

New Year Predictions

The year will be a year of increased tension between the opening up and the closing down of information.

In one sense information wants to be free, because it is increasingly cheap, easy to replicate and disseminate, and sitting in a cultural context where old paradigms of property are breaking down. This is reinforced by changing cultural aspirations from a generation that is at home with You Tube, Wikipedia and social networking sites, where barriers to the flow of information (and, from time to time, misinformation) are at least permeable if not non-existent.

In another sense, information wants to be corralled, restricted, fenced and meted out sparingly - knowledge and information give power and are of financial value, whilst people rightly expect that their personal information will be kept secure.

These tensions will manifest themselves as follows:

- The impulse of Governments to regulate, control and snoop will increase as rapidly as their ability to succeed in doing so effectively will diminish;
- Well meaning systems of data regulation and control will continue to be frustrated by employees, data handlers and others who, viscerally, fail to take it all seriously - discs, memory sticks and computers will continue to be left on trains, in pubs and restaurants, and there will continue to be temptations to share juicy gossip.
- More people in the entertainment and software industries will get to thinking that they need to find new ways to make money (such as software as a service) which recognise the outmoded nature of their present business model; those who don't will notice that the waves which were lapping around their feet are now pretty near their thighs.
- The battle between Open Source and Proprietary models will continue to be fought, but it will still be too early to call.

People who rashly make generalisations will be proven wrong.

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