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Top Technology Predictions for 2012

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By Matt Ployhar

It's that time of year, when I speculate as to what the big technology announcements and impacts are going to be for the next year. For 2012, I looked for things that will in some way have a profound short- or long-term impact on the various gaming ecosystems.

So what's in store for 2012? Let's get started. Some of these may seem obvious, but there are often some things taking place between the lines that may not be so apparent.

1. Voice and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There are big implications here; I expect this to be a huge battlefield for the likes of Apple, Google and Microsoft. It will be very fun to watch! I'm hoping this sparks a new renaissance in voice recognition software coupled with artificial intelligence. Doesn't everyone want a protocol droid? Oh, wait; that's just a few more years away from becoming more affordable. This does, however, segue into …

2. Cloud Services

Sure, this may sound painfully obvious, but I believe we've only seen the tip of the iceberg here. The biggest implications come back to more and more content that can be digitally delivered or consumed. So expect things like the DECE Ultraviolet initiative, which could easily be extended to include the various gaming devices.

The big players here will continue to be Apple with iCloud, Valve with Steam, Sony with PSN, and Xbox with LIVE. However, expect Amazon to come on very strong. I also predict we'll see a few more consortium pacts formed. Where does it settle? I'm not sure it does. However, the first partner that delivers something on the order of Jarvis from *Iron Man* -- my own personal cloud -- will be the one I crown the winner.

3. iPad and Slate/Tablet Mania Begins to Wear Off

By the end of 2012, we'll likely see Microsoft spend more on Windows 8 and Project Denver marketing than what's left in the Federal Reserve. We also have Amazon playing in this space with the Kindle Fire. How many more hundreds of knock-offs will we see in the meantime? Don't get me wrong; I think they're nifty little devices, perfect for easy-to-do tasks and some PC usages. However, it's a device that I'm likely to buy as an addition to a PC -- not as a replacement for one.

4. Smarter TVs and All-in-ones Converge

I was hoping to see more of this in 2011, and it didn't happen. I'm still hoping that at least one of the big HDTV manufacturers like Samsung or LG will offer a compelling all-in-one in the 42-inch range or greater, with moderate upgradeability, WHDI/WiDi and an integrated Kinect/PrimeSense-like sensor in the bevel or stand. I'll keep that on my wish list for Holidays 2012 (if the Mayan calendar proves to be incorrect).

5. China Lifts Its Console Ban?

Perhaps. ...

6. E3 News

I'm hoping to see an announcement for at least one of the eighth-generation consoles. Good luck! My money is on Sony. If they're smart about it, they'll go with a cross-device, cross-platform play.

7. Google Goes Big in 2012

I expect Google will do even bigger things in 2012. Imagine a Google voice offering (like Siri) coupled with Google Search. What Google Android did on smartphones will likely be attempted to be duplicated on the slate/tablet form factor. Sure, they're there now, but I expect finer tuning for 2012. It has to be, given Microsoft's push with Metro on that form factor.

8. Big-name Game Engine Company Gets Acquired by a Bigger Fish

I keep expecting to see this happen. Even though it doesn't, I'm keeping it on my list.

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9. Globalization and Economic Climate Continues to Remain Flat
Believe me when I say I hope I'm dead wrong on this one. Domestically speaking, continue to pay off those credit cards, keep your debt-to-income ratio down and expect taxes to go up. The implications here for technology are continued ASP erosions, lower disposable income rates and more discerning buyers. This all translates into smart business leaders who will want to ensure that they can offer more compelling content at low rates and may require or warrant another look at new business models. Proprietary devices with lower Total Available Markets (TAMs) will be very unattractive places to be.

Courtesy: Matt Ployhar