

Advisory Board Brief



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Advanced technology: indistinguishable from magic?

This time of year, I'm reminded of one of my favorite quotations. Arthur C. Clarke (1917-2008) the famous Scientist & Science Fiction writer, observed that, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." The quote was particularly graphic during this past Christmas season as electronic gadgets continue to dominate gift giving and consumer spending.

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"BIG THING" WILL CATCH ME
FLAT-FOOTED – ONCE AGAIN**

Forever a 'gadget guy' at heart, I've chuckled listening to my teenaged kids discuss their holiday gifts, with seldom a second thought about the sheer marvel of the underlying technologies that make such products possible? As part of my chosen career, I consider myself privileged to visit with companies and engineers that are busy harnessing underlying advances in technology to create tomorrow's products. In some ways I'm getting an early glimpse of tomorrow's "magic."

It wasn't too many years ago that few of us could have conceived of a requirement for a 1 TB (Terabyte) storage device? That's a QUARTER OF A MILLION MP3 songs (or 4 MB photos)!

Of course with the advent of streaming video, HDTV, and the like, such a huge memory space becomes a requirement (and within a year or so – likely a necessity). Isn't it a marvel (or magical) that such a device was available for less than \$100 during the past holiday season?!

I find it's always a lesson in humility to remind myself, that the 'next big thing' will catch me flat-footed – once again. Witness the exponential growth of Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc). Facebook added 100 million users in less the 9 months! By anyone's definition, Social Media is better described as a tsunami, not a trend.

Will we be able to adapt to “quantum leaps” in technology? Will we adapt to new category creators (as an example, 35% of Amazon book sales are now for ebooks)? Although they're the 'odds-on-favourites', my hope is that youth won't have a monopoly on adapting.

It is exciting to think what technologies the next 10 to 25 years will usher in? By all indications – it will likely seem “magical.”

In the meantime, I'm advised to keep my collection of 'when I was your age' anecdotes fresh, else I'm likely to quickly loose my teenaged audience – faster than ever!