MARK SHERWIN: Welcome to Fjord Trends 2015 Webcast, live from the Fjord London Studios. Fjord is part of Accenture Interactive and my name’s Mark SHERWIN. I’m a Managing Director within Accenture Interactive in the UK and Ireland. I’d like to introduce two other people today.

Firstly, John Oswald, the Fjord’s Business Design Director, who’s a champion for customer experience and user experience and really focuses on innovation that is driven from good business common sense and the ability to drive real business value from customer insight.

Secondly, I’d like to introduce Mark Curtis. Mark founded Fjord and is now the Customer Client Operations Officer. And his book, Distraction: Being human in the digital age, is well known in – in circles around customer experience and customer service design. He’s a global trendspotter and a global speaker and we’re really excited to hear what both these guys can bring to – to the story today.

If you’d like to follow us, you can forward – follow us at #Fjordtrends and you can also ask questions by tweeting us @Fjord or @Accenturedigital. Questions will follow at the end. We’re going to be taking them from the audience and also live from Twitter. So please do interact with us. And without further ado, I’m going to hand it over to Mark, who’s going to talk to us a little bit about the history and philosophy behind trends, how they’re created and then introduce us to a number of the key trends that we’re talking about this year. Mark.

MARK CURTIS: Thanks, Mark, thanks very much indeed. So there’s really two main things about how we go about – about trends. One is the sort of guidance system we’ve got for – for how we – how we decide a trend is a trend in the first place. And that’s really very simple. It’s got to be something that we will be working on over the next year with our clients because our clients ask us to or because we believe they should be working on it and we persuade them that that is the case.

There’s an added one to that as well, which is we believe it should be something where by the end of the year at least, people we know in our wider circle of acquaintances, friends, family, we’ll actually be talking about this as well. They may not call it what we call it, they may call it something else, but – but from a consumer or a user perspective, they will be responding viscerally to it, they will be aware of it in way or another.
So we tend to rule out what I call the jet pack trends because we’re not anywhere close to jet packs at the moment as far as I know anyway. And if they’re more than five years away, then they’re really probably not going to impact so closely on what we do. So it’s – it’s quite near term. So it’s very relevant for 2015.

The second thing about trends we do is that we draw trends from the entirety of our staff. So we have almost 500 people working in Fjord now. Almost most of those are designers, but not all of them are designers. Some of them are HR, some of them are marketing, some of them are finance and we include everybody because trendspotting is actually something that everyone can do. And because everybody is consumers, everyone is users and you just have to sit back and think and get the perspective in order to be able to bring that perspective to bear on – on what’s happening out there. But it is a fairly unique way of getting trends. It’s not done just by one or two individuals, it’s actually culled or drawn or collected from – from – from the wisdom of a crowd. A crowd in this case that is very focused on – on digital design.

And - and that I think makes them – makes them very, very strong. Towards the end of the year, once we worked with everybody in the company to do that, we then have a 2 – 3 month process where we collect more together and we begin to look for the patterns that are emerging. And those patterns this year have delivered us 9 trends. And over the top of that, when we sit back and look at them, it’s very clear that what I call some meta-trends beginning to emerge, which are really what you would think of as being the flavor for the year ahead.

So those meta-trends are, first of all, that we’re going to see the impact of digital colliding with the real world this year more than ever before. So you may object that’s not particularly new. We certainly been talking about that for the last few years, there’s no question about it, but we’re actually going to as ordinary people, experience that big time this year. We’ve already begun to experience it with Uber and we’re going to talk about Uber a fair bit today because they’re a – they’re a company that is really set whether you like them or not, they set a bit of a pattern for the world, for the world of digital and physical. But it’s not just with them, it’s also with the hotel chains. So it’s some of the big hotel chains have announced that they’re introducing digital doors
this year. These are doors in the hotels which you can unlock with your smartphone, which will have other added value to it as well.

So you think about the many tens of hundreds of thousands of people who stay in major hotel chains over the coming year, all of those people will be experiencing these smart doors and they will be telling stories about them and they will be evaluating whether these things work for them or not, whether it's a step too far or whether it is something they really want to use. But that's an example of how we're going to see digital and real world coming together.

The second one is – the – the base level customer expectation now if you want to excel is magic. If you are not aiming to deliver magic, you are probably going to fall short. We live with what I – I genuinely call, perhaps I shouldn’t, the Harry Potter generation. You can call them Millennials or Gen Y or whatever you want, but it is a Harry Potter. And that doesn't mean that we're expecting to get out on ones, it just means that we expect daily magic in the interactions we had – we have.

We've seen this with the taxi services. Everybody who's used one of the taxi services comments on the same thing. When they get out of the cab and they walk away from it, they don't have to pay in the driving rain and – and wind, in London in particular. And when you do that, you experience just a little bit of magic. Magic doesn't have to be very big, it can be quite small, but if it changes your life in some small, but perceptible way and it feels magical, that's a heart of a great user experience.

The third thing I think we're going to see is a greater focus on the seams between things. John's going to talk about this a bit with a trend we call Mind The Gap. It is a – it's a – we can have an argument or a debate about whether seamless in itself is possible. Consumers know what the seams are and they expect them, but they want connections now to build over those seams and to make them as invisible as possible and that, too, is an important driver of the year.

If I had to sum it all up in one word, it would be ambition. So those companies that will succeed in what they do this year and in the years after this year will be the ones who bring to market an outrageous level of ambition and I truly use the word outrageous advisedly.
You do have to think very big now because there is some pretty scary people out there competing with you, who are also thinking in a very, very ambitious way and then you have to deliver on it as well.

So those are the sort of meta-themes is you like behind – behind this year’s trends and - and now what we’re going to do is we’re going to talk about five of them. You can see all of them, if you want, at our website and also on slide share where we have the full presentation.

So the first trend I’m going to talk about this year, we’ve called Money Talks. And in my head, I have to say I call this the China Trend and it’s the China Trend because there is stuff now coming out of the Chinese market which is beginning to and will radically impact our expectations of what digital can do. And most of all, with a new generation who are used to highly visual communication and want very rapid interaction and we’re seeing this with WhatsApp, Snapchat, for example, what we’re now getting is messaging and commerce fusing together for the first time properly, which actually if you think about it is not that strange, because commerce used to be conducted in – in most societies across the world in a market. And the market is where you went not just to buy things, but also to talk. So conversation and commerce are actually bed fellows which, you know, from an historical point of view, we should be extremely comfortable with seeing coming together. What’s happened with the internet is they’ve been pushed apart, but now thanks to some of the stuff we’re seeing in China, we’re beginning to see them come back together.

And this is a – this is a new social layer to commerce, which potentially changes money forever and, again, we’ve been predicting that money is being changed for the last few years, now we’re beginning to see a very tangible example of where it’s happening with huge success.

So from a brand point of view, you need to begin to think about content, conversation and commerce and how those things are going to combine together in the same place. So the outstanding example of this is WeChat. So WeChat, if you haven’t heard of it, is actually only I think three years old, 3 to 4 years old. The least count I saw they have 500 million users, force of breath, in just that period of time. And WeChat started as a, if you like, something a bit like WhatsApp is the best way to describe it. But now, they’ve built into it, gaming, shopping and banking, so it contains its own wallet.
So if you think in terms of - of what happens when you combine together markets like eBay or Amazon together with WhatsApp, then you’re beginning to head in the right direction for what we chatted become very, very successful and to create. But they’re not the only people. There are other markets like TelVal coming out of China, which is now number 11 in Alexa Global Rankings. Also hugely successful, Taobao is allowing a range of – of – of ordinary people to set up a small merchants. So think of it a bit like eBay, but it’s eBay on steroids and many, many Chinese people are now trading in their own right. So, again, they’ve adopted this and said we understand what this is, this is a market where conversations happen. I can be in the market and I can trade in this market. They’re even using it to act as middle men between Western goods for which there’s a very high demand in China, but which are difficult to get, and then pulling them into China via – via the site, setting up merchants – merchants as middlemen. But it’s not just out of China we’re seeing it either. We’re also seeing some very interesting stuff happen with Instagram, for example, so a few people I think are aware of this, but in – in – in some markets and notably – notably the Middle East, and I believe in Thailand as well, Instagram is being used as a commercial site. Instagram.

I’ve seen signs, I’ve seen examples of people using it to sell sheep, to sell dried fruit and people can do this because it’s very visual. And – and it’s very visual. You can set up a market very easily on something like Instagram by sharing people what your wares are. It may be a hack from our point of view, but it works and it’s creating very real commerce. And, again, and this is the important thing, this local repurposing is – is doing it in a – in a place where you normally get conversation. And if you then start projecting forward and thinking about what that means, think about the potential for coupons, for example, on Instagram, it’s a visual space. Why not?

