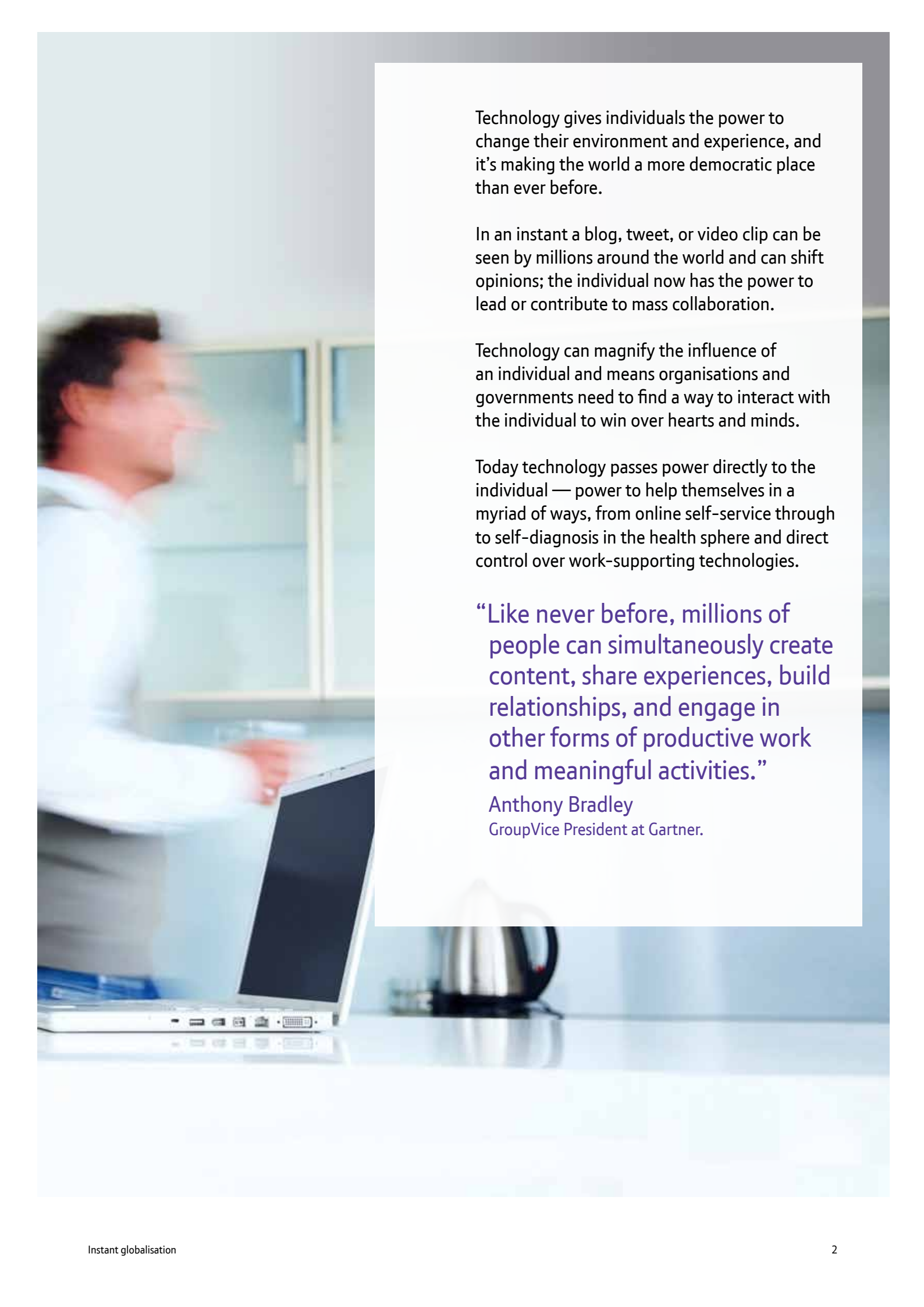# Power of the individual

Technology gives individuals the power to change the world

Technology gives individuals the power to change their environment and experience, and it's making the world a more democratic place than ever before.

In an instant a blog, tweet, or video clip can be seen by millions around the world and can shift opinions; the individual now has the power to lead or contribute to mass collaboration.

