



# Connect to the future

Luc Gimbrère discusses what 'microconnecting' means for the future of IT

**These are difficult times for traditional IT departments. Why? Don't they already deliver steady IT systems? Don't they deliver systems that integrate flawlessly with our partners in the supply chain? Well, that much is true. But today, there are over four billion mobile phones worldwide and we are entering a decade in which 50 billion devices will be connected to the Internet. The power of cloud computing is being harnessed and developers get to work with tools which are more and more productive.**

## A new dawn

There may be IT professionals who are wondering what a consumer's smartphone has to do with all of this. Obviously we are not just talking about one end-consumer, but something that is taking place on a much higher level. Hans Vestberg, CEO of Ericsson, claims that by 2020 the number of connected devices will be around 50 billion. Other analysts have claimed that by then, the number will be 100 billion. Audacious predictions claim this number will already be reached by 2015. It raises questions and – for the enterprising – many opportunities. But there is more. Four trends will change the way the IT domain is managed in the enterprise.

## Trend 1: The connected device

Cars, trainers, MP3 players, game consoles, RFID chips reading stations, smart meters measuring the temperature and quantities in trucks and warehouses

and safety cameras. There are just a few examples of devices that are connected to the Internet. Imagine what that could do for your company. Imagine what such a development would ask from your IT department.


## Trend 2: The connected consumer

Millions of consumers, in trains and automobiles, on beaches and on skiing slopes, are using applications on their mobile devices. As bandwidth is enabling a faster and richer mobile Internet experience, consumers have a world of opportunities at their fingertips: texting, mobile commerce, Twitter, YouTube and location-based services. The Internet is changing consumer's worlds. This changes the demands the end users have about your systems. Moreover, this will change the dynamics in the supply chain. Is your IT department ready?


## Trend 3: The increase in development productivity

Another change that redefines enterprise IT is a simple one: we now have the tools to do what we want, faster and cheaper. New development tools such as Microsoft LightSwitch dramatically enhance the productivity of developers. The same business logic, but developed for different interfaces (user experiences), is a lot easier than ever before for the experienced developer. There is also the issue of reusable software components and services to consider.

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#### **Trend 4: Cloud computing**

Last but not least: have you already considered the impact of cloud computing? It is a seemingly endless source of computing power. End users who are on flickr.com or have a Hotmail account already experience the power of the cloud. But can you explain to them the capital expenditure for a corporate data centre if you don't know what its capacity will be in the future? Then again, can you explain that to an IT professional?

#### **Connect to the future**

In the near future, delivering IT systems that integrate flawlessly with partners in the supply chain may no longer be good enough. Because of the billions of connected devices that have yet to be released, because of the mobile platforms that are available at the fingertips of more and more consumers, because of the availability and scalability of cloud infrastructure and the increase in software development productivity, there will be a new standard. And the standard is 'to be microconnected'. To be microconnected means more than just having your systems integrated with your customer and your supplier or partners in your industry. Microconnecting means connecting on a

micro-level to consumers and to billions of devices; to people and machines; to the future and, quite possibly, to the survival of your company.

#### **Five steps to becoming microconnected**

In this business, we get more and more customers asking for advice on how to deal with these new developments. We have developed a five step approach to prepare for this new standard.

##### **1. Vision**

First of all, develop a vision on who you want to be, how your value chain works, how connected devices could add value to your customers, who your partners are and how end users and consumers play a part in that spectrum.

##### **2. Partner**

In this new era, your old partners face the same issues you do. By collaborating smarter, you should have more value to add than the two halves you were before.

##### **3. Consider**

Picture the speed, the scalability, the flexible costs, the ease-of-use and the cost savings brought to you by cloud

computing. Consider the cloud as already being part of your infrastructure, even if you do not use it today.

##### **4. Experiment**

Do not hesitate to try something new. For example mobile is new to most companies. Because of the previously mentioned developments, an experiment doesn't have to be expensive and it can be of great value.

##### **5. Innovate**

Elaborate on successful experiments or great ideas and develop innovative processes and systems. The business case of so-called opportunistic development has become increasingly attractive. And rest assured, if you do not connect and innovate, your competition will.

Connecting on a micro-level is a concept that has been around for a while and is unstoppable. However, this might make you feel somewhat uneasy. Companies will have to learn to embrace new technology and to grasp the new opportunities it will bring. But, as a consumer, you probably already have.

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