TECHTalks | CES© 2024 Tech Trends
With Bill Briggs, Chief Technology Officer, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Raquel Buscaino: Welcome to Deloitte TECHTalks. I'm your host Raquel Buscaino and I'm the Emerging Technology Lead on Deloitte's US Novel and Exponential Technologies team, where we sense and make sense of what's new and next in tech. I could not be more excited to be with you here today. We are live from the CES© show floor in Las Vegas, checking out the latest and greatest in tech.

And I'm even more excited because I'm here with Deloitte Consulting LLP's Chief Technology Officer, Bill Briggs, where we're going to walk through Deloitte's 2024 Tech Trends, and what's showing up on the show floor as it relates to what's new and next in tech. So Bill, could not be more excited to be with you right now.

Bill Briggs: It's going to be awesome.

Raquel Buscaino: It's going to be great. It's going to be great. So, Bill, OK, you're an executive editor for Tech Trends. You've been doing Tech Trends for how many years now?

Bill Briggs: 15 years! Yeah, it's been a great run, and the CES© environment, there's always tech advances happening, and our clients in every industry around the globe, they really looked at Deloitte to say "how do we make sense of what might feel overwhelming, the amount of change? But probably more importantly, what do we do about it? And how do we apply it to our business, or how our work is done, our broad industry?" So, yeah, it's been an amazing run. And this year, I think is the best yet.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. Ok. So the tech trends for this year, I'm gonna list out the headlines, would love to hear your initial beats and reactions.

Bill Briggs: Ok.

Raquel Buscaino: First one is "Interfaces in new places: Spatial computing and the industrial metaverse"

Bill Briggs: Yeah. So this idea of metaverse has been talked about for a long time. And people, for a long time, they immediately thought about it in the way it's been portrayed in science fiction and movies, right? It's "escape from reality"; I'm going to go to a place and I can have fun and I can communicate and I can collaborate…. And that is happening, for sure, the consumer side continues. And you see a lot of investment on the floor, kind of making advances to devices, to content.

But the emphasis of the trends is more about the business applications. We say "industrial metaverse", it's the how do we not escape from reality, but how do we bring digital to the physical, and use it for things like enterprise simulation, so before we build a building, can we really understand how we might use it "day one", and day, I don't know, what would be your day, day 1500, and can we take operations and put real data behind what we think is happening. So business processes used to be hypothetical. Now we can really see.

And then a huge piece is the augmented work. Like, how do we think about it for training, learning & development, and it's all playing out here at CES©

Raquel Buscaino: Totally. And I think you're seeing part of it because the "wow" factor that might have existed in past years for just simply putting on a headset, there's less of that "wow" factor happening now and, more of the "what does it actually mean for me and my business?"

Bill Briggs: Totally. And I actually, the first time I used the VR headset, I think it was 10 years ago, was at CES©. Of course, it was a gaming application, which is fine for me. It was fun. But yeah, it's the how do we now move into something that really matters from a business and a government lens?

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, awesome. Well, that's the first trend. OK. Second trend headline is "Genie out of the bottle: Generative AI as growth catalyst" What is that?

Bill Briggs: So of course generative AI, all of our clients are very interested in what it is, so, why does it matter? And we're bullish, like everyone, and the point of the trend is: From a tech, it is evolutionary. So a lot of CIOs (Chief Information Officers) and CTOs (Chief Technology Officers), they'll say, "wow, is it really that new?" It is. There's capability we never had before; important, powerful.

But it's also an evolution of technology. It didn't come out of…. It's not an alien that landed from outer space. It's not the model from 2001. It's not magic. But the real point becoming: "how do we then put it into practice? How do we find the use cases that matter? How do we actually deploy?"

And I thought coming here, we'd see AI on more boots than we do. It's certainly a part of the features and capabilities of what a lot of the exhibitors here are showing. But it's not the headline, it's the fabric, which is part of our point of, you know, we don't want it to be so consumed on the how, it's the why.

And, and so that's playing out. A 100 years ago at CES©, I'm sure there were some billboards that said "now with electricity". We don't see that anymore. I think AI is going to be in the fabric of almost every technology offering, but not the hero of the story, maybe.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, it'll be expected in a way. And so simply putting AI on a billboard doesn't make you stand out from your competitors as much as it would have.