Technology can magnify the influence of an individual and means organisations and governments need to find a way to interact with the individual to win over hearts and minds.

Today technology passes power directly to the individual — power to help themselves in a myriad of ways, from online self-service through to self-diagnosis in the health sphere and direct control over work-supporting technologies.

"Like never before, millions of people can simultaneously create content, share experiences, build relationships, and engage in other forms of productive work and meaningful activities."

Anthony Bradley
GroupVice President at Gartner.

Why it matters

It matters because the rise of the individual is a symptom of the way new technologies are changing the way we live — from the way we socialise, learn, campaign, protest, develop ideas, interact with public services and government — through to the way we work.

The same technology that's given the impetus to the individual is being used by smart organisations to reach out to the people crucial to their livelihoods, using the same forums and methods to interact with customers via their preferred method of communication, and putting the individual at the heart of their operations.

#socialrevolution

The inexorable rise of social media is one of the defining features of our time. Politically, it's changing the global landscape and, for organisations, the power social media gives individuals has made, and continues to make, permanent alterations to the balance of relationships.

The immediacy of social media means a tweet this afternoon can mean a riot by sundown, so organisations who want to succeed in the connected world need to respond to criticism and praise alike with alacrity.

The Metropolitan Police used Twitter during the riots and reduced queue waiting times on 999 calls from 41 to zero seconds by advising people to avoid calling unless it was an absolute emergency, and by using the hash-tag #londonriots.

Also during the London riots, a junction box housing BT cables was destroyed by fire. As a result, a whole area of London was left without broadband, and BT needed to explain what was happening. It was able to tweet an image of the burnt out box as part of its message relaying the difficulties it was having to customers and followers. By so doing, it was proactive in the way it interacted with the people that mattered, encouraged empathy and understanding, and limited the potential damage to its reputation.

Retail therapy

The power of the individual is having a noticeable impact on the world of retail. Customers expect to be able to browse and buy online, assuming they'll receive the same level of service as they would in store. What's more, they also expect the retail experience to offer a seamless transition across a range of channels (what's been dubbed 'Youbiquity'), from website to smartphone app, to the store itself.

To operate as efficiently as possible, smart organisations look to innovate, making their systems work better, while keeping costs down and staying adaptable — meeting high customer service expectations can unlock success.

> Many people like to do their research online and then come into stores to buy, so we see them as being complementary channels.

A fantastic supply-chain success story is that of online clothing retailer, **ASOS**, able to deliver products from 850 brands to 160 countries — including to the USA within two days, and Australia within three to five. With 4.4million active customers, ASOS has seen stellar growth of their international sales of 103 per cent in the year to 31 March 2012 and retail sales overall have increased by 34 per cent. But what's really impressive is that ASOS does all this out of one central warehouse in Barnsley.

UK retailers realised the importance of 'youbiquity' early on and the UK is now a world-leader in multichannel retailing; smartphones, tablets and laptops as likely to be at the heart of transactions as shop attendants, credit cards and high-streets.

Aurora Fashions is a case in point. The company realised that, despite the tactile nature of clothing and the social aspect of high street shopping, online and off-line channels can work hand-in-hand with great effect. Ishan Patel, Strategic Development Director at Aurora Fashions, explains: "Many people like to do their research online and then come into stores to buy, so we see them as being complementary channels."

And it works both ways, with some customers choosing to buy online after having seen an item in store. Aurora recognised the business potential of this shift in customer behaviour and set about making sure all its brands were online with fully-transactional web sites.
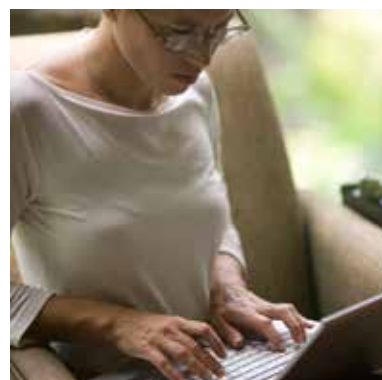
John Bovill, Group IT Director at Aurora Fashions, said: "It was very important to create a seamless multi-channel experience for our customers, so the e-commerce platform needed to integrate fully with our existing [systems]." The company's brands are all now tapping into the ever-expanding online shopping market, enhancing customer satisfaction, and encouraging repeat business.

