

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE LAW

**IT and the GFC - Predictions for 2009**

By Jason Schoolmeester

In the spirit of the theme for this edition of *Balance*, I am once again going to make some predictions for the year ahead. But first, I have to deal with the GFC.

The GFC (Global Financial Crises), is now the universal cause of all problems. Economy going bust, well it is because of the GFC. Work cutting back on staff, it is the GFC. You burnt your sausages on the barbecue, yep, it wasn't your fault, it was the GFC.

The fact is, the GFC will not stop spending on IT. It is like saying that people won't buy milk and eggs. In fact, I have read stories that the Federal Government's stimulus payments were just the right amount to buy a Netbook, and many people did just that.

The real impact or benefit of the GFC will be the increased scrutiny of individuals and businesses on IT spending. Everyone will be looking to get more bang for their buck. They will be looking for IT equipment and projects that have the greatest return on investment. With all the IT companies vying for your dollar, there are going to be some great deals on offer.

Predictions:

1. **Netbooks.** If you don't own one, then you, or someone very close to you will own one by the end of 2009. Netbooks are not trying to replace notebooks (laptops) or desktops. They are focused on providing access to the internet away from the office and home. For me, I can't wait to see how Apple tackles this market. An over sized iPod Touch is the rumour.

2. **Facebook.** In early January

2009, Facebook passed another milestone: 150 million members (<http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=46881667130>). Mark Zuckerberg, the 24-year-old founder and CEO of Facebook wrote that, "if Facebook were a country, it would be the eighth most populated in the world, just ahead of Japan, Russia and Nigeria".

The power of social networking sites has not yet begun to be felt. True, President Obama and his followers showed us how the savy use of Facebook can help spread your political message, but this is just the beginning. Social networking sites have the potential to help Governments engage with their people. Only time will tell if this potential is fulfilled. Other more focused social networking sites like [linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com), will also gain critical mass as people separate their social and professional lives.

3. **Second generation of the iPhone.** One phone to rule them all. The second generation iPhone will dominate the mobile phone market. Make the switch and make it early, there is no looking back. There is nothing more to say.

4. **Operating systems.** You may not know it, but the world runs on linux, it is the backbone of the Internet. However, it just doesn't cut it as a desktop operating system. The leader for desktops is still overwhelmingly Windows. Even if Windows seven does not pardon all of Microsoft's sins from the Vista debacle, Windows will remain the dominant desktop operating system for many years to come.



*Jason Schoolmeester*

While Windows will continue to be dominant, particularly in large organisations that have made substantial investments in the system, Apple's OSX should not be under estimated. Simply put, Apple Mac's OSX is amazing. The fact "it just works" is attracting more users all the time, me included. In fact, my recent purchase of an iMac has left me stunned.

For those still not convinced to move to an Apple Mac, I had a virtual Windows XP machine up and running in less than an hour which means I am able to use all of my Windows applications as if they are part of the Mac. This makes the transition to Mac easier for those that take the plunge while still clinging to their PCs.

5. **Getting physical with your computer.** The mouse has been the "it" peripheral device since it was introduced. However, on the back of the iPod Touch and iPhone, 2009 will see an increase in the use of gestures and touch screens in everyday computing. For fun check out Microsoft Surface at

www.microsoft.com/surface.

**6. Data storage and management.** Whether you are using a standard PC or an Xbox or a Wii, computers are now hub of our home entertainment systems. This means data storage and management will become an increasing headache. Consider your CDs and DVDs. As you buy more, you put pressure on your bookshelf, but I doubt anyone ever considers throwing any of your old CDs or DVDs in the trash. When you are storing CDs and DVDs digitally on a hard drive and it gets full, you can't simply leave the data hanging around or stacked up on top of the speakers, you need more hard drive space. More hard drive spaces means more management.

Over the last few years we have been building our iPod or music collections, and now we can add TV shows and movies. All this adds up to some serious storage requirements. 2009 will see an increase in affordable home data storage and management solutions, which don't need specialist IT training to install and use. Remember, when you think about your capacity, you need to double it if you want to back up all your songs and movies.

**7. Privacy.** Your personal information is being collected everywhere, often without you knowing. Personal information is also the price for participation or admission to emerging technologies and Internet sites. On 28 January 2009 the United States, Canada and 27 European countries celebrated Data Privacy Day (<http://www.intel.com/policy/dataprivacy.htm>) for a second time. On the basis of a quick search, it is not clear whether Australia holds a similar event, but if not, we should. People, particularly younger people, need to be more aware of privacy issues.

I think that 2009 will be a great year.

**The Australian Constitution**

Have you ever experienced a situation where you could settle an argument, if only you had a copy of the Australian Constitution on hand? How can you make the Australian Constitution more fun? The answer to both questions is so simple - put the Constitution on your iPod Touch or iPhone. Thanks to Sydney barrister, Ben Kremer, you can do exactly that. A free iPod Touch or iPhone application which contains the text

of the Australian Constitution is available from the iTunes store.

The application makes it clear that this version of the Constitution is not the official version, but it is reproduced with the permission of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

The Constitution is broken down into its chapters, but that is far as the navigation goes. I think it would be great to be able to go straight to a particular section, but perhaps that might be added in a future update. In any event, this is a must have application for any lawyer sporting an iPod Touch or iPhone.

**Courtoons** (<http://courtoons.wordpress.com/>)

David Mills is not just a US appellate lawyer. David publishes daily legal cartoons. While the courtoons have a decidedly, but not unexpected, American bent, there are some real gems. So if court has got you down or you are just looking for some light relief, check out Courtoons. (Author's note: be sure to check out January, some seriously funny toons.)

It would be very interesting to see a Territory oriented legal cartoon. If you have a creative side I invite, no I encourage, you to draw your own legal cartoon with a Territory flavour. I am confident that we could find a place in *Balance* for anyone brave enough to submit them. Submissions should be sent to Rebecca Mitchell ([publicrelations@lawsocnt.asn.au](mailto:publicrelations@lawsocnt.asn.au)).



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