



Islander February 2015

Technology Update

New Tech Launches for January – an excellent start to 2015.

The year began with two major trade shows. Firstly, the gigantic Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, which highlighted some fantastic new technology ranging from driverless cars to Intel's new computer on a stick, and secondly the Detroit Motor show. The latter is normally the exclusive domain of petrolheads, but this year they were being outnumbered by IT geeks!

Firstly, let's take a look at the computer on a stick.

Intel Compute Stick

HDMI-based streaming sticks were first brought to you in this column in October 2013! Whether it's the Chromecast, which I reported on, the Roku Streaming Stick, Amazon's Fire TV Stick or Mozilla's Matchstick, putting a bunch of electronics into a stick, the size of a standard USB stick which can be plugged into the HDMI port on your TV (or computer monitor) is all the rage.

As a result of these, Intel's Compute Stick at CES it was an immediate hit.

The Compute Stick takes a fully functional Windows 8.1 or Ubuntu Linux computer, together with full Windows 8.1 license, and puts it into something the size of a Chromecast for just \$149, which is an absolute steal when you consider that this includes Windows 8.1.

The Compute Stick uses Intel's Bay Trail Atom Z3735F quad-core processor and includes Bluetooth 4.0, 2.4Ghz 802.11n wireless and a single USB port. It also includes a micro SD expansion slot for more storage.

The Windows 8.1 version of the Compute Stick has 2GB of RAM and 32GB of flash storage built-in.

A Linux version of the Compute Stick is also available for \$89. It comes with 8GB of storage and 1GB of RAM.

The Compute Stick could be a great opportunity for businesses or schools who want an inexpensive computer for web access and light office work. I can think of a many interesting applications we could use it for. It should become available in March.

Is tomorrow's car likely to be an iCar?

As already mentioned, Detroit in January is usually filled with just

HEAD OFFICE

Palma de Mallorca, Spain

TEL +34 971 404 208

www.e3s.com

FAX +34 971 404 431

info@e3s.com



one group of people, petrol heads for the Motor Show. However, market analysts agree that if carmakers want to appeal to a younger generation, who are now driving approximately 23% less than they used to, they'll need to shrink cars into, well, iPhones. Thus, the show is now attracting many IT geeks.

"If you look at the buying decisions of the younger generation, they're a little worried about the navigation system that gets you from point A to point B, but mainly they're interested in texting and being able to communicate with their friends," says Gary Silberg, the national automotive sector leader at consultancy KPMG.

"Whoever gets that right, that's who will win in the marketplace."

Dieter Zetsche, the boss of Mercedes, put it more bluntly. "The car of the future is a smartphone on wheels."

Only about 10% of cars are connected to the internet today, via 3G and 4G, but that number is expected to balloon to 90% by 2020, according to the consulting group Machina Research.

Over the next few years, will the traditional car manufacturers like Mercedes and Toyota develop their own software, or will the big tech guys such as Google and Apple attempt to take this market? They have already developed software for this market so very definitely have it on their radar.



However various companies are keeping their options open. Take Ford for example. Ford's strategy is to continue to develop its software in-house, while making sure that it is compatible with the latest tech offerings from elsewhere.

Following on from the Mobile World Congress (MWC) launch in Barcelona last February, they unveiled the latest version of their in-car entertainment software, Sync 3, at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES). This features upgrades like the ability to update the software wirelessly, as well as enabling it to interact with apps such as Spotify and AccuWeather.

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info@e3s.com



Don Butler, Ford's executive director of connected vehicle and services, said the company was still committed to remaining "device agnostic".

"Whether you've got a Blackberry, iPhone, or any of the various flavours of Android device, your phone will be compatible with the Sync system," says Mr. Butler.

Kymeta, our Seattle partners who are developing the flat panel satellite antenna, have already been working on their Connected Car initiative for a couple of years with Toyota. I suspect the Kymeta flat panel, fitted flush in the roof of the car, will be a feature of both the "device agnostic" car manufacturers and the big tech guys solutions in 2020.

Content is the Driver

Moving on from driving cars themselves to driving the technology in cars, yachts, trains, planes and at home, we can clearly state that the technology driver is Content. What or who is Content?

To help explain this Leslie Moonves, president and CEO of broadcasting giant CBS, used his keynote presentation recently to underline the fact that while media consumption models are changing, "you still have to tell good stories".

What he means is that if we didn't have news, magazines or books to read, TV and movies to watch, stock market updates, weather, emails, Tweets, and messages, then the meteoric growth in data demand would not be happening.

An example of this is a fantastic new service we are launching called **e3.TV IPTV** in February. This is TV accessed over the Internet. Watching TV is no longer limited to being under the satellite that transmits the signal and all the vagaries of being in the right place with a large enough dish. Your favourite channels can now be watched anywhere in the world.

We are initially providing 132 UK channels, which include legally subscribed to and paid for channels covering Entertainment, Sport, Movies and News. In addition, there are 94 UK radio channels. The service includes live, catch-up and recorded TV.

Apart from a wide range of current events, entertainment and news channels, the service will provide coverage of all major sporting events including the 2016 Olympics, Formula One, Premiership football, Bundesliga, Ligue 1, Serie A, La Liga and Champions' League. Later this year, we can enjoy the Rugby World Cup, not to mention Wimbledon and all the Golf majors.

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info@e3s.com



This is just the start of our service, as we will soon be adding channel selections in German, Russian and Arabic.

So, going back to the driver being Content, our **e3.TV IPTV** content requires a good data connection. Most of the channels are available in three levels of definition: low, standard and high definition (HD). The rising definitions require rising bandwidth. Of course everyone wants to watch in HD, but if the bandwidth is not available it can be switched to a lower definition without significant loss of quality.

At home, this drives you to asking Movistar or BT for a faster fibre connection. On a yacht, you can't connect to fibre, so what options do you have? As a communications specialist, we have recently developed a solution **e3.UNITE**. This recently launched service provides a 50Mbps data connection to a yacht for just over €1,000 per month as opposed to \$200,000/m using VSAT!

What an exciting start to 2015 on the new technology front!

Roger Horner of e3 Systems

For further information on any of the above, please contact us.
email on info@e3s.com and website www.e3s.com
Tel: +34 971 404 208

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TEL +34 971 404 208
www.e3s.com

FAX +34 971 404 431
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