

# 2021 Predictions for IT

**SAMEER HILAL**  
Chief Operating Officer  
[vCom Solutions](#)

With the wild ride of 2020 behind us (although early 2021 hasn't exactly been uneventful), the obligatory look at what the year ahead provides an opportunity to show off our prognostication skills (or lack thereof). The biggest influencer of what IT, telecom, and mobility management professionals will encounter in 2021 is, not surprisingly, the continuing effects of 2020.

## 1. Work from home is here to stay

Less a prediction and more a fait accompli, the ability to work from anywhere will be with us long after COVID is behind us. "Anywhere" will include the traditional office or the home office. In a sense, every home office has become a "branch office" and organizations will begin to address the particular needs of those branches more seriously than they have in the past. Expect more focus on remote security, collaboration technologies, and redundancies to support WFH connectivity and increased mobile reliance. Integrating the efforts of sourcing/procurement, fin/ops, the network team, and IT leadership in an efficient, technologically-enabled way provides tremendous business value for the enterprise.

## 2. Understanding inventory and assets will be more important than ever.

Organizations are going to be seeking better ways to understand the cost and utilization of their assets and the IT spend associated with every employee, whether that's collaboration licenses, SaaS license, Mobile assets, etc.. Companies will be diving deep into the investments that need to be made to support the new hybrid office and whether costs should be shifted to better support WFH tech initiatives. If you don't know what you have, you can't do it.

## 3. Big focus on improving WFH tech.

Increased WFH will require a boost to bandwidth, and the deployment of technologies like SD-WAN to support the distributed workforce, particularly for power users, will grow. The need for an optimal remote user experience, especially for video applications, will mean a higher demand for devices, applications, and hardware to improve the WFH UX. IT focus will also center on remote monitoring, sensors, cameras, and other security-related assets to ensure that the new "branch office" is a secure node.

## 4. Commoditization begets an IT marketplace.

The leading-edge providers, like PES, are covering more key categories of the CIO's budget such as IaaS Cloud, mainstream SaaS providers, and UCaaS providers. Integrating overall ITFM areas with legacy TEM capabilities is the real future of the space.



## 5. Serious prep for 5G begins.

As reliance on mobile continues to grow and support the work-from-anywhere trend, the need for more bandwidth and more devices with data plans will drive further need for optimization and tools for ongoing management. With 5G promising speeds 7x faster than 4G LTE, the reality of AR/VR-driven applications, IoT proliferation, low latency applications, and autonomous tech is upon us. But with this next gen of connectivity comes significant risk that will require businesses to be proactive in protecting their networks. Creating a 5G strategy is crucial to making the shift and ensuring that business transformation initiatives can scale to support the new data-driven reality.

## 6. Partners with AI/ML will dominate.

Enterprise reliance on partners who have invested in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) within their solutions will continue to grow as the demand for data-driven decision-making increases. What Forbes calls “the ability of tech to perceive, reason, learn, and problem-solve”, the speed at which AI or ML-driven tech processes and analyzes data results in efficiency gains and being able to more effectively solve real business problems.

## 7. Cloud infrastructure spend will hit a new high.

With more and more companies moving their IT infrastructure to IaaS (via leading players like AWS, Azure, and Google Cloud), customers will be more reliant on tools and expertise to help them gain control over this fast-growing category of spend. The migration from on-prem to cloud-based data centers will be further accelerated, which will further necessitate tools for visibility, spend optimization, and control.

Similarly, with the proliferation of SaaS applications, companies will seek to better control licenses, consumption, and cost allocation back to employees and business units. With estimates of corporate app usage reaching four digits (Amalgam predicts the average billion-dollar enterprise will use over 1,000 apps), cost control and ongoing management becomes crucial.

## About the Author

Sameer Hilal is co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of vCom, focused on innovating vCom's IT Spend Management software and solutions. Sameer has worked in technology management and software development for more than 20 years including serving as VP of Operations for a leading integrator of enhanced voice and network services.

[LinkedIn](#)  
[sameer@vcomsolutins.com](mailto:sameer@vcomsolutins.com)  
 Twitter: @sameerhilal01

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