And bear in mind also, that Instagram, according to a new university professor, has 25 times the engagement levels of Twitter and I think 15 times the engagement levels of Facebook and that’s because we’ve become very visual in our expectations.

There’s also I think another piece of – of – of hidden evidence, which hasn’t been commented on much, but needs to be, which is David Marcus, who was CEO of PayPal, last year, in the middle of the year, jumped ship from PayPal to go and head messaging of Facebook. Now
why would you, as a world leader, in understanding how mobile payments work, why would you suddenly leave and go to Facebook messaging? Definitely one to watch this year is what Facebook are planning on messaging because, obviously, you know, they’ve – they’ve hired the top expertise in the world to drive them there.

And this is not just China either, it’s also Africa. Take a look at what Joonmedia are doing in Africa. So we’ve talked about M-Pesa for years now. The next one to see coming out of Africa is Joonmedia. Joomedia are using WhatsApp for customer care, really entrusting use of an open API in order to – to improve their service and it shows how quickly the world is going mobile.

So those are just a few examples of where we’re seeing money talks across the world. And I think to round that off what I would – I’d suggest is three – three or – or 2 or 3 things that – that we need to think about and that our clients need to think about. The first is study China, look at what’s coming out because the speed of change here is very fast, indeed, and it isn’t going to take long before – and, in fact, we are seeing people pick up on it. Venmo is an app in the U.S., which is being picked up very quickly now. Venmo allows people to send money to each other through a conversation and track it socially.

There was a – a wonderful article in Quartz Magazine just late last year, which describes an editorial debate in Quartz between people who did understand Venmo and those who didn’t understand Venmo. And at the end of the debate, what they realized was somebody pointed out all the people who didn’t get it were over 30, sadly, and all the people who did get it making commerce social were under 30. So this millennial thing is – is real and affects the way in which we pick up on the services.

The second thing to think about is think about the ongoing ramifications of this. If conversations and commerce fuse together as in the old fashioned marketplace, then at what stage are we going to see people able to engage in negotiation over prices? So we’re not used to haggling for prices, except maybe on eBay, but what if haggling for prices actually was reintroduced back into the marketplace? This – this – the technology clearly gives us a potential to do so.
And – and then the last is as this generation that expects these things to be fused together in a conversational interface, begin to enter the workforce as they are doing now, what changes will that make to the way in which – to the expectations workforce has for the tools that they use? So that’s the first of the trends as we see it.

MARK SHERWIN: Fantastic. Thank you.

MARK CURTIS: So I’ll go on and talk about the second?

MARK SHERWIN: Yes, please, go on.

MARK CURTIS: And then I’m going to hand over to John, who’s going to cover the next three.

So the second one we called the Sixth Sense and this is very much about how we’re beginning to use data and smart design. So data mining and smart design together to anticipate better what it is that people require from the services they are using and we’re about to take some major jumps forward in this. And – and if we just stop for a moment there, go back in time, ever since we started doing digital design, I’ve been doing it, as Mark said, for 20 years now. There’s been this massive focus on the button, whether the button is allegorical, metaphorical or something, simply matter between the focus on something happens when you do something, you click on something. It doesn’t have to be a button, but it’s – you know, it’s thought of as a button. And that’s been there for 20 years. The button is the moment where somebody makes a choice to do the next thing or to go to the next place. It might be next page, payment, whatever it may be. But actually now we’re reaching a place where some services are beginning to anticipate the button click and try and remove the button click all together.

And if you think about that statement, then there are two very important things here. One is delivering the most efficient reaction possible to when somebody clicks the button. The second one, which goes beyond that is removing the need for them to click the button at all by anticipating their needs and then delivering something to them without them asking for it. So just quite scary and this does have scary implications, there’s no question about it, but it is undoubtedly the direction of travel which we’re now seeing and that’s why we’re calling this out as a trend this year.

And that direction of travel really began to some extent with the media and digital. So, you know, we – we’ve been – people have been talking for a while now about I want what I want when
I want it and that really started with media and with binge watching. So binge watching as we know is, you know, the ability to say I want to watch all 10 episodes of Boardwalk Empire now and I’m going to stay up all night in order to do so. And then I want what I want when I want with Spotify, got all the music in the world, except maybe the Beatles and I want it now and – and – and I take it now.

So this is a – this is a move which – which we’re seeing companies come up with in order to take that I want what I want when I want it away from – not just away from media, but to transfer that media thinking and then begin to apply it to – to all services. And really to a large extent, this begins with, and this is a key word to take away from this I believe, certainty. People want certainty. They don’t want to waste their time looking for things that aren’t there or that they’ve actually decide they don’t want to buy. It’s – we’re very time conscious now and that time consciousness means we don’t want to waste time looking for stuff that isn’t there.

Very interesting report late last year which showed how retailers often misunderstand what consumers want. Consumers when they’re asked, what is most important from you from a retail app or website, it’s inventory. I want to know what is there and I want to know what I can buy and I want to know that it’s truly available and when it’s available. If you ask retailers the same question, they say search because they’re driven by technology. And so they’re making a fundamental misstep there, a misunderstanding, but that certainty is key. And we’ve seen the certainty play out with taxis, that’s after all, to some extent, well to a large extent, the business at Lyft and Uber and Halo are in is offering certainty. Now we’re seeing it play out with food, perhaps happily and unsurprisingly. And so we’re seeing it with companies like Instacart, notable that that was set up by an ex-Amazon buddy, ex-Amazon head of supply chain, by SpoonRocket, by a new company in New York called Wunwun, that’s W-U-N-W-U-N. Wunwun have an outrageous claim to build, deliver you anything from any chef or restaurant in Manhattan within an hour, which is an exceptional claim. And now it’s moving beyond food to – to things like housekeeping and manservants. I’m not quite sure what that one’s about, but it’s moving – moving all over the place where people have – may say I want a manservant and I want him now.
And – and so, this is, again, this is a button click and it’s – it’s – it’s pre-button click, but it’s lining up those people and – and one of the things that has really enabled this is the supply side. It’s not so much a demand side, we’ve always wanted things as quickly as we possibly can, that’s not new to humans. What’s changed here is a smartphone has transformed the supply side because we can all individually become many merchants now with our spare time. If you doubt me on this, check out just this week the Economists headline story. I think it’s the cover story this week. They’re talking about almost exactly the same thing.

And what’s happening here is those people who – who can work in this area are able to transform their lives by understanding what demand is there and, of course, using mapping on the phone, get to the place where the demand is in no time at all and those – those are really very transformative.

If you look at other things that are happening, Uber – Uber’s data scientists claim they can now simulate demand patterns extremely accurately across the city in real time, which allow them to move traffic to where it needs to be. So they’re using data in a very clever way. I think everyone is conscious of the fact ‘cause it – it received widespread coverage last year that Amazon filed an anticipated reshipping patent. Again, we need to be clear on terminology here. That’s not to say that they’re anticipating that I want an Xbox. They’re anticipating a lot of people like me want Xboxes and, therefore, they’re moving enough Xboxes into the city in order to deliver when it happens.

But in a less lorded move last year, very late in the year, Amazon also launched something called Echo. So Echo is well worth taking a look at if you’ve not seen it yet. It’s a small cylinder that sits in the house and you can talk to it. It’s not dependent on a smartphone, it’s – it sits on its own. Clearly it’s connected to Amazon’s commerce systems and you can – it’s a form of artificial intelligence in the house. Now, we were talking about it earlier and we can all take views that that’s – it might be creepy and the people might have a problem with the idea of this thing sitting in their house listening to them all the time. Whether or not that is – that that is a valid objection, whether that objection, you know, commercially blocks it from happening, what’s fascinating is that Amazon, who are a pretty smart company, have obviously invested a lot of time and energy into
this and it is putting a form of artificial intelligence into the house, which will be able to, at least from a grocery point of view, I think if you look at their marketing and their talk in kitchens typically, be able to anticipate what people want. So it’s a very clear and actually so far quite unheralded step towards – towards this anticipatory world that we see coming.

So this is we think a huge change and something which we’re going to have to watch very carefully and - and a lot of companies are going to have to think about how can they get stuff to the customer faster and faster and how can they anticipate demand? And I’d – and I pick out really three things to think about here. The first is develop an expertise in understanding data patterns, it’s not just gathering the data, which everyone knows is now important. It’s actually spotting those patterns across the data. It is considerably harder to do.

