



Top Ten from ITEX

Computerworld hosted a major business technology show ITEX in Auckland on November 23. More than 400 IT delegates heard from local and international speakers on topics such as stealth cloud, fostering a new generation of IT workers, the role of social media, and the rise of BYO technology.

The *Computerworld* and *CIO* teams were out in force attending a variety of sessions, here are our top ten take homes from the day.

1. Only some people are your biggest asset

Opening keynote speaker Michael Davies set the tone for the day when he told CIOs and IT Managers they needed to prepare for a post-PC world.

By 2018 the working environment will be skewed towards app phones and tablets. The PC is going back to being a work station and only those doing "intensive knowledge work" will need a workstation.

The challenge will be around creating wide area connectivity that will enable a roaming workforce that will consist of more part-timers and less conventional full-time opportunities.

"Only some of your people are your biggest assets," Davies told del-

egates. "The point is to spot them, nurture them."

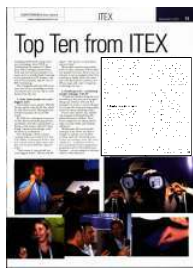
Meanwhile, outsourcing routine work to other countries will become less popular because, Davies says, it's cheaper to run a computer than hire someone in India. And call centre jobs will diminish as customers use iPhone apps and voice recognition technology, he says.

2. Breaking news – marketing people unhappy with IT

"I think the hardest thing for us in marketing is that our job is to open things up, whereas with our ICT manager, he wants to control things. So you get this natural juxtaposition, and we're always bashing heads."

That's what Alexis Lam, marketing manager at Burgerfuel told a panel discussion entitled: "How local companies are taking advantage of social media and mobility initiatives."

Mediaworks NZ social media strategist Cate Owen said that a change in mindset was needed to allow staff onto Facebook and Twitter on company time. She cited Adobe Air – a platform used by several popular client management programs such as TweetDeck and Seismic – as an example of software which is often blocked.



And although social media was growing in importance, Owen said companies still have to weigh up what they're spending with what they're trying to get out of it.

But while companies may be slow to embrace social media – New Zealanders aren't. According to panel moderator Justin Flitter there are now 2.1 million New Zealanders on Facebook, 70,000 active monthly Twitter users and 450,000 registered Kiwis on LinkedIn.

Postscript: The online article about this session was retweeted 70 times.

3. Rugby was the winner

Asked what was his most nervous moment during the Rugby World Cup, ICT Manager Chris Hope told delegates: "the opening ceremony". That was the first opportunity to run the whole system live under a full workload – no dress rehearsals were possible. Once the infrastructure proved itself under the immense load of data, pictures and video coming out of that first event, he could feel more confident.

"You can plan all you like but you have to deliver; and that has to be done using people. It's fair to say we had exceptionally good people," he said.

It was a project years in the planning. Of 13 stadiums originally scheduled to participate in the tournament, only five were served by fibre networks – essential for the huge information demand, particularly to serve the world's media. Most of them had "very lean" ICT setups with the emphasis on saving cost. Only one had a dedicated ICT team.

Three stadiums had to do major upgrades to handle the World Cup and Dunedin was building a completely new stadium.

Hope and his team decided not to use much of the existing technology but to renew all networks to a uniform standard. One vendor would be selected to provide a turnkey system for each of 10 major divisions of the project (10 "towers of service delivery"), for example, telephony or data network. Vendors were free to choose to bid for one "tower" or several.

"When we went to market we didn't know which venues we were going to use," Hope said. There was some adjustment to the scope and detail of the arrangements as negotiations went on.

There was a deliberate decision to "keep it simple", to use tried and proven technology and to stay >> 14





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away from the bleeding edge.

The developers wanted local vendors involved as much as possible, so there was ready support for the long-term legacy use of the infrastructure.

Applications had to be provided for everything from the accumulation of statistics – counting the tackles and the knock-ons – through standard business software to a web portal for the 39,771 accredited media representatives, as well as the public websites for the tournament. Facilities had to be available for visiting stakeholders to rent technology and related services according to their needs.

As a result of a tendering process in 2008-9, Gen-i was awarded six out of the 10 “towers”. Other winners included TeamTalk for radio communications and international sports media specialist Deltatre for the public websites. Some area such as spectrum management (awarded to Lambda Communications and the Ministry of Economic Development), required highly specialist providers. The tournament management system was a fixture – owned by the International Rugby Board, it had been used in the last three World Cup tournaments.

