

Tech trends and predictions your small business needs to know in 2019

By  Colin Timmis.

16 Jan 2019

Digital transformation is well and truly underway, both in business and across our daily lives. As technology continues to change the way we work and live, it's worth looking at the year ahead to see what technology is likely to have the biggest impact in the upcoming months.



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Let's unpack the top technology trends that your small business needs to know about in 2019.

- **5G**

5G is set to broaden access to the internet – and substantially increase connectivity speeds. Increased speeds allow us to trial new devices and process the results in real time, paving the way for smart cities and digital infrastructure.



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According to Frost & Sullivan, 5G will be coming to South Africa in the next few years, with the healthcare, education and automotive markets among the early beneficiaries.

That said, some providers are moving more rapidly than others: Vodacom's 5G service launched in Lesotho in August last year, offering fixed-wireless speeds of 700Mbps (which is 35 times faster than the typical 4G connection in South Africa). Faster, more accessible internet could arrive sooner than expected.

- **Cloud, cloud and more cloud**

Although it may be over a decade old, cloud computing is evolving at a rapid pace.

In 2019, we're anticipating the rise of multi-cloud technology. It's exactly what it sounds like: numerous cloud environments to host, deploy and deliver applications. Adoption is already reasonably healthy – an IBM Institute for Business Value Survey found that 41% of organisations have a multi-cloud management strategy in place – and 98% of organisations plan to adopt multi-cloud architecture by 2021.

This technology helps companies become more agile by helping to manage, move and process data wherever and whenever needed. Expect organisations that have already embraced multi-cloud management to find new ways to leverage its power – and expect organisations that haven't to at least become more aware of it as these products become more available.

- **Generation Z in the workplace**

Generation Z – those born from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s – have grown up with technology. They've used it in formal education, it's in their homes and they may even have a good understanding of code. This generation has the ability to bring true innovation to the office environment – so it's worth catering to this demographic's needs. They expect their workplace to use the best of technology, so companies need to keep up.

In addition, Generation Z are well equipped for automation and machine learning in the workplace. According to international research from Dell, 89% of Generation Z recognise that we are entering the age of human-machine partnerships: 51% of those surveyed believe that humans and machines will work as integrated teams, while 38% see machines as tools for humans to use as needed. Businesses would do well to employ more Generation Z members to help bridge the digital gap and readiness.

- **Artificial Intelligence**

According to Gartner's Top 10 Strategic Tech Trends for 2019, 40% of new application development will involve AI co-developers.



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AI is very much already in use in our daily lives (think Netflix, Siri and Amazon) but 2019 is set to see uptake soar, as more companies invest in the technology. This is great news for South Africa. Research from The Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) said that AI has the potential to double the growth rate of the South African economy and boost rates of profitability by an average of 38% by 2035.

• Blockchain

Blockchain technology has the potential to aid many industries – not least accountancy. It provides clear chains of accountability and ownership of assets, which is incredibly useful when auditing.



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In fact, mobile operating companies Vodacom and MTN have already been experimenting with blockchain technology. They intend to discover how it can be used to improve numerous processes and systems such as number-porting, and inter-carrier settlements.

• Better banking

If you have the right technology in place, you can run your business more efficiently. That's exactly what Xero's new, full-featured API for bank feeds does for small businesses and their advisors. By integrating with banks including Sasfin and Absa, businesses can now reconcile accounts, create smart, shareable reports and online invoices, and review their cash flow in real-time while on the go.

This means that users are always working with completely accurate data.

2019 is set to be a bumper year for enterprise technology developments, particularly in South Africa. It's important to keep an eye on the latest trends to see what will work for your business or your clients. The more efficiently you work, and the more work you can let technology do for you, the more time you can spend growing your business.

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