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# Here's What 18 Top Executives Say Will Happen in 2018

First off, artificial intelligence is just going to keep getting bigger.



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*CREDIT: Getty Images*

Predicting the future is hardly a precise science (<https://www.inc.com/christina-desmarais/this-20-minute-routine-is-laziest-but-most-effective-workout-ever.html>), but it's possible to identify macro trends (<https://www.inc.com/christina-desmarais/9-books-you-must-read-according-to-some-of-biggest-names-in-tech.html>) by paying close attention to what's happening in an industry. Here's

what a handful of entrepreneurs, founders and executives (<https://www.inc.com/christina-desmarais/23-good-things-most-successful-people-do-every-day-and-rest-of-us-probably-dont.html>) see coming in 2018.

## **1. 2018 will be the year of the voice user interface (VUI).**

"It's been three years since Alexa first showed up in our living rooms. When Amazon launched the first Echo, it seemed like a curious product to many. But the sales growth of Amazon's Alexa-powered product family has been meteoric in the past year. Not to mention that Google Home joined the party, and soon to be followed by the Apple HomePod. But that's just the beginning. Amazon is now licensing Alexa and new devices--including thermostats, home lighting systems, remote controls, automobiles and more--which now have the super smart assistant built in. As consumers, we're becoming increasingly more comfortable and reliant upon using voice to talk with our phones, cars and smart home accessories. While I'm not about to say that the graphical user interface of the touchscreen is dying, there's little question that in 2018 voice will become a primary interface to the digital world. And with it, professionals and firms will develop specialized expertise for voice interface design and voice app development, as the VUI coexists with the GUI."

*--Adam Fingerman, cofounder of ArcTouch (<https://arctouch.com/>), a mobile app design and development consulting company*

## **2. Major retailers will close stores nationwide to focus capital on automating their eCommerce supply chain and fend off Amazon.**

"Major retailers have long ignored the importance of their supply chain and consumers are no longer willing to accept an inefficient buying process. Fewer locations to service is the only the first step for retailers needing to gain a competitive edge. The second is better control over the supply chain and less outsourcing. Large retailers will recognize this deficiency in 2018 and bring logistics in-house as a key differentiator."

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*--Matthew Tillman, founder and CEO of Haven (<https://www.haveninc.com/>), a logistics technology company enabling the global commodity trade*

### **3. Alternative payment acceptance will continue to grow.**

"The introduction of new payment methods is constant. It's important to stay nimble and adapt to new technologies, such as mobile payment applications, as they emerge. Apple Pay is reporting more than one million new users each week. Popular cloud-based wallets such as WeChat Pay and Alipay are breaking down borders and disrupting the payments ecosystem. User adoption will continue to increase and payment providers and businesses need to prepare to accept a growing number of alternative payments (including wearable smart devices)."

*--Joe Mach, president of Verifone (<https://www.verifone.com/en/us>)North America*

### **4. MySpace could make a comeback.**

"I think we could see an uptick in legacy/analog media (books, magazines, etc.) and greater attention being paid to in real life (IRL) experiences, events, and connection with others. Many people have been on Facebook for 10 years, and I think they are starved for more human experience and connection. I would also not be surprised if we saw the relaunch of some platforms such as MySpace. The Koch acquisition of Time comes with MySpace. MySpace might be the 2018 surprise that no one expects."

*--Jennifer Grygiel (<http://newhouse.syr.edu/faculty-staff/jennifer-grygiel>), assistant professor of communications at Syracuse University's SI Newhouse School of Public Communications (<http://newhouse.syr.edu/>)*

### **5. The Internet of Things security arms race will amplify.**

"We've seen malware attacks on IoT devices in recent years, proving the importance of identity management and verified authentication credentials. The newest botnet called Reaper will play a big role in the Internet of Things security arms race as it works to exploit individual device vulnerabilities. As identities become more strongly authenticated in 2018, Reaper-style attacks of IoT devices will increase."

*--Eve Maler (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/evemaler/>), VP of innovation and emerging technology for ForgeRock (<https://www.forgerock.com/>), a platform provider of digital identity management solutions*

## **6. China will continue to play an even more important role in the global ecommerce and payments ecosystem.**

"The Chinese government is focused on increasing openness and innovation and is committed to playing a leading role in our increasingly global, digital, interconnected world. With the middle class in China growing at incredible speeds and more engineers graduating in China every year than in the entire western world combined, I expect in 2018 to see the continued evolution of China from a nation of strong producers, to a thriving market of strong consumers and innovators. Businesses from all over the world will accelerate their efforts to get their products and services into the Chinese market and businesses from China will play increasingly prominent roles globally."

