



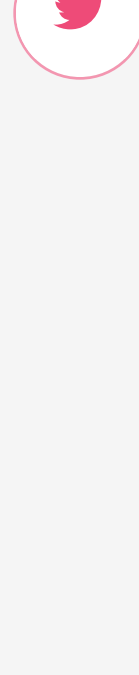
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How 9 global business leaders see 2021 business trends unfolding

As 2020 is drawing to a close, it is important for businesses to take time to reflect on this challenging year and identify the trends and opportunities 2021 will bring.

In this article, we have collated the thoughts of some of the most innovative tech leaders on what the year ahead holds for technology.

Joshua Zerkel, Certified Professional Organizer and Head of Global Engagement Marketing, Asana "When the UK was plunged head-first into remote work in March 2020, business leaders did what they needed to do. They gave employees the tools they would need to survive in a fully remote environment. However, we now find ourselves in danger of fuelling "application overload". Our data shows employees at enterprises are using 10 apps for remote work, switching between them over 25 times a day. This has consequences. Due to switching between apps, 27% of workers miss messages and actions, and 25% end up duplicating work.

"In 2021, business leaders should take a critical eye to the tech stack deployed to help teams cope with the rapid transition to remote work. A lot of those tools, like Asana, Zoom and Slack will stay in place to support workers in distributed work. But ensuring employees know the purpose of each app they are using, and how they are using it, is vital to keeping teams aligned and avoiding 'work about work' (such as searching for information and duplicating work) in 2021."

Stuart Templeton, Head of UK, Slack "Over the last few months, the word 'work' has been completely redefined. We have seen the eradication of the traditional 9 to 5, and in some cases the complete upheaval of the physical office. During the shift to remote work, many new benefits have been realised, so it's no surprise that our recent Future Forum survey found that less than 12% of knowledge workers want to return to working full-time in the office. With a move towards hybrid work expected in the years ahead, 2021 will be the year that businesses need to create their own digital HQs. This will help to keep business culture alive and retain all discussions and documents if organisations are to ensure their teams - both internally and externally - remain connected and productive.

"2021 is ultimately a chance for businesses to reset and restructure the way that they work. By putting in place a new digital HQ they will be able to meet the needs of a distributed workforce, ready for the future."

Iggy Bassi, CEO and Founder, Cervest "2020 has been a year unlike any before. Almost every industry across the globe has been thrown into disarray by the effects of COVID-19. With this, politicians, scientists and business owners have been forced to focus their efforts on the pandemic, in turn pulling their efforts away from the battle against the climate crisis.

"The new year will see a renewed, stronger spotlight on how organisations take responsibility for their climate security and the measures enforced to tackle risk, as the pandemic has brought a new impetus to overall risk frameworks, especially climate. So much so, we expect 2021 to see the first company declaring a goal that all its major business or financial decisions will factor climate into them. Measures are already being put in place to pave the way for this, for example the UK chancellor's recent announcement to make climate-related financial disclosure fully mandatory by 2025.

"The recent Biden win has already had the world speculating as to whether the US will re-enter the Paris Agreement, which would have an extreme influence on accelerating the demand for climate intelligence. Regardless, each country's climate actions for 2021 and beyond will become more visible through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). More businesses will seek outside consultation to remain compliant with new guidelines, and enterprises will start to make radical changes to business operations and investments as a result of gaining access to new intelligence on physical and financial climate risk.

"We also anticipate seeing an increase in sustainable investments, as investors continue to hold organisations accountable for their transparency, adherence and action around climate risk. Equally, the move towards 'Paris-aligned' investing will see a rise in acquisitions within the climate risk space as its importance becomes ever clearer. Unlike the shock factor COVID-19 caused, climate risks are already present. It will be the businesses who actively show improved financial disclosure on their climate security who will be the ones to attract investment in 2021 and years to come."

