

The tough get going

 By Doug Woolley

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2017 was not a great year for South Africa, but also not without its highlights. Sometimes it feels as if we will accept any glimmer of hope in an onslaught of bad news. But if you meditate on the events happening under the radar, there are many reasons to be hopeful.



Doug Woolley, general manager Dell EMC

I'd like to share one of those and why it will matter most in 2018.

Even if you have been living under a rock, you still would have noticed the sweeping changes technology is causing in our world. In 2010 less than 10% of South Africans had smartphones, but in 2017 that crossed the 50% mark.

“ This is one of many indicators of a society eager to embrace digital, and build a future based on the incredible new technologies that are spreading across the globe. ”

The cloud

A massive part of this shift is the cloud. Now, the cloud is not just a place where you store files or where your email lives. In fact, the cloud is not necessarily a nebulous collection of computers that sit who knows where. There is more to this. The cloud represents a new way of how we build technology.

Even companies who build their own onsite systems using hyper-converged technologies are still engaging in the world of cloud. It's a world of virtual machines, incredibly fast storage, and high capacity networks. They deliver the applications we use every day, but at a fraction of the cost.

Rapid adoption of commodity cloud services

Any society's place in this new digital world correlates directly with their adoption of the approaches that the cloud world offers. In 2017, that shift became very clear in South Africa. Not only did we see the announcement of a huge hyperscale cloud company opening the first such datacentre on the African continent, but the market also experienced the rapid adoption of commodity cloud services such as Salesforce and Office365, Google Music, and Showmax.

Both on-premise and public cloud systems have seen growing levels of uptake during the past two years, creating a tipping point in 2017 where companies no longer ask why they need to make the change, but rather how they can make the right change for them. This is a very different conversation we are seeing in the market.

Okay, but so what? So companies are buying fancy new computers. Not quite. Recently I ordered food from a popular local fish-and-chips takeaway brand. I could do it all on their website, on my phone, and had the order delivered from my nearest branch. My insurer offers me discounts based on how I drive. My health insurance gets cheaper if my fitness monitors show I'm exercising. I can do my banking on my phone and hail a cab at the same time.

The change to become bigger and more profound

These changes did not happen in isolation. They are a part of this shift in how we use technology. That change is only going to become bigger and more profound.

Already in some British supermarkets, you will pay a different price if you go during rush hour - and less if you shop earlier in the day. That's right, the prices automatically adjust based on the time. That's crazy, but it's true. This is the world we are entering. South Africa's place in that world depends on how we adapt to these changes.

Digital ideas to flourish into reality

“ 2017 was the tipping point, but 2018 is where we will see the difference, where our digital ideas will flourish into reality. ”

There is certainly much more to be done: we need lower data costs, easier access to the internet and more skills development. There is still a lot to achieve to create the digital DNA countries will need if they expect to thrive.

2017 is when we arrived at the race. 2018 will be when we take the first step towards winning it.

ABOUT DOUG WOOLLEY

Doug Woolley is the general manager of Dell EMC South Africa.
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