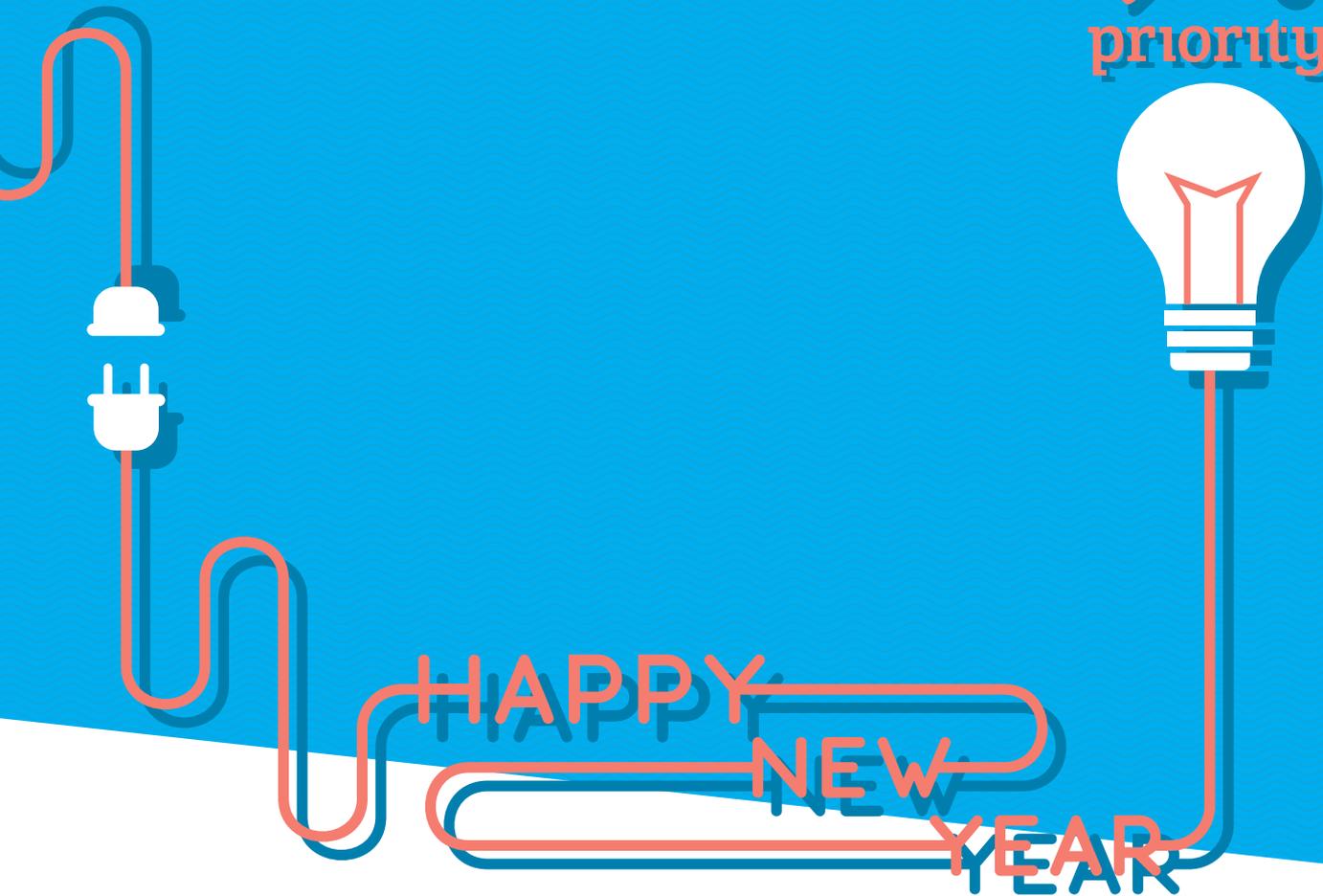


WILL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY DELIVER ITS PROMISE IN 2018?

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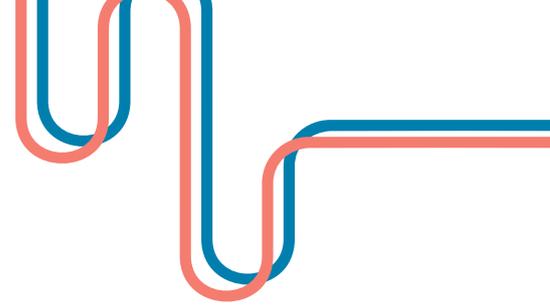
It's that time of year again: where we take stock of what 2017 has presented us with and think about what might be in store over the next 12 months. Google's 2017 in search data revealed "how" was the most popular type of question asked by internet users, as people looked for answers on how to offer help and make a difference. It's been a turbulent year for many, and not just thanks to extreme weather.

Meanwhile in the business technology world, the promise of AI, 5G, enterprise IoT and the end of desk-based working has, at least, provided us with a sense of steady progress.