The second thing to do is as we just touched on this, it sounds humorous, but really there are ethical conduct issues here, which everyone will have to grapple with. And for the last few years, you know, when we’ve done trends, Fjordians have typically talked about the ethical issues around a range of issues. These are getting higher and higher and higher up the agenda now.

And the third one and probably the most important from our perspective, is designers will have to understand data and will have to be able to work with data very well because we won’t be able to do this stuff, the stuff beyond the click, unless we’re very familiar with data. That’s it.

MARK SHERWIN: Thank you, Mark. I love the – the Boston analogy is the – the point of - of change really for customers. I remember Steve Kratzberg, the Seminole work, don’t make me think and on the front cover there’s a button with a finger on it and I was thinking, whilst you talked, well, based on the trend, what would you replace that – that picture with and I supposed really a speech bubble with then somebody telling you what you want, when you want it and giving you the price – it’s the price that you already wanted. And what would the feature there make me think. So that’s very interesting. So thank you very much.

JOHN OSWALD: Yeah, three more. Thank you. Thank you. So the – the next one I want to focus on, so Mark in his introduction talks a lot about seams, very briefly anyway. So there’s the
idea of do you try and create seamless services or do you try and make beautiful seams or as we’re calling it in this trend, Mind The Gap. Subtlety different emphasis.

Basically what we’re – what we’re exploring with this idea is don’t screw up experiences between devices or between physical and digital channels. It’s a kind of obvious thing, right, so we have more and more devices, they’re more and more connected and we spend more and more time on them and we’re always in flux and things always get interrupted. You lose connectivity, so you can’t find where you’re going on your map. If you go underground, so you can’t listen to your music anymore, well, you can actually, but I’ll come onto that. And you – and I think experiences like in-flight movies and as soon as the plane lands and it’s all a bit of a shame really. And the best example I can think of is this – was – was when I was working on a project with one of our designers and he was taking notes on – on Google Docs and he suddenly stopped and said, I can’t write anymore, there’s no internet. And I thought that’s interesting I can’t write with no internet.

So it – it operates at sort of many levels this idea of gaps. There’s – there’s just what happens when you lose connectivity, there’s what happens when you move from device to device and then this one happens when you move from one environment to another, a sort of a digital channel to a physical one. Because the cross channel expectation thing is really, really high now. Spotify works very, very elegantly, when you go underground, when you’re at home, when you’re on one device, when you’re on another device, it’s very, very thought through. Evernote, equally, plus they’re now integrated with Moleskine, a very physical device, plus now devices in notebook, but you know what I mean. And then Kindle is very easy now to go straight through to somebody for help with – on your – on your Kindle Fire device, just through the SOS button.

But the problem is we have such high expectations of this, by the same token, we’ve also been educated by lots and lots of companies in how to manipulate channels to best effect. So the number of customer experience stories you hear where, you know, I tried to do something on the website and then I phoned somebody and then I tried again on the website and then I went to the live chat function to find something else. And people know the tricks now to sort of manipulate
these channels because they recognize that one channel doesn’t know what the other is doing. So that’s the kind of current state we’re at with a lot of large companies we work with.

But there’s – again, another sort of facet of this which is how companies have responded to that by taking out whole parts of the experience, so click and collect. Such a huge part of – of what we saw in retail last year and are continuing to see this year. So many people are doing this now for the simple reason that it takes away that whole delivery problem, the staying at home problem. You just go to the store, pick it up and it’s actually much more convenient. And according to John Lewis, people spend 3-1/2 times more than they would normally.

MARK CURTIS: John, I got to mention the - the CEO, I think it’s the General Manager of John Lewis was on the radio just yesterday announcing their Christmas results and he said, things that staggering, 53% of their online orders are now click and collects rather than delivery. So that’s now over half, which is – it may be a British phenomenon, but it’s very, very interesting. Sorry to interrupt you.

JOHN OSWALD: That’s alright. I was waiting for that. No, really it’s a good point and it reinforces everything really. But that’s something, only sort of part of it. So there are more things being launched over the coming year, which we’re going to – are going to amplify this problem even more or accentuate other kinds of gaps in the future. So Apple Watch, when that launches, what’s going to happen when the battery goes on your phone? What happens again when you go underground or you go somewhere where there’s when your remote – where there was no connectivity at all, what – how’s that going to work?

We’ve been working with a major car company on just what happens on a – in a connected car when you’re in a remote location where there is no internet coverage, there’s no 3G or anything? So how does that work with keeping track of where the – where the vehicle is, how you communicate with people and so on?

So from a design point of view, what we’ve got to do here is – is just sort of minimize the impact any of this has on – on users and there are very simple ways of doing it and more complicated ways of doing it. But it comes down to not forgetting what somebody was doing when they lost connectivity. It’s a big problem in an enterprise point of context where, for example, you
could field technicians who need to keep on – keep on track with all the – all the information they need to enter about a job they’re doing, for example, in a telecommunications context, what happens when they lose connectivity? But also a very day-to-day thing, what happens when you’re taking notes about something or you use connectivity with your – with your mapping function?

And don’t forget, things like my credit card details, simple stuff like that. Again, Spotify solved this quite neatly by putting in a reminder in your playlist, your credit card’s expired. It’s a very eloquent way of doing it.

So what it comes down to, again, is a few – few – few sort of recommendations from – from our point of view, from Fjord point of view. I guess, first of all, it’s – it’s working at what your gaps really are. I mean a lot of companies are very organizationally siloed in – in a way that it’s – it’s not actually possible to spot from a company point of view where they are. It may be blinking obviously from a customer point of view, but not so much the way people are organized. So who’s minding those gaps within your organization and if there isn’t anybody, think about who you might appoint to – to find out what they are? How you might listen better to what customers are really saying about where stuff’s falling over to help you better design stuff for the future.

The second thing is what are all the – all the sort of crazy edge cases that when you launched a service, people will tell you just by using it. So what I mean by that is how do we start to think about that right from the off, thinking about this – this strange stuff that people might just do that is going to break your service. People do that if they’re early adopters because they experiment, you know, they will try stuff and try and break it and so you find a lot of good data that way. But equally, laggards, you know, people are coming to this way, way, way down the tracks. They may have very, very entrenched ways of doing things and when – when they are let loose on your service, all sorts of things happen because they have a completely different mental model of how this thing should work. So these things, if you bake it into how you think about your services from the very beginning, it’s really going to help.

And yeah, thirdly, think about how your organization needs to adapt to do this. A lot of – a lot of companies we’re working with now are – are looking at how you manage customer journeys
sort of horizontally through organizations rather than thinking about how – how the traditional stuff is done. A good way to go.

So Mind The Gap is, you know, find them first either get some value from them or just plug them somehow.

MARK SHERWIN: John, that’s a great example. I think one of the key things is also is looking to the gaps you might not realize are there and I think the word customer experience, the risk is you focus on an individual customer. And just a particular case at Christmas for me, I was sitting on my sofa trying to book flights to the Cayman Islands for next Christmas on my app – my Apple iPhone app, whilst my wife is browsing the same deals on her iPhone – I’m sorry, on her iPad and my brother was on his Mac in the Cayman Islands talking us through our television on Skype also trying to find the best deals. So there was a gap between a group of people who were trying to buy one thing and – and we kept on trying to share the deals between us. So I think there’s an interesting whole change when you – when you start to get a dialogue conversation in commerce as you were talking about. We’re not necessarily talking about one to one interaction, we’re talking about groups and peers and the gaps that can create between devices and experiences. So I think that’s going to create a whole new range of challenges to us and as – as designers and – and business leaders over the next few years.

MARK CURTIS: I think that’s right. I think – I mean I think with the multiplication of devices, which is, you know, where we’re sending out, you know, to some extent the Apple Watch because that will be so much focus on that in – in – in March. I think that’s when they’re launching it, you get a multiplication of devices, the opportunities for more things to drop between the gaps, especially with laggards as you pointed out, not that I’m calling you a laggard, Mark.

MARK CURTIS: There’s opportunity, yeah, that’s the point.

MARK SHERWIN: Indeed, fantastic. John, so on with the next one.

JOHN OSWALD: Yeah, so the next one. This is January, right, so when everybody starts off the year thinking about, well, how am I going to do things differently and how do I be a better person at work, at home, all this stuff? And, you know, you get inundated with – with like really helpful stories and articles about, you know, with advice about getting more sleep, about switching off
your email, about using your devices less, by spending more time with your family and it all makes you feel a bit wanting to be honest. But what’s the theme? It’s actually dieting, digital dieting, in the sense of if we’re in a situation where if people look at their devices about 1500 times a week and that’s an average. So we kind of need to – to take a break here because something’s not quite right and there’s lots of effects that this has. We feel overwhelmed, we feel stressed, we feel tired. The devices we look at emit light frequencies that actually disrupt sleep patterns. It’s well known that if – if – if you’re looking at your phone screen before you go to sleep, you can take longer to go to sleep, quite simply because it’s emitting this stuff that makes you, you know, behave differently.

