



When Platforms Change, the Old Leaders Are Seldom the New Ones

By Daniel Burrus

Whenever there is a major change in platform, the leaders of the old platform are seldom the leaders of the new platform. For example, at one time, the only way you could use a computer was to use a mainframe. Then, as processing power, storage, and bandwidth increased, our primary computer became a desktop ... and then a laptop ... and now a smart phone and tablet.

Of course, this does not mean the old goes away. It simply gets integrated with the new to provide greater value. We still have mainframes, desktops, and laptops, but we're using them in different ways as we shift to a new major platform—smart phones and tablets.

Right now, we are in the midst of the fastest and most profound shift that's ever happened, because it is not just a computing shift. In other words, that smart phone is not just a computer representing a shift in how you compute; it's also your main communication tool, which represents another platform shift. In the past, phones just gave you access to phone calls. Today the phone gives us an online, multimedia, integrated experience that includes voice and video communications, and much more.

Who were the leaders of the computing platform before this shift to smart phones and tablets took place? Most people think of companies like Microsoft, Dell, and Hewlett-Packard to name a few. Similarly, who were the leaders of the telecommunications platform in the past? Companies like AT&T, MCI and Sprint might come to mind. How about cell phones? I'm

sure Nokia and Motorola top your list.

And how are all those companies doing today? The answer is, they're struggling—and some are struggling a lot. We've had a major platform shift, but they're set up to thrive in the old platform, not the new one.

Shifting to a new platform is difficult. Of course, it doesn't mean that these companies will not survive. But it does mean it's unlikely they'll be the dominant leaders of the new platform.

Therefore, from a business standpoint, you have to ask, "Who are my strategic partners? Who are my strategic vendors? Who are the companies that I rely on? Are they the leaders of the old platform, or are they competent leaders of the new platform?" Remember, you can't go backwards in time. You can only move forward. Do you have the right business partners and alliances to be successful in this new era?

And from an investment perspective, ask yourself, "Does it look like the leaders of the old platform will be the leaders of the new platform?" If the answer is, "No," then you have to look at how much of your portfolio is invested in that old platform. Then, identify who you think will be the leaders of the new platform and keep your eye on them, as that is likely where you want to be investing.

These are all important questions to ask at this exact point in time, as technology continues to transform how we sell, market, communicate, collaborate, innovate, train, and educate. So to build a successful future—both in terms of your career or business and your personal investing—it's important to look at who is growing in power and who is shrinking in power. Once you use this



platform shift model as a way to analyze things, you'll start to get some new answers worth heeding.

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About the Author

Daniel Burrus is one of the world's leading technology forecasters and business strategists, and is the author of six books, including the highly acclaimed Technotrends, which has been translated into over a dozen languages. The New York Times has referred to him as one of America's top three business "gurus" in the highest demand as a speaker.

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