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We are facing an age of unprecedented change, and one key challenge facing businesses is the arrival of the new digital economy. According to analyst firm IDC, the new digital economy may hit a huge US$20.4 trillion globally by next year.

Mobile technologies have been a true game-changer, transforming the way we live, work and play. Smartphones and tablet computers have given consumers the power to interact, shop, communicate and work in new interactive ways with more freedom than ever before.

All this means that organisations have to innovate and conduct business in new ways. They need to be more responsive. They need to sell, make and deliver products differently in order to survive and thrive in the new digital economy.

For governments, they need to embrace ICT tools and systems to better provide public services to citizens and businesses. They need to respond with agility and allow interactions with their departments and agencies online and through mobile technologies.

Our theme for this issue of Amplify IT is the new digital economy, where we explore the business and technology trends surrounding this new economy.

We also find out more about one key emerging technology in the digital economy: video analytics. It has become useful not only for security surveillance, but also as an essential business tool to help organisations streamline operations, improve monitoring and customer experience.

The ability to automatically analyse video streams – whether live or recorded – to create useful information about the content means it is useful for organisations and government departments for security, people and traffic management or event counting.

How is your organisation navigating the new digital economy? Are you taking advantage of new opportunities to build even greater success in the future? How can we leverage technologies to improve customer service excellence?

Embarking on any change would start with understanding. We hope the articles in this issue will help your understanding, and help start you on the route to transforming your business for success.
THE NEW DIGITAL ECONOMY

Thriving in the New Digital Economy

Companies need to innovate and conduct business in new ways in order to survive and thrive in the brand new digital economy.

We are now standing on the cusp of a brand new economy that is very different from that of the earlier agricultural era or industrial age. The developing world is rapidly changing from an industrial economy with factories, steel and automobiles, to one built on computers, mobile and wired networks, the Internet and the computer chip. And with this new economy are new rules and new drivers for success.

Much of this new digital economy is driven by the pervasive influence of the Internet which has led to the widespread adoption of consumer technologies like social media, mobile devices and mobile telephony, as well as the growing popularity of activities like online shopping, e-banking and content sharing.

Impact on Industries

This new economy has a deep impact on industries and governments. Not only do they have to deal with the challenges of technology and globalisation, they also need to be more responsive, to sell, make and deliver products differently. In short, their operations and processes will be transformed.

The power of mobility and social media has enabled a whole new way of business engagement and collaboration across the ecosystem. The Internet and machine-to-machine (M2M) technology allows organisations and governments to be more proactive and less reactive. The combination of these technologies together with analytics, can fine-tune predictives that will prevent crimes, anticipate customers’ next purchase and even take over control of cars to avoid traffic jams.

In particular, industries like the technology, telecommunications, media and publishing, banking, entertainment and retail industries have all been affected by the new digital economy.

The media, entertainment and publishing industry has had to deal with a completely new way of working, with the onslaught of digitised publications, movies and music. Today, the traditional business models have to compete with new ones, where shows can be streamed to digital devices or desktops, and where news and books are viewed not on paper, but on tablets and screens. Information has become a commodity in this new digital economy, and firms have to grapple with a new way of selling and pricing this commodity.

For the healthcare industry, the concern continues to be ensuring a high quality of care in this age of unprecedented rate of urbanisation, which can place punishing demands on services like healthcare. A transformation in the way hospitals are run and the provision of healthcare services can improve quality and decrease cost of medical care.

For instance, a digital hospital where the information flow is seamless and processes are connected, leads to better efficiency and lays the groundwork for better patient care. A digital hospital can also extend the benefits of ICT improvements beyond the hospital walls, to enable connectivity and collaboration with other healthcare organisations, and
can even encompass care in patient homes. Other advantages include positive effects on operating costs and staff productivity.

**Asia Rising**

With this new digital economy, there has been a shift of economic power to emerging markets, which have been quick to embrace the digital economy, leapfrogging the developed countries in terms of technology adoption.

The developing or emerging nations are also more prepared to embrace this new digital economy and more ready to adopt a new way of working.

Importantly, the emerging market also has a growing customer base of middle or upper-middle income class who can fuel this digital economy as customers.