*--Scott Galit, CEO of Payoneer (<https://www.payoneer.com/en/>), a financial services company that provides online money transfer and digital payment services*

## **7. Supply chains will get smarter.**

"The lines between the retailer and supplier will begin to blur in 2018. As retailers and brands continue to share geographical inventory data across distributed commerce networks, consumers will benefit by receiving faster and cheaper shipments, regardless of where they make their purchase. In essence, all parties benefit when the traditional retailer/supplier relationship evolves in support of better consumer experiences."

*--Frank Poore, CEO of CommerceHub (<https://www.commercehub.com/>), a company which helps retailers and brands grow online product assortments, promote and sell on channels and fulfil and deliver orders*

## **8. The demand for real-life visual content will continue to increase.**

"While storytelling remains fundamentally about aspiration, what we aspire to has transformed considerably over the last few years and this will be reflected in the media landscape. With our increasingly connected urban world consumers and creatives alike will begin tossing out the old romantic jet-set and beautiful ideal, and instead demand content that is a more authentic reflection of our lives."

*--TJ Leonard, CEO of Storyblocks (<https://www.storyblocks.com/>), a stock video, images and audio provider*

## **9. Consumers will hold healthcare brands accountable for the best in customer experiences.**

"Legacy players will need to continue to invest in and improve the customer experience to meet their customer's growing expectations for simple, transparent and on-demand experiences. All healthcare organizations need to re-evaluate current systems and processes to ensure they can deliver on the customer of the future's

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358f-4122-93dd-0ac0ebad89e4) rising expectations. As industry consolidation accelerates, healthcare companies need to pay careful attention to how they bring brands together in ways that create a more powerful brand experience for customers instead of more confusion. There is a big opportunity for healthcare brands to stand for more than healthcare provision but actual health and wellness in a more holistic sense and the happiness they engender."

--Rick Wise, CEO of Lippincott (<https://lippincott.com/>), a global creative consultancy

## **10. The new tax plan will provide an opportunity for brands to show their employees and customers they care.**

"I think the most wonderful and timely opportunity exists for brands and marketers to showcase how the new tax plan and financial incentives will be passed on to their employees and customers. Like AT&T and Comcast and Wells Fargo among others announced how they plan on reinvesting savings in their companies, raising minimum wages and passing along bonus to employees. Next step is to showcase lower pricing and savings to customers. This type of messaging will build brand loyalty and further increase revenues."

--Sandy Rubinstein, CEO of DXagency (<https://dxagency.com/>), a digital marketing and advertising firm

## **11. The CMO will finally become the most important c-level after the CEO.**

"In today's market, the difference between buying your shoes, or your hoodie, or your computer, or your car, or anything really, from this company versus another company is marketing. The era of buying advertising without data has been dying for years. In 2018, it will finally be dead. And CMOs are taking action. They are putting data to work and their ad dollars are getting them more

bang for their buck than ever before. Companies that don't evolve with the data-driven digital era will suffer a lot in 2018. However, those companies with data-driven CMOs at the helm are taking share from the companies that aren't evolving."

*--Jeff Green, CEO of The Trade Desk (<https://www.thetradedesk.com/>), a technology company that empowers buyers of advertising through data-driven decisioning*

## **12. Drones will lower O&M costs.**

"Global demand for drones in the energy industry is expected to reach a cumulative market value of \$4.47 billion

([https://www.researchandmarkets.com/research/9fshnc/drones\\_for\\_energy](https://www.researchandmarkets.com/research/9fshnc/drones_for_energy)) between 2017 and 2025. In the past year alone, drones have evolved from consumer gadget to delivery bot, and now industrial tool. Using airborne video inspections via GPS, radar and infrared camera, drones are able to remotely monitor long stretches of transmission lines and even directly remove any debris causing power outages. In 2018, utilities will adopt drones as key assets in the electricity network that connect equipment maintenance apps like Asset Performance Management with the field service workers and drones that complete suggested maintenance. Using AI-enabled analysis, drones will also provide utilities with unprecedented data to streamline workflows, solve problems, and provide added value to customers while relaying valuable information to power producers that improve operations, reduce costs and inform preemptive measures."