Bill Briggs: If anything. There's fatigue of just being all hyperbole, that it's like really, OK, and not only how, but how are we going to make it work at scale? Because the other thing is, a lot of our clients, they've been doing demos and proofs of concepts, which are great to inspire what more we could do, but they're not enough to drive Fortune 100 framing.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, yeah, Generative AI. OK. The third one is "Smarter, not harder: Beyond brute force compute"

Bill Briggs: Scrolls off the tongue, doesn't it?

Raquel Buscaino: It does.

Bill Briggs: It's, there's a whole category of new under the infrastructure that's fueling the underlying capability, and a lot of attention to GPUs (Graphic Processing Units) and supercomputers focused on AI. We see a lot of the AI chipsets who are here and are important.

You know, we're looking at that as one interesting evolution that doesn't replace cloud computing. It doesn't replace the investments you made in your data center. It's adding new capability with very specialized workload.

And so, in the paper we talk about looking out: quantum computing is increasingly being applied to real business and government concerns, that's in the same thread. And hopefully we move to a place where the horsepower isn't the limiting factor, which for a long time it was, like we couldn't do. It just wasn't feasible or it cost so much. And now we're seeing these great offerings, and more and more clients taking advantage of them.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, yeah. And it's interesting because I think, say take Quantum for example,, talk about classical computing versus quantum computing. It's not like it's necessarily an "either or ". it's a supplement. It's a complement, it's "how do we bring more, how do we make the pie bigger to power the party?"

Bill Briggs: I know! We're both golfers. It's a new club in the bag. And if you buy a 7, you're not going to use it on the putting green, I think. And it's the same. So it's probably a really terrible analogy for quantum computing.

But the idea of it, it's for specialized workload, amazing new opportunities to do things we couldn't do before, but the read of how do we apply it to all the things that we've been using compute for over the years. It's not a great fit, by design. It's not a defect, that's a feature.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. And thank goodness we have more features to build, right? How boring would the world be if we didn't. OK, #4 is "From DevOps to DevEx: Empowering the engineering experience."

Bill Briggs: I love. I love this one. So much of technology is at the heart of strategy, so much of our clients, even Deloitte, like, how do we have a much more disciplined world class engineering capability? And that could be product engineering, software engineering, it's basically "how do we build the future?" And to do that we need to invest in our engineers.

And for a long time, it was all about automation, and tool chain, and platform, which is a piece of it, no, no question. But this DevEx is developer experience, engineering experience, and it's also: what is the culture community? How do we think about the talent model for engineers? Which is different than a lot of your traditional technology folks. How do we really lean into the process to make engineers better?

And it could include, it does include GenAI, as a part of the development process, especially for documentation, and QA. But this idea that we need to invest in engineers as one of the most important talent groups that we have and not enough people have done that. You know, high tech traditionally, professional services a little bit, it's every industry now.

And so, it's not on the floor, maybe is the thing that people are talking about, but it's embedded in how most of the products that we're seeing got to where they are here, right?

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, yeah. And I think a lot about purpose driven work.

Bill Briggs: Yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: And there's something to be said that most developers, they're not in it necessarily for the money, right? They're in it because they love what they do. They love tackling challenges and problems. And so, when you say if there's a burden or a process that takes up, say, 50% of your workload that prevents you from doing that. Gosh, that's…

Bill Briggs: I mean, and the idea, how can we be ruthless that if I have to do it more than one time, I should automate it, right? For sure. And the things that we're helping free up are the things nobody wants to do anyway, you know. And then "how do you build the culture, the community, the learning, these other thing?" Engineers, they want to be around other people practicing their craft, and grow together, and so, you know, doing that very intentionally.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. All right. Number… what are we on? Number 5. Defending reality. I like this one: "Defending Reality: Truth in an age of synthetic media."

Bill Briggs: Yeah. So Trust and Truth, right? The trust, we think about cyber security and privacy, which is a real thing. We think about the regulatory compliance aspects, which is real and unfolding, and then you got this ethics morality.

