

Tips, Tricks and Advice from your local “IT Guru”

This month I want to talk to you about the coming year. Yes, it's that time again: to look back at my predictions from last year to see how I did, and also see what's coming up for this year. On the phone front my predictions were a bit off-target. I underestimated the amount of changes from iOS 6 to iOS7, and missed out on the iPhone 5C. I was also way off with Blackberry: rather than become the number three player, they seem destined to disappear completely. I called the Nokia Lumia 1020, with its massive 43 megapixel camera, and so far my prediction that Windows phone would become more popular seems to be on track. I did, however, totally miss the idea of Microsoft buying Nokia. On the PC front I was much closer. There have indeed been a whole raft of Windows 8 touchscreen devices, and the OS is picking up in popularity. Apple didn't build touch capability into Mac OS as I suggested, but I did predict the availability of cheap Windows 8 tablets (I'm typing this on a £199 8 inch full Windows Tablet, in fact)! I was right with Google announcing a load of new services, and dropping some as well, but completely wrong with predicting the decline of Facebook. Oh well, I can't have everything! Finally, I suggested that smart watches would start to gain traction, and whilst there have been some announcements... I may have been a little too optimistic on that front.

So, what are the trends for this year? I really do think smart watches will start to make an appearance. Apple is rumoured to be making one, and things like the Pebble and Samsung Galaxy Gear are gaining popularity. I don't think we will be talking into our watches any time soon, but I do think a device on your wrist that picks up notifications from your phone and allows you to control some functions certainly has an appeal. If you look further forward, then you could even imagine a device on your wrist that had the full functionality of your smartphone, but was able to communicate with whatever size screen you needed to use at the time. Now, that's something I would be interested in. I expect Apple will release a new phone in the Autumn, and I think it will be bigger. The trend is for larger screens and I don't think apple can ignore this for much longer. I still believe that Apple will start using touch screens on their laptops, but they may announce an even bigger iPad with a detachable keyboard in the meantime. Later in the year we'll definitely see the first phones from Microsoft, and I expect them to continue the Nokia Lumia tradition of high-end cameras, even in low-end devices. Motorola and Sony have a few things in the pipeline, so in the Android world there looks to at last be a bit of competition for Samsung.

Although Windows 8.1 has fixed a lot of the gripes people had with the first release, I think that a further point release in the first part of the year will turn it into something everyone will be happy with. I even expect see some more low-priced Windows tablets and convertibles appearing on the market. Despite what anyone says, I think Windows will be the predominate OS for a few years to come. With that in mind, and with the end of support for Windows XP this coming April, I expect an awful lot of people will be upgrading to Windows 8 this year. I also think Google will continue to push is Chrome OS, and people will still continue to ignore it. With Windows 8 devices becoming so cheap, I just can't see a place for Chrome OS. Later on in the year, look for Microsoft quietly phasing out Windows RT in favour of the full version of Windows, because, as with Chrome OS, I can't really see a place for it in today's marketplace.

In truth, I can't see any major innovations coming this year. I think it's a case of minor improvements to what we have already. But, as we have seen from last year, I'm not too good at this prediction lark. So, who knows? Happy New Year!

If you have any questions or anything you would like me to cover in this column, email me at look@4-11consultants.co.uk

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