MARK SHERWIN: Because you’ve got another few emails coming in that you need to reply to before you go to sleep.

JOHN OSWALD: And, you know, it feels like – it’s a very imperfect way of living. So if we’re – if you think about it, if we’re looking at our phones 1500 times a week, that means we’re taking the phone out of our pockets, swiping it, unlocking it, going to the right thing 1500 times a week. That’s a lot of time and it’s a lot of actual cognitive load just on – on your day. I mean you’ve – you’ve been behind somebody in the street who’s walking along trying to do something and they won’t get out of the way because they have no idea you’re there because they’re on their phone or trying to do something on their phone. It’s just extremely distracting.

And, you know, think about the movie last year, Her, Spike Jonze’s film, where Joaquin Phoenix falls in love with his operating system. I won’t focus on the falling in love part, but the interactivity in that film, the vision of the future that it presented was one where there was so little interaction, it was just people talks and services listened and there was no real focus on the screen being in between and mediating that experience, interesting vision of the future then. And the sort of 1500 times a week thing shows ourself in many different ways and – and there’s a bit of a backlash towards it now. So there are companies offering – offering digital detox, kind of like summer camp for people who want to get away from their – their digital services.

Kind of ironically, there’s a – there’s an app that has been launched in Singapore where this is beautiful actually, it’s where – if you put two phones together over – over lunch or dinner and
use this app, a tree will grow and an image grows on the screen. It’s very, very beautiful and then – and apples start forming and stuff. Crucially, if you pick up your phone, it interrupts the growth of the tree and it all starts from scratch. So in other words, it’s trying to make people not focus on the screen and focus on being with each other.

And apps like Calm and Headspace, they’ve been around for a while, but they’re really hitting the headlines now, probably because there’s – there’s a big trend towards mindfulness in general and we’re recognizing this connection with just too much screen time, too much – too many devices around us. And when you look closely at – at research with sort of younger demographics as well, it’s – with – with that kind of age group, there’s not so much – we think they’re – they’re sort of screen hungry and device hungry, it’s not so much that. They’re just trying to build – build a profile, build a life and find – find connections in the physical world with real people. That’s – that’s why they’re using digital services. It’s not – it’s not just because they’re there.

So, you know, think about – think about some of the trends that are happening and some of the things that exemplify this when to focus once more on the – on the Apple Watch, the focus has been so much on the hardware, the look of the object itself, the strap, the colors, the features, the – the windy thing, I forgotten what it’s called.

MARK CURTIS: Digital crown.

JOHN OSWALD: Digital crown. Thank you. And, you know, rumor has it as well, some – some governments are actually having people work with electric typewriters again. It’s not so much a distraction thing this, but it’s just – it’s a privacy thing as well. Because if you think about all this screen time, that has privacy implications as well. I know you’ve got a fantastic anecdote actually. Just any time you like, just jump in. And there is actually physical evidence for how damaging this can be, so when you lean forward to look at your device, it puts extra pressure on the spine and that adds up to about 700 – 1400 hours a year of extra pressure right there.

So there’s lots of things we can – we should and could think about in response to this kind of trend, so digital dieting being the thing, you know, spend a bit less time with your devices around us. What that means from a – from a design point of view and from a, you know, what we
recommend point of view is just think about the load you’re putting on the people you’re designing services for, right. Think about the notifications you’re putting out there and the alerts. There’s a very fine line between utility and extreme irritation or just exhaustion. And look at the demands you place on your staff if you’re launching services for your employees. It’s great to launch a new communications channel in a big company, for example, but think really carefully, are you adding to something or are you replacing something? If you’re just adding yet another layer of communication, that’s just going to be another – another thing that you’ve got to check, another channel that you got to manage along with email, along with everything else that you do. So think carefully about that.

And then, finally, think about when you’re distracting the people you’re designing for. If you think about it and you all know this, so when you’re concentrating really hard on a task, if you’re interrupted, it takes about 20 minutes to get back to the same level of concentration you were at before. Multiply that over the day and you’ve got masses of lost productivity. So think about how you – how you engage with people and design services for them that don't interrupt that. Actually encourage and empower people to – to make the most of the sort of intellectual effort that they – that they actually have to bring to bear on all this.

So digital dieting, a bit more of a psychological one.

MARK SHERWIN: I think you’re absolutely right. I think – I think the customer engagement piece is key. It’s amazing how many people I speak to who their ambition is to be into engage more and more frequently with their customer.

JOHN OSWALD: Yes.

MARK SHERWIN: And rather than having more meaningful engagements with their customer.

JOHN OSWALD: Yes.

MARK SHERWIN: And – and to me, we need to be focusing on what’s meaningful? And if – if meaningful does mean every 5 or 10 minutes, great. If meaningful means one fantastic experience once a year digitally, then that may be exactly what the customer wants and needs and I think we need to - to reflect on that. I also think and talking about, you know, digital dieting, well, it’s January and I think a quite a lot of people I’ve met in the last few days who started their
dryathlons and maybe we need to have a wiathlon and that is see how long we can live without
digital connectivity. I think most of them in this room would probably struggle by the end of the
hour, but it’s – it’s an interesting exercise to see how you change your dialogue and interactions if
you walk away from connectivity for a while.

MARK CURTIS: I think – I think and – and a couple of things to - to add. One is, one of the things
I – I think is interesting about this trend is every year we get – we get Fjordians, people in Fjord, all
consistently talking about one or two things and this was a trend which everybody mentioned in
every single place that we are and we’re – we’re in 15 cities now globally and - and it was very,
very consistent was this sense of this is something important, it’s a feeling which is coming in.
And, although, 500 is not the biggest research group of all time, it is a meaningful size and this
was a very consistent message. And interesting the message two years ago was privacy and
security and that then popped up the next year with Snowden and became very important.

And then the second thing building on that thought is this is a somewhat schizophrenic
friend – trend, because people are anxious about it, but as John has pointed out, they also
struggle to know what to do with it. I think one of the quotes we heard in some research we were
doing for a client and, again, this quote according to the team who told me about it was
symptomatic of everything they heard was, I’m spending more of my time gazing at the screen, but
I resent it. And – and then the other element of schizophrenia is around security, which is, you
know, we know from research consistently that Americans, for example, are consistently more and
more anxious about their – their data security, but they’re consistently doing less and less to guard
it. So they’re doing more and more things which allows data to get out the door. So it’s a
schizophrenic trend in terms of how people are behaving.

MARK SHERWIN: Fantastic. Just – just before we ask John to follow-up on the final trend
and just so we’re getting lots of really great comments and input from Twitter and #Fjordtrends, do
you want to follow it or drop questions at and @Fjord. If you’ve got questions, please do pass
them on because we have an opportunity at the end, we’ve got some questions from the audience
here and I’ve got some questions myself and – but it’ll be great to hear some – some thoughts and
questions you’d like to put to the panel from the Twittersphere. So I’m OG for the final – final question.

JOHN OSWALD: Thank you, sir. So the final one then, I’m – I’m going to start with a bit of a quote here from an industrial giant CEO, which is: “If you went to bed last night as an industrial company, you’re going to wake up this morning as a software and analytics company.” So let it sink in for a minute. So this is from a company that produces massive quantities of industrial and domestic hardware, but who actually made multimillions in new revenue, incremental revenue last year, from software based services based on physical things with embedded sensors.

So the trend is digital disruption goes physical, by which I mean, well, yes, the physical world is now completely laced with sensors and is only going to become more so. And is – the digital world is now able to influence the physical world in ways that we couldn’t ever imagined before. It’s sort of going on about Uber again, but it’s – they’ve – they’ve gone from obscurity in 2010 to kind of ubiquity and controversy and all sorts of unforeseen things in 2014, which is kind of amazing because Uber was never just an app. It was never a digital service. It’s an entire physical experience right away from one end to the other. And it’s all enabled by digital, but analyzed as exhaustively as any digital service, all those physical things that are happening are crunched and analyzed and decisions are made on the back of them in – in ways that we couldn’t even imagined before.

So the digital revolution now is as much about physical objects as it is of anything else. So physical objects going viral, who knew?

So Airbnb, they – they launch a – they now launch a print magazine because it’s about lifestyle. It’s about – it’s about where you go, who you – who you go with, the beautiful places you stay in that – that reflect other people’s taste in other countries, it’s an amazing thing.

