However, in the case of 3D printing then you do want to wait or be a fast follower. It has a long long way to go before it industrialises and you’ve got an entire product stage it has to evolve through. In fact 3D printing will reach the plateau of productivity and see relatively widespread adoption as a product long before it industrialises. At some future time (2025–2030), as it starts to industrialise then it’ll probably reappear in the technology trigger usually under a slightly different meme. When it comes to 3D printing then you could wait a bit and get involved in the product space or wait much longer until the “*war*” is upon that industry at which point you’d need to go “*all in*”.

Two points — cloud computing and 3D printing — on almost exactly the same position of the hype cycle required radically different approaches to investment and strategy. One was “*all in*”, the other was “*wait and see*”. Being aggregated opinion, I do find the hype cycle quite useful as long as I separate out what stage of evolution something is in first. I often talk to CIOs who tell me they invest when something is in the stage of enlightenment. That’s a fairly reasonable way of losing every major technological war in business.

For me in 2008, this hype cycle helped reinforce the message that we had to go all in, it was a land grab for this territory. I also took comfort that many of my competitors probably read exactly the same hype cycle and thought they had time. Let us emphasise that point, I was going “*all in*” when competitors thought they had time — it’s a help yourself to the future buffet with no-one saying you can’t have 7th helpings because everyone else got the date wrong. Thank you Gartner, you probably have no idea how much you’ve helped me.