The power of the individual has led to a rise in consumer expectations — from the call centre experience, the supply-chains that serve them, to the devices and times they choose.

Reinventing the contact centre

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Contact-centre technology highlights the crucial importance of the rise of the individual. People want an experience that feels bespoke — meeting their specifications and at a time of their choosing — expectations that could be perceived as expensive, requiring increased inputs and effort. However, the reverse is true: the individual can get their desired experience at the same time as the organisation makes efficiency savings.

> "We wanted to make the whole process more dynamic, making sure that anybody applying would pass through the customer journey as rapidly as possible."
>
> Sue Moore
> Programme Manager, Department for Work and Pensions

When the **Department for Work and Pensions** (DWP) introduced a new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) scheme, the aim was to get people who could work back into employment, while supporting those who

couldn't. The plan from the outset was to manage the whole customer process over the phone. At a practical level this meant reducing call handling times and, at the same time, being able to deal with increased call volumes.

Sue Moore, Programme Manager, said: "We wanted to make the whole process more dynamic, making sure that anybody applying would pass through the customer journey as rapidly as possible — including receiving any payments due. We estimated that we would take over 60,000 calls per month, not including the initial spike of contacts from existing claimants."

In order to handle the projected volumes efficiently an IP telephony platform was linked to DWP's Siebel customer relationship management (CRM) system. Linking the systems together means it's possible for ESA staff to track claims properly and have all the information they need at their fingertips as soon as a call is presented. In addition, the system routes each call to the most relevant agent, every time.

All initial claims to ESA can now be managed over the telephone, with incoming calls delivered to available agents, regardless of location.

The system's success supports new ways of interacting with customers, including self-service.

Transferring control

The potential of self-service as a way of leveraging the power of the individual by creating cost-effective opportunities for people to drive contact shines throughout pioneering programmes.

The individual knows technology conveys the power to help them; offer the right contact methods and people will use them; promote them and educate about them and take-up will increase.

'Channel shift', the process of moving contact methods away from face-to-face and towards phone, electronic

or self-service forms, opens up significant cost-saving opportunities. Research by the Society of Information Technology Management reveals the average cost to local government of a face-to-face contact is £7.40 and the rate of such contact per head of population varies from 0.24 up to 1.76 per year. Councils who have embraced channel shift have made quantifiable savings; **Surrey County Council** has reduced the cost of phone and web contacts from 79p to 49p per enquiry since 2007 and saved £175,000 in its contact centre plus £150,000 elsewhere by reducing available contact.

Suffolk County Council was also a pioneer, developing a Customer First programme in 2009 to improve customer service by completing more social services assessments at the first point of contact. Part of the programme involved introducing online self-service for people who need assistance with occupational therapy equipment. Citizens carry out an online self-assessment that recommends equipment, or provides information via email.

The programme as a whole has dramatically reduced waiting times for care — which could be up to two years for some occupational therapy equipment — in some instances to a matter of days.

Head in the clouds

Cloud, too, offers fantastic opportunities for organisations to keep up cost-effectively with the demands placed on them by individuals. From the supply lines that allow speedy delivery around the world, to the scalable contact centres used by private and public sector organisations to offer better support to users, cloud's flexibility is a big asset.

Patrick Barwise, Emeritus Professor at **London Business School**, says a retail cloud revolution is underway, with retailers using on-demand cloud services to give instant access and richer content throughout their multichannel activities. This will help them operate more sustainably and improve customer service to the benefit of customers and retailers alike.