Evernote, talk about wanting to be the global platform for your memory no less. Look at the partnership with Moleskine, the physical notebooks again.

And then Mark mentioned right at the top – top of the hour, the idea of a Starwood Hotels and Hilton, as well, creating smart doors that unlock from your phone.
And Tesla, the cars, the electric cars, a completely data driven physical service. It’s not a car. It may look like a car, but it’s not a car anymore. When — when — when there was a recall issued in 2014, Tesla issued an over the air update to nearly 30,000 owners. They just updated the OS and resolved the problem. Can you imagine a traditional car company doing that? It’s amazing.

So data collected from, you know, sensors on oil rigs can save what looks like infinitesimally small percentages of productivity by spotting more in our parts, but those percentages are — are huge in monetary terms and not — and not industrial context.

And Uber’s data scientists can predict the final destinations of the passengers of about 75% of the time. It’s fairly extraordinary. And it’s all powered by increasingly cheap computing power as well.

Amazon web services, as we all know, kind of powers a lot with the startup economy and the digital economy. They’ve dropped their prices 42 times since they launched in 2008. So think about that.

So to bring all this together a little bit, so digital disruption goes physical, what do we recommend, what do we think of the things to focus on? Well, firstly, even if your — your company’s assets are physical, all your — all your stuff is — is — is very tangible and real. It doesn’t mean you’re immune from digital disruption. Just ask London cabbies about that one.

What can one or two sensors do for your physical assets if you’re a company that ships goods or — or makes things or makes parts. It completely changed business models for companies making — making turbines, for example, ‘cause you can — ‘cause you can then rent them rather than sell them. So think about this.

And I guess the second thing emerging from that as well is there’s two kinds of industrial leaders that are probably going to emerge over the next year or so. So there’s — there’s the folks who are going to lead with just by developing new kinds of smart devices as one form of leadership. For the other one is those who lead with smart analytics, so smart devices, smart analytics. Maybe you can do both, but those are two directions basically it’s going to go.
So, I guess, you know, finally with that one – with – with this one, whoever you are, you’ve – you’ve kind of got to extend your – your sensors, your sensory capacity into the real world as well.

**MARK SHERWIN:** Great, thank you very much, John. So, Mark, over to you to talk about the next trend.

**MARK CURTIS:** So the next trend we’ve called interaction in – in connected systems and – and actually probably we could of come up with a better title for this. It’s a – it’s a – it’s a subtle one this, but it is actually deeply important and it’s to do with – to a large extent, it’s to do with what’s happening with wearables, which we’re hearing a lot now and, indeed, Fjord is doing a great deal of work and Accenture more broadly and nearables as well and – and the other sort of – I’ve even hear hereables in the last few days, which are beginning to emerge.

And – and the irony is, as we predicted before, these things are designed to disappear to a large extent to make – you know, to make the experience seamless, as we’ve talked about already. But when you design them to disappear, you need some kind of a controlled device and really the sort of question here, which is more than a philosophical one, is what is going to be the controlled device in the future. And, indeed, you know, in the near future and then the long term future.

So if we just go back in time a little bit, then the – the – the phone – the smartphone for a long time, for those of us who are old enough to remember the – the – the late 90s and early thousands, we debated a visit firstly whether or not the phone was going to be a messaging device, calls and – and text messages or whether it was going to be a Swiss Army Pen Knife and there were many people around who said it will never ever be the Swiss Army Pen Knife. It can’t do all of that work and now we know, you know, that problem was solved in 2007. We’ve not gone back. The debate doesn’t happen anymore.

So it became the Swiss Army Pen Knife or as I remember, we used to say back in 2003-4, when we believed in – in the future of the phone, that it will be the remote control for life. And – and – and – and I’m happy to say I think that was quite farsighted at the time that it has definitely become that. But now you need to begin to think about all these new devices which are coming
out. We’re seeing them at CES this week, as we record this video. The – the phone – a lot of these new devices will have a dependency on the phone for – for their interactions. We’ve talked about that a bit already with - with the Apple Watch. And the phone, if you like, becomes a sun in the middle of a solar system. And – and the question really is, is that sustainable and are we going to see – begin to see, ecosystems move away from that? And that answer to that in brief now is probably not in the near future, but it’s – the question marks are now there and everybody designing for anything, which is in this new connected internet of things, you know, what we call living services area, are going to have to begin to think very hard about are we seeing our device existing as – as something which is always tethered to the phone or are we seeing our device as something which is a separate thing all together?

We’re seeing this played out in the car, where, you know, there are big questions marks on whether the car manufacturers will actually create an operating system which is theirs, whether they will be dependent on Google’s operating system or whether there are actually people who don’t want any of that because they jack the phone in as soon as they get in the car and then the car becomes the remote control for a lot of other services that happen in the car.

And – and that’s not only the place. There’s some interesting stuff happening in the automobile industry. Last year, Mobile World Congress, Volvo announced I think an amazing idea, which was basically digital keys for their cars, but the really groovy thing about what they’re doing is that these enable other people to unlock your car. And you may say, well, I don’t want anyone else unlocking my car, but you might do if you’re ordering something like groceries and they’re being delivered to the back of your Volvo before you drive home to cook a meal for the night, kind of an interesting idea. So in that case, virtual keys, which effectively are one use only through a smartphone, become a very interesting idea. So for the delivery person, then – then that becomes, you know, a very cool way of interacting with the car and – and, you know, fulfilling on commerce.

We’re seeing Apple have now announced HomeKit, so that – their very clear play to create an ecosystem which no doubt will have, you know, a high dependency on the phone, but may and
we’ll see what happens when it – when it gets out into the – into the – into the wider sphere. We’ll see the degree to which it stands on its own or it needs a phone there.

We’ll see a lot of questions around this as we’ve, you know, already hinted at or hinted at in another trend, see this with – John’s Mind The Gap trend, with – with the launch of the Apply Watch and question marks over. As I’ve said or have said often, you know, when my son walks away with my phone without asking me to play Minecraft on it, you know, and it’s more than whatever the tethering distance is from the mothership of the – you know, from the watch. The watch is from the mothership of the phone. Sorry, that’s what I was trying to say. Then when that happens, what is still available to me to use on the watch and am I going to find that difficult? So, again, we have a similar question.

Some – some, you know, and what we’re also seeing is the launch into the marketplace of a lot of things which are allowing people to hack together their own connective solutions and some very interesting connected solutions. Take a look at cloudBit. cloudBit, very interesting company who are creating a small motherboard, which allows you to retrofit all sorts of devices in your home to the internet.

Take a look at OpenRemote, OpenSource middleware for living services or the internet of things. Take a look as we said elsewhere at Amazon Echo, the smart device, which is completely independent and doesn’t require any tetherings. It’s not difficult to imagine why Amazon have done that, but you know, given that they’re all in the ecosystem and – and the fact that, you know, other people are more major mobile manufacturers now, but nonetheless, it’s interesting they’ve gone down that route.

So, and – and then I’m just at a very parochial Fjord level, one of the things I’ve seen over the last year which just absolutely delighted me was our – one of our design teams in Helsinki have put together a connected foosball table and the connected foosball table simply has sensors in each goal mouth, which detect when a score has happened. That’s linked to the internet where you can set up a league table of all the people who were playing foosball in the – in the company and then you can get live instant replays as well. All of this can be done for about 50 Euros and hacked together by – by a small team of people very quickly.
The last point on this is that the smartphone screen is – has been over the last year growing, but actually shrinking at the same time. It’s shrinking because there’s less available real estate on it because we all want to get our apps on that home screen or the second home screen. And for things which are irregularly used, but nonetheless important, it’s difficult to validate or justify their place on the home screen. So what are you going to do to work your way around that?

And this really brings us back to the points I made at the beginning, which is wearables and nearables, the irony is they’re designed to disappear, but you still need to see them sometimes. And the question is where? And this is I think a big challenge that people are going to be thinking about as they think about is the phone going to continue to be a sun or is it going to move to being part of constellation over the next few years?

MARK SHERWIN: And that’s very interesting around and which is the dominant interface and where is the control and that’s a theme that, as you say, was debated back in 2003 around what the – the firm was going to do. Do you think that in the future, it’s going to be a polarized debate where people have to decide whether their device is the controller or part of a ubiquitous, more diverse interface or is it about maintaining optionality and being able to interact in – in all those different ways as appropriate and to the context?

