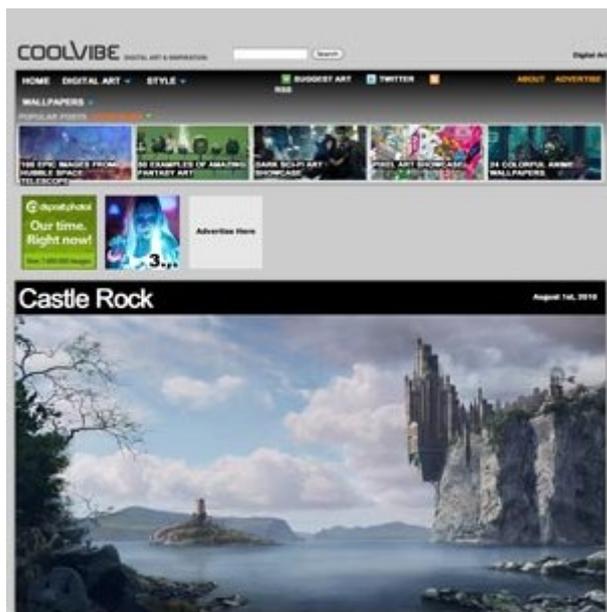


According to a July 2008 survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, one out of three Netizens reads blogs on a regular basis. They've become an essential part of any savvy company's media campaigns. Companies like Google and Facebook use their official blogs to make major product announcements, while companies like Apple find themselves scooped by distinctly unofficial blogs. And for better or worse, blogs often drive the 24/7 news cycle. We have met the media, and it is us.

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Capacitive Touchscreens (2006)

What made the iPhone different? It wasn't the groovy geek in the black turtleneck; it was that magical capacitive touch screen, which uses your body's own electrical properties to sense the location of your finger.

Patented in 1999 by Dr. Andrew Hsu of Synaptics, capacitive screens made their cell-phone debut on the LG Prada in 2006. But the iPhone catapulted the technology into the mainstream, leading to a new generation of apps that let you tap, swipe, stroke, and pinch your way to handset Nirvana.

"Apple didn't invent the capacitive touchscreen, but it was the implementation of the technology in the original iPhone that completely altered the face of the smartphone

market,” notes Ben Lang, senior editor of CarryPad, a Website focused on mobile Internet devices. “Apple realized that with touch input consistent enough for mainstream use and an intelligent soft keyboard, it could dedicate nearly the entire front of the phone to a screen. A ‘soft’ keyboard’ can be removed when it isn’t necessary, and make room for a rich and intuitive user interface.”

Now, of course, we expect every cool new mobile device to have this functionality. The multitouch screen made smart phones and their larger cousins like the iPad the “it” devices for the new millennium--no turtleneck required.

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The Cloud (2010)

Vaporous? Possibly. Overhyped, most definitely. Still, the always-accessible Internet will change the game more than any of these other technologies combined. Why? Because the cloud will essentially turn the Net into a utility--just flip a switch or turn a spigot and it’s ready to use, says Peter Chang, CEO of Oxygen Cloud, a cloud-based collaboration and data storage vendor.

“Just as we use utilities like water and electricity instead of wells and generators, we leverage the utility of the cloud to store, access, and replicate data--whether it’s Flickr photos, YouTube videos, Facebook, Salesforce, Google Docs, or online games,”

says Chang. "Cloud storage liberates users from the the confines of attached storage and empowers them to take their data anywhere."

The Net began with a satellite shot into low-earth orbit. Now its future lies in the cloud. There's something innately satisfying about that.

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