But when it comes down to digital content, how do we have confidence in what we're seeing is real and it happened? That we know that what we're consuming is copyrighted? We're not authentic or not the veracity?

So it's all of the how do we think about cyber to have confidence, and protect IP? And like everything in trust, it can't be at the end where we're just checking a box, and it's a compliance activity like "OK, because we have to". This is something so strategic that I think it's actually going to be a part of people's brands almost, like "we're a part of either helping you protect your digital rights and your digital asset, or our policy in how we put guardrails in place and what we've done, is a part of our value proposition, as a product company, as a service company". Yeah, whatever.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. And maybe even that the human premium too, it makes the things that are uniquely human, a conversation that we have that are human that much more important, right, in a world where information can be generated like that.

Bill Briggs: I mean, I was on a panel yesterday and the great point at the end was just about the human connection piece is what makes most of the world go round, you know, commerce, industry, certain society. And so yeah, how do you prop that up but also protect it? Yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. All right. Number six, I like this one because it's something I have not done this week. Core workout…

Bill Briggs: When you're getting 30,000 steps a day!

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, oh gosh. "Core workout: From technical debt to technical wellness." Core workout? what does that mean?

Bill Briggs: Yeah, this one is not the shiny object that's going to get the headline out of CES, but in every client conversation that I have, that Deloitte has, it is front and center. And it's basically no one has the luxury of starting from scratch.

So you've got decades of technology investment, and in most cases, it wasn't built to maybe last as long as it's been in play, and it certainly wasn't built to be able to take advantage of all of these amazing advances that we continue to see.

So we say "core", it's all of your legacy applications, infrastructure, network… and when people tend to go and try to do something about it, they pick one of those, like "oh, we're going to… the strategic objective is our ERP upgrade…"

Raquel Buscaino: I'm just going to work at my left pinky today.

Bill Briggs: Totally right, right. And the metaphor we have is instead of it being a specialist that you're only going to focus on mainframe migration, your left pinky, think about it more of a holistic wellness program, like, because what you might feel is the biggest need, it might not be! And so how do you look at all of those pieces together? And then the good news is when you're actually treating the patient, if they're on the operating table, this might not be the metaphor we want to use, but I like it for second.

Raquel Buscaino: Let's run with it.

Bill Briggs: Yeah. If the patient's already on the operating table, fixing all the other pieces there, are a lot better than saying that schedule six or seven operations in a row. And so there's two pieces, confidence of where to focus and then we can we can sometimes deal with them because they're so intertwined or it'd be painful and inconvenient to or so.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. And the proactivity in it as well. I like it's not something, you know, if you wait until the last day of the year to work out for 365 days. I mean that is! Talk about pain! But a 30 minute walk each day, I can get behind it, right?

Bill Briggs: No, it's, it's spot on! And most of it, isn't… It's not people that were doing bad things, and were being less than thoughtful. It was always perfectly justified. And a lot of times we'll say, "Oh, we're going to go and we'll take care of it in the next release." And we don't because the next thing comes up. And so they just pile up, and pile on, and there's a better way to do it.

Raquel Buscaino: Well, so, Bill, you've been walking the show floor for the last couple days now. You've seen all these six trends show up in some ways. What's something that has surprised you maybe, about the show floor?

Bill Briggs: Yeah, the fact that there's so many industries. So CES©, the Consumer Electronics Show, so when people think of it, they think of transparent televisions, and the next generation of what resolution will we have, you know, 8K/16K and that's all here, of course, it's kind of fun! But there's EEG tech, there's biotech, and health tech. There's government tech, there is industrial manufacturing, advanced robotics. So you go through all of these different areas, and it's more and more prominent, which is amazing.

And then I love it, like, just a step back, and we're overlooking the floor and this is one of, I don't even know how many, a dozen convention centers around Vegas that are here. 4000 exhibitors... So when we talk about that pace of change technology, it's moving so fast, so much happening. It's almost an embodiment of that as you walk the floor.

