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1. VOICE REACHES SATURATION POINT

Voice assistants have been available in Australia for a relatively short time (just over a year), but the technology has certainly made itself known. (I, for one, never realised there was a way to listen to music in every room of your house...)

Perhaps driven by the novelty factor, or the fact that on sale days you can purchase an Echo Dot for as little as \$39, the simple fact is that Alexa is on the rise in Australia. Yes, I realise there are other assistants out there; however, I believe it's fair to say that Amazon's Alexa is the most widely known. And, in the format war that is currently raging, Alexa will likely be victorious.

In the next 12 months, I believe voice as a user interface (VUI) will reach a tipping point in Australia as historically, we have shown ourselves to be rabid tech adopters.

2. WELLNESS WISHES

The hippies are continuing their takeover of society. No longer are the great unwashed identifiable by flowers in their hair and their insistence on wearing bell bottom jeans (probably made from hemp); rather, they promote 'wellness' while wearing 'active wear' in cafes while letting their children, who are probably named after a US state the parents have never been to, run amok.

But I digress.

It appears that the multi-billion dollar wellness industry has well and truly arrived in the custom integration channel. People want healthy homes and healthy workplaces, and they are willing to pay for them.

Integrators would be wise to investigate the available options and, while they're at it,

learn all they can about electromagnetic hypersensitivity. This will come up and it's best you have an answer. (It's also important to know what kombucha is and understand that it is a trap. Avoid it at all costs.)

3. ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

For the past couple of years, I've been banging on about what I have been calling 'The Great Distributor Shuffle'. It has even become a staple in my YouTube video series, *Connected TV*.

While there will undoubtedly be further changes to local representation in 2019, I believe it will slow down significantly. No longer will we be averaging one to two changes per week; rather, I believe it will be closer to one to two each month.

4. THE CONTROL MARKET HEATS UP

Over the past few years, the control system landscape in Australia has been dominated by one or two companies. But I believe that this category will now be the cause of the biggest battle we've seen for quite a while, and integrators will be right in the thick of things.

Alliances will be tested and integrators will be sweet talked and promised the world.

Never before has it been more important to do your homework and truly vet the brands you sell to your clients. Does the supplier have good tech support? What training does it offer? Will the company be around in five years?

Most importantly, do they have good freebies? Make them fight for your love.



5. GOLDEN PAUL VOTING HITS FEVER PITCH

Voting in the 2018 Golden Paul competition was by far the most combative to date, leading me to believe that fervour surrounding voting in the 2019 competition will reach a new level, leading to riots breaking out in the streets. Blood may be spilled and tears will definitely be shed. And while the write-in votes will again indicate that I am the rightful and most deserving winner, the award will be presented to someone who will live up to my example.

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