MARK CURTIS: If it’s going to succeed, there’s going to have be platforms which are close to ubiquitous. There may be competing platforms, so maybe you decide that your house or your car is going to go one way or the other, but – but they will have to be platforms of one kind or another. Some of those may be around – may have a wall garden around them and some of them may be very open. It will depend on the philosophy of the companies that win out. But – but going solo is – if going solo is what it looks like for the next few years, then I think all bets are off for degree of speed with which this stuff is really going to have an impact on people’s lives.

MARK SHERWIN: So for it’s like for someone thinking about a service or a product, it’s really about how do you achieve ubiquity and often how – what’s the most contextually appropriate approach that for a customer?

MARK CURTIS: Yes, a very good way of putting it.

MARK SHERWIN: Fantastic, brilliant. And, John, onto the next one.
JOHN OSWALD: Right, well, I – I guess I want to touch on something that has been another elephant in the room, apart from the socks, for – for quite a while, which is how – we – we often talk about designing services for – for end users. And the - the usual thing you think of there is – is consumers, you know, people who we’re designing this stuff for, but I think the – the really big elephant in the room for me when we’re talking about a lot of the ideas we’ve been touching on is the people who really make this work. So, hence, we come up with this trend, we’re calling it Omni-Colleagues, the new heroes of digital.

So for the longest time, everybody that been trying to knit together channels and ways of contacting customers. And we’ve developed kind of imperfect term of omni-channel to try and sort of encapsulate how you get data from one channel to another, understand customers, no matter how they interact with you. And as Mark mentioned earlier, it’s – it’s something that nobody’s really properly – well, some people are close to cracking it, but it’s not – it’s not there yet and, arguably, customers are too complicated to be able to truly automate in that sense, to be able to properly understand somebody and what they might ask you at any stage is a hugely complicated task.

So people come back into the – into the fold a little bit here. And we’ve seen a big – a big shift over the last year or so, which – which is only going to continue I think, of almost like rehumanizing the organizations that – that we’re part of. So you got to consider what’s appropriate to automate and what’s appropriate to put a human being center stage for. And I guess, you know, it – it was complicated enough from where we trying to sort of navigate physical stores and kind of center channels and life chat and all these kinds of things. But it’s becoming and in so doing, it’s a lot harder for brands to sort of manage their – their image, their – what they stand for and so on. And so you get people like Airbnb who come along and say, well, we’ve got a customer experience, but we really want is an employee experience because we recognize that these are the people who actually make this work.

And it’s true of almost every company actually and, you know, you can experiment with – with different ways of interacting digitally but, ultimately, a lot of the time, it’s the people who work for you who are the ones who truly carry your brand and carry the – what you – you actually stand
for, whether you’re a bank and you’re trying to sort of advise people in a non-regulatory kind of a sense on – on what’s the best things to do are and how to best navigate the different services you’ve got or whether you’re – you’re somebody in a retail store who just makes that last mile bit of pain for your shopping delightful rather than irritating, right.

We all know that sort of experience of getting to the checkout and this is one of our trends from last year actually, getting to the checkout and discovering that, you know, it’s all automated, but it’s that unexpected item in the bagging area problem. A human being at that point of interaction can just make it so much better because you have a little bit of a chat with them and it’s kind of nice and so. But it’s – it’s a lot bigger than that and, you know, if – if our organizational thought process over the last couple of decades is being, you know, how can we make customer facing channels work better and optimize it with Six Sigma and (inaudible). It doesn’t actually improve the lot of the employee at all, you just – you’re just trying to get more out of an already squeezed individual and you’re – you’re making that – that channel feel very inhuman actually because you’re trying to just cut down on call time and – and optimize the interaction from a business point of view.

And what ultimately you’re doing is really jeopardizing your customer experience because if, you know, why would you outsource or relinquish control over one of the most important interactions you’re going to have with a customer, when they actually take the trouble to pick up the phone and call you. You know, that’s – that’s huge. So why would you – why would you give that away?

And, again, we’ve seen a subtle shift in vocabulary over this past little while as well. We’ve moved from the idea of – of just employees and operatives to colleagues. That means they’re part of what we’re doing. They’re – we’re part of the same kind of journey together. And, you know, even – even very, very digital companies are starting to think about this too. Again, Uber’s been a big theme of – of this whole – of this whole thought process and – and are trends for this year, but Uber stands or falls by the people who choose to – to work for Uber and actually drive for them. And, again, that introduces something digital again into – into a very physical interaction, which is the ability to rate your driver, which we’re starting to see more and more of as well. And, you
know, employees and staff and colleagues are starting to realize that everything they do is – it's possible to measure and manage. Therefore, they need to sort of represent the right kind of behaviors and so on because they know they're going to be scored on that. That might feel a bit intrusive and a bit difficult, but to a certain extent, at least – at least you get feedback there and then about something you’ve done for a customer and to some extent, that’s actually really empowering. So that’s kind of important.

Amazon have launched this kind of May Day button where you can kind of get straight through to somebody, you know, a real person and – and then talk to them.

And I guess if we’re sort of looking ahead a little bit, there’s some, again, other interesting examples from – from people we’ve either – either worked with or have observed with us over this last little while and there’s a large telecommunications company we’ve been partnering with where they’ve got a massive digital first initiative. But some of the first things that they’ve been doing is improving the way in which their colleagues interact with their customers, consulting some of those really critical sort of customer facing issues.

There’s an eyewear startup called Warby Parker, one of the sort of darlings of the East Coast at the moment, who are doing something very, very different into – when it comes to this, you know, the social impact of – of what they’re doing through their – through their colleagues. They’ve opened a call center in Nashville, which has no, you know, phone tree, RVI system. You just go straight through to a real person.

Simple, Mac Simple, recently acquired by BBVA, but nonetheless, their customer care function, when you actually go to the web page, is a beautiful series of – of photographs of the real people you’re going to actually get through to when you call them. It’s really nice.

And it’s, you know, when you see what’s actually happening and some of the things that we’ll see a lot more of, so I guess, what we’re recommending here. If we’re – if we’re trying to empower these – these colleagues with – with digital services, it’s easy to sort of lapse into traditional thinking and give them dashboards and more and more information about customers, organized in tabs with lots and lots of fields. We’ve done that. That’s – that’s over. The – the way we need to think about this now is what are those colleagues doing in the context they’re operating
in and how do we give them tools that actually enable them with the task that they’ve got to accomplish? Because that’s really important. We need to treat colleagues, employees, as we would consumers. We need to design for them in ways that we would, you know, go through the same kind of process as we would for – for actual consumers. ‘Cause, ultimately, they’re – they’re people too and we need to sort of take that into account.

So Omni-Colleague, I guess the new – the new kind of hero, digital or people at the heart of – of how this whole digital economy actually works.

MARK SHERWIN: And I think that’s a really refreshing idea to – to focus on because I think there’s a been a risk as almost a wall between low fidelity or non-interactions and high fidelity human interactions and almost a lot of the effort over the last two years has been driving people over that wall saying, look, you’ve got to make that choice that if you want efficiency, you got to climb that wall and accept that there’s a – there’s a lower fidelity interaction but, hey, it’s – it’s going to be very efficient. And then I think technology’s caught up with that hasn’t it? I mean technology’s moved beyond that where actually there’s no reason why you can’t operate a great human interaction, a great dialogue, a great – a great personal and communication, but – but online. And I think that’s the only way you can do that is to involve your colleagues because if you don’t involve them, it will – whether the technology enables it, it will still feel incredibly fragmented as you- as you move people from something that’s self serve or – or semi-automated to – to that human interaction. And I think any way we can do that is to create and experiences that work for the colleague, as well as they do for the customer. And if you do that, you can create a really good high fidelity progressive experience online.

JOHN OSWALD: And there’s – there’s something we heard from – from one of our – one of our clients in recent months, has been this idea of I won’t quote them directly ‘cause it’s actually attributable, but it’s an idea of extreme transparency between employees and – and customers. Why should a company have information about you that you don’t have yourself? Why – you know, what gives you the right to withhold that, right? If we’re being honest about it, you know, the customer wants to achieve something, the company has something they can provide, let’s just make that –
MARK SHERWIN: For sure. Fascinating.

MARK CURTIS: To be fair, you – you talked about – there’s really picking up on one thing you said, which I agreed with, but I don’t pick up on some terminology. You talked about sort of high fidelity people experiences and low fidelity technology sometimes. I think you can also and we’ve all experienced low fidelity people experiences as well.

JOHN OSWALD: That’s true.

MARK CURTIS: And so I think one of the solutions to that and one of the design techniques we’ve been using over the last year which I personally I didn’t do it, but I’m very impressed by it is a piece of thinking, is to map the emotional journey of the employee at the same time as you map the customer journey through the same experience. And it is remarkably insightful to see those two mapped together because where you get low points for both, you know you have an extreme problem and you really need to act on that. And by acting on that and creating then tools which the - the colleague can use or, you know, staff can use.