But I think what the white and tech trends does so well is to say the future is more knowable than it might feel. And even amongst this chaos, there's themes that are popping up, that are enduring. So it gives you confidence that, even though you'll find some fun pool-cleaning robots, and you know, all, all the things... There's real business to be gleaned from here, and we're seeing a lot of great advances in places that matter.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah. And like you said too, there's the intersection between different technologies, is so pervasive, so you might be in the pool cleaning section, and you're seeing AI robotics, sustainability. And so it's almost like, I imagine 20 years ago, the headlines, people fit into a nice cookie-cutter version of what that AI sustainability/IoT section was. But now right it's all so intersecting.

Bill Briggs: No it's such a great, and the point, the individual ingredients are necessary, there's no question, but it's the recipe of, you know, how we bring them together. And none of them individually even with trends, the danger is we treat them as if they're distinct, there's so much collision between them, and really it's how they come together, that's where the magic happens and yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: Absolutely. OK. So thinking, thinking ahead, let's say, we're now 2025. You know what? Let's say, we're 20 years ahead from here. Now Bill, what are you most excited about for the future of technology broadly, where we're heading?

Bill Briggs: I think it's to this point of the problems we're going to be able to solve are going to be bigger and more profound. And the question of "can we" is likely going to be "yes", you know. And you apply it to, mental health and wellness. How amazing will it be to have all of the diagnostic information that you only get in the hospital as just a part of your daily routine, and can help you prevent getting sick, and help you understand the triggers in all of your life, and everything you're doing that is wearing on from mental health. So that's, that's amazing.

I've always wanted a jet pack. So we, I used to say that "when we talk tech trends is not flying car futures". There's flying cars here on display. Maybe in 20 years, it'll be in your driveway. I don't know if I'll still be allowed to drive by then, but, you know, they'll be autonomous, I'm sure.

Raquel Buscaino: It's ok, you can sit as a passenger.

Bill Briggs: Yeah, yeah. So I think that will be amazing. And then, you know, I'm a film buff, and a gamer, like that piece of CES© still speaks to me. And I can't even think of what that will be in in 20 years. But it's going to be fun to stick around and find out.

Raquel Buscaino: Yeah, no, I'm with you. I mean, I often think that people, people talk about the future sometimes as if it's something that happens to us. But that's not the case. It is something that we're creating, whether we know it or not, and so there's 130,000 attendees here at CES© 2024,

Bill Briggs: Yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: And I look at everyone, and I'm like, OK, these are the people, these are the companies, these are the innovators that are actively building that future.

Bill Briggs: Beautifully said, and the boldness, and you talk to people, the excitement of tomorrow being better than today. Of course, we have to have, all the cyber discussions. How like, how do we make sure we're doing responsibly? How do we build trust in everything we do? All very real, you know, and progress is going to continue, and you just "feel it, see it, live it, here."

What are you excited about? So 20 years. What do you think you're going to see?

Raquel Buscaino: Oh my gosh.

Bill Briggs: CES© 2044... How's that roll off the tongue?

Raquel Buscaino: It sounds, it sounds like a made-up year. You know, it's like, can I can my mind even go that far? I don't know. I think the flying car will be interesting, but I think over the years, we've seen there's things that happen at the center of the show floor.

Bill Briggs: Yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: And then there's things that happen at the outskirts of the show floor.

Bill Briggs: Yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: And over the years, things at the center slowly filtered to things on the outside and vice versa, in a way, right, for small innovations or things that were once legacy technologies. And so for me, I don't know if I'm necessarily excited to see what 2040 or 2044 is going to look like, but I'm excited to see every year, the small changes that get us to the future.

Bill Briggs: Well said. I love it.

Raquel Buscaino: Oh, well, Bill, I mean, I couldn't thank you enough. I mean, this is an awesome spot to be, recording live from CES©

Bill Briggs: Yeah.

Raquel Buscaino: Fantastic conversation, sharing your future of where tech trends are heading. So thank you so much.

Bill Briggs: No, thanks Raquel. And to your point, let's all collectively keep leaning in and making this future, because it's here waiting.

Raquel Buscaino: So, yeah, couldn't agree more. And to for all those tuning in, thanks again for joining us for TECHTalks as we kick off this year. Going to be more thrilled for all the future episodes we have coming down the pipe.

If you'd like to stay connected on the future of tech, you can follow Bill, you can follow myself on our socials. They are listed in the episode description. Thank you so much, and we'll talk soon.

Stay savvy.