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| Steve Strickland-White
Head of IT at We Buy Any Car | / | Adam Warne
Group IT Director at AO.com | / | John Rignall
Head of IT Services & Operations at Missguided | / | Tim Douglass
Head of Multichannel Tech Operations at JD Sports | / | Jamil Khalil
CEO at Wakelet |

What challenges is the dotcom sector facing in the next 12 months?

We met with five IT executives from the dotcom sector to talk about what they consider to be the biggest challenges in their industry and how they're planning to confront these to remain ahead of the curve and deliver on customer expectation.

Over the last few years, dotcoms have been forced to adapt to the way consumers are now expecting to make purchases online, how they engage with brands and the speed in which they expect fulfilment. On top of this, they have had to consider the impact of mobile technology, new buying trends, social customer behavior and changes in global business models. It's clear then that the sector has to make some difficult decisions when it comes to deciding which infrastructure is most able to support these rising demands. But the challenges don't end there.

JD

JD Sports Fashion has long been established as the leading UK specialist multiple retailer of fashionable branded and own brand sports and casual wear. With over 800 stores in the UK, the organisation has focused on increasing their online presence in response to customer demand.

Tim Douglass, Head of Multichannel Tech Operations at JD Sports reveals why the retailer faces sudden spikes in traffic and how the organisation is overcoming this challenge.

"When a leading brand such as Adidas or Nike launch a new product on social media, we can experience massive spikes in traffic within minutes which presents us with a pretty big challenge around fast scalability. The answer is likely to lie in Public Cloud which will also help us in transferring data across all our systems and ensuring all of our channels are communicating collaboratively in real-time."

Scalability is one of the biggest draws of Public Cloud adoption - it enables organisations to scale up and down in response to demand, during peak transaction times, as well as presenting an opportunity to accelerate speed to market.

> **"...we can experience massive spikes in traffic within minutes which presents us with a pretty big challenge around fast scalability."**

wakelet

Wakelet, a fast-growing tech-startup has developed a free to use platform that allows users to organise online content by aggregating links, images and other interesting media into handy collections or folders called 'wakes'. The start-up currently has tens of thousands of users and this is set to grow as people around the world discover the potential of the platform.

But as a tech-startup, Wakelet faces different challenges to the larger more established Dotcom brands. CEO of Wakelet, Jamil Khalil explains:

"As a start-up, we have limited resources and this makes it difficult for us to create the fully flexible platform that we would like. We originally built the platform on private servers and then decided to re-architect the entire platform, change technologies and move it to a public cloud. This allowed us to make our platform more scalable and faster to build and iterate on. Moving forward, we want to get millions of people using Wakelet and as we gather more data we'll look to integrate AI in the future.

Unlike a lot of dotcom brands, we're not looking to generate revenue in the short-term. Instead, we are focusing on building a great product that has real utility and a smooth, effortless user experience."

MISSGUIDED

Described as a bold, straight talking and forward-thinking fashion brand, Missguided is a UK-based multi-channel retailer selling clothes aimed at 16-35 year old women. Since the company's launch in 2009, the online retailer has experienced explosive growth in the UK and has expanded into the USA, Australia, France and Germany.

Speaking of the challenges he faces, John Rignall, IT Operations Manager at Missguided explains how customers are now expecting their goods to be delivered faster than ever before.

"Today's consumers expect goods instantly. Next day delivery used to be a selling point for us, but now it's a service customers have come to expect. Many of our customers will only wear an outfit once or twice so we've introducing a service called 'Unicorn Class Premier Delivery' which is a process in which the customer pays once and this entitles them to unlimited free next day delivery for a year and because there is no minimum spend, they no longer have to spend £60 to be entitled to free next day delivery."

> **"Today's consumers expect goods instantly. Next day delivery used to be a selling point for us..."**

In 2016, the online retailer launched a shopping app with a Tinder-style future called 'Swipe to Hype'. The product invites fans to mimic Tinder's trademark 'right swipe' of approval whenever they're 'matched' with a product they love in order to save it for later viewing. The app also facilitates fingerprint recognition to let users pay for goods at the checkout.

How can all of these challenges be overcome?

For dotcom organisations to be able to rapidly respond to both the short-term and long-term challenges, they must adopt a flexible IT infrastructure to enable them to scale on demand, improve efficiency and implement new technologies, quickly and effectively, which may mean moving to Public Cloud.

Public Cloud, combined with connectivity and bandwidth forms the backbone of digitisation. The cloud's ability to scale computing power to support emerging trends such as data analytics and business intelligence makes it a must-have technology, which will ultimately create a faster route to insight-driven decision-making and business outcomes. Migrating your organisation's services and infrastructure to the Cloud can bring agility, scalability and cost reductions.

As the UK's #1 Cloud Service Provider, ANS is experienced in helping the dotcom sector migrate and build their next generation of digital business applications in Azure and AWS.

So whether you're thinking about migrating to the cloud or if you're already using it but want to find out how you can optimise your environment and become more efficient, speak to us.

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0161 227 1000

webuyanycar.com
The UK's favourite car buying service

As the UK's largest car buying service, We Buy Any Car has helped over 1 million customers to sell their cars since 2006. But with the automotive industry primed for rapid disruption over the next decade, what does the organisation see as its biggest challenge?

"The emergence of the Sharing Economy could pose a big threat to the wider automotive industry. In the next few years, we expect more people to start sharing vehicles.

Organisations that provide long-distance carpooling services which connect drivers with vacant seats in their car to people who are looking to travel the same way are gaining popularity. This means that in the future, fewer people may be buying cars and selling vehicles. While this is a challenge that poses an imminent affect, we're also keeping our eyes on the development of driverless vehicles. While this may not be an immediate threat to our business, it is bound to effect how we conduct business in the not-too-distant future."

We're looking at our data and exploring new ways to help continue to grow the business, the computational capacity of Microsoft Azure can certainly support that and open new doors for us. By moving to the cloud, we can start to analyse more data quicker, looking back at 12 years of trading, finding trends and enabling data to further support the decisions we make.

> **"By moving to the cloud, we can start to analyse more data quicker"**

ao.com

Having Launched AO.com in 2000, the organisation has grown to become one of the UK's leading online electrical retailers, selling over 4,000 different products. But what does the online appliance retailer see as their biggest obstacles in the next few years?

Adam Warne, Group IT Director at AO.com discusses:

"Our biggest challenge is making people aware of who we are as a business. Last year we managed to secure prime airtime on a Saturday evening by sponsoring Britain's Got Talent which enabled us to reach out millions of potential customers across the country. This was a crucial piece of marketing for us as the electrical retail industry is saturated and so it's vital we stand out from the crowd and differentiate ourselves.

Another challenge which is consistently posing a threat is the rate at which technology and products are evolving. At the moment, we sell a vast number of TVs, but what happens if in five years' time when Google Glass starts to dominate the market and no one wants to buy TVs anymore? We're always trying to predict what will happen but it's difficult. No amount of research and analytics can confidently say what our top selling product of 2020 is likely to be."

Retail is all about putting the customer first, so what are AO doing to satisfy customer demand?

"To put the customer first, I think retailers actually need to work together, to a point.

As a consumer, I'd love to be able to have a single app that keeps me updated with everything I need to know about my appliances, from informing me that my fridge is at the correct temperature to notifying me if a particular appliance is consuming more energy than it should be. I think we'll eventually end up at this point but at the moment, the biggest difficulty preventing this is that every manufacturer is different and there isn't a common platform. But if retailers take ownership of a single, unified platform, it would have the potential to be massively powerful not just for us as a business, but also for the consumer."