Anna Brailsford, CEO, Code First Girls "Today, women make up only 17% of IT specialists in the UK, and a mere 35% of women are pursuing STEM at higher education level. But this is changing. As we transition into 2021, companies will take the opportunity to reshape the way we work and fight to achieve gender parity in the workplace. By empowering women to upskill in technology, businesses across industries can establish a work culture that enables women to thrive.

"At a time when businesses are facing increased uncertainty, a highly skilled, diverse team is invaluable and such a workforce doesn't need to be solely outsourced. Instead, forward-looking organisations will turn to their existing employees and provide opportunities to support upskilling and personal growth. Whether in person or through the use of a video-conferencing tool, businesses can partner with organisations dedicated to creating tailored training sessions - empowering attendees with new skills and perspectives. Not only does this help future-proof the business, but it also demonstrates a commitment to a company culture that values employees. In the new year, you can't rest on your laurels. Take the initiative to set an industry example for 2021, educate and upskill women. The businesses that get this right, and build a diverse and inclusive workplace for women, will thrive."

Benji Vaughan, Founder and CEO, Disciple "If 2020 taught us anything, it's that humans are infinitely adaptable. As we've seen traditional employers struggle to meet the demands of constantly changing lockdowns and furlough legislation, we've found more and more fledgeling entrepreneurs turning their own interests and passions into alternative revenue streams. In order for this raft of new businesses to be successful, they need to bring their content and their audience together in one place - and this is where we can expect to see real growth in 2021. The growth of online communities will skyrocket as an increasing number of entrepreneurs and creators recognise the value these networks can have in supercharging their business. Many of them are now using digital platforms to grow communities of like-minded individuals from all over the world.

"When digital communities bring audiences together in one place where they can engage with the content they love, this space gives creators a real opportunity to build real value by monetising their fans with subscriptions, online courses, and premium content. This kind of engagement and targeting is something that can't be matched by traditional social media or mailing lists, which is why we anticipate sustained increase through 2021."

Jed Rose, EMEA General Manager, Airwallex "Next year will pose many challenges for businesses as the pandemic continues to have global impact and the consequences of a new UK-EU trade deal - or lack thereof - need to be worked through. However, with challenge comes opportunity. Despite the further disruption looming, the UK will still remain a global leader, particularly within the financial industry. We must look towards the chances that arise in 2021 and use them to strengthen global banking connections, for example with the US and APAC. Regardless of the political and economic changes the UK will face, London will remain a crucial ecosystem for financial services.

"In 2021, there will be a surge in international businesses looking to change their working practices, especially their finance management, so that they can continue to improve their efficiencies and operating margin. This means that many will take the leap to fully immerse themselves in digital-first solutions and e-commerce to help continue operations and sales overseas. International organisations will look to consolidate their financial operations by using one single platform that offers greater transparency over transactions, helps them easily expand their customer base, and avoids the traditionally high fees that come with foreign exchange and cross-border payments. Now more than ever, organisations need accessible, convenient service providers to help them to manage their business' performance with minimal disruption.

"As 2020 draws to a close, one thing is clear: businesses will not be able to go back to the same ways of working as before. Instead, they should look to advanced technologies to help them construct smarter ways of managing their finances, in order to continue scaling despite the uncertainty caused by Brexit and the pandemic."

John Morrison, SVP of International Markets, Extreme Networks "As a result of the ongoing pandemic and the related increase in remote work, organisations are going to focus even more on their networks in 2021. After all, they are an organisation's lifeblood, especially during uncertain times.

"But one of the main challenges for many companies next year will be that they need their network infrastructure to continue delivering optimal performance despite the inevitable budget cuts and resource constraints that the fallout of the global pandemic and the resulting recession will create.

"Network-as-a-service will emerge as one of the key enterprise IT and network connectivity trends of 2021 as it provides organisations with a cost-conscious solution to ensuring consistent connectivity. It also offers companies the flexibility to expand or reduce network services on-demand depending on business needs, without sacrificing performance.

"2021 will be the year where many companies start to move away from investing in physical network infrastructure and instead consider outsourcing some or all network operations and management by committing to the network-as-a-service model."

