COMMUNICATION & TECHNOLOGY

TWO EXPERTS
Stein Arne Nistad and Rikard Strand at Itera, give us their thoughts on digitalization, the future, Metropolis, Snowden, revolutions, fatal consequences, human relations, communication and technology.

humanizing technology

Gartner says that by 2020 we will put more computers into our laundry in a week than we have used in our lifetime so far. Itera claims to possess just the right combination of competence required to meet the changes we are in the midst of.
So – why communication and technology?

Stein Arne Nistad
Director of Strategy and Solutions, Itera

Stein Arne has been in the IT and communication industry for 25 years. He is a consultant, journalist, author and speaker.

Rikard Strand
User Centric Infrastructure Chief Consultant, Itera

Rikard is a well-known IT evangelist and system architect, with more than 15 years' experience in managed services.

The digital era is upon us, no question. How should we meet it? What can we expect from the years to come? Should we fear it or welcome it? Surely, digitalization and the technological change facilitates great opportunities, for people and businesses, but also challenges and threats that we have never met or dealt with before. How can we prepare for the changes and challenges ahead?

Rikard Strand and Stein Arne Nistad are two of the most experienced specialists at Itera. They have met innumerable customer challenges, and formed solutions, from innovative and high-risk data protection systems to business critical communication strategies. How do they predict and prepare for the continuation of the digital development? And why is Itera so well positioned to face it?

Gartner talks about the ongoing digitalization with terms such as Big Data, cloud, mobility or Internet of Things. What are *your* thoughts on the subject?

SA : I remain quite pragmatic to these terms. It is not as though these are new phenomena. They simply manifest themselves in new ways. The idea of man machine integration easily goes back to Frankenstein, or Fritz Lang's futuristic epic, Metropolis. With Internet of Things, we have a new set of "senses". We can relate to things, information, distance or time in new ways. Internet of Things is a fun idea, but can only be defined through the usages they are created for. Many people claim that technology is the driving force for value creation. I disagree. Technology is merely a platform through which one can release value. Success will not come from understanding the technology, but from realizing how to use it, and how it affects business models, information, relationships, interaction or organizational development.

R : Soon, your refrigerator can send you information on what you need from the store. Sensors on your body might warn you that you are about to be ill or have a heart attack. The earthquake in Chile this March was automatically forecasted to seismographs, and people could prepare for it. If you are able to extract the right information from Big Data and use technology in the right way, you can ignite revolutions.

STEIN ARNE NISTAD

*Director of Strategy and
Solutions, Itera*

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Big Data. What exactly *is* Big Data?

R : Big Data is essentially a lot of data sources containing structured and unstructured information gathered in multiple ways. All this stored data does not present any value until it is analyzed or treated it in a way that makes it useful. A great deal of data is collected, but remains unused. That is what we call "dark data".

SA : That is the main problem. We have never generated data at this level before. I call it "digital desertification". Data emerges from so many arenas and in such enormous amounts today, we will need new tools in order to extract anything valuable from it.

R : A whole new market appears as a result, for those who know how to gather useful information. They might not need it themselves, but others do, and can pay for the service and constructive data.

Being able to handle Big Data and extract useful information from it equals success?

R : Sure. Look at IBM, Oracle, Google, Microsoft and Facebook. They are all working with Big Data. Amazon has introduced "predictive shipping". Before you order the book, it is on its way to your mailbox. They run constant analysis and have complete control of your habits. Their system knows that you will buy the book before you do. Grocery stores do much of the same. They make sure to give you special offers on products they know you often buy, and will buy again. That way they make sure you visit them again and again. Predictive marketing.

SA : It is all about establishing strategies: "What information do we need to detect relevant behavior in our target groups?" Then you must find solutions that work, but that are not perceived as surveillance or compromising individual rights and privacy in this transparent, digital society.

…which triggers the next questions: What will happen to our privacy in this world where physical and virtual realities intertwine? Are we not already monitored? How can we make sure it is not abused?

R : There is every reason to take these consequences seriously. I do not think we will reach a "Minority Report" state, where you are arrested for crimes you will commit in the future, but Internet of

Things will at a greater and broader extent make your every move traceable. Yet, at least in the Nordic countries, we have very strict rules as to how data can be collected or cross-linked. As long as security and access management is highly prioritized, I do not think the risk of worst-case scenarios is very likely. This is what we work with every single day, and we will stay ahead of the potential risks using least privilege best practices on behalf of businesses and our customers. What every individual chooses to do in his or her own private virtual space is, of course, decisive for him or her.

