

MWC 2017 shows how fast the world is changing

by Alex Robbio - Monday, March 13, 2017

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The world is changing. Nowhere else is that more evident than at Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona. I attended the event along with the management team of Belatrix, and I want to share some of my highlights and thoughts:

- **Tech focused on improving workforce satisfaction and productivity reflect changing nature of the event. In the startups targeting B2B/enterprise markets, I was excited to see quite a few of them targeting talent acquisition, talent management, training, performance management, satisfaction analytics and management. It is clear that knowledge-based companies are struggling with how to improve the satisfaction and productivity of their workforces. This is also interesting to see because it reflects how MWC is moving away from focusing on new mobile devices with new features, but rather how mobility can help drive real business benefits, and improve organizations.**
- **Challenges ahead for crypto-currencies, but widespread potential for blockchain.** Crypto currencies such as Bitcoin were prevalent at MWC. However many of the presentations focused on the challenges that Bitcoin has for becoming a standard, mainly because it doesn't have a good governance strategy, so it's not clear how it can be improved nor how issues will be fixed by the community. Blockchain however was widely discussed, in particular for uses beyond those in fintech, for example with voting and authentication, where it will arguably have an even greater impact. The use of blockchain also has tremendous potential for coordinating different connected devices (as part of the smart home for example) - look out for more of this in the coming year, and at MWC 2018.
- **Bolstered by AI, marketing and sales hacking come to the fore.** It was fascinating to see that in the marketing and sales space, a lot of companies are now offering niche solutions to generate, analyze and score leads, many of them using artificial intelligence (AI). We also saw some interesting approaches to pay-per-click management using AI techniques.
- **Drones become more spectacular. Drone vendors are bringing innovation to the space at a dramatic pace. Just consider [Intel flying 500 drones](#) from a single PC, the technology of which they used for the spectacular backdrop to Lady Gaga's half-time Superbowl show. And then consider the potential commercial applications, in industries such as agriculture and precision farming, or for humanitarian purposes such as rescuing individuals in remote situations.**
- **Personal health continues to be a key focus area for mobile initiatives.** Just as we have seen in the past, we saw a lot of apps and devices to monitor everything from ovulation to blood pressure. We saw Nokia for instance talk about its efforts in creating new digital health products, which is not too surprising given its acquisition of Withings, one of the leading smart device manufacturers, last year.
- **The emergence of 5G.** A lot of people were talking about this, and Samsung is promising to launch 5G phones shortly, even if the standard is not fully agreed and globally accepted. This reminds us of what happened with WiFi 801N, which was launched in "draft" mode by many

vendors until there was full agreement on the specs. We heard companies exchanging views on what this incredible bandwidth will mean for devices and user experiences for example. Executives were discussing how companies can get ready for it so that they are first to market while at the same time not relying so much on this bandwidth that the other majority of their users with no 5G in the first years have a negative experience.

And finally, particularly relevant for business executives, I had the pleasure of talking to an executive from Microsoft who said that we should expect Windows and Office to run on almost any standard Qualcomm mobile device very shortly. They are working on a lot of mobile first devices like netbooks, tablets, laptops, that will offer a seamless experience for users. With pre-existing global data contracts, users will be able to roam and always be online. They also expect a laptop to potentially run for over 20 hours. This is excellent news coming from Microsoft, and reflects the changes the organization has gone through under Satya Nadella's leadership, as they try to become a more mobile, digital organization.

Were you also at the event? Let me know your highlights in the comments below.

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