Dr Tim Guilliams, Co-Founder and CEO, Healx "Amidst the pandemic, the benefits of AI in healthcare are being realised. Technology has been instrumental in finding treatments for COVID-19, monitoring its spread, and helping to alleviate the strain felt by medical practitioners by supporting their work. This expansion in use indicates a bright future for AI. Indeed, with projected investment expected to reach \$45. 2 billion by 2026, the AI sector is set to transform healthcare.

"The acceleration and automation that AI provides can be utilised to consolidate facts within medical data. It enables medical professionals to learn from and apply knowledge to every aspect of healthcare from drug discovery and treatment planning, to bed admissions and patient care. As the healthcare sector faces further strain on its resources, the ability to harness AI is paramount. But while technology will feature heavily, the healthcare of the future is also dependent on medical professionals combining their expertise with these technological advancements to deliver the best possible care to their patients."

Sergei Anikin, Chief Technology Officer, Pipedrive "The past year has been catalytic in helping even the most conservative of industries embrace technology. The onset of the pandemic caused an abrupt halt to traditional ways of working and this trend is set to continue well into the new year and beyond. Not least because local lockdowns and social distancing measures are unlikely to be a thing of the past any time soon.

"The demand for innovative solutions has risen due to the impact of COVID-19 and is set to reach even higher levels in 2021. It is giving industries the motivation to invest in digitalisation and automation. As a result, a virtuous cycle will form: with the surge in demand will come more willingness to use online services and a better understanding of the utility of digitalisation, which in turn will increase trust in technology and drive its deployment across all industries. In addition, the acceleration of even more streamlined and effective solutions will supercharge the process, leading to a sustained rise in technological development and business success.

"In 2021, we can expect to see even more daring, outside-the-box concepts aiming to solve any challenge the new year brings."

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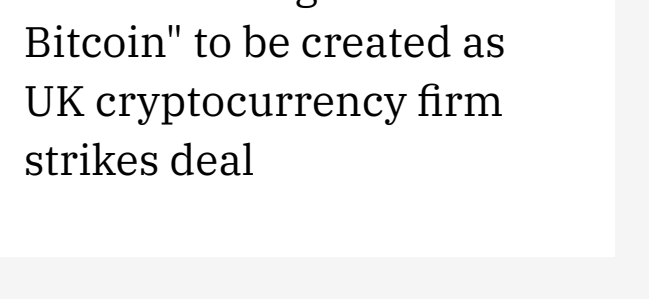
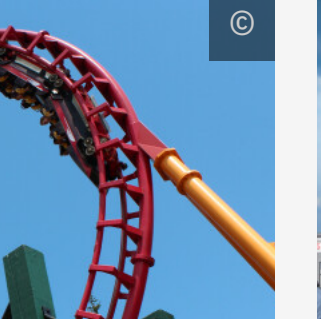
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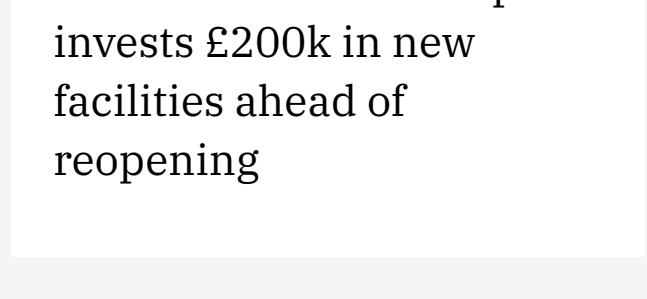
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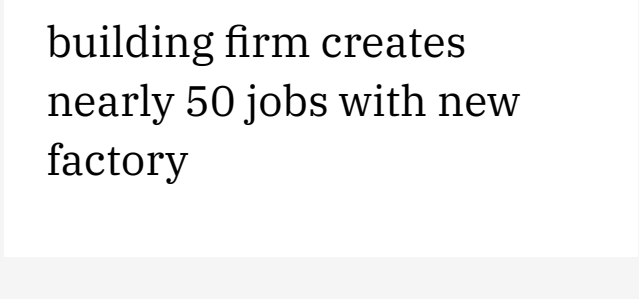
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World's first "green Bitcoin" to be created as UK cryptocurrency firm strikes deal