Okay, so the next trend is about what we call Emotional Interfaces. And – and really thinking about it there’s two key angles to this. One is that the – the big story is the interface is going to become more emotional over the next few years and we’re really going to see this begin to breakout this year. There’s really two angles to this. One is that our emotions will be read more often and more frequently for – hardly ever all at the moment, we will increasingly see examples of our emotions being detected by interfaces or what we think of as interfaces. And the second thing is that we will see more emotion coming back at us in the design of those interfaces in the way in which we interact with them.

So that’s – this is, if you like, almost the design trend, if you like, and all the most pure design trend of all the trends we’re talking about this year.

We’ve – we’ve become very used since digital began to – or since computing began really to a – to a very transactional relationship with them and almost to some extent, with each other through computers with – with very little range of external information. Emoticons, as it used to be called. I’ll come back to what they’re called now in a moment. But emoticons, if you like, were a very interesting early attempt for people to inject body language into email.
MARK SHERWIN: And emoticons, we’re just talking about, colon, slash, brackets or whatever it might be?

MARK CURTIS: Yeah, smiley faces or whatever it may be, but just using punctuation marks in order to create a sense of body language, you know, the raised eyebrow is – is irony. And, you know, we – we actually have thousands of years of letter writing and we never cracked that one until computers came along and then we began to encode irony into letters.

So – but what we’re seeing now is a whole new palate apart from the keyboard coming to us and that palate is senses, social media, synthetic materials, which can detect how we feel. And – and very importantly and not much observed so far, new design philosophies. So a growing awareness, the design philosophy matters a great deal and we’ve seen that as people – a lot of people working in digital and outside that have become familiar with the shift that Apple made from skeuomorphic to flat design. And now this last year, we’ve seen Google publish quite a manifesto on what they call material design. And if you look into the weeds of what material design is about, a lot of it is about actually introducing much more fluidity and much more emotion, if you like, as we would say, into – into the interface.

And in the last thing that is happening is – is speed. So as a result of all of these things, we’re seeing that a more visual and expressive design language is beginning to emerge and will emerge over – over the very near future. And that I think, cut a long story short, I think has a big impact on brands because they have to now think very hard about their digital personalities because their digital personalities will not be flat and I’m not using the Apple terminology. They will be less flat and much more rounded and – and because more emotional content will begin to be enabled and as a result, you will see that they will have to think even harder about how their digital personalities are expressed.

So there’s some very interesting examples of why this is happening, both on what I would call the input side protecting our emotions and the output side. On the input side, I’m actually, once again, indebted to the economist for bringing this week this – this trend to life by talking about an Israeli company startup called, Beyond Verbal. So Beyond Verbal have created an app called Moodies, which with 40 different languages claims it can analyze your emotional states
when you – you speak into it. Now, again, all of this raises hackles. You know, some people will look at it and go, well, listen to this and say, well, I’m not so sure about that. But – but we can’t stop the pace of technology, we have to understand what the meaning of technology is for us.

Emotient is a company that can do facial recognition. So think about this, you’ve got two different kinds of emotional recognition here. We’ve got voice with – would be on verbal and we’ve got Emotient for face. And then as a build on that, the Aldebaran Robot, which is getting a lot of coverage and with which I’m happy to say Accenture have been actually working on some groundbreaking stuff. They – they bring them together, so the Aldebaran Robot can actually detect both through your voice and your face what your emotions are and just being squarely pitched at a – at a family environment.

JOHN OSWALD: Plus you’ve got a beard as well.

MARK CURTIS: You can hide things. Is that why you have a beard, John? Interesting. Think about it.

And – and other companies like, you know, Smartcardia, which allow emotions to flow through to controlled connected objects. So your emotions and your feelings will actually change the stakes of the room around you because of the – because, you know, things that detect how you feel and then connect to the objects and change the ambiance atmosphere. So these are a lot of ways in which we’re seeing – we’re seeing emotions on the input side being detected.

Then – then on the – on the output side, I think we mentioned already the movie Her and – and we also mentioned the idea that science fiction that the – the time lapse between science fiction and reality seems to be getting much shorter. But my – my bet would be that most people who’ve seen Her won’t be so surprised when things like that begin to happen. They may struggle with it. It may take a while for those things to become normalized and we’re not saying that artificial intelligence of that kind is yet here. Although, it is notable that for the first time ever in 2014, research has claimed that a computer has – has taken the Turing Test and passed. Now I know that’s been debated by some people the validity of the test and the environment, but certainly it’s the first time anybody has reasonably convincingly claimed that it’s – that it’s passed.
And we move on from emoticons, which happened really at the beginning of the internet, now to Emoji’s. And Emoji’s are everywhere. And if you look at what, you know, 10, 14 and 20 year olds are doing with – with what’s happened and the environments like that on Instagram, then they’re using – their using Emoji’s to communicate at least 50% of the time because they’ve gone very visual.

MARK SHERWIN: And when you say Emoji, do you mean exactly saying is what we used to term as emoticons?

MARK CURTIS: I mean emoticons, but a much, much, much bigger range and you don’t need the keyboard. You actually have a – you actually have a – it’s a palette of emotions. And it’s not new. We’ve seen this before. What’s new is the fact that people actually relying on this a great deal and they’re using them a very great deal to communicate. And we predict confidently that over the next, you know, 2 to 3 years, companies will begin to need, if they want to communicate with that younger audience, they begin to need to use Emoji’s in their – in their palette of communication, which will be a relatively new things for people to do and we’re seeing it beginning to happen with some customer care departments on Twitter, but I think we’ll see it – we’ll see it big time.

The – and I think the other questions for companies to ask themselves as they – as they look at this is, a couple of questions, where will I create my digital smiles? So how digitally can I smile at a customer? This is not a theoretical question. It’s actually a very valid question to ask about how you can communicate personality. So if there’s one question for – for the CMO or the Chief Digital Officer or the Chief Experience Officer, no matter which one to us or even the CIO, it would be where am I going to, you know, place my digital smiles in order to – to meet this trend?

And, lastly, and – and this is not a casual throw away. It’s beginning to look like this is the year when beginning to think about a robot strategy may not be such a bad idea. That’s been a bit far out for a while. The things that are happening with robots, I mean that we’re probably not too far away from organization probably thinking about within the range of connected devices that we’re thinking about, we need to begin to think about where robots might go because some of the work with – with the Pepper Robot, which is the one Aldebaron made – Aldebaran have made. It’s pretty impressive. There’s a robot in Tokyo, which its claim can reliably beat people at scissors-
paper-rock every single time because it can see the way their body is moving faster than they know themselves or faster than they can respond to what it does, so it can beat them. It’s cheating, but it’s very interesting.

MARK SHERWIN: I think it comes back to the issue of transparency and making sure that you - you communicate to the customer what inputs you are taking from them and, particularly, I mean it’s interesting, we talk about and customers wanting to share emotion or not, it’s enough, you know, from debt collection we found that lots of people liked to use chat because it masks the emotion, but that’s probably not the millennial customer and then your customer probably thinks, well, if – if I can share that emotion and it gets us all to a better solution quicker, wouldn’t that be effective? So I think it’s about understanding that, communicating, sharing and being open about what information you are taking and what you’re – you’re eliciting from that information.

MARK CURTIS: It’s not a new point, but – but – but digital to some extent body language out of human communication and what we’re driving at here is just about putting body language back in because it’s a completely normal thing.

JOHN OSWALD: Yes, it’s what we evolved.

MARK SHERWIN: And it links the digital colleague piece because without that and you’re going to beat something hard, you can communicate your emotion to some extent, but actually means that seamless melding of the digital colleague, the digital channel, digital customer is critical to – to making it effective. Great, fantastic.

John, you going to take us through the next one?

JOHN OSWALD: Yeah.

MARK SHERWIN: Fantastic, thank you.

JOHN OSWALD: Alright, so I guess this one sort of builds on another little bit of a theme that’s come up a few times, which has been – is – is the phone the Swiss Army Knife or the single use thing? And actually if you take that to its extreme a little bit, all the application and services we tend to use a lot of at the moment, tend to be very pinpoint things that do one single thing really well, which is fine and helpful and good, until you’ve got a lot of them. At which point, you’ve – you’ve got fairly complicated journey to remember in your mind about how you do something
actually quite simple when – when you’re booking like cinema tickets, you like, use a cinema app and then you use something to do with payment and then you use a map. It’s all a little bit fragmented and you’re relying a lot on people stitching together their own little journeys. And that’s, again, it’s to my point earlier about the digital dieting thing, I think it’s a quite a big contributor to the fact that people are a bit overloaded by digital services ‘cause it’s just complex to manage.