**Navigating This New Economy**

To thrive in this new digital economy, the following are some suggestions what organisations can do to build for success:

**Prepare for the buyers from emerging countries.** It is predicted that emerging countries like Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, and Turkey will account for a greater share of global GDP than the G7 in 2020. So forward-looking companies need to be tuned in to the customer requirements of these countries and tailor products accordingly.

**Strategic IT systems.** While IT investments can have a hefty price tag and a long implementation period, strategic IT systems can provide companies with a competitive advantage, up operational efficiency and effectiveness and enable great customer service.

**Improve data analytics.** Business intelligence tools are critical to help companies identify opportunities and risks, and anticipate important events in order to initiate intelligent action.

**Focus on the customer.** Work to please the customer, find out what the customer wants through social media or customer relationship management tools. Find new customers within your market or even beyond by selling globally.

**Embrace social media.** Use social media to get customer feedback, boost marketing, improve product development and gain new customers.

Fundamentally, these forthcoming changes can result in rapid market transformations and have a profound impact on organisations worldwide. Given the rapid rate of change, it might be the well-prepared organisation that will thrive and succeed in this new economy.

**Thought leader:**

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**What is Driving the Digital Transformation?**

**Mobility:** The growing ubiquitous mobile connectivity will see Internet access shifting from a tethered device like desktops, to mobile devices in the next few years. It offers a valuable new marketing channel, with mobile commerce and mobile payment transactions being powerful capabilities.

**Business Intelligence:** This helps organisations to understand their customers and market trends, and undergirds most business operations – whether the supply chain, marketing, or product development. Companies which can analyse data in real-time and act on it will have an advantage.

**Cloud Computing:** This technology will offer more flexibility than past computing methods, and employees can access information wherever they are, rather than having to remain at their desks. IT departments are freed from having to worry about constant server updates and other computing issues, freeing them to focus on other issues.

**Apps Economy:** A vibrant applications (apps) ecosystem has evolved around mobile platforms, which began with the creation of the Apple App Store in July 2008. Already, over 50 billion apps have been downloaded globally across all platforms.

**Social Media:** The growing popularity of Facebook and Twitter allows more immediate and pervasive user engagement, allowing organisations to build their brands and gain customer insights.

**Money 2.0:** Economic transactions will increasingly shift to be cashless, with next-generation payment solutions and alternative currencies.
e-Government: Transforming Lives for the Public and Businesses

Submitting income tax returns online and e-Procurement that allows smaller businesses to compete against larger companies for government contracts are some common scenarios when a country adopts e-Government.

e-Government certainly has a role to play in the digital economy, to provide citizens with eServices through the different ministries and government agencies.

As the new digital economy transforms the world, it also has an impact on every aspect of life – whether education, communication, health or government. Coupled with the growing population, resource scarcity, and the public’s rising expectations, the digital economy requires that governments review their policies, regulations and process to keep pace with these new developments.

What does e-Government involve? It is about using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and systems to provide better public services to citizens and businesses. It also involves rethinking processes, service delivery and policies, so that public services are delivered more efficiently to the citizens. As a result, citizens and businesses will be able to conduct business with the government more easily, quicker and at lower cost.

Not Just Internet Technologies

While e-Government is often associated with the Internet, it actually includes a range of other technologies like mobile technologies, mobile messaging, wireless networks, smart cards, closed circuit television (CCTV), tracking systems like radio-frequency identification (RFID), biometric identification, etc.


The report also identified 11 technologies with rising expectations that are climbing the slope to the “Peak of Inflated Expectations”. They include: operational technologies for government, video content management and delivery systems for government, pace-layering EA approach in government (a new approach to enterprise architecture), enterprise app stores, business process as a service (BPaaS) for government, employee use of social media in government, citizen developers, big data information management for government, real-time cyber security for government, application portfolio management, and bring your own device (BYOD).

Singapore Sets the Pace

The Singapore Government’s use of technology has evolved over the past 25 years from using technology for task automation and paperwork reduction, to becoming a world leader in e-Government practice.

Today, some 1,600 of government services are available over the Internet at the one-stop portal www.gov.sg.

Both citizens and businesses in Singapore have gained from e-Government services. Citizens e-file income tax returns and renew road tax online. Every citizen and permanent resident is issued with a single sign-in user identification called Singapore Personal Access (SingPass), which allows each user to transact with government e-services.