This year, we surveyed 500 senior business decision makers in UK companies to find out just how mobile their businesses are. While 88 per cent permitted mobile working, many staff in operations roles such as HR, customer service reps and production staff rely on systems which leave them oftentimes chained to their desks with little chance of performing job functions from a mobile.

The data highlighted a growing need for companies to adopt a simple solution, such as our Mobile Application Generator, to improve efficiency and workflow for employees who rely on computers to access business systems. 2018 should bring with it an increase in awareness of mobile ERP solutions, so that all employees can enjoy some level of quick and easy access to core functions relevant to their job from any mobile device.

Ask the experts: Will business technology live up to expectations in 2018?



We thought we'd do predictions a little different this year. We spoke to several industry experts, from both within and outside the company, to get their hot take on which technology will propel businesses forward over the coming months. Here's what they had to say.

Steve Brooks, Editor, Enterprise Times

"2018 is the year when companies realize that compliance will influence their choices. GDPR comes into force on 25 May 2018 and many companies are woefully unprepared. New fiscal regulations such as ASC 606 and IFRS 15 come into full force and companies need to prepare for IFRS 16.

Technology should help to mitigate some issues that arrive from these compliance headaches. Top of the shopping list is AI. AI can be a nebulous term, similar to cloud. However, solutions will increasingly deliver capabilities supported by AI techniques such as machine learning, augmented intelligence and conversational interfaces during the year.

2017 saw a tipping point for the implementation of cloud-based ERP solutions and that move should accelerate during 2018. Those companies that have true cloud-based ERP solutions should benefit. 2018 is also likely to see further consolidation in the market. Larger vendors will buy niche cloud players and Private Equity backed entities will buy up legacy vendors.

The buzz around blockchain and Inter Ledger Protocol will continue but there should be real use cases in ERP emerging during the year as well. Regulation may kill off the emergence of many cryptocurrencies and caveat emptor will continue to apply for the rest.

Enterprises are also going to demand greater personalization for both internally and external facing systems as they struggle to understand how to transform. There will be winners and losers across industries which will continue to see household names disappear."



Gabriel Gheorghiu, Founder & Principal Analyst, Questions Consulting

"Companies using ERP, especially manufacturers, are trying to diversify their offering by offering services related to the products they manufacture. Traditional ERP solutions that focus on manufacturing only will have a hard time adapting to this market trend. Those vendors who acquired multiple solutions and failed to integrate them may end up retiring some of the applications.

I don't think that AI and IoT will have a huge impact on ERP in 2018, but ERP vendors will need to focus on seamless integration with Manufacturing Execution Systems and [industrial control systems](#). Since many manufacturers will invest in robots, they need to make sure that data can be easily transferred between ERP and any equipment used in manufacturing."

Rob Bamforth, Principal Analyst, Business Communications, Quocirca

"Cloud adoption will continue to grow - as a service propositions extend further into large enterprise and SME. Not only software, platform and infrastructure but communications, collaboration and media as services too. IT increasingly has to operate as a service broker.

Adopting the right organizational culture is becoming even more important as collaboration and highly collaborative working processes such as DevOps will differentiate those undergoing successful digital business transformation from others.

AI will take over from BI as the data technology getting a lot of attention but failing to deliver real business value. Not because of poor technology, but poor alignment with business need."

Dan Aldridge, Managing Director, Priority Software U.S., ERP Evangelist, LION

"ERP systems will increasingly be hooked to IoT, tapping into data from systems such as Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES) that have machine efficiency data and other "big data" harvested from sensors for analysis purposes.

With the development of interface technology such as APIs and XML, many customers will want to incorporate some of the more popular "best of breed" applications for CRM into their application mix replacing inferior modules in the ERP systems.

Virtually all ERP systems will have to have some means of social collaboration that will slowly replace more antiquated means of communication such as e-mail and reduce reliance on outside systems for communication. Conversations will increasingly be kept inside the walls of the ERP system."



Leor Barth, VP R&D, Priority Software

“From a customer service point of view, companies are getting better and better at collecting data in order to provide better service. However, this is going to be tempered by the GDPR regulations that will be coming into effect in May 2018, forcing companies to take a serious look at how they manage this data. We’ll also see a continuing replacement of traditional retail by e-commerce behemoths that will impact customer service.

From a security point of view, attacks on IT systems by various malicious actors will continue to be a problem, driving more and more departments to make the transition to the cloud.”

Efrat Nakibly, VP Marketing & Strategy, Priority Software

“The integration of AI into organizational systems (and ERP in particular) will affect both the customer facing work but also the internal workflows. Perhaps the most common use of AI integration is within customer service and the use of bots. In 2018 we’ll see the technology advance so bots will be able to hold richer and more personal conversations and have tighter integration with the ERP system.

ERP systems that use AI and machine learning will also know how to define business processes according to behavior patterns of specific people, departments, and even entire organizations. Instead of defining specific business processes in the implementation project the system will learn what the users are doing and will define the BPM itself.”

So there you have it, predictions for the coming year from people who know the industry best. With AI, cloud ERP and GDPR hot on the agenda, it looks like 2018 will be a significant year for emerging technology and new regulations. How will you ensure that your business be at the forefront of these changes?