

Top Technologies: 2009 & Beyond

As economic uncertainty reaps havoc on corporate budgets, IT leaders are under increasing pressure to ensure the IT function and its activities are consistent with corporate strategic objectives. CIOs must carefully guard IT budget dollars, wisely choosing technology investments that will make the greatest strategic impact and increase revenue.

Recently, several lists and surveys have sought to predict the tools and strategies that will play the critical dual role of supporting business strategy while boosting company revenue. These lists offer a "sneak peek" at which technologies many CIOs and top IT executives will be implementing and/or expanding over the next three years.

According to technology research firm Gartner Inc., its 2009 list focuses on technologies that "... impact the organization's long-term plans, programs and initiatives."

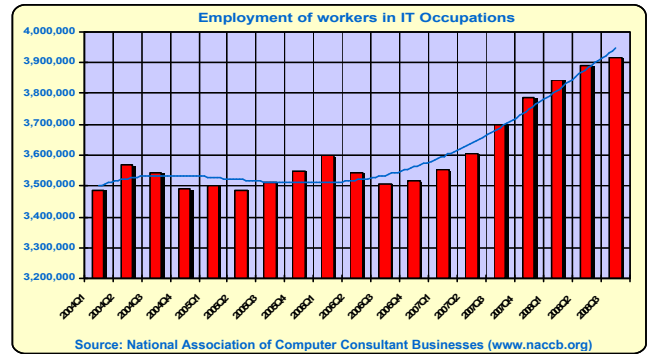
Gartner's Top 10 Strategic Technologies for 2009	Top 10 Technologies that Drive Revenue - CIO Insight
1. Virtualization	1. Service-oriented Architecture
2. Cloud Computing	2. Rich Internet Applications
3. Servers – Beyond Blades	3. Unified Communications
4. Web-oriented Architectures	4. Smart Phones and Mobile Clients
5. Enterprise Mashups	5. AJAX
6. Specialized Systems	6. Application Virtualization
7. Social Software and Social Networking	7. Storage Virtualization
8. Unified Communications	8. Wikis
9. Business Intelligence	9. RFID/Wireless Sensors
10. Green IT	10. Social Networking

Source: Gartner, Inc

Source: cioinsight.com

Although they may be labeled differently, several technologies appear on both notable lists above, which is a strong indication they should be given serious implementation consideration. Here are the technologies that overlap:

- ◆ **Virtualization:** Though definitions vary depending upon the type of virtualization, essentially this technology allows one computer or application to do the work of several.
- ◆ **Web/Internet Apps and Architectures:** As the need for the interoperability of applications increases, so will the need to build Web-centric applications to meet global needs.
- ◆ **Social Networking:** When it comes to this technology, Gartner says the "risk lies in failure to engage and thereby, being left mute in a dialogue where your voice must be heard."
- ◆ **Unified Communications:** As consolidation continues in the communications industry, so will a company's reliance on fewer vendors.



Battening Down the Hatches IT & the Economic Storm

IT executives may feel their departments are especially vulnerable in this time of shrinking corporate budgets. Rather than worry, there are several actions leaders can take to reinforce the strategic value of IT and its ability to substantially help companies weather this unparalleled economic storm.

The first critical step is to identify discretionary spending and activities versus non-discretionary spending and activities. This process does not just focus on hardware and applications, but also on staffing. Identify what aspects of a project are 'nice-to-haves' compared to 'musts.' It may be possible to significantly trim project costs by eliminating the 'nice-to-haves' across the board. If this is not possible, consider outsourcing as a way to keep key projects on target and on budget.

And speaking of outsourcing, it's a good time to look at your overall outsourcing strategy. Managing through an economic downturn isn't just about reducing current overhead, but also reducing future costs. Consider expanding outsourcing contracts in order to conserve internal resources.

Keys to Managing IT in a Recession

- ⇒ Demonstrate how IT is an asset and not an expense;
- ⇒ Know what is discretionary spending (and what isn't);
- ⇒ Outsource to reduce overhead;
- ⇒ Green initiatives save power (and expenses).

