



Tech Talk

Tech predictions for 2017 ©

by John McCarthy



Hi and welcome once again to Tech Talk. Well, 2016 is done and dusted – and a good job, too, I can detect some of you understandably murmur. Indeed, 2016 cannot by any means be described as a vintage year: millions of innocent victims needlessly killed in needless wars, worsening atmospheric pollution throughout the world’s major cities provoking illness and consigning hundreds of thousands to an early grave, increasing global warming with warnings that it may already be too late to save the planet, seismic events in the political arena with potential repercussions that we can’t even begin to imagine – even the Tech world has suffered more than its fair share of setbacks with rockets exploding on takeoff, the first fatality attributed to a driverless car, the Samsung Battery scandal and similarly explosive news from hoverboards, a sharp increase in internet fraud and of course alleged hacking during a certain Presidential election which may or may not bring the world closer to another Cold War ... or worse. A veritable *annus horribilis*, so it’s tempting to think that everyone is due a cataclysm of more or less serious proportions and there are the usual doomsayers in the press heralding an apocalypse during 2017. There again Cassandras have of course existed since time immemorial.

And so, we turn another page on Tech Talk, and we take out the old crystal ball as I don the mantle of Nostradamus and try to see what the next twelve months may have in store. After all, it’s only a harmless bit of fun. First prediction is that the so-called two-in-one computer will take off. Most tech experts maintain that it’s increasingly difficult to innovate on a traditional clamshell laptop design, and even the new Macbook Pro, apart from its novel ribbon, can hardly claim to be particularly innovative. Microsoft have already broken the mould with their Surface-pro line-up, and this features a tablet-style design with an attachable keyboard. Touchscreens with increasingly user-friendly interfaces and it will be fairly simple for salesmen to move users over to the two-in-one convertible design by using the argument that they represent a more versatile computing platform, and sales could once again reach the same figures as in the golden age of computer sales.

Biometric technology is not new, but it has the potential to become a very important part of our everyday lives. Many mobile phones can now be unlocked by reading your finger-prints and modern passports contain ID chips that remove the inconvenience of queuing at airports. As we rely more and more on a tech, 24-7 online life, we’re

increasingly exposed to the dangers of hackers infiltrating our personal data and using it for nefarious purposes. Finger-print and perhaps even iris scanning could be broadened to include credit card ID, as banks attempt to stem the scourge of fraud, and companies are researching into vein scanners, which are allegedly more secure than any PIN number, as the chances of any two people having the same vein structure is 3.4 billion to one.

Expect an increase in the number of electric cars sold, but not a monumental one, as they're still prohibitively expensive for most people, and would cause total chaos on the power grids if they were sold in sufficient quantity. On the subject of which, photovoltaic technology will almost certainly increase its position as the planet's largest source of renewable power, and expect tidal turbines to increase their numbers.

Virtual Reality will continue to expand its beneficial embrace, and indeed it already enables people to enjoy immersive events with no physical risk. The benefits in the field of medicine are obvious, but as with anything else there is a dark side as studies have shown that an abuse of VR can lead to social isolation, as some people become more comfortable existing in their fake world rather than facing the real one. Wafts of 2016 once again!

I'd love to go on, but we've run out of time. If you have any ideas or comments on what next year will bring, do contact us on the website. Join me for another edition of Tech Talk next week on EnglishWaves radio. Bye or now.