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The 2018 futurist forecast

What will shape your business this year?

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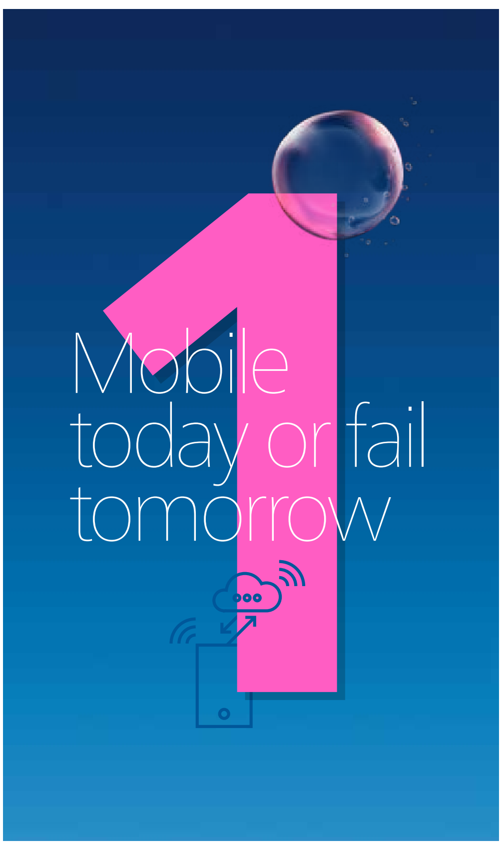
The business landscape is changing rapidly. Companies that don't adapt, and quickly, will be left behind. It could be sink or swim if you take your eye off the ball.

So we make sure we know our stuff. That way we can pass knowledge and insight onto our customers. We've had some expert help from 'thought catalyst' Graeme Codington to try and identify what trends will be affecting businesses in 2018.

Because forewarned is forearmed.



Mobile today or fail tomorrow

The smartphone revolution hasn't ended. This is just the start. If your business is not mobile-first within the next two years, you may have missed the boat.

Moving to cloud-based services is a start. Have you made the jump yet? Several factors are driving tech-savvy businesses in that direction.

- Access to data anywhere
- Disaster recovery capabilities
- Better flexibility
- Reducing support burden on staff

https://www.spiceworks.com/marketing/state-of-it/report/

Employees will expect to be able to stay connected and use the same level of technology at work as they do at home. Now is the time to ask if your level of IT investments are holding your business back.

Meanwhile, marketing goes mobile. The figures show it. If you're not concentrating your business and marketing strategy on mobile, you're missing out.

By 2019, mobile advertising is expected to represent 72% of all U.S. digital ad spending.

(MarketingLand)

As of August 2017, there are over 3.5 billion unique mobile internet users.

Source: Statista

80% of social media time is spent on a mobile device.

(comScore)

68% of companies have integrated mobile marketing into their overall marketing strategy.

(Salesforce)

4G

Average smartphone conversion rates are up 64% compared to the average desktop conversion rates.

(CMS Report)

71% of marketers believe mobile marketing is core to their business.

(Salesforce)

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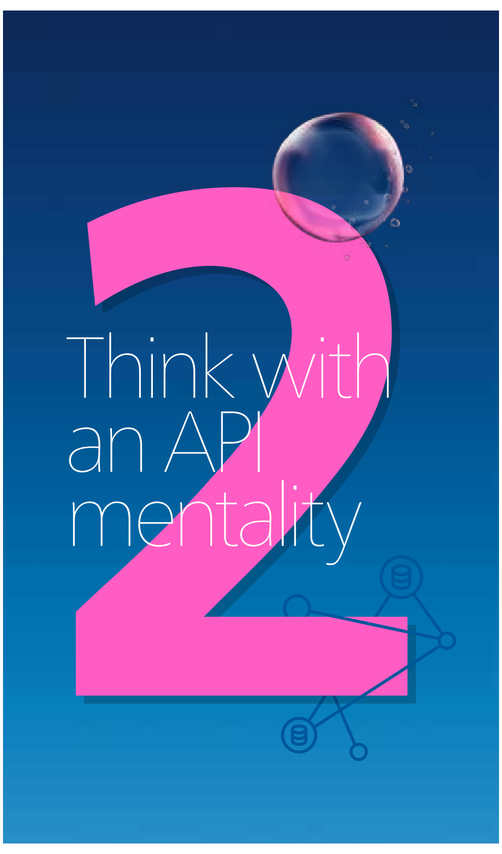

Think with an API mentality

An application programming interface (API) is code made available to developers by a company or website, so they can build applications for their site. It also makes it as easy as possible for people you do business with to engage with you.

APIs help create a seamless network to improve value transfer with clients, suppliers, partners and employees and gives businesses three big benefits:

Break down barriers
Give customers easy access to your interface allowing them to use your product in a way that best suits their needs.

