



Image: Neypomuk-Studios

## How to build a Death Star in one day

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*One idea, some coding skills and a few bucks - that's all you need these days to create something HUGE. Maybe not a galactic superweapon, but something almost equally disruptive.*

Let's think 10 years back, it's not too long ago. Some smart folks come up with an idea for a micro-blogging service called *Jitter*. It's revolutionary, ... well maybe, who knows. They create a prototype, a pitch deck and convince investors to give them a considerable amount of dollars to try this out. Once the money is in, the team buys some dangerously large servers, hires geeks to set it up, and starts building their application. After some months of viral marketing, they get additional funding to secure more computing horsepower to make sure the system can cater for the growing popularity of the service. [1]

Now -- 2016, the age of cloud computing. Social media. Netflix, Airbnb, and Uber. How can these companies be innovative, omnipresent and highly adaptive on such a scale?

All of these players started to revolutionize existing business models with a radical new approach. Many of today's apps that everybody seems to be using share the following characteristics:

- they use a **highly cost-optimized way to utilize IT services** on a pay-as-you-go model, also known as 'the cloud'. At home or at the office you don't have a Diesel generator in the basement, you use the local power supplier, pay for what you use, and they send you a monthly bill. Cloud works just like that. And in IT terms, this goes beyond virtualized servers or storage and is even more about an increasing number of services like [mobile backends](#) and [global content distribution](#). The Death Star probably wasn't fully paid off yet when it blew up, in 2016 you don't even need to own the infrastructure or pay for everything up front.
- they **create mashups and integrate existing services**, with many of the new players having a **mobile-first** strategy. You'd like to send text messages to every user to confirm accounts? [Twilio](#) does that, you just integrate it. Writing articles -

why not use [Wordpress](#) and pull an RSS feed into the application? It's easy to get massively scalable video streaming on a pay-as-you-go model with [Azure Media Services](#), you upload your video and stream it to millions of users, without having to operate anything. Facebook, Twitter etc. allow you to blast updates to your network, they even let you use their authentication mechanisms for your application so users can sign in with their existing credentials. The list goes on.

- they found a way to **build & release software updates faster**, without jeopardizing the quality and stability of the service. While this is of course about enabling technologies and concepts such as [Docker](#) and a [Microservices Architecture](#), it's really about breaking up a big problem into many smaller ones, a high level of automation and cross-functional collaboration. You might have guessed it - these days we call it DevOps.

Imagine today, two friends meeting over breakfast in the morning. *Jeff*, a developer and aspiring UX designer, and *Sandra*, a marketing genius who understands social media and can operate Photoshop. Now, they've had this *mind-blowing* idea in their heads for some time, by lunch time Jeff has stood up a dangerously large set of global infrastructure, built a mashup that integrates existing services and automates several things. Sandra has designed a nice logo and came up with some catchy phrases that *just makes you click that link so you can explore that new thing*. You share it with *your friends*. By midnight, half a billion people on the planet have seen it.

What is your idea that changes everything?

[1] Probably just like you, I've not been played a part in the creation of Twitter and can't say if things really happened this way. And it's not really important since the storyline is, of course, imaginative and used as an example

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