

When 'future' technology trends become today's reality



By [Nick Durrant](#), issued by [Bluegrass Digital](#)

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This year has been a tough year for many but looking ahead to 2021, the technology world promises a wide range of opportunities to adapt. It's tough to make predictions about 2021 when none of us are sure how the rest of 2020 will pan out. What we do know for certain is that the world will never be the same.



Nick Durrant, CEO of Bluegrass Digital

Gartner recently shared the following story to illustrate this point. When the employees at an industrial site returned to work after the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, they noticed a few differences. Sensors and RFID tags had been deployed to monitor if employees were washing their hands regularly.

Computer vision technology was implemented to determine if employees were complying with mask protocol and speakers had been introduced to warn people against any regulation violations. The company was also using this behavioural data to better understand and influence how people behave at work.

While some of this may seem extreme, it showcases that business leaders and corporate heads need to develop strategies to adapt to the 'new norm'.

Technology offers a range of opportunities to help businesses minimise disruptions and, ultimately, thrive.

Here are a few technologies that are set to make an impact in 2021.

Introducing the Internet of Behaviours (IoB)

According to Gartner, the IoB is all about using data to change behaviour. One of Gartner's nine strategic technology trends for 2021, the IoB will see organisations gathering "digital dust" about their customers' daily lives and then using this information to influence behaviour.

But there are various ethical and societal implications that need to be considered depending on the goals and outcomes of each use case and privacy laws are set to have a massive impact on uptake of IoB.

The as-a-service revolution

In 2021 and beyond, companies need to be able to adapt as demand changes. As such, those that leverage cloud to provide scalable solutions as-a-service will prosper. "As-a-service" offerings make it possible to deploy cutting-edge technologies with minimal upfront investment and without needing to hire people with specialised skills.

During the pandemic, we witnessed the dramatic rise of video and web conferencing app, Zoom. As a cloud-based service, the brand was able to cope with increased demand because they could easily add servers and increase coverage and quality. This is what as-a-service offerings are all about.

Punting the total experience

Another Gartner strategic trend, the total experience aims to improve experiences where everything intersects - from technology and employees to customers and users. Last year, the research firm forecast that we would be moving into a

'multi-experience' world, which will change how users perceive and interact with digital tools and technologies.

The total experience takes things up a notch. This trend empowers business to capitalise on key Covid-19 disruptors like remote work, mobile and distributed customers. As interactions become more mobile and virtual, experiences must evolve.

Operations, anywhere

Business needs to be accessed, delivered and enabled anywhere - be it by customers, business partners, employees or leadership. The anywhere operations trend is all about "digital first, remote first". This isn't to say that there is no longer space for physical interactions. Rather, operations anywhere is about delivering digitally enhanced experiences and building products and applications that deliver a fuss free, seamless and contactless experience.

Extended reality

Extended reality combines the different immersive technologies we already have access to today. Think virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) all in one. What does this look like? Well, in 2021 we could see VR being used to enable remote medical examinations, like an eye test and then customers can "try on" different specs and see what the frames look like on their face using AR.

Covid-19 is a prime example of a black swan event, a term coined to describe high impact events that are unimaginable before they happen. The events of the last year have certainly proven that no one can predict the future and that we need to be flexible enough to adapt when we're faced with the unexpected. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't plan and prepare for the year to come.

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ABOUT NICK DURRANT

Nick Durrant is MD at Bluegrass Digital, a digital solutions company with offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg and London. We are experts in crafting web and mobile products and platforms. After spending 17 years in working the tech industry in the UK and setting up the Bluegrass in London in 1999, Nicholas now runs the company from Cape Town, developing the business into Africa and Europe offering world class digital solutions.
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