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How to Make Safe Predictions

A statistical analysis once showed that if you predict for tomorrow the same weather as today's, you will be right more often than the average meteorologist. We think Gartner, the dominant IT analyst firm, has adopted and adapted this method. The ten predictions for 2015 made by analyst David Cearley at the analyst firm's recent symposium in Florida are only useful if you lived under a rock in 2014 and haven't followed what's going on in the SMAC area (social, mobile, analytics, cloud), which by extension includes the connected devices of the Internet of Things (IoT). A typically lame prediction, as summarized in the last ACM TechNews column: "Gartner sees computing everywhere, or ubiquitous access to computing capabilities, as a top trend, and Cearley notes companies may need to acquire new expertise in this area." Wow.

The problem with such mundane statements is that either they indicate that the Gartner audience is now made up of IT laggards, or else it soon will be -- because CIOs who are not asleep at the wheel will no longer find it useful to attend. How's that for a 2015 forecast?

In all fairness, the Gartner Symposium is a huge event with hundreds of presentations, not all of which are likely to be so trite. But then why is the IT press so obsequiously reporting such a session as if it was big news, without an ounce of critical spirit?

Hacking

The prevalence of cyberattacks by Chinese hackers was outlined in a rather dramatic manner by FBI Director James Comey, who said in an interview that "there are two kinds of big companies in the United States. There are those who've been hacked by the Chinese and those who don't know they've been hacked by the Chinese."

(Reported by BusinessInsider.com, relayed by Vince Polley in his Miscellaneous IT-Related Legal News).

Privacy in the Cloud

Privacy has been seen as a big challenge since the first talk of moving to cloud-based solutions, even though keeping data inside an organization's firewalls is by no means a guarantee of privacy (see the above article). What's different in 2014 is that some action is starting to happen. The US National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) has a group working on cloud security and privacy, in liaison with the General Services Administration -- the US federal government's sourcing division. ISO has published ISO 27018, which is largely a response to the European Union's personal data protection laws. And before the end of the year, the Cloud Standards Customer Council (CSCC) is planning to issue a white paper about Cloud Privacy for the Public Sector -- mostly aimed at US government agencies. As usual, the CSCC paper will recommend several concrete steps to help adopters mitigate the risks and avoid reinventing the wheel. Stay tuned, as this publication will be announced in The KIT.

ACM Learning Center News

ACM added new titles to its custom eBook and Safari video collections. The Safari Books Online collection has added coverage of popular web and mobile programming toolkits. Mobile developers will find resources on Android and iOS application programming. Java developers will find books on Java EE 7 and SE 7 and 8. The Safari video collection has new entries on AngularJS, Android application development, Hadoop, and Java. The Books 24x7 collection has 120 new titles on a wide variety of technical topics. There are also updated preparatory guides for many in-demand certifications including CCNA, PMP, and TOGAF.

→ Seen Recently...

"The armies with which a prince defends his state are either his own, or they are mercenaries, auxiliaries, or mixed.
Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous, and if one holds the state based on these armies, he will stand neither firm nor safe; for they are disunited, ambitious, and without discipline, unfaithful, valiant before friends, cowardly before enemies; [...] in peace one is robbed by them, and in war by the enemy."

-- Machiavelli, the Prince, Chapter XII, giving a 16th-century version of a critique of outsourcers and contractors