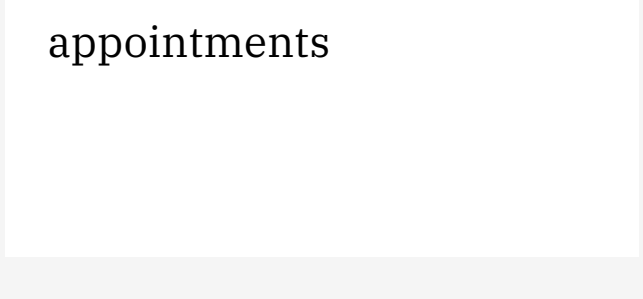
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North East adventure park invests £200k in new facilities ahead of reopening



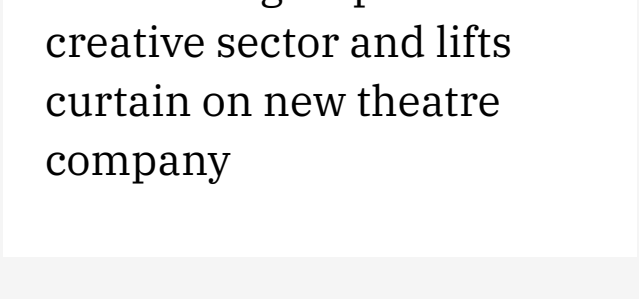
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Yorkshire modular building firm creates nearly 50 jobs with new factory



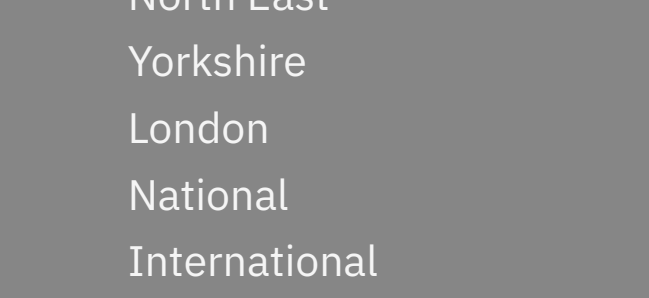
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This week's North East appointments



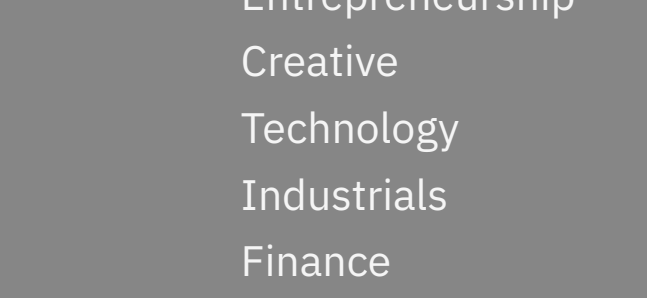
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Newcastle group boosts creative sector and lifts curtain on new theatre company



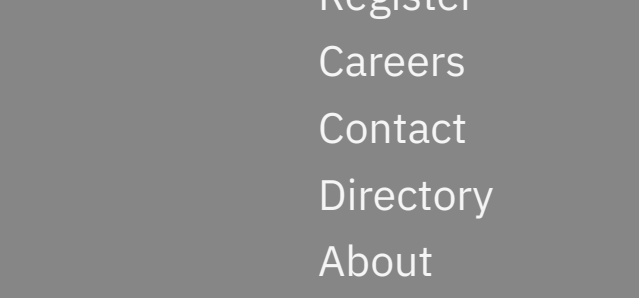
6

Online car retailer Cazoo steers into new markets with \$7bn merger



7

Teesside musician creates online music learning platform



8

This week's Yorkshire appointments



9

Yorkshire construction company starts work on new NHS health centre



10

Blackfinch boosts business development team with double hire

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