*--Steve Martin, CDO of GE Power (<https://www.gepower.com/>)*

## **13. AI and the IIoT will propel the digital transformation of the power industry.**

"Asset-intensive industries, such as the electricity industry, are just at the beginning of deriving value from emerging technologies such as the Industrial Internet or AI, despite the heavy output of machine data. Data coming off of electricity assets will result in terabytes of information that AI can analyze to recognize patterns in machine behavior and make changes based on desired outcomes. In 2018, we predict the continued growth, adoption and collaboration of the IIoT, AI and Digital Twins across the industrial settings will automate basic maintenance processes. This collaboration, creating a human/machine approach to digitizing operations, will free up human capital to focus on high priority operations issues, reducing operations and maintenance budgets, which currently dominate cost profiles across the power industry."

*--Peter Kirk, former CEO of NeuCo and now executive, business operations, for GE Power Digital (<https://www.gepower.com/>)*

## **14. Big and small companies will invest in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning.**

"This technology will have a major impact on the healthcare industry in several ways. For example, AI will start to help diagnose patients, learn from large medical data sets, and help us understand more about medicine at a deeper level. In the near-term future, AI might be able to read CT Scans and X-Rays better than a radiologist, reducing the cost of creating a radiology report. AI may help patients determine what specialist to go to based on a series of questions they answer. In addition, physicians build out really large patient files over time, and AI can look and see patient symptoms and relate it back to something that happened a long time ago - perhaps something that was dormant and would be hard to find in a large file. And with medical billing, using AI might make claims adjudication more streamlined."

*--Daniel Kivatinos, cofounder and COO of drchrono (<https://www.drchrono.com/>), a company that built the first iPad EHR and is enabling the medical practice of the future*

## **15. More companies will integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into IoT networks.**

"We've already started to see AI techniques--such as with bots and algorithms--that push the boundaries toward unsupervised learning, auto-generated training and reinforcement learning within edge devices. In IoT environments, these automated bots and algorithms are enabling edge devices to get smarter and learn by themselves. As a result, we'll see IT and OT systems moving closer together. This convergence, in time, will help organizations move up the IoT maturity model."

*--Brad Surak, chief product and strategy officer of Hitachi Vantara (<https://www.hitachivantara.com/en-us/home.html>), a provider of internet of things, cloud, application, big data and analytics solutions*

## **16. Houses will start selling themselves.**

"Technology is making it easier than ever before to buy and sell homes and get approved for mortgages. The industry is streamlining and transforming the home buying and selling process just like searching for and buying cars online changed the car industry. Escalating prices of housing and limited inventory of new construction will only help consumers adopt new technologies like virtual staging and buyer-driven insights. The real estate industry moved away from the traditional commission model in 2017, so we'll continue to see changes in real estate transactions for both buyers and sellers. We're currently at a tipping point in the industry."



*--Amit Haller, founder and CEO of Reali (<http://www.reali.com/>), an interactive, app-enabled real estate company*

## **17. Mobile technology will provide more utility for consumers who are on the move.**

"For the last decade, we've seen significant growth in the mobile space, but the trajectory to date has been largely the transfer of existing technology, often offering surface-level utilizations like social networking to mobile. We're now seeing a shift where tech companies are using mobility at its core to provide more intrinsic daily value to consumers as they are on the move. Mobile technology will improve lives in more fundamental ways extending beyond utilities like selfie shots and social networks. We see it already with mobile apps like Uber and Lyft and we'll see it unfold in other industries like safety and security."

*--Chris Hulls, cofounder and CEO of Life360 (<http://www.life360.com/>), a location and driving safety service for families*

## **18. Blockchain will grow in the travel industry.**

"We are able to imagine and develop an entirely new way of distributing and consuming travel by combining blockchain-powered smart contracts with AI chatbot technologies. Blockchain has arrived on the scene in 2017. **We're already seeing the first Airbnb competitors such as CryptoCribz, but the travel industry is still in the very early stages of connecting travel inventory to this distribution platform.** It will be another one to two years before the technology is widely used in a way that we see meaningful booking volumes from blockchain as a channel."

*--Johnny Thorsen, VP of travel strategy and partnerships at Mezi (<http://www.mezi.com/>), an artificial intelligence-powered personal travel assistant*

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