

Top Tech Trends for 2018



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As another year goes by, we've seen some significant changes to the tech landscape as old technologies come into their own and new technologies open up opportunities for IT professionals. As the importance of technology in our daily lives continues to increase, and more industries go through digital transformation, the tech sector itself grows too. With a number of exciting trends on the horizon that have the potential to disrupt the market, we're taking a look at the areas we expect more demand for in 2018 and beyond.

VR Becoming Viable

While VR has yet to actualise its full potential, it's starting to find its feet as it works its way into applications outside of just entertainment. VR is a tech solution in its truest sense, allowing users to immerse themselves in virtual realities and problem-solve in new and innovative ways. Its applications are not just limited to the tech industry, or even just for product-driven industries. More and more industries are finding a use for **VR as part of their training programmes**. VR not only allows employees to live out a nearly real-life scenario, but also to learn from their mistakes in a safely in a sandbox environment. There are an incredibly wide range of applications for VR, and it's a classic example of how far-reaching technology can be, with everything from entertainment to HR to education having the potential to be augmented by VR.



As VR becomes a more viable option for more industries, the skills that go along with it, like 3D modelling, game development and UI/UX, become increasingly more transferable. We wouldn't be surprised to see the number of startups developing VR focused products, or established companies adding VR as a specialisation, drastically increase in 2018 as organisations look to add this capability to their repertoires. While understanding the concepts behind development and programming would naturally be useful, there will likely be an opening for people joining the industry with animation or 3D modelling backgrounds.



Blockchain

If 2017 was the year of anything, it was arguably the year of Bitcoin, with the cryptocurrency's value raising by over 1000% since this time last year. The result has been a significant but divisive impact on the financial services sector, and an increasing number of organisations are looking for people with the right knowledge to help them understand and harness this disruptive force. Not only will they need to understand it, but as more services flirt with the decentralised nature of Bitcoin, people with the skills and knowledge to integrate it into new or existing platforms are going to become exceptionally valuable.

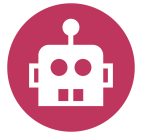
However, while Bitcoin has been one of the year's most visible successes, the technology behind it – the blockchain – is a concept with arguably even greater potential. Blockchain is a technology that could possibly revolutionise much more than just the financial market, but it is still in its infancy and is a while away from coming into its own. However, it is growing, and as a platform that breeds trust by cutting out the middle man, it's likely that a greater number of forward-thinking companies will look to using **this as an alternative**. To give an insight into exactly how the blockchain can provide innovative solutions in a variety of different contexts, one only need look at the already enormous range of blockchain solutions for various different problems. For example, **Primalbase** uses blockchain technology as a way of simplifying rental relationships, whereas **CarTaxi** uses the technology as the backbone for an automated car towing service.

While a healthy degree of scepticism should be taken as an investor, if you're an IT professional then it's a good time to get ahead of the game and get to grips with the tech behind the cryptocurrency. Understanding the concepts behind blockchain is critical (so get studying!) and a basic knowledge of economics and financial services is a nice-to-have. A number of blockchain and cryptocurrency startups have already started to pop

in New Zealand, so there's no time like the present to get acquainted. After all, the applications of **blockchain are seemingly limitless**.

AI and Internet of Things (IoT) Continue to Grow

Gone are the days when AI was the purely the stuff of science fiction; welcome to a world where it's here and it's here to stay. While AI in the context of drawing insights from big data analytics is still a key trend, the advent of **Air New Zealand's "digital human" Sophie** is a clear sign of what's to come. And while large corporates are embracing more developed forms of AI, it's in your home as well. As tools like Siri and Alexa become more consistently more advanced, smart appliances become more common, and more self-driving-capable cars hit the market, AI becomes more deeply imbued in the our now-connected every day devices, and AI becomes more tightly woven in with our ever-expanding Internet of Things. It's a match made in tech-heaven, with the vast amount of data generated by IoT devices needing to be disseminated and delivered in real time. When working in tandem, **AI and the IoT could allow companies to solve new problems and draw fresh insights**.



However, there are drawbacks to the increasing connectivity we're seeing. With **numerous examples of hacks, leaks** and poor security throughout 2017, it's clear that something needs to be done. We predict that organisations will go into 2018 and beyond with a **renewed focus on security**, which means that experience in this sector will become hugely valuable. Those who have focused on organisational security in previous roles, especially in directing and implementing new security systems and processes, will find themselves in high demand.

Furthermore, self-driving vehicles (another big story in 2017), are also an AI-driven innovation. As the production of these increases and more of them arrive on our shores, our roads need to be fully prepared for a large-scale introduction. That means smarter infrastructure, smarter laws and guidelines, and smarter road rules – all of which will need input from those with tech backgrounds, both in the planning and implementation stages. We're already seeing the impact of this in Christchurch **with the launch of Ohmio Automation**, a company that makes driverless shuttles, which are currently being trialled at Christchurch airport – so there are job opportunities in this space locally.

Summary

With so many technologies coming into their own this year, it's clear that next year could see real demand for IT professionals who can help organisations to embrace the new technologies that can help them drive their businesses forward. 2017 has been an exciting year for tech and it looks like 2018 will bring with it more developments and opportunities – and hopefully a few more interesting trends we can write about next year!

If you'd like to discuss this further, **contact us** today.