

Top six trends for this year

By [Dion Chang](#) and [Raleen Bagg](#)

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Using the Flux Trends T.R.E.N.D.S acronym (Tech, Retail, Economy, Natural world, Diplomacy, Socio-cultural), Flux presents six trends for 2017. These are just a sample of a broader selection of trends, which Flux will explore in-depth at our first trend presentation of the year: 'The State We're In: 2017 - Dazed and Disoriented, the impact of being WOKE'.



Dion Chang

Using the same trend pillars, this presentation provides you with an executive summary of how the world is evolving: from game-changing technologies to shifting social norms:

TECH - Chatbots. Look what's Talking.

Chatbots are automated text conversation computer programs which use artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing to talk to customers/users. Want to disappear from a fleeting relationship? Ghostbot is a burner text-messaging bot which will ghost you away. Boo without the boo hoo. Can't sleep? Need something to do to pass the time? Text Casper mattress company's chatbot and talk to the bot about anything and everything.

And in South Africa: Leading the technological evolution in low and middle-income countries, the [Praekelt Foundation](#) launched a new chatbot for Messenger, integrated into the South African Department of Health's MomConnect, at the 21st International AIDS Conference last year. The bot provides mothers more affordable and interactive access to the stage-based messages currently provided by the technology's SMS services.

RETAIL - After Hours Retailing. Mixing Business with Business.

Retailers are surprising customers with services and unexpected experiences when their doors close.

Capitalising on their real estate when they're not serving meals, restaurants are emerging as transient office spaces for nomadic or GIG workers.

Sonos, the sound system company, installed a sleep-over/listening room in Brooklyn's Rough Trade record store. Booked via Airbnb, guests spend the night in this vintage-style room, equipped with a sound system, and full access to the store's music inventory.

In London, the Science Museum has launched Astronight Slumbers: adult sleepovers that allow guests take part in torchlight tours, creative workshops or catch a midnight movie before bedding down in amongst the exhibits.

ECONOMY - Algorithmic Management Delivers the Works.

Organisations are increasingly favouring algorithms to create more effective decision-making and judgment. Bosses are becoming algorithms. Managers' jobs are being automated and algorithms are doing a far more productive and effective job.

It's reported that Artificial Intelligence will eliminate 6% of jobs in five years. Intelligent agents and robots will eradicate many positions which include customer service, web designers, online marketers, accountants, HR professionals, trucking and taxi services, journalists, lawyers and psychologists. The list continues to grow as technology advances.

AI is big in Japan. AI-CD β is a robot that is being treated as an actual employee as a creative director, a substantial and weighty position, in a top advertising agency.

NATURAL WORLD - The Biorights Movement. Assisted Dying. Whose Life is it Anyway?

In terms of their bodies and their lives, people are exercising their ownership rights. Patients are demanding cash for, and control over, their DNA; refusing to provide specimens unless they are compensated. Human DNA is a valuable commodity in medical research and is in high demand by drug companies, the government and academic centres.

On his 85th birthday, Desmond Tutu wrote that he wanted to end his life though assisted dying and that terminally ill people should have the right to choose a dignified death. However, the Supreme Court of Appeals recently overturned a ruling by South Africa's High Court, which granted Robin Stranham-Ford the right to die in 2015.

The Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Germany, Japan and Canada all allow some form of legal doctor-assisted suicide, so globally, the trend is growing.

DIPLOMACY - WOKE is Wide Awake. Post Truth Politics: The Days of our Lies.

WOKE, a slang term that originated in the African-American community, gained traction on social media and has permeated mainstream culture referring to being able to think for oneself. In vague terms, WOKE refers to an intangible level of awareness about community issues, racism, sexism, classism and social justice.

Lords of the Lies. It used to be that the purpose of political lying was to create a false view of the world. The lies told in the run-up to the American elections last year do not work like that. They are not intended to convince the elites, whom their target voters neither trust nor like, but to reinforce prejudices.

In South Africa, the NPA, the HAWKS and other supposed bastions of integrity, have been shown up to be somewhat more than economical with the truth.

SOCIO-CULTURAL - AI Gets Creative with Movies and Music.

Named after IBM's first CEO, Thomas J. Watson, the Watson computer system was specifically developed to answer questions on the quiz show *Jeopardy!* In 2011, Watson competed on *Jeopardy!* against former winners and won the first prize of \$1m.

Now Watson has made its directorial debut by creating a trailer for the 20th Century Fox sci-fi drama, *Morgan*.

The product of Flow Machines, *Daddy's Car* is a song written by AI which analysed a data base of 13,000 music samples and was then programmed to compose music in the style of the Beatles. AI has already started creating our entertainment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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