Cloud offers multiple opportunities to improve existing processes so that organisations
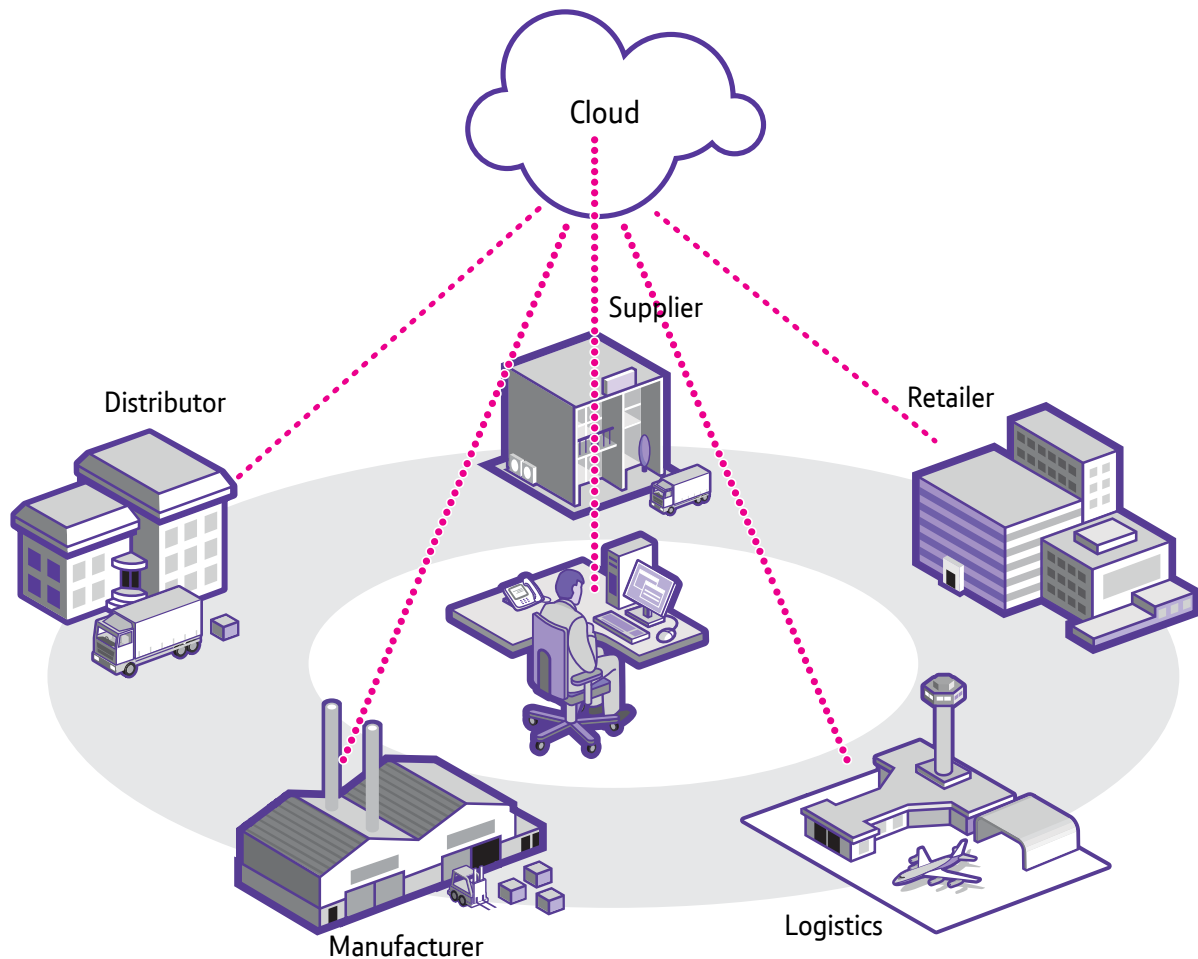
Cloud offers multiple opportunities to improve existing processes so that organisations can achieve the efficiencies they want.

can achieve the efficiencies they want without undue investment in new technology.

As special services logistics partner for Ericsson, **TNT** is responsible for delivering essential telecommunications parts and supplies to field engineers across the UK in the tightest of timescales. In a reverse logistics operation, it also has to take back and process parts for returns or repairs.

TNT wanted to improve the efficiency of this service, but with key information held in different formats and systems in its supply chain it was hard to get a single, clear view of its performance and see where and how changes could be made, and time means money.

TNT introduced BT Global Trace, a cloud-based capability that brings together information from different systems to give total visibility of events, from the moment the order is placed until it is delivered to the engineer. Automatic alerts and improved reactions have enabled TNT to boost delivery times by 16 per cent to Ericsson customers who

require a business critical, two hour response.In due course, BT Global Trace is expected to help TNT reduce overall inventory and associated costs while maintaining customer service levels.