Businesses have also benefited from the increased efficiency and convenience of dealing with the government through the online platform. For instance, the Online Business Licensing Service applications, renewals or terminations for one or multiple licences in a single transaction.

Singapore’s achievements in the e-Government sphere have garnered awards and mentions globally. Singapore has topped the 2012 Waseda University World e-Government Ranking for four consecutive years. The World Economic Forum Global Information Technology Report ranked Singapore fifth in 2008, fourth in 2009 and second from 2010 to 2012 in a ranking of 138 economies based on their preparedness to leverage ICT for increased competitiveness and
development. Singapore also ranked second overall, after Sweden, in the Global Information Technology Report 2011-2012 and 2010-2011, published by the World Economic Forum in cooperation with INSEAD.

**Hong Kong: A Leading Digital City**
The Hong Kong government has harnessed ICT with the goal to develop Hong Kong into a leading digital city, with the Digital 21 Strategy guiding Hong Kong’s ICT development since 1998.

Some key e-Government initiatives include the GovHK, a one-stop government portal to allow fast and convenient access to a comprehensive range of government information and services frequently sought by residents, businesses and non-residents.

There is also a range of citizen-centric online services that offer the public the convenience of creating their own personal profile, specifying personal preferences, requesting periodic email updates on topics of interest and much more. This can be a personalised e-magazine by Leisure and Cultural Services Department, or eTAX services by the Inland Revenue Department, or the online application for government vacancies.

Users of mobile devices with broadband connectivity can now access government information such as news, weather forecasts and traffic conditions anytime anywhere.

The smart ID card is a key e-Government initiative that provides automated immigration clearance at control points installed with the e-channels. The smart ID card can also store a personal e-Cert issued by the Hongkong Post Certification Authority or be used as a library card to check out or renew library materials.

**e-Government a Priority in Australia**
The Australian government had set out a broad agenda in 2002 in the initial e-Government strategy, Better Services Better Government, which mapped out the move toward more comprehensive and integrated use of new technologies for government information, service delivery and administration.

Since then, the government has updated its strategy in October, in the latest Australian Public Service Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2012 – 2015, which is expected to deliver a more coordinated approach to developing and using ICT in the Australian Public Service (APS).

Six strategic actions were outlined in the APS ICT strategy. They include:

- **Building capability:** Improving ICT knowledge, skills and capacity across the APS to deliver more efficient, effective and improved services.
- **Improving services:** Using ICT to simplify and join together services that government provides to individuals and businesses, while ensuring security and privacy.
- **Investing optimally:** Targeting and coordinating ICT investment and sharing resources and services to deliver the greatest value and improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Encouraging innovation:** Harnessing the full potential of the digital economy and new technologies to promote innovative ideas and take-up of technology-enabled improvements.
- **Creating knowledge:** Generating, sharing, managing and more effectively using information to improve decision-making, drive economic growth and tailor services and policies to local needs.
- **Collaborating effectively:** Strengthening networks, creating partnerships and using a variety of technologies to involve the wider community in developing policy and informing service delivery.

Going forward, ICT will continue to play a critical role in how governments around the world operate and deliver services. Progress in e-Government adoption continues in most countries around the world, as governments strive to enhance public sector efficiencies and streamline governance systems.
Getting More Out of Video

Video analytics, designed to bring intelligent surveillance to the security sector, is now becoming an essential business tool, helping organisations streamline and monitor operations and improve customer experience.

Video is now a key part of any major organisation’s data – but how can we organise and derive useful information from ever-increasing archives of raw video footage?

One solution is video content analytics (VCA), a once emerging technology now becoming a mainstream business tool that can automatically analyse video streams – whether live or recorded – to document useful information about the content. Today’s common uses of VCA include security, public safety, people and traffic management and crowd counting.

“Think of video analytics as the brains behind, or even inside, a video camera. Whether detecting intruders, highlighting abandoned packages or providing facial recognition and automatic number plate recognition, VCA applications are significantly improving what can be achieved in the world of video surveillance – and, critically, the technology is improving all the time,” said Mark Fear, Head of Special Projects, Singapore at Digital Barriers, a provider of advanced surveillance technologies to the international homeland security and defence markets.