The target was to deliver 48 matches faultlessly at the 12 match venues eventually selected and to make as many New Zealanders as possible feel connected with the tournament, fulfilling the chief message used to market New Zealand to the IRB – “a stadium of four million”.

Although there is a legacy element to the core infrastructure, much of the equipment and software was developed for seven weeks’ use – a profile quite unlike a typical commercial ICT operation, he said.

“Good ICT is ICT you don’t know is there,” Hope said. “It doesn’t get in the way of your doing your job. On that measure we were successful.

“If you’d asked me three months ago, would I do it again, I’d have

said ‘no way; it’s too hard’ but today I’m thinking ‘when’s the next one going to be?’”

4. Disruption can be good for you

“If you’ve got an inertia problem maybe you need to seed some disruptive thing within your own organisation.”

Yikes! That was the advice Radio New Zealand new media manager Richard Hulse gave delegates at the end of the roundtable: ‘Open Source in a Hybrid Environment’.

Hulse had been outlining the open source solution that had been adopted when the broadcaster was forced to move from a tape-based to a computer-based system when the music library catalogue system came to the end of its life. He said at the time no one had any interest in running a project to replace it, so they looked internally for a solution.

“There was one guy in the computer services department that thought that Linux was the new hot thing to learn and I’d done a bit of PHP programming so we developed a proof of concept to replace the system,” Hulse said.

“Within four weeks of writing the proof of concept most people were using our weekly dump of the data for searching in preference to the catalogue system and within about three months it was completely replaced. And it developed iteratively, so users would use it and then give us feedback to what functions they wanted.

“It was kind of a skunk works project and not really supported formally – basically done in free time,

and that kind of evolved to be our entire intranet.”

Hulse says when it came time to upgrade the internet they went out to market and ended up with an open source supported system. But, when the vendor wanted to go in a direction they didn’t agree with, they replaced it with a Ruby on Rails application.

Hulse describes Radio New Zealand as a “niche client” with specific demands that mean systems scaling up at short notice (i.e. a major news event that attracts massive website hits). He says one of biggest challenges technologically is the interface between open source and proprietary systems. “What I am increasingly finding is that the free stuff is very easy to talk that way, but there are impediments to actually going back the other way.”

5. TradeMe dev prefers native apps

In a year’s time TradeMe expects a quarter of all visits to its site will be via a mobile device.

Head of development Simon Young says there are currently 200,000 registered mobile devices. In recognition of the importance of mobility, TradeMe released an iPhone app a year ago. In that time visits via mobile devices have grown 3.4 times to be 6.2 percent of all visits to the site.

TradeMe picked iPhone because data showed that 96 percent of their mobile users were on iOS devices. Asked if he thought developing HTML5 applications was a good alternative to native applications Young said he preferred native apps because of their ‘polish’, but he could see the benefit of being able to deploy releases at will.

“We’ve got a pretty good rela-





tionship with Apple, but we've heard some shocking horror stories about apps taking months to get approved, and sometimes not at all."

TradeMe have six staff on the mobile development team – two working on HTML5 web applications and four on native applications.

6. Turn work into a game

It appears that Generation Y (those born between 1980 and 2000) have been rebranded the Millennials. But the name change, and the recession, hasn't made this generation any easier to employ – if anything, it appears they are even more special

According to Viewfield Consulting director and former Warehouse CIO Owen McCall, millennials favour a work environment that meets their most important

needs – love and belonging, self esteem and self-actualisation.

Millennials work collaboratively, and are very socially aware. The ultimate expression of this is Facebook (inventor Mark Zuckerberg is a millennial).

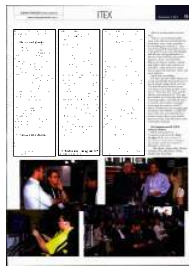
McCall says millennials will find their own tools to get the job done and these are unlikely to be ones the CIO will approve of – initially.

A good way to motivate a millennial is to recognise that they like choices, says McCall, who cited Kenneth Thomas' book *Intrinsic motivation at work* in his presentation.

Explain the objective, indicate how you would like them to achieve it, and then give them an indication as to how they should go about it. In other words, don't be too prescriptive, says McCall.

"Games do this very well," McCall told delegates. "If we can start to





define work the way games define work we can start to set up that intrinsic motivation cycle.”