Says Steve Brown, Divisional General Manager of TNT Special Services: "We have shown that greater visibility across the supply chain increases efficiency and flexibility. There is no doubt that a single view across all systems and data speeds up processes and identifies significant events, allowing us to respond in new and better ways to our customers, and they, in turn, deliver a better service to their customers."

Efficiencies like those achieved by BASF and ASOS have direct implications for customers because cost reductions can be passed on to them. Suppliers are also acutely aware that consumers have the power to make or break reputations, so building efficiencies into their supply lines — and offering a better service as a result — is a superb way of keeping those powerful individuals onside.

The power of consumerisation

The power of individuals doesn't lie only in their spending capacity and their ability to make their opinions heard. For the first time in history innovations in ICT are being driven by individuals, rather than by organisations. Consumers are more likely to have advanced smartphones, better laptops, the latest tablets, and even better broadband connections in their private lives, than their places of work; this is known as the consumerisation of IT.

This is a huge change to the world of 20 years ago when, if there were computers and mobile phones anywhere, it's more than likely that they were in offices, being used by executives. Unsurprisingly, these big changes in the IT industry have significant ramifications for organisations.

To start with, CIOs are increasingly under pressure from employees to enable non-work devices to connect to company networks and be used to carry out work. The desire to use better, more efficient devices familiar from the personal sphere in the workplace is a trend impossible to ignore; Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is here to stay.

From an organisation's perspective this requires considered BYOD policies, as well as good security measures to deal with the potential threats to which a more flexible, more open network could be susceptible. The right BYOD policies allow organisations to benefit from the latest technology, without the expense of providing the hardware themselves — a great opportunity to do more with less.

Research shows the importance of unified communications in attracting and retaining talent; 57 per cent of global executives sampled in 2012 believe effective communications technology and collaboration tools are vital to finding and holding onto skilled people. BT 2012 collaboration research revealed that 34 per cent of under 35s and 40 per cent of directors or general managers would consider moving employer if the organisation's use of communications technology doesn't keep up-to-date with trends. People in larger organisations are particularly affected by having the best communications technology when choosing where to work; 43 per cent gave this as an important factor in job choice. It's attitudes like these that are providing the catalyst organisations need to reconsider attitudes to technology in general and BYOD in particular.

Cisco's recent IBSG Horizons Study shows some of the benefits associated with BYOD; 95 per cent of participants in the US-based survey say they permit BYOD in some way shows big changes are afoot in the workplace. Overall, more than 75 per cent of respondents acknowledged the benefits of BYOD and the improvements this consumer-driven change brought to their organisation, underlining the fact that BYOD is here to stay. What's particularly telling is that IT managers are working hard to balance security concerns around BYOD with the potentially-significant cost and productivity benefits it offers.
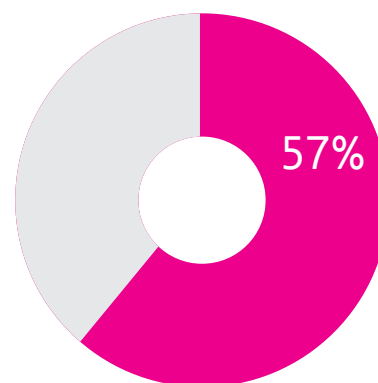
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Building security for and against the individual

Norfolk County Council

In the security realm, one of the big responsibilities all organisations have is keeping customer information secure. Reputations can be shattered in an instant if security is compromised, particularly when it concerns personal information such as patient records or financial details.

In 2011 the average organisational cost per data breach was $5.5m and the average cost per compromised record was $194

Just as an individual can spark a mass collaboration via social media, an individual can also cause irreparable damage to an organisation by malicious cyber-attack or by accidental data loss; this creates the situation where organisations need to protect the individual's data against the actions of other individuals.

Driven by increasing awareness of the cost of security breaches — in 2011 the average organisational cost per data breach was $5.5m and the average cost per compromised record was $194 — organisations are putting security and clear assessments of risk at the heart of project decision-making.

With security front of mind, **Norfolk County Council** Children's Services department wanted to bring all its data together on one, cloud-based system, eliminating confusing duplications, meeting compliance requirements, and reducing time and costs. But they were committed to only activating data sharing capabilities if protected by the highest levels of security.