SA : Look at that iPhone in your hand. Apple can, at any given time, download a new version of their OS, take over your phone, turn the camera on without you knowing it and track everything you do. With several billion smart phones around the globe, the potential for data collection and abuse is tremendous. This is why the whole NSA and Snowden ordeal is so grave. It stirs up a fundamental right you have to control your own device – what is collected from it and what information you produce. You can say that you are not monitored, but it all depends on how you define the term. My tax return is registered and reported without me lifting a finger. More than that, it is more correct than if I had done it myself. Imagine all the systems and data communicating with each other and gathering information just to produce this single document. And it is just the tip of the ice berg. How this community will evolve, and who will hold the power, is all a question of attitude. If we look at it this way, we are building a technological infrastructure tailored for assumption of power with fatal consequences. Quite a gloomy thought… Let us hope it does not head in that direction!

R : Let us!

Wow. Agreed. Assuming the world does not fall into the wrong hands – at least not for the next couple of years – what are your words of advice to our customers on the subject?

R : The digital development will hit practically all markets. Trends change, users change, possibilities change. All our customers should sit down, face the challenges ahead and ask themselves: "How will digitalization affect my company? How can we meet our customers' and employees' expectations for mobility? What do social media mean to us? Where should we communicate with our target groups? How should we administrate our data? Is there

technological infrastructure tailored for assumtion of power with fatal consequences. **"**

unused potential in our data that we can draw value from for our existing or even new markets?" Having the guts to meet the changes up front is vital.

SA : Do not sit on the fence until the train is so close it runs you over. The most relevant trend is actually to pay attention, and to try to understand the development. We cannot predict anything, but likelihood tells us that Internet of Things *will* evolve. Expectations towards mobility *will* increase. Big Data *will* be an important term. Social media *will* change people's way of acting.

R : This is where you are allowed to lean on partners such as Itera. Our goal is to build close and long-lasting relationships with our customers. This way we learn enough about them to help them make the right choices and strategies to meet the changes ahead. It is our job to keep an eye on trends, be updated and able to advice our customers, based on our experience and skills. We are passionate about these things. Our customers challenge us and we challenge them. Together we can create innovative and engaging solutions that meet the needs and expectations of not only our customers but also the people *they* are dependent upon pleasing.

So, in the end, it is not about cloud, Internet of Things or fancy stuff, but people, relationships and those basic human and inter-human needs?

SA : Exactly. Building relationships that last is, and will be, a competitive advantage. Roles will change; one day you are a customer, the next you are a partner and yet the next you are a supplier. Networks become dynamic. Anyone can make use of technological tools, outsource services or collect any given data. In the end, your ability to preserve your relationship with your customers is what will be business critical and make a difference. It will represent loyalty, competence, value, stability and safety in the middle of all this rapid change. Customer and supplier win equally on safeguarding these relationships. They are the glue that holds the enterprises together and contribute to creating a sustainable development.

R : We will always be humans, and the importance and impact of human relations will always drive and motivate us. Combined with the smart technology that emerges, this interpersonal understanding and the goals we strive towards together will open up for great opportunities. As a result, we will see solutions that truly make a difference for people and businesses.

Why is Itera so well equipped to handle the development we are going through? Why communication and technology?

SA : We have been through a transformation for a long time now. We have melted heavy communication and strategy competence, business understanding, need and goal analysis, traditional IT consultant capacity and an extensive experience in tailoring security solutions, operations and system integration. Through defining ourselves as a communication and technology company, we commit to cultivating and developing skills that enable us to meet the development. Itera possesses competence, in the shape of unique people, who are prepared to meet the prerequisites and expectations that arise. We know the technological solutions that can ensure the security and control you need, while at the same time enabling you to meet expectations from your customers, users, patients, partners or employees. In the end, it is all about relationships that need nurturing, human needs and goals which need to be addressed, and the ability to humanize technology.

ITERA IS A COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY COMPANY

We deliver consulting and strategy, design and development, operations and management.

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE

humanizing technology