



Welcome to our latest bulletin, which focuses on the impact of technology-enabled business platforms.

In our lead article [Peter Boggis](#) and I explore the emergence of technology-enabled business platforms and examine how they are different from platforms of yesterday. We believe that considerable lessons can be learned from the development and use of these platforms, particularly how they can be used to 'pull' an organisation into its desired future.

In our second [article](#) we share the insights of two thought leaders in this space, Mark Bonchek and Sangeet Paul Choudary. In their featured article they pose a counterintuitive question facing all businesses today: how do I enable others to create value?

Finally, we review Phil Simon's book [The Age of the Platform](#) in which he examines how Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google have redefined business.

As always, we welcome your feedback.

Best regards
[David Trafford](#)

About Formicio

We work with people who want to improve their organisation's future by delivering transformational change.

We provide both thought leadership and thought

How business platforms pull the present into the future

Over the past decade technology-enabled business platforms – the likes of which include Amazon, iTunes and Facebook – have had a profound impact on our lives. They have 'pulled' us into a future that is different to the one we might have envisaged.

In their recent article [How Business Platforms Pull the Present into the Future](#), [Peter Boggis](#) and [David Trafford](#) argue that these business platforms all have one thing in common: they changed our individual and collective behaviour. They pulled our present into their future! A future that has now become so familiar it doesn't feel like we've changed at all! But was this by accident? Did these things just happen or were they planned?

Make no mistake: it was all planned. When Jeff Bezos launched Amazon, he had a clear vision from the outset, as did Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook and the system architects at Apple. They were all building a future in which they believed we would willingly participate. It's a sure bet that system architects in the likes of Google are doing the same now.

But how are these new business platforms different from the ones that exist in most organisations today? In their view they differ in four important ways:

1. They are **extendable** – new value-added services can be added easily.
2. They are **open** – to new participants.
3. They support **eco-systems** – that extend across the value chain from suppliers to customers.
4. They are **agile** – not constrained by their underpinning technology and architecture.

Peter and David believe that the approach is equally applicable in strategy and organisational change where technology-enabled business platforms can be used to 'pull' an organisation into its desired future.

To read their full article where they give examples of emerging business platforms, click [here](#).

Three elements of a successful platform strategy

According to Mark Bonchek and Sangeet Paul Choudary, the rise of platforms is being driven by three transformational technologies: cloud, social and mobile. The cloud enables a global infrastructure for production, allowing anyone to create content and applications for a global audience. Social networks connect people globally and maintain their identity online. Mobile allows connection to this global infrastructure anytime, anywhere.

They argue that these three transformational technologies are forcing all businesses to answer a fundamental question that

partnership on all aspects of change from formulating strategy to managing migration.

Throughout our work we believe that it is important for the client to retain ownership of their challenge and find an approach that will work for their organisation. Our role is to support and facilitate the process, while keeping the client true to their intent.

Specifically we can help:

Explore alternative futures that are not only better, but achievable.

Establish the conditions necessary for successful transformational change.

Develop capabilities needed to 'pull' an organisation into an improved future.

More details can be found on our [website](#).

Parting thought

"Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world."

Archimedes
Greek Mathematician
287 – 212 BC

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underlies Platform Thinking: how do I enable others to create value?

In their view the answer lies in a platform strategy that addresses:

1. **Connection:** how easily others can plug into the platform to share and transact.
2. **Gravity:** how well the platform attracts participants, both producers and consumers.
3. **Flow:** how well the platform fosters the exchange and co-creation of value.

To read their article, click [here](#).

The gang of four who set the benchmark

In his book [The Age of the Platform](#), Phil Simon describes Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google as *The Gang of Four*. He believes that they have individually built the world's most valuable and powerful business platforms, and in doing so have done nothing short of redefined business.

He believes that one thing *The Gang of Four* have in common is their ability to embrace intelligent risk and not being afraid to fail, experiment and change. More importantly, they have spent a great deal of time and money building extremely powerful and valuable ecosystems, partnerships and communities that seek symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationships.

Furthermore, their platforms can quickly and easily scale, morph, incorporate new features (which he calls planks), and add new users, customers, vendors and partners. In other words they are not constrained by legacy technologies and architectures.

In a later chapter Simon gives his views on the most promising candidates for emerging platforms. His list includes Foursquare, Twitter, Groupon, Adobe and Quora. Interestingly WhatsApp (founded only in 2009 and recently acquired by Facebook for \$19 billion) was not included. Obviously they were not on his radar screen when he wrote the book – nearly three long years ago.

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