Then and Now: A Departure from Technology

By: Andrew West

As of March 31, 2011, I will be hanging up my technology hat for good and putting on a beekeepers' veil and wielding a garden shovel while keeping one hand on a computer keyboard. Yes, it's true, I am making a drastic life change so that I can focus on hobbies and work that will help to re-energize and heal both myself and the planet. My time will be spent beekeeping, gardening, electronic music production, and home keeping, with the rest going to DJing and long-term planning (5+ years) toward founding and living in an intentional community, either in SB County or up north in the Santa Cruz area.

This transition reminds me of when I bought my first used Intel 286 PC back in 1990 with a built in 2400 baud modem; I'd be emailing and chatting online with my girlfriend at Northwestern using a free dial-up account from UCSB. I'll never forget the look on my friends' faces when they would stop by my room and ask what I was doing; when I told them, it was as if I had spoken to them in a foreign language. That hobby was, in large part, responsible for launching my successful and satisfying 20-year IT career.

I expect this transition into my new, passionate hobbies to follow the same serendipitous path. Through a conscious framework of simplification and efficient design, I will follow a path based on the sustainable utilization of land and resources. This equates to less stuff, less travel, less eating out, buying used goods and clothes, solar power, rain catchment, low-water usage landscape design, and earth-friendly lifestyle choices such as riding my bike as much as possible, growing and eating as much food from our garden as possible, etc.   I had a head start on all this being a vegetarian for most of my life, however after I met and married my wife, Meg, she has taught me a ton about efficient landscape design and the importance of doing everything one can to minimize their footprint on the earth. She is a LEED certified landscape architect who recently joined the City of Goleta Planning Commission, and she has been instrumental in "saving my life", as I like to see it. We've made significant changes to our Goleta home over the past 4 years, and I'm happy to report that our quality of life has improved significantly while decreasing our expenses at the same time. I'm hooked for good!

I am happy to say that I am leaving the CIO Solutions team at a time when we continue to grow through the recession and when I have never seen a better team in place – quit while you're ahead, right? I expect to hear more and more good things about CIO Solutions as time goes on since I know that the culture there is based on a solid foundation that values the CIO team as much as it values the rest of the CIO family which includes our clients and employee's family members. I have seen all kinds of organizations and companies during my time at CIO, and I can safely say that it's one of the best places to create a career and improve yourself in Santa Barbara and in California, for that matter. There are many good reasons why I stuck around for so long! It will be very difficult for me to leave this family, that's for sure. I will need help making it through this transition, so please keep in touch!

Over the years, I've grown hopeful that industries such as Information Technology are headed in a better direction, although I see many developments that I believe hurt us as well. So, I will leave you with my top lists of the good and the bad I have seen out there during my time.

Andrew's Top 5 Technology Wins

- **Server Virtualization** – I know of nothing else better that has happened in IT over the past 20 years than this. With benefits such as less stressed IT people, drastically improved power and space utilization, portability, ease of management, and ease of backup/recovery. VMware rocks.
- **Managed Services** – These services make it easy for our clients to understand, receive, and budget for comprehensive IT services. Managed services make life easier for everyone, clients and IT staff alike.
- **The Cloud** – This cloud definitely isn't all silver lining, however its future continues to brighten every day. Want a business that's immune from most disasters and that you can run from anywhere in the world? Look to the cloud.
- **Storage Virtualization** – Are you sensing a trend here? Same benefits as server virtualization, except for storage.
- **The Internet** – Enough said?
- **e-Books** - Meg and I got a Kindle for Christmas. As avid readers, we were hooked within an hour.
- **Ethernet** – One of the best standards ever invented in networking. It continues to win, and it continues to scale since its inception in the mid 70's. (OK, I'll stop now)

Andrew's Top Technology Bombs

- **Smart/Cell Phones** – OK, so I couldn't leave without stirring up some controversy. I think that these devices have created way too much distraction, noise, and interruptions in our already harrowing lives, thereby lowering our overall quality of life. I will not miss being constantly tethered to mine (yes, I do have one, however I will not use it to drink beer from – there are much better ways of enjoying this activity). They are definitely useful in certain circumstances, but I think we have gone overboard with these devices in general. I also think they make us more stupid – not smarter – over time. *Note: I almost included Smart Phones in my Favorites list, but my overall impression of these devices to date has been negative. If I lived in a country where a Smart Phone was my only means of communication, I would definitely make an exception.*
- **Digital Rights Management (DRM)** – Music and movie companies' attempts to protect their content via (inherently) flawed protection schemes have only hurt paying customers and artists in the end. "Hackers" continue to access content unabated and always will.
- **The Internal Combustion Engine** – This single invention has done more to harm the planet than any other I can think of. When you consider that most cities are designed around cars and not humans, you can begin to see where I'm going with this.
- **Too many others to mention** – all the bad inventions take care of themselves. I like to look for the good things anyway, and not give the bad things too much press.

Thank you to everyone who has made my career in IT as fulfilling and exciting as possible.

Please stay in touch!

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