Traditionally, inside a CCTV control room, a number of operators will each monitor several screens, and behind each screen will be a range of unwatched cameras as the video management solution manually or automatically switches between them. Every stream will likely be recorded, but cannot practically be monitored in real-time. This leads to post-event analysis rather than during-event intervention. Video analytics presents entirely new ways of working, intelligently tagging masses of raw video footage to create useful information, reducing the requirement to view hours of empty camera images when searching for specific people, vehicles or incidents – or monitoring scenes in real-time and triggering alerts that bring events to operators’ attention as they happen. The benefits of video analytics are self-evident; offering real-time operational effectiveness and efficiency, through better utilisation of staff and equipment resources.

In the world of security surveillance, video analytics helps secure high-profile locations and protects public safety, it monitors transport hubs and
networks, detects thefts, loitering and unattended objects, it identifies persons of interest through facial recognition algorithms, maintains border security through perimeter protection, and also retrieves required video samples from large volumes of recorded material – significantly enhancing law enforcement operations and reducing costs and elapsed time within key police investigations.

A large number of video channels can prove challenging for a human observer to monitor, but video analytics can analyse a huge volume of video data in real-time – such as an integration of facial recognition and licence plate recognition technology with an alarm system to stop or solve drive through, range of industries, including supply chain management, banking and finance, hospitality, healthcare, retail, transportation, home automation, and the public sector. Video analytics is becoming an essential business tool to help organisations streamline and automatically monitor operations, whilst delivering better customer experience.

“Video analytics is generating a huge amount of interest in the industry. Benefits include an element of deterrence, whilst increasing the overall efficiency of surveillance. The market for analytics software alone will be worth hundreds of millions of dollars within the next two to three years,” said Neo Shi Yong, Co-Founder & CEO of KAI Square, a provider of technology-related surveillance services and monitoring solutions.

According to market intelligence company ABI Research, the video analytics market is expected to be worth US$900 million in 2016. Gartner has predicted that by 2015 at least 25% of deployed video analytics solutions will be embedded in business applications, up from less than 5% today.

### Adoption Tips

Before deciding if a video analytics solution is suitable for your organisation, KAI Square’s Neo suggests that organisations should first identify whether they have a need for video analytics. Then identify where video analytics is needed, whether it is of a general level, which can use standard products in the market, or if there are special requirements that require customisation.

Fear from Digital Barriers advises that: “video analytics should be a consideration for every business where visual inputs are important and can at present only be managed by human operators at a high cost and low efficiency and reliability. The business case and ROI will depend on the technological difficulty involved in mastering the correct analysis of the event and the cost of the event management.”

The following are suggested tips for implementing a video analytics system in an organisation:

- **Perimeter Fencing**
- **People Counting**
- **Human Detection**

Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and walk up robberies, or stop internal fraudulent activities by integrating visual analytics with point of sale system.

Beyond the security world, video analytics can be applied to a wide
1. **Have clear and realistic goals and objectives.** Ask what you want the system to do for your organisation: to increase productivity or customer service? To deliver new business or streamline current processes? Set relevant KPIs, such as decreasing man-guarding cost.

2. **Identify objects of interests** for analysis and ensure that the selected systems fit your environment, avoiding incurring additional costs in calibration – or utilising video analytics systems that can be configured quickly to a scene.

3. **Study the pros and cons of a centralised or distributed analytics system** and analyse which works best for your applications – depending on the complexity of the analytical tasks and how the analytics will be used.

4. **Decide how you will use the video** – which will influence recording and streaming options – including wireless transmission. For example, continuous recording can enable the use of complex event processing.

### Applications of Video Analysis

- **People Counting**
  - Users are able to set a perimeter to detect people moving in or out
  - Ability to differentiate between objects and people to produce accurate data analysis
  - Application designed for entrances and exits and minimise counting errors caused by human and environmental factors

- **Traffic Flow**
  - Predict the flow pattern in a set perimeter

- **Density Measurement/Heat map**
  - Ability to count objects or personnel in/out of virtual borderlines
  - Ability to detect abnormal increase or changes in crowd density

- **Background and Colour Filtering**
  - Ability to filter out background and retain moving objects thus enhancing viewing of targeted objects
  - Colour sorting of objects and people from a sequence of video feeds thus enabling grouping via colour properties

- **Tracking of moving objects**
  - Ability to identify objects or personnel in/out of virtual borderlines
  - Track objects or people and project moving paths to determine distance and speed
  - Concurrent tracking of multiple objects or people
  - Set speed parameters in car parks and roads to detect vehicle speed

