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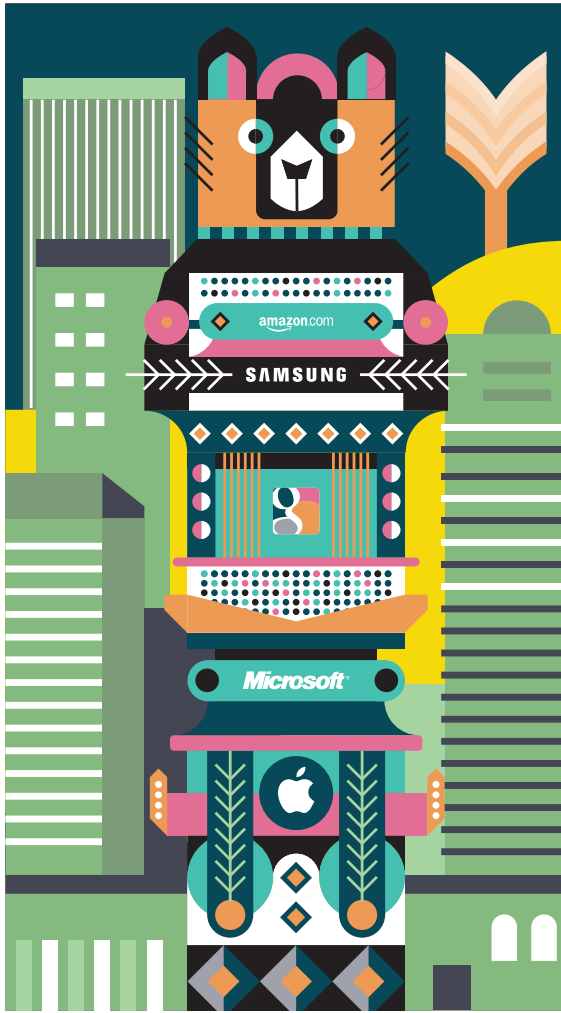
2015

JAMES DYSON
ON THE YEAR
OF THE ROBOT

SAUL KLEIN
ON THE CREATIVE
ECONOMY

CARLO RATTI
ON DRIVERLESS
FUTURE CITIES

PLUS 101 MORE IDEAS THAT WILL CHANGE THE WORLD



BECOME A TECH TRIBE MEMBER

From Sony to Apple, consumer brands will attract ever greater loyalty – but only if the manufacturers can create compelling ecosystems that work across many devices

By **Shahid Hussain**



THE INTERNET BRIEFLY PROMISED the triumph of the long tail: small, independent products providing us with a customised user experience. In 2015, however, it will be like the old days again: we will all belong to a company tribe – Apple, Google, Microsoft, Amazon or Samsung, plus some smaller players – but we'll be pretty much part of one system or another.

In the 90s, mobile-phone customers were loyal to their carriers. This was because it was cheap to call inside a network but expensive to call between them. So our choice of network was determined largely by the people we knew and called often. Today you can use your minutes to call anyone; people choose networks based on other factors, such as who has the best handset. But as we add other devices to our personal collection, we are going to start thinking again about compatibility – not so much how we talk to our friends, but how our devices talk to each other and the services they can access.

In the developed world, many of us are now surrounded by an array of computer-based technologies – smartphones, laptops, tablets, TVs and gaming consoles. In 2015 we'll add smart-home automation and wearables to that list. And that's when we'll start to think about how all these devices interconnect and about the services that lie behind them – email, music, search, productivity tools and others we can't imagine right now. And they will need to run across all our hardware. Whereas today, it's no big deal to use, say, Google's Chrome browser on your iPhone or Apple's iTunes on a Windows PC, in 2015, as systems become more complex, people will begin to see the benefit of using Company X's stuff with Company X's other stuff.

Firms such as Apple and Samsung for smartphones, Amazon for cloud-based services and Microsoft or Sony in console gaming are already advocating the advantages of this tribal lock-in. In each case there's an increasing benefit to buying into the same ecosystem. If you're an Amazon customer, buying one of its Fire phones would make it even easier to find what you need, and you know for sure your Amazon Prime video is going to work well with it.

There are risks of course. Sony's PS4 may be a great gaming experience, but other services are lacking (even music, which you might expect to be a strength). By contrast, Microsoft has Xbox Music, which works very nicely with Windows and Windows Mobile, meaning that we consumers get a better product and Microsoft bigger profits: every Xbox One sold is an opportunity to capture revenue in other areas.

Look out in 2015 for a retro flashback to the early days of mobile. Just as we were once Orange people or T-Mobile people, next year we'll be Amazon people, Google people, Apple people.

I, for one, will welcome our new technology overlords.

Shahid Hussain has worked extensively in technology product marketing, and wrote The No Bullshit Guide to Product Management