

Make sure you're at the heart of disruption



By [Damian Michael](#)

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I recently travelled to Dubai to attend the 37th Gitex Technology Week - where the future of business begins. Tech pioneers and futurists, business leaders and IT professionals come to GITEX to experience the world's most advanced technology and drive digital transformation...



Damian Michael, founder and MD of iNNOVO Networks

GITEX Technology Week is a game-changing, must-attend event located in Dubai – the world's fastest growing technology hub. For 37 years, visionaries and tech pioneers have been descending on the city to witness first-hand the technology that has inspired generations and innovations that are set to change the world.

A dynamic innovation hub, a bridge between east and west, a pioneer in technology innovation and early adoption makes theoretical technology a mass-consumption reality. In just a few decades, Dubai has reinvented itself from a quiet fishing port to a global investment hub and leading travel destination, now renowned for its record-setting skyline, driverless metro, and man-made islands.

Its comprehensive government investments in digital innovation to advance key social, economic, governance and environmental indicators, means this incredible transformation will only gain pace in coming years.

These are the trends I predict we'll see more of in 2018:

1. Hype vs reality

Artificial intelligence (AI) is everywhere, promising self-driving cars, medical breakthroughs, and new ways of working. But how do you separate hype from reality? How can a company apply AI to solve real business problems in 2018?

Here's a synopsis of what I learnt, and which AI learnings your business should keep in mind for 2018.

We've all seen the sensational headlines: "The robots are coming, and they'll take our jobs!", "AI can do your job faster and more accurately than you can!"

“ **Human jobs won't go away, but they will change. Roles will be more creative and specialised as AI is integrated into the workday.** ”

Better data leads to better math, leads to better predictions, so people using AI can automate the tedious work and take action on the insights. AI does the math faster, saving money by automating normally complex processes. It makes your life easier even now, behind the scenes. This is what it looks like today. In the longer term, AI will transform industries.



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One of AI's promises is to make self-driving cars safer. AI will power everyday driving decisions, such as whether to stop abruptly or swerve to avoid hitting an obstacle. AI will help redesign the entire shopping experience, optimising everything with more and better data. Retailers will seamlessly stock the precise number of goods needed on shelves at any given time, and know which product at which price should be highlighted to a specific customer as they navigate a store.

2. The blockchain landscape

Blockchain is emerging as the mainstay for digital identities in the emerging trust economy. The total market capitalisation of cryptocurrencies hovers around \$150B (with a single bitcoin trading for more than \$5,000). Blockchain technology has fostered a renewed examination of today's highly centralised web, and reignited conversations around currency and value, digital governance, and the fundamental structures and rails of our modern internet.

Blockchain promises to solve this problem. The technology at the heart of bitcoin and other virtual currencies, blockchain is an open, distributed ledger that can record transactions between two parties efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way.

The ledger itself can also be programmed to trigger transactions automatically.

“ **With blockchain, we can imagine a world in which contracts are embedded in digital code and stored in transparent, shared databases, where they are protected from deletion, tampering, and revision.** ”

In this world, every agreement, every process, every task, and every payment would have a digital record and signature that could be identified, validated, stored, and shared.

Intermediaries like lawyers, brokers, and bankers might no longer be necessary. Individuals, organisations, machines, and algorithms would freely transact and interact with one another with little friction.

This is the immense potential of blockchain and the rise of decentralising various industries eg. telecoms, finance, freight etc.

3. Smart systems and robots

Using automation to assist human doctors with surgery, provide diagnostics and other applications.

“ Robots will play an increasingly important role in business and life in general. Robotics will continue to accelerate innovation, thus disrupting and changing the paradigm of business operations in many industries. ”

Robotics can sharpen a company's competitive edge by improving quality, increasing operational productivity and agility, and enhancing experiences of all stakeholders.



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In the future, there will be a robot-as-a-service (RaaS) business model. Organisations will implement a chief robotics officer role and/or define a robotics-specific function within the business.

Robotics will face regulation. I believe by 2019, government entities will begin implementing robotics-specific regulations to preserve jobs and to address concerns about security, safety, and privacy.

E-commerce and omni-channel commerce companies will deploy robotics systems in their order fulfilment warehousing and delivery operations. This has already been implemented at Gitex.

“ In the end, high-performing organisations of the future will be those who position themselves at the centre of the digital ecosystem, taking control and making sure that they are at the heart of disruption. ”

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ABOUT DAMIAN MICHAEL

Damian Michael is the founder & MD at iNNOVO Networks. Nominated for the second time in this year's Entrepreneur of the Year Awards, Michael holds a wealth of versatile experience in both the public and the private sector. After completing his apprenticeship in the SA Navy as a radio/radar technician, he worked in sales and senior management positions for ICT operators like Vodacom and MTN, and was involved in successfully launching Neotel in South Africa.

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