- **Optical Character Recognition**
  - Ability to recognise characters and numbers from videos or images

- **Facial analysis**
  - Detect face and capture zoomed in snapshot
  - Index face according to similarities in key features
  - Ability to detect and capture gender and age
  - Ability to determine impression time via face angle
  - Detect and identify persons

- **Licence plate recognition**
  - Ability to capture, index and catalogue licence plate events
  - Catalogue and manage watch lists of licence plates
  - Proactively protect against repeat offenders or persons of interest by setting alerts for identified perpetrators

- **3D Modelling**
  - Realistic view of the set perimeter
  - Reduce human error in misleading where events are being triggered
  - Allow third-party personnel to familiarise quickly with the area

- **Track Driving Behaviour**
  - Ability to monitor driving patterns to improve safety and reduce fuel consumption due to bad driving behaviour

- **Time series technology**
  - Plot patterns, occurrences, counts, etc. over time to help users spot trends and behaviours
The Rise of Mobility in the Enterprise
Enterprises Take Big Steps in Mobility Adoption

The growing popularity of the bring your own device (BYOD) trend means enterprises have to deal with the security, management issues, as well as making enterprise mobility relevant for its customers and staff.

A mobile workforce is a familiar concept, but enterprise mobility has grown in significance in the past year with the growing influx of personal mobile devices into organisations. The bring your own device (BYOD) trend is likely to grow in popularity as devices grow more powerful, bandwidth increases, and as more and more mobile workers rely on their own devices to connect to the corporate network.

For many organisations, the key challenge is dealing with the security and management of these mobile devices, as well as using mobile technology to empower their employees and customers, who increasingly expect mobile applications to be as intuitive as consumer apps.

As a result, many enterprises are changing the way they do business, by modifying their products, services and processes in order to cater to this mobility trend. The business functions like the marketing and sales departments are often the ones leading the mobility charge, along with the support of the IT department. Enterprises are also looking to mobilise their own core applications such as CRM, ERP, expense management, inventory management and time tracking. In fact, many organisations now view an effective mobile strategy as a necessity for business growth, and not just a “nice-to-have”.

For users, mobile technology and cloud-based applications have encouraged the growing popularity of telecommuting and work shifting, according to The iPass Global Mobile Workforce Report (Q2 2012).

The report found that the top information accessed on the corporate network from the smartphone is email (97 percent), followed by documentation (37 percent), corporate directory data (33 percent), presentations (26 percent), spreadsheets (26 percent), customer contact information (25 percent), and the corporate intranet (25 percent).

Benefits and Challenges
Enterprise mobility can allow workers to work more efficiently, and improve customer service and engagement, as well as improve the supply chain processes and collaboration between employees and with partners/suppliers.

However, with the benefits come challenges, such as security concerns, developing easy-to-use mobile apps, and mobility management.

For organisations embarking on making enterprise mobility a part of its operations, a first step is to encourage a formalised BYOD policy, spelling out the guidelines regarding device usage, as well as the different mobility choices that are company-approved.

Giving employees the right resources to do their jobs — whether the appropriate mobile device, creating a mobile enterprise environment, or providing related training and information to do the job can up productivity and efficiency. The organisation should also ensure that the applications that employees use for work on their devices are optimised, which will increase productivity levels.

Security is another key concern. Ensuring that appropriate security levels to enable remote access to the corporate network is a key consideration, with the security policy focused on securing access, instead of restricting access.
NCS Solution Feature

OneTouch™ for Work Efficiency

Interactive, Productive and Engaging. This is the OneTouch™ experience.

OneTouch™ is a uniquely interactive platform that offers enterprise’s mobile workforce a productive experience when engaging their clients. It allows their mobile workforce to access data, content and services from backend systems while on the move. With this, they can now present product catalogues intuitively, fill forms, generate proposals and collaborate with clients and colleagues.

For today’s mobile workforce, a simple and intuitive user interface is key to successful mobility adoption. OneTouch™ unifies access and presentation of enterprise applications and information into a mobile tablet platform on the Cloud, powering the vision of Applications Anywhere, Anytime, on Any device, on an Always-on infrastructure.

To facilitate easy communication, enterprise social collaboration and personal content management tools, OneTouch™ comes complete with a suite of productivity tools. Think quick editing for documents, doodling for instant visualisation of ideas, and annotations for updates and reminders.