Promote innovation
Customers and suppliers may use your data in ways you had never imagined.

Utilise customer insights
Analyse how your business provides value to your end user's company.

Monetising your API

Connect the data, connect the dots. API is accelerating innovation and there could be a goldmine sitting untapped in your data stores. Can you afford not to explore that?

The massive amounts of data your company holds may not in itself be useful, but combined with APIs it could be incredibly valuable for you and other companies if assessed with the right cases in mind.

40% of IT projects will create new digital services and revenue streams that monetise data (source)

So what are you waiting for? Want to build up your data capabilities? Start by looking at your API capabilities. An API platform will give your company a proactive agility, letting you connect your data to different systems and apps.

Three ways APIs turn your data into value:

Turn your data into a service.
Most companies hold data that can be used by other businesses. APIs helps offer that data to the right people in the right context.

Use the data for internal use.
Improve internal processes and increase employee productivity. Well-managed APIs connect systems, data and applications across multiple clouds meaning ultimately your data is available where it's most valuable.

Make smarter business decisions.
Use APIs to find actionable insights from your data.

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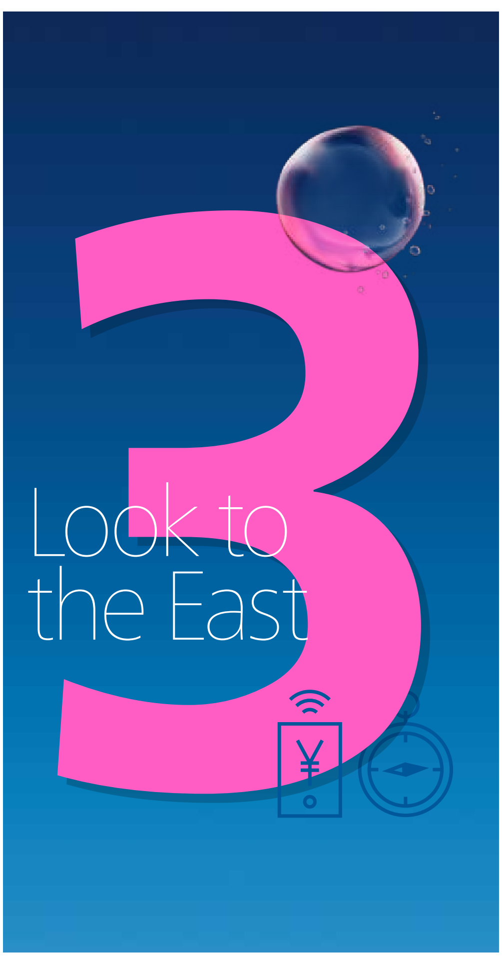

Look to the East for your tech takeaways

Facebook and Google are often looked at as global giants but Chinese companies like Alibaba and WeChat have transformed the way people shop, chat and send money.

Chinese consumers use their phones to pay for lunch, groceries, even bicycle rentals, resulting in China's mobile payments reaching **£3.9** trillion in 2016. Compare that with America's **£80.2** billion.

Mobile payment users in China are expected to reach 630 million by 2020 and China is the world's largest internet market with:

- **71%** owning a smartphone
- **724 million** mobile internet users
- **72.1%** of Chinese internet users are between 10-39 years old

https://www.slideshare.net/EdithYeung/china-internet-report-2017-by-edith-yeung

China is fast becoming a cashless society. Even buskers use QR codes to receive tips to their virtual accounts.

In 2017 mobile online payments users saw a 31.2% YoY growth

(www.chinainternetwatch.com)

China has 469 million mobile wallet users, up 31.2% over the past year

(CNNIC report 2017)

50.3% of China's internet users use mobile devices for payment in offline retail stores

(www.chinainternetwatch.com)

China leads the way

China loves it's sharing platforms. It ranks top in the world for bike-sharing with over 106 million bike-sharing app users. That figure is expected to reach 198 million by 2021.

Other sharing platforms include anything from electric vehicles and women's clothes, to agricultural drone sharing.

China's live streaming market was worth $5 billion in 2017 with top revenue streams being:

- **Sales of virtual items**
- **Premium features**
- **Online games**
- **Advertising**

It's the gaming capital of the world. 600 million gamers generated £17.62 billion in 2016 with that figure set to rise to £24.28 billion in 2020.

220 million eSports players make China the **largest eSports country** in the world. Revenue rose by 52% YoY in 2016. 11.1 billion eSports video streams were delivered in the same year.

China aims to be world **leader in artificial intelligence** by 2030 and has invested **£1.86** billion in AI start-ups in 2016.

Other trends include robotics, artificial intelligence chips and power bank rental.

China is also the **world's largest cryptocurrency market** and is developing its own digital currency. They plan to start using Blockchain to collect taxes, send invoices and improve security for elections.