The brave new world of co-operative computing

The internet and social media platforms are revolutionising the ways we live our lives. Mr Andrew Dart from CSC Asia urges the insurance industry to leverage these technological advances to help clients and meet their needs, while at the same time improve the margins. The possibilities are simply endless, he says.

Apple passes Coca Cola as the most valuable global brand, so extolled the breathless headlines from the New York Times in late in September. This WAS news as Coca Cola had held the top spot for 13 straight years since the inception of this Interbrand report.

What was more notable, if you read the article, was that Google had also passed Coca Cola for 2nd place. The article noted: “Brands like Apple and Google and Samsung are changing our behaviour: how we buy, how we communicate with each other, even whether we speak with each other. They have literally changed the way we live our lives.”

Ubiquitous Google
This is true. We are already in a brave new world. Google has/is still fast creating this world and the pace of their innovation and sheer “brass” in their approach continues to take my breath away. Their plan to extend the Internet to the other five billion inhabitants of planet Earth by balloon – Project Loon, is one of those “just so crazy it might work” ideas, which will drive geographic ubiquity of the Internet to every corner of the world.

Google has already driven ubiquity across devices and platforms. Just look at recent statistics where Android is pushing at more than 50% market share of the global computing platforms and when taken with Apple’s market share, you can see mobile devices are soon to rule as platform of choice – unthinkable just four short years ago!

Google’s vision seems to be of an Internet made intelligent and aware. That is, as you move through the world, the Internet is aware of you and will attempt to co-operate and assist you in achieving your stated objective, assuming you are connected and listening.

The latest generation of Google Maps is a case in point, where routing alternatives will be proactively suggested as the service becomes aware of potential obstacles between you and your destination. It can also provide relevant information, based on knowledge of your preferences, as to places of entertainment and refreshment that you may enjoy along the way.

Cloud and coffee
In the past, we were all mesmerised by Web-based GUIs (graphical user interfaces). Apple and Google are leaving that all behind – who needs a GUI when your computing platform can converse with you?

Apple’s Siri and Google Voice are just the beginning. Google’s drive to this new high ground can be seen in their recent partnership with NASA and the purchase of Quantum computers for their Artificial Intelligence Lab. Huge computing power and dirt cheap prices is another ubiquity dimension that Google leverages. This vast Cloud based power house will soon likely provide computer aided lip reading, instantaneous translation, face recognition, while at the same time directing you to the nearest Starbucks when you need your favourite beverage.

Now with the advent of Google Glass and these voice interactive capabilities, sensual ubiquity is upon us, enabling people to interact with the Internet almost anywhere in new more intimate ways and allowing this integration into the very fabric of everyday life - making the virtual and real world seamlessly morph into one. If you haven’t seen Glass, go to YouTube and take a look at some of the demonstration videos there and you will see what I am talking about.

“Co-operate” with data to avoid claims
So how, as an industry, do we play in this co-operative brave new world? We need to be introducing our custom-
ers to new opt-in services that will leverage data from our traditional platforms, but mashed up with other relevant co-operative services now available and personal data from the customer’s own device.

The ubiquitous world that Google and Apple are creating, now allows insurance companies to move from simple claim settlement to claim avoidance. We can use, say, extreme weather analytics to syndicate those insights to our customers in a timely and relevant fashion, thereby allowing the insurer to become an active part of the cooperative computing ecosystem and avoiding claim events.

Tapping into available data for both general and life insurances

The recent floods in Europe were one of the most costly on record with the bulk of the losses coming from the write-off of “waterlogged” vehicles. Imagine a service to those same customers where they are alerted to the level of flood risk in their area and that if they upload a video of their vehicle being encased in a “flood bag” near to time of the impending flood, then they will have the excess waived on any claim.

A similar approach can be used in a life or health context, where promoting a healthy lifestyle will help reduce claims and improve the quality of life of people. Imagine the use of wearable devices such as a Fitbit, in conjunction with a range of incentives from the insurance company – the risk mitigation possibilities are endless.

Rather than a movement to be resisted, we should, as an Industry, be active in embracing it. As it presents the first real opportunity for our Industry to truly align interests with our customers and collaborate – improving the lives of people/families we insure, while at the same time improving our margins. Now who could ask for a better scenario?1

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Mark Your Diary

At the 1st Asia Brokers’ Summit held in Singapore in 2013, 14 brokers’ associations were represented. Key concerns were raised and discussed, with new relationships developed. Many brokers are now looking forward to the new year, the Year of the Horse, to gallop into new pastures. So we look forward to seeing you at the

2nd Asia Brokers’ Summit

26-27 February 2014, Singapore

Theme: “Finding Your Niche in a Changing World of Insurance”