OneTouch™ can also be customised to incorporate enterprise specific applications and services such as Business Performance Dashboard, e-Forms, Diagnostic Kits. These applications will then be securely integrated with the backend enterprise systems.

With OneTouch™, what used to take hours or days can now be accomplished in mere minutes. As a portable online collaborative briefcase, OneTouch™ offers win-win arrangements for the enterprise and its mobile workforce.

Features:
• Access to customer profiles anywhere, anytime via an interactive panel
• Showcase product information and catalogues intuitively
• Develop questionnaires and analyse customer needs
• Fill forms and generate proposals
• Collaborate and chat with colleagues and clients

Key Benefits:
• Direct access to data, content and services from enterprise backend systems while on the road
• Information and productivity tools at fingertips
• Provides analytical information
• Facilitates closing of deals and closer engagement with clients
• Collaboration tools like chat and conferencing (new) to facilitate real-time online discussions among colleagues

To find out more:
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Social networking impacts corporate culture

Social networks such as Weibo, Renren, Facebook & Twitter are becoming a major force in Asian society and regional businesses want to adopt these systems, or build corporate versions, to get market feedback, protect their brand reputation, and promote employee collaboration. But social networks can also reveal customer or employee dissatisfaction, misuse can lower productivity, while under-use is wasted investment. An informed strategy is vital so, to clarify some of the issues, in September, a group of senior CIOs attended an MIS Executive Roundtable, sponsored by NCS, on “Adopting Enterprise Social Media the Customer Way.” The mediator was Teng Fang Yih, Editor, MIS Asia Magazine. Below is a report of some of the views expressed.

Having accepted (with a struggle) the “consumerisation of IT,” Asian businesses are applying their enterprising zeal to social networks. But an essential first step is to determine the purpose and cost of projects, as sponsor NCS reminded the roundtable participants. “We recently got a request to engineer a social network for financial collaboration among a community of brokers,” said Adrian Pok, Director, Presales, Business Application Services, NCS. “We told them the first decision was to define what the network needed to do, and who was going to pay for it, especially when there would be many sporadic or intermittent users.”

Another businesslike suggestion came from academe. “It’s important that we demand measurable benefits, because we can be seduced into pursuing new technology in the face of common sense,” said Gerrit Bahlman, IT Director, HK Polytechnic University. “A strong driver for outward-facing networks may be a customer service, while, for inward-facing networks, the drivers could include knowledge management and project documentation.”

Promoting corporate reputation

Protecting and enhancing corporate reputation is a strong driver for social networks. “We partner other companies to provide design and logistics and even IT services,” said Sam Tan, VP IT Asia, Aecom Asia Co. “Aecom has over 45,000 employees in 130 countries. We have many forums that help design teams discuss creative solutions, and enable our leading specialists to recycle their designs and expertise. Our staff are mainly professionals, so they can blog to disseminate our successes and promote our services, without releasing sensitive information.”

Alignment with corporate policies has always been important, but hard to measure – until today. “In my office, managers were asked to write some bullet points of what they planned for future years, and what they expected of employees,” said Gary Tai, Managing Director, NCS (Hong Kong). “I proposed collecting the opinions and vision of all individuals, to see if they were aligned with organisational policies. So an enterprise network is a tool to help in aligning everyone in a company. Incidentally, I’ve read that, years before the advent of online social networks, Steve Jobs of Apple nominated staff members to gather feedback on the attitudes of a wide range of people towards the company’s products.”

The education sector must pursue new technology to stay relevant. “Universities are using IT, including smartphones, as a tool, and we have to adapt our teaching materials and methods,” said Bahlman. “There’s also a revolution in research, with a deluge of information, and the challenge is to analyse the data and turn it into usable knowledge.”

Banks are cautious, but not necessarily conservative over technology. “We have not built social networks, but we cannot avoid them, because people will use their smartphones to access websites like Facebook, and YouTube,” said Dr Paul Liu, Head & Manager, IT Research & Support, Chong Hing Bank. “We are forward-thinking on technology. Every department has its own computer system and they demand very sophisticated technology, very different from 10 years ago. So, now we are considering our social networking policy.”