As budgets are trimmed, IT may end up with unused or underutilized resources, which hurt bottom-line performance. Realign and rescue stranded assets in order to make the most of every tool, technology, system and team member you have.

And be sure to plan for the "bounce-back." Cutting too deeply now may mean not being able to fully exploit the eventual upturn.

Demand for IT Workers Still High

IT Workers Defy the Market

Although IT job growth has slowed, it reached an all-time high in 3Q2008 of more than 3.9 million. The unemployment rate for most IT occupations remained significantly below the national overall unemployment rate of 4.7 percent in 3Q2008.

Occupation	3Q2008 Unemployment rate
Computer hardware engineers	2.7 %
Computer and information systems managers	1.9 %
Computer programmers	2.2 %
Computer scientists and systems analysts	2.2 %
Computer software engineers	1.6 %
Computer support specialists	4.4 %
Network and computer systems administrators	2.4 %
Network systems and data communications analysts	3.4 %
<i>Sources: NACCB based on unpublished U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data</i>	

By looking at the correlation between year-over-year hourly and weekly wage changes, demand among different IT and computer sectors can be assessed.

The year-over-year hourly wage increase for all workers in September was 3.2 percent, but weekly wages were only up 1.4 percent—a strong indication that workers' hours across the U.S. have been cut back.

The reverse situation (weekly wages rose faster than hourly wages) occurred in some IT/high-tech sectors, which indicates high demand in those technology categories. For example, hourly wages for workers in the Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals sector rose 8.9 percent while their weekly wages rose 17.6 percent.

On the other hand, the relationship in other IT/computer sectors seems to indicate falling demand due to the fact that weekly wage increases did not keep up with hourly raises. For example, workers in Computer Systems Design Services received, on average, a 10.5 percent raise in hourly wages in September 2008 from one year earlier. However, their weekly wages did not keep up: they were 7.1 percent higher over the previous year.

The relatively high hourly wage gain indicates high demand and low supply of workers. The lesser weekly wage growth indicates that those workers did not work as much.

Soft Skills as Important as Ever

It may be difficult to admit, but IT professionals do not always have the best communication and interpersonal skills. While it may feel safer to keep one's head down and hide out in today's tough economic climate, it's not a smart career move. Now is the time to communicate knowledge and demonstrate value. For many IT professionals, that will require sharpening the soft skills listed below.

Critical Communication Skills

1. **Diplomacy** – Yes, customers can be wrong. Instead of simply dismissing their ideas, try, "That's a good point, *but*..."
2. **Knowledge Sharing** – Knowledge is an advantage and a talent—not an excuse to be arrogant. Try sharing and teaching as opposed to preaching and scolding.
3. **Listening** – Asking questions and giving colleagues time to talk is a sign of flexibility and willingness to learn.
4. **Expectation Management** – Remember that your customers/audience may not have a great impression of IT. Find out what you are up against and work to change negative sentiments with positive communications and professional work.

With IT now integrated into strategic functions across the enterprise, good communications skills can often be the difference between success and failure for both an individual and a project.

E-mail Addiction: A Real Problem

E-mail is a valuable work tool, but also an addiction risk. E-mail addiction, to which IT workers are especially vulnerable since their workdays center around technology, can become a serious detriment to one's workplace productivity and personal life.

Warning Signs of Addiction:

- Checking e-mail every 15 minutes or less.
- Going through e-mail religiously when not at work.
- Interrupting in-person activities on a regular basis to look at and respond to e-mail.
- Interrupting non-professional life, such as sleep, family time, etc., to check e-mail.
- Needing to respond to an e-mail immediately.
- Feeling compelled to look at every e-mail.

If you fit the e-mail addiction profile, here are some steps to help regain your control over e-mail.

- Adjust your e-mail client to check e-mail every couple of hours.
- If you feel driven to check office e-mail from home, make a commitment not to look at it after a certain hour. Your family will thank you.
- If possible, decide on certain times of the day to deal with e-mail and commit to that schedule. You may be surprised how much time opens up in your day.
- Remember that there is no such thing as an "emergency e-mail." If it's a true emergency, the method of communication should be a phone call, maybe a text message, but certainly not an e-mail.