem in the software. Software! There is a computer in my car? I better park it.

Computers are being embedded everywhere, and the concept of the PC is going away. Just look at the recently announced iPad. This prediction was good.

Prediction 2 — With this trend towards ubiquitous computing, there isn't a business out there that will not have to adapt. Maybe they won't have to adapt in the next 12 months, but surely in the next three to five years.

Credit card companies have begun rolling out cards with active Radio Frequency ID tags in them that will allow credit transactions to be conducted without swiping the card.

How long will it be before we no longer have to stand in line to purchase items? We will be able to pass by a RFID reader on our way to the car with our purchases.

Are your inventory and point-of-sale systems ready for this conversion? Does your IT staff have the employees to rise up to the challenge?

How did I do? Not so well. RFID adoption has been much slower than we thought in early 2007. This is a 10-year prediction, not three to five years. This prediction was bad.

Prediction 3 — While most companies have spent years getting their store fronts available on a Web page for access over the Internet, how many are ready for their Web pages to be transmitted to cell phones?

As a college professor, I get to see a new set of freshmen every year. This year, nearly 100 percent of the incoming freshmen (born in 1991) will have a cell phone. More than 50 percent of those cell phones are used for Internet access.

They view videos, listen to music and purchase goods and services on their cell phones. Virgin Mobile Cell enables its customers — mostly young people — to opt in to watch commercials in exchange for free minutes.

"We've been shocked at how many signed up," Dan Schulman, CEO of Virgin, said. "For them it's just entertainment."

Is your Web site ready to go mobile and be viewed on cell phones? Does your IT staff have the employees to rise up to the challenge?

How well did I do? Even Georgia Southern University has a mobile version of our Web pages in 2010. Do you? This prediction was good.

Looking to the future

"Sony has already patented a game system that beams data directly into the brain without implants," reported Chris Taylor in Business 2.0 Magazine in 2006.

How long will it be before your company will have to deal with that IT trend?

I'll have my predictions for 2010 in my next article, but two out of three for 2007 is not too bad. Tell me what you think.

Kevin Lee Elder is an associate professor of information systems at Georgia Southern University. He may be reached by e-mail at kelder@georgiasouthern.edu.

Courtesy of Consumer Credit Counseling Service of the Savannah Area

Judson Hendry, left, the incoming board chairman of the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of the Savannah Area and vice president of operations at Hospice Savannah, and counseling service president John Wills present outgoing board chairwoman Sandra McCord Best with a plaque honoring her service.

Consumer Credit Counseling Service outgoing board chairwoman honored

BUSINESS IN SAVANNAH

Sandra McCord Best recently was honored for her leadership and guidance of the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of the Savannah Area.

On Jan. 27, Judson Hendry, the incoming board chairman and vice president of operations at Hospice Savannah, presented Best with a plaque honoring her service as board chair and her commitment to community needs.

Best, director of human resources at Savannah State University, served as chair from 2008 to 2009. Under her direction and that of Consumer Credit Counseling Service president John Wills, the counseling service provided important services, such as foreclosure prevention counseling and financial education, to the community.

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of the Savannah Area is an accredited nonprofit budget, credit and housing counseling agency and a member of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling.

Its mission is to provide professional and confidential counseling, debt management, housing counseling and consumer credit education to the community.

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