Paul Fisher, Assistant Director, Children's Services (Business and Compliance) said: "All of this is achieved without compromising data security. We know at a technical level that the virtual data centre itself is incredibly secure."

Flexibility improves life experience

While keeping them secure, network technology also gives people the flexibility to work, shop and be entertained from anywhere. And it's even extending to the way people give and receive medical care.

Every year around 1,800 patients attend Surrey A&E units with suspected strokes. Rapid assessment and diagnosis is vital and means the difference between life and death. Adrian Blight, Surrey Telestroke clinical director and the lead consultant for stroke medicine at the Royal Surrey County Hospital, said: "Time is critical when treating strokes. For the best chance of recovery a patient needs to be diagnosed and treated within four hours. Face-to-face assessment is vital, but out-of-hours a senior consultant with the necessary skills would not always be onsite."

When looking for a solution to the issue of not having specialist resources available 24/7 Adrian and his colleagues had the vision to create a centralised out-of-hours stroke assessment service using BT-networked HD video conferencing technology on hospital beds. Wherever the consultant is, a client application installed on their laptop enables connection to the bedside via a secure broadband link. Adrian Blight said: "I can review scans and test results online, see and talk with the patient over

the HD video link, and speak face-to-face with the onsite medical team and worried family members — all without leaving my home office. Many conditions masquerade as a stroke. Being able to thoroughly assess patients more rapidly and prescribe the right treatment saves lives and improves the chance of a full recovery."

Patient power

NHS

Another NHS Trust embracing the remote management of patients and patient autonomy is **NHS Wakefield District Primary Care Trust** (PCT). As people live longer it means more years of medical treatment, and healthcare providers around the world are grappling with tightening budgets and the urgent need to curb spiralling costs.

The Trust's area of responsibility had a higher recorded incidence of patients with heart disease than the national average, so the focus of the scheme was patients with chronic heart failure. The PCT looked at how it could better manage the conditions of its patients as well as improving their quality of life and simultaneously reducing costs.

The Trust trialled an interactive personal health application that meant patients self-monitored their vital signs, along with key data such as blood glucose and weight. Then the information was sent over a standard broadband connection to the patient's care team for analysis.

The system hands the wellbeing of participants to the individual and, at the same time, frees up NHS resources without compromising service. Alan Wittrick, Chief Executive of NHS Wakefield District, said: "The feedback we are receiving from patients and community nurses is encouraging. Patients say they feel more in control of their condition. In some cases it has transformed their lives."

Setting the bar high

Paradoxically, although we live in a world where technology does so much for us, that same technology also lets us do more for ourselves.

In the finance sphere, for example, what's been called 'Youbiquity finance' is taking control. Consumers increasingly value access to information, accounts and providers when they are on the move, at work, in their homes, or wherever they may be. As with retail, they expect a seamless experience, no matter how they mix and match channels; on average customers use 2.9 channels to purchase a simple home insurance product. The contact centre is at the core of meeting these expectations, being the 'eyes and ears' of the organisation and the means by which channels and personal data come together.

As technology increasingly creates a world controlled by the individual, organisations need to change the way they operate to accommodate the desires of ordinary people. From employees who expect to be able to work flexibly with the technology of their choice to the shoppers who apply the same rules to their consumption, the ever-more connected world we live in is waiting for smart organisations to make the changes they need in order to stay successful. The power of individuals is here to stay, and the innovation that places power in their hands, is also helping organisations overcome the challenges they face.

Join the conversation at www.letstalk.globalservices.bt.com/en/

What it all means

- Technology gives individuals the power to change the world; this cannot and should not be ignored by organisations.

- Social media is changing the global landscape and, for organisations, the power social media gives customers is making permanent alterations to the balance of relationships.

- Service providers — from hospitals to retailers — can achieve efficiencies by giving individuals more freedom to help themselves.

- Multichannel retailing with smartphones, tablets and laptops is changing the world of retail and customers expect a seamless, channel-agnostic service.

- Reputations can be shattered if security is compromised, making keeping customer information secure a big responsibility.

- Individuals expect their opinions to be heard and acknowledged, so a rapid response from organisations is vital.

BT

Bringing it all together