So we’ve seen – we’ve seen people like if this than that, provide a tool kit for people to be able to aggregate things together a little bit more, but to a certain extent, it’s almost services like that are almost a little bit too abstract because you’ve got to work at where your journey is and knit it together yourself in quite a complicated way and then launch out to the world and then watch it happen. So you’re actually relying on the user a lot to sort of build their own service.

But then again, we are seeing a lot more of – what we are seeing a lot more of now are – are companies and startups particularly who are starting to aggregate all sorts of different aspects of – of service into one whole experience. So the trend is aggregation moves into services, which were sort of like glibly calling the travel trend because there’s a few examples – there’s a few reasons for that.

So first of all, you know, you see people like, well, Nike+ have sort of seated – seated the way for – for others now, but, you know, FuelBand, Jawbone, Fitbug Org, all really interesting sort of fitness tracker services who are now starting to move a lot more into a bigger – a bigger play where you’re actually starting to talk about fitness and health outcomes rather than just measuring data on a day-by-day basis. So do I want to lose 10 pounds by this time next month? Is 10 pounds a lot to lose in a month? Probably is. You know, there are nice services that can help you do that. And because, you know, it’s not just about capturing day to day by day, it’s about sort of building on your – what you do day-by-day and building motivation into it and it’s a lot more than that.

And Starbucks has started to or have been doing for a long time actually, they’ve been thinking a lot bigger than coffee, ‘cause coffee goes with music, coffee goes with news, coffee
goes with loyalty and they’ve been experimenting with all these things in the physical world for quite a long time and, indeed, digital.

But we’ve seen more recently is, well, I mentioned Airbnb in the context of a different trend, but Airbnb moving from just facilitating the contact point between a person wanting to go somewhere and a person with flat somewhere into like a whole holiday experience type of a – an interaction. So you go somewhere, let’s say, you know, you go somewhere like – somewhere like Paris where, you know, you kind of know Paris, right, a little bit you’ve been a few times, but you meet somebody in – through the contacts of Airbnb who actually really knows a different side of Paris to what you – what you did before. So, therefore, they’ve built in this whole experience into this sort of the twelve step journey they already have, which knits together an awful lot more than just the transaction.

SNCF, actually, the French train operator, have done something similar where rather than having to, you know, buy your tickets to get the train, it’s about a lot more than that. It’s about getting to the station, it’s about finding a car at the other end and knitting all that together into one sort of holistic experience. You see the travel train thing come through here.

We talked about Uber enough, I won’t go into that anymore, particularly, but only to say that they now have a tie-up with Spotify where your playlist will play in the cab that you choose through Uber. Again, knitting together all sorts of aspects of – of what – what the service actually is.

And then, you know, I talked about if this than that, but there are no services like – like Tink, which aggregates all of your financial services into one place as well. We’ve seen a lot of experimentation with that in the last two years particularly.

But I guess what – what we’re getting at is – is companies starting to think a lot more than just the thing that they do well into what else does that imply along the journey? What is the customer actually trying to achieve when they’re using that service? Is it bigger than just what our service can offer and, therefore, can we extend it and aggregate it?

Tesla, have taken a fairly extraordinarily step of opening up their patents to – to other vendors, so that, you know, the act of driving somewhere or just getting into the car can be linked with a lot of other things that kind of go with it. So rather than creating their own – own sort of, you
know, connected car, ecosystem thing, which is just Tesla, they’re enabling a much more innovative approach to that – to that whole thing where you can knit together your own experience with everything else that you use in a fairly automated kind of a way.

So, yeah, this is – this is kind of hard to do and it’s quite abstract and a lot of thought required. So I guess as a – as a series of recommendations for – for how you would approach something like this, how do you aggregate services into a – into a journey? Find insight, see how people are actually using your – your service in the first place, are there other aspects of where this – this journey starts and ends where, well, people are doing sort of slighting different things, which mean that there’s something you could do which is kind of interesting. So what gave Uber the idea to play your playlist in a car? Well, they probably noticed that people were getting into the taxi and just like listened to music on their headphones. Well, why don’t we sort of build that into something else? You got a really good stereo in the car, why not use it? That’s what I mean, so take insights like that.

And it’s not necessarily building your own little series of services within your own company either, it’s being open enough to broker relationships with other companies around you and that’s hugely important in this. It – it came up in the discussion about the whole internet of things. It’ll work really well when – when companies are brave enough to – to be a lot more open sourced about this and collaborate more and innovate around the business model a little bit.

And – and then, finally, there’s a kind of brand point. What is your brand actually stand for in that kind of – in a – in a digital world? This is going beyond ideas of sort of logos and color and all sort of stuff. This is more like what do you actually do, what value do you add for customers and are there little ways in which you can extend that and – and extend what the brand does? Virgin does this extremely well, just – just in the way that it disrupts different industries when talking a bit more granular than that to how different – different touchpoints and ideas can augment and enhance how you aggregate a series of experience into this experiences into one service.

**MARK SHERWIN:** Excellent. And I – I think what’s – what’s interesting about that is I think a light bulb went on for me at the end of last year actually was an App called Tempo and that all it does is
takes other people’s services, so it takes LinkedIn, it takes My Outlook Diary, it takes my email, it
takes my Facebook and brings it together into a – an environment that manages my day for me.
And what’s interesting is they don’t have a product or service at all of their own and they simply
said, if – if my product or service is taking others and improving the workflow, the experience,
aggregate those in a better way, I’m creating new value. And interesting enough, there’s a
question if they’re creating value that actually generates commitment from the customer and
loyalty from the customer to them rather than the original brand, you know, that’s hugely
disruptive. So I think there’s – there’s a really interesting tension between wanting to do it, if not,
which is critical because (inaudible) is important. But, also, if you do that and other people can
enhance and – and increase your – the quality of your customer experience through aggregation,
that’s also a threat. So I think it’s about making sure you understand both sides of the coin and
really – the only way to do that is, as you say, through real customer insight.

MARK CURTIS: I think – I mean to take the travel example a bit further, if you just think about
what happens to people in travel now on even a simple journey, airline journey, you’ve got two
airports by definition and one airline. On a slightly more complex journey, you may have multiple
airports, let’s call it four for the sake of argument and two airlines. And – and the question really
that that begs, which people are struggling with is do I, therefore, need four apps for the airports
and maybe two for the airlines? So I need six apps now in order to navigate my way through the
journey.

JOHN OSWALD: And London Bridge Station has an app now as well.

MARK CURTIS: Yep, exactly. So would it not be easier for me to have an app, which helps me
manage the whole journey? Now this is, of course, this is very challenging to – to organizations
because it means to some extent letting control of some of their – letting go of some of their brand
because it is not their space, it’s somebody else’s space into which they contribute. And, you
know, the people who run, you know, Istanbul Airport may have significant problems with that for
all – all sorts of reasons to do with corporate pride, which are totally understandable. But the
question that, you know, Turkish Airlines and British Airways and Istanbul Airport and Heathrow,
perhaps collectively, need to begin to consider is to what degree do they need to let go of that in order to create an enhanced user experience, which is genuinely end-to-end and – and beyond.

MARK SHERWIN: And if – and if you don’t choose to do that, then you’ll have the disrupter come in – come in and use the open source content that you have to by obligation share and they will provide a better experience.

MARK CURTIS: Absolutely.

MARK SHERWIN: So if you were in a position where you have greater collaboration opportunities with – with competitors potentially, with others in the – in the – in the value chain, you can create something significantly better than a disrupter because you can open up your information to each other.

MARK CURTIS: Correct.

MARK SHERWIN: Fascinating. Thank you very much. Mark, are we going to come back to you to discuss a further trend.

MARK CURTIS: No, we’re fine now. We’re finished. This is all the trends for today and thank you for asking.

MARK SHERWIN: Fantastic. Thanks very much. Everybody’s heard the – the 9 trends that are setting the tone really for digital and customer experience in 2015. Thank you very much, Mark, thank you very much, John, and a huge amount of content, a huge amount more available if you go online and look at the Fjord website and if you want to follow the conversation further and #Fjordtrends, where you can see all the discussion that, the dollop that’s going on around this. Also, you can tweet us @Fjord or @Accenturedigi and to get more information, more feedback, more ideas. We’d love to hear your thoughts and what you think these trends will mean for you, your industries and you as an individual. Without further ado, thank you very much. A really fascinating hour. I really enjoyed it.