

Technology Trends 2017: A Silicon Valley Recruiter Perspective

By Kathryn Ullrich



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Connected Economy – Our world is ever-increasingly dependent on always connected mobile phones, tablets, and computers. With mobile apps and SaaS solutions, and the infrastructure to support this, we are continuing to see the evolution of how we live and work. Companies continue to innovate on cloud infrastructure, applications and services for consumers and businesses. With this comes opportunities for cloud executives with product, sales, consulting, and customer service skill sets.

Autonomous Vehicles – One of the greatest paradigm shifts, much like the Internet as a disrupter, will be self-driving cars. Autonomous vehicles will change how we think of taxis, long haul truck drivers, retirement community golf carts, automobile purchases, and Uber/Lyft/Zipcar usage models. We are in the hype phase of autonomy as major automotive OEMs and innovative technology companies are developing new solutions for the emerging fleets of autonomous vehicles. Companies seek talent with related technology or business skills as automotive and technology convergence accelerates.

Cybersecurity – With the proliferation of devices and data, there is an omnipresent threat of data security. Companies and their boards are addressing these threats and privacy concerns with a myriad of solutions to recognize and thwart hackers. Cybersecurity technologists are continuing to innovate solutions that allow data only to the intended user and device, while sales and marketing executives must communicate beyond the noise to reach intended customers.

Data Science, Data Analytics and Machine Learning – With the vast amount of data being collected, new teams of data experts are unleashing value in understanding who buys or not, why, what and other questions. Data scientists are the hard-to-find talent, mathematical geniuses developing algorithms to foresee business direction. Data science combined with data analytics – using past performance as an indicator of future performance – and machine learning – coding so computers to learn from results – are leveraging information to create huge customer and efficiency wins. Universities are minting new data scientists while executives in this space are extending the data science repertoire, not just changing their LinkedIn titles.

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Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality – At the Super Bowl 50 Experience, a fan favorite exhibit used Virtual Reality to take fans into the excitement on the football field. AR/VR are the next new paradigms, starting in sports and entertainment as a launch for business applications, requiring technology and business development innovation.

Customer Success – With business models changing from one-time purchase to cloud and subscription models, companies require strong customer service to retain customers. Businesses are requiring a VP Customer Success with strong skills to drive the customer experience, customer service and on-going revenue.

Healthcare IT – With rising health care costs and ubiquitous connectivity, information technology plays an important part in raising the quality of health care while reducing costs of serving patients. Back-office systems, integration and connectivity, combined with innovative customer applications for doctor-patient communications, remote monitoring, health and wellness data tracking, and more, are creating opportunities for technology solution innovation, improved information systems, and enhanced business models for servicing patients.

Diversity – Diversity of thought brings improved business results for companies. Tech companies, that markedly need diversity in the workforce, are measuring efforts to increase diversity, with mixed results. Best-in-class companies are adopting best practices for leadership recruiting, STEM pipeline recruiting, and inclusion practices to recruit and retain diverse talent. Odgers Berndtson offers Inclusion and Diversity solutions that bring positive results for improving diversity.

About the Author



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Kathryn Ullrich is a Partner in Odgers Berndtson's Silicon Valley office and a member of the Technology practice. She focuses on senior executive searches for major corporations and venture-capital-backed companies in software, systems and services, and has specific expertise in autonomous vehicle technology, cloud, cyber security, data analytics, Internet, IoT, SaaS, and other disruptive technologies.

Prior to Odgers Berndtson, Kathryn spent nearly twenty years in executive search at Heidrick & Struggles, Russell Reynolds Associates and her own boutique search firm. Earlier in her career, Kathryn worked in software product marketing at Siebel Systems (now Oracle), strategy consulting at Accenture, and engineering at GTE (now Verizon) and Motorola.

Kathryn is passionate about diversity. She is the founder of a Silicon Valley non-profit for women in technology and actively works with clients on increasing diversity in technology. In 2016 she was honored by Silicon Valley Business Journal as a Woman of Influence for her work in diversity and inclusion.

She has a BS cum laude in electrical engineering from University of Michigan and an MBA with Carter Award top honors from UCLA Anderson School of Management.

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