Adopting social networking as part of corporate culture is a strategic decision. “Obviously, your customers’ views on product quality and pricing are of great importance to you, so that is another justification for networking,” said Tai. “So the important thing is to get top management endorsement of a thinking environment.”
Business versus private networks

Are social networks converging our business and personal lives? Kerry Logistics Networks has a workforce of 20,000 at nearly 500 sites. “People carry two phones, for personal and business use,” said Wilson Lee, IT Director for Kerry Logistics Networks. “But I want to promote one device for both, so people can ultimately merge their personal and work life – that suits the lifestyle of this generation.”

But there can be problems. “I heard about a kindergarten teacher who shared her Facebook with children, their parents and her friends,” said Pok. “Then, when she appeared in a photo drunk, everybody was thoroughly shocked.”

So, will networks cause divergence after all? “Most people have separate phones and separate e-mail addresses for private and work use and they don’t mix their LinkedIn and Facebook friends,” said Bahlman. “It’s a clear distinction.”

Many participants seemed concerned that unsupervised social networking could lower productivity. “Social networking could enhance the continual collaboration between our staff, carriers, other logistics providers, and customers,” said Wilson Lee, “but we hesitate to adopt networking on our corporate network, because we need to balance any gain in communication effectiveness against risks to productivity. Social media can grow rapidly, and we need to feel confident that it promotes customer service, and does not jeopardise routine work, especially in our smaller unsupervised offices.”

“How can we tell whether employees are using social media for the business or their personal interests?” continued Wilson Lee. “We have experimented with social networks, but found that monitoring the processes is difficult. Privacy is a concern, since it is easy to export data. And, although social networking may help recruit staff, it may make help lose them, too. We need to know the bottom line value of social networking.”

Fear of embarrassment

Management is generally sensitive to unmonitored criticism from employees. The Hong Kong based, long-established Chong Hing Bank provides a range of retail and commercial services through 52 local branches, plus branches in Shantou, Macau and San Francisco, and representative offices in Guangzhou and Shanghai. “We are very concerned with the potential for people bad-mouthing our reputation,” said Liu. “Even a small information leak can be damaging and we have guidelines on what can and cannot be released to the public. We are regulated by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and we don’t enable Facebook or YouTube use. However, so far, social networking incidents that might damage our reputation are few and manageable.” Of course, there are many channels that can carry unwelcome criticism. “Most of us want to know how
criticism has business value. So the takeaway is that social networks are here to stay – don’t bury your head in the sand.”

Restricting access to networks may be self-defeating. “We have an online group called All-Staff,” said Raymond Lee, Head of IT, Hsin Chong Construction Group. “A few years ago, an employee sent an e-mail to the whole group, criticising the company, then handed in his notice. We restricted the group to people above a certain level. But you cannot restrict social networks to senior people, without defeating their purpose.”

Businesses must have policies, and must implement them. “When you set up a forum you make the rules, which give you a measure of control over the discussion,” said Bahlman. “Sometimes misunderstanding leaves people angry and frustrated, but that is why you need the rules.”

Gammon Construction handles construction projects in China and Southeast Asia. “Perhaps rules is too strong a word: we could say ‘guidelines.’ We hope for a good percentage of people to participate, but in reality, they may not materialise,” said Horace Chu, Head of Information Management Services, Gammon Construction. “We track usage and we see people log in and read their posts.”

Utilisation and Asian culture
Building a social networking is easy, but getting people to use it is not. “In the last couple of years, we have created a number of networking platforms,” said Chu. “We have discussion forums, a social platform where we post non-work related topics like social gatherings and tours, and a knowledge collaboration platform. We also have blogs from key staff members. We don’t use Facebook, for security reasons among others. Issues where I think social media could contribute include recruitment, providing a forum for developing safety standards, and promoting collaboration and bonding between staff. But utilisation is not high enough, and I want to learn how to promote the use of social media.”

Administering the network is a key issue. Hong Kong based Shangri-La International Hotel Management operates 72 luxury hotels worldwide. “It is simple to build a forum but, like others, we find it challenging to achieve effective utilisation,” said Thomas Yung, Director, Information Management, Hong Kong based Shangri-La International Hotel. “We have a lot of documents circulating on the Intranet between our hotels, and we have some collaborative applications, but we are still figuring how to utilise social networks and cloud architecture. We are also deciding who should administer social networks and ensure the cultural content is appropriate. Some people say that social media should be modules in the HR systems.”