7. The six user groups

In a presentation on BYO technology, IDC Australia senior analyst Trevor Clarke defined the following six groups of users in New Zealand:

- The technology evangelists who are frequent buyers of technology, knowledgeable and vocal in what they consider good.
- Impulse buyers who get a piece of technology just because it's the latest thing.
- Experiential adopters who spend a lot of time playing with the gadget in the store before buying – or deciding not to buy.
- Pragmatic buyers who acquire technology to satisfy a defined need, “because they have to; not because they want to”.
- Green buyers who consider environmental sustainability as an important technology choice criterion.
- The “disengaged” who buy new technology only when their old device is failing.

Clarke says vendors promote chiefly to the first three categories, because these people make frequent purchases. However, 35 percent of New Zealanders are identified as pragmatic buyers.

8. Virtual Christchurch

HITlabNZ (the Human Interface Technology Laboratory) at Canterbury University has released an augmented reality mobile application capable of virtually rebuilding Christchurch's central business district.

Developer Mark Billingham, who presented the app at ITEX, says the CityViewAR app will stimulate and assist discussion of rebuilding proposal.

Users can walk around central Christchurch looking through their phone's camera and see 3D simulations of the original buildings on their sites. As replacements are planned, these too will be included in the database so smartphone users with the app will see the proposed building simulated on-site.

Billingham presented the initial version of the app, following the September earthquake last year at a function last October to launch the Webstock 2011 conference.

The application to iPhones and smaller Androids has required a trimming down of the database. The digital building models, maintained by architect Jason Mills, have been simplified to take up less storage space, says Billingham and an on-demand mode has been introduced, so the whole database does not have to be accessible at once. A set of tags naming the buildings will first be seen and on clicking on any building, the app will download the full 3D rendering of that particular building.

The app is provided free of charge. It can be downloaded, Billingham says, by looking for CityViewAR on the Android Market.

The official launch is scheduled for December 10 on the site of Cashel Mall with its temporary shops housed in shipping containers.

9. Netflix not coming, but VP welcome any time

In the final keynote of the day, Netflix vice president Brent Ayrey dashed hopes that the online content streaming service would be setting up shop in New Zealand. The service has taken the US by storm with its “all you can eat” movie and television content for US \$7.99 a month.

Low broadband penetration, poor internet infrastructure (giving rise to the dreaded datacaps) and difficulty in securing distribution rights were cited as reasons for Netflix staying away.

But despite that bad news Ayrey had plenty of information to share with a large audience at the end of the day. He identified the following four key trends for companies creating internet products.

- Connected TVs
- Ayrey says that by 2015 there will be 500 million internet connected televisions in homes around the world, which is especially relevant to content companies.
- Always connected devices
- Consumers will be using tablets like the iPad and Amazon Kindle Fire more, and moving away from desktops and laptops which will be relegated to hardcore working devices.

He used Amazon, which competes with Netflix with its Instant Video service, as an example of a company which has jumped on this trend by selling its Kindle Fire tablets below cost.

“This is a very different strategy to the one Apple deployed. The reason they're doing this is because they want devices in people's hands so they consume Amazon media,” says Ayrey.





• Move towards natural interactions

“There is an accelerated shift away from old control methods like keyboards, mice, and controllers to something new and easy,” says Ayrey. He talked about how easy it is for both his one year old daughter, and 88 year old grandmother to interact with his iPad using touch gestures. Ayrey says that with Microsoft’s Kinect motion control, and Apple’s Siri voice control, we will have a suite of tools to make interacting with machines easier and more intuitive.

• Real-time serendipity

The last trend he talked about was social, specifically sharing the activities of people using online services. “For Facebook the last five years was about connecting people,” says Ayrey. “The next five years will be

about connecting activity.” He says that Netflix users sharing their video watching habits on Facebook directly increase the number of people streaming their movies and TV shows. Facebook is encouraging app developers like Netflix to make the most of its new news feed feature, a ticker which shows your friends’ latest activities, what Facebook calls ‘frictionless sharing’.

10.Computerworld ITEX Award winners

ITEX closed with the Computerworld Awards. **Turn to page 16** for the winners of ICT Project of the Year, Software Developer of the Year and ICT Manager of the Year.

– *Sim Ahmed, Stephen Bell, Michael Foreman, Peter McLennan, Divina Parades and Sarah Putt*

