

## We've converged and consumerised, now it's time to coordinate

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### Quocirca Comment

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Three recent trends in communications technologies – network convergence, social media and consumerisation – have on the surface appeared to be about simplification, but they have actually made life more complicated for some.

Convergence takes all of the silos of proprietary telecoms functions – voice and data, fixed and mobile – and blends them together around a single common set of universal open protocols borne out of the IT industry and the internet. All services are becoming combined and unified.

It sounds simple in principal, but all these proprietary technologies existed for a reason – commercial control – so the reality is that many vested interests need to be dragged sometimes kicking and screaming into line.

The fallout has been the emergence of dominant vendors like Apple, Google and Amazon from the IT world and some casualties in the telecoms industry, perhaps most notably Nortel, but also the significant weakening of giants like Motorola and Nokia.

While the economies of scale achieved through the unification and convergence on common standards are evident in the massive boosts in performance and reductions in the cost of sending data anywhere on the planet, it is not without other challenges.

Converged networks can struggle to deliver differentiated and predictable performance for services that need it. While common protocols mean that all traffic looks the same, different needs mean it should not all be treated the same. Network neutrality is a worthy aspiration for equality of access to technology, but it is not adequate for the deterministic transport of packets of data.

What of social media? It democratizes the provision and supply of content. Anyone, anywhere can be a citizen journalist, organise an

uprising or share pictures of funny looking cats with an army of friends, followers or like-minded 'individuals'. The opinions and wisdom of the crowd has never been more accessible, but the signal to noise ratio has dramatically worsened.

Finding relevant, accurate and accredited information is getting harder even for those organizations with the power to search 'big data', let alone for individuals.

As for consumerisation (in particular the use of mobile devices) this means that the same tools are available and usable for business or personal activities – the work/life division is completely blurred. Many individuals find this liberating, but those tasked with managing services, costs and security in organizations consider it a nightmare.

Many of the historical barriers – between work and home life, between network services, between friends – might have seemed arbitrary and often opaque, but they provided some control and resistance to anarchy.

Without some elements of structure and separation, systems become error prone, difficult to test properly, impossible to identify root causes – in short, unreliable and insecure.

Many will suggest this is not a problem; this 'hyperconnectivity' (a term once promoted by the now absent Nortel) is the natural evolution of technology and its total adoption is vital for employing the digital generation. This smacks of an abdication of responsibility by those who suggest a 'do nothing' approach.

There are others, who will argue, like King Canute, that these changes should be stopped, the clock turned back, the genie squeezed back into the bottle. They ban social media in the office, ignore the appearance of tablets and impose departmental firewalls to keep telecoms, office facilities and IT functions apart. This is not a realistic approach for businesses either.

Effective solutions need to emerge not for imposing total control, but applying coordination – herding cats - keeping data safe, not behind firewalls, but in 'bubbles' and protecting business processes in virtual pathways.

This coordination has to be built not around the vested interests of suppliers, but about the needs of end users – business, social and personal processes.

The barriers of old have crumbled and been torn down, but without some shape and definition the revolutions that led to their destruction will lead only to inefficiency and insecurity. Business processes no longer need top down re-engineering, they need to be rebuilt from the bottom up from their constituent tasks, virtualized and properly coordinated. Otherwise these communication trends may not have created democracy, but anarchy.

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## About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first-hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

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