A network must be peer-to-peer, not top-down. “Three years ago we built an Intranet forum for collaboration and where we could get feedback on employee satisfaction,” said Liu. “We were disappointed, as the sharing of views was all top-down from management. I would like to know the experience of others.”

Are cultural differences a problem? “Social networks are a success for B2C enterprises, but we are B2B, so that our customers can easily give us positive or negative feedback by direct channels,” said Wilson Lee. “We built an Intranet forum, but when management is monitoring them, Chinese employees avoided commenting on internal forums and went to public platforms instead, so we got little feedback. So how do we promote better utilisation?”

Another speaker agreed. Hsin Chong Construction Group is a Hong Kong-based company in construction, civil engineering, and diverse property related services, in Greater China and the region. “We have a pilot network on which members have to be registered, so people don’t
We do not have a large commercial Cultural change seems to be needed. Securities Holdings) Group.

cautious,” said August Chan, Director while the older generation is too the young people speak out boldly, western cultures, but in our company, difference between eastern and enjoyment. “There may be some improvement, lifestyle and personal wealth management, home online entertainment, investment, consumer needs in mobile Internet, conglomerate that addresses

crises. The young are less inhibited The young are less inhibited Perhaps the younger generation has fewer problems with networks. The CASH Group is a service conglomerate that addresses consumer needs in mobile Internet, online entertainment, investment, wealth management, home improvement, lifestyle and personal enjoyment. “There may be some difference between eastern and western cultures, but in our company, the young people speak out boldly, while the older generation is too cautious,” said August Chan, Director of Technology, CASH (Celestial Asia Securities Holdings) Group.

Cultural change seems to be needed. “We do not have a large commercial relationship with consumers, but we are trying to promote our platform for internal collaboration,” said Wilson Lee. “This is the beginning of a trend in cooperation between corporations, and between corporations and consumers, but we have a long way to go. I look forward to seeing cultural changes so that people can adapt to the new environment and gain efficiency.”

Companies often find that employees who speak out and complain on public networks still under-use internal forums. As Wilson Lee says: “People tend to say good things on the internal platform and bad things on the external platform.”

The solution, in a word, is ‘trust.’ “Most of us have social platforms, but only one or two allow anonymous posting,” said Chu. “The key to utilisation is trust, but it is difficult to trust management when management does not trust the employees, and constantly monitors them. When people are allowed to post anonymously, the trust issue may disappear.”

Anonymous feedback can be helpful One voice disagreed. “In a corporate environment, we can never accept anonymity; we need to know who said what,” said Wilson Lee. “However, in addition to our general corporate forums, we also have sub-sites for groups dealing with specific products, customers or countries. People feel much more comfortable communicating, and even complaining, in these smaller dedicated sites.”

Of course, statistical opinion surveys are nearly always anonymous. “There is a small wireless device called ‘Clicker,’ that enables students to respond anonymously to classroom questions,” said Bahlman. “A lecturer can display a list of possible viewpoints on an issue and ask hundreds of students to choose a viewpoint by transmitting the appropriate number from their Clicker. Responses are automatically compiled and incorporated in a graphic that is displayed immediately. The anonymity overcomes inhibitions caused by sensitive issues.”

Apparently, smaller groups increase utilisation. “How can people speak up if the boss is listening?” asks Bahlman. “My solution is to create workgroup forums on specific topics, monitored only by their own supervisory staff, not senior people. At the university, we have 50,000 strong personalities who are politically active. Social networking has small risks, but if we tried to bury problems, they might explode.”

As a technology and service vendor, NCS has a strong point of view: networks promote business integration. “NCS builds internal and external social networking sites. We provide the technology and advise how to create the necessary cultural changes,” said Pok. “One reason why people fail to see the value of social networking is that they separate their working and personal lives. But the lines between work and leisure are blurring. Social networks can help to integrate many aspects of our lives. In future, we will not just share opinions and documents, but also databases and project records. Networks can follow many aspects of our lives and reveal what is ahead or behind schedule.”

“Ideally, when we come to work in the morning, the social network should tell us what has been happening in the last 24 hours,” continued Pok. “It should tell us what is behind or ahead of schedule. We wouldn’t need to consult many individuals or systems to find out what was happening. The network can integrate our jobs.”