

No more “new normal”: Here’s what we see for 2023



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A merciless Gen Z and a tight rope walk over hiring gaps round out our insights

Retail, manufacturing, gaming, healthcare, finance, education—for every industry, technology has made a global information economy. It is creating incredible convenience and benefiting people and businesses. Businesses can ride that momentum or be crushed by it. Lumen experts have some thoughts on how to thrive.

Lumen is a network giant. As a tech company [that connects millions globally](#), Lumen has a front row seat to the good, the bad and sometimes doomed ways organizations use tech.

Trendspotting comes naturally for the people at Lumen—leveraging global visibility and data science to power decision making. **We’re sharing our insights to help companies get ready as we answer: What’s next in tech?**

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Trend #1: Gen Z shows no mercy as they make or break emerging and immersive technologies. It is a generation of harsh and fast judges for digital adoption or rejection.

Digital is ingrained in Generation Z’s identity. Rapidly evolving technology that blends physical and digital experiences is becoming the norm. Online gamers already demand superior graphic equality (as in, equal to real). They demand interaction, minimal playtime latency and download speeds. Next gen technologies like artificial intelligence, Web3 and the Metaverse are entering the mainstream.

With increasing expectations for a seamless experience across the board, the adoption of new and immersive technologies hinges on [the ability to transport colossal amounts of data](#) to screens and consoles worldwide. Those who aren’t prepared to stand and deliver massive mounds of data are doomed to be buried by it.

What’s coming next:

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*We already know what it will take to succeed in the Metaverse and beyond: flawless data delivery, security, and privacy. The bigger question is, can companies deliver? Generations of digital natives will have no hesitation in abandoning apps and experiences that can't," said **Miriana Martinova, Lumen's senior vice president of core network solutions.** "Industries need to outrun a tech-savvy Gen Z by supporting today's low latency, high-bandwidth demand. Otherwise, companies that never worried about data and tech will feel the world shift about a split second before they ultimately flounder and fail.*

Trend #2: Future proof will replace the new normal as businesses attempt to build for the unexpected.

All businesses, and especially the [retail](#) and [manufacturing](#) sectors faced huge challenges during the pandemic. Their increasingly data-heavy and interconnected online operations created new vulnerabilities loaded with risk, not the least of which is the increasing threat of cyberattacks. Now, staying secure requires a comprehensive strategy, the right security partners and constant vigilance. Security these days must be both holistic and proactive.

Planning for tomorrow is often too late; businesses need the flexibility and foresight to immediately pivot and adapt. Creating a future-proof IT environment to help weather shock and stress from any direction—whether it be natural disasters, cyberattacks or supply chain bottlenecks—will serve as a necessary inoculation to survive and keep growing.

What's coming next:

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*We've seen how an idealist approach to technology creates fatal vulnerabilities. It's time businesses put a spotlight on anemic areas where weaknesses can flourish—cybersecurity, [networks](#) that won't scale and a lack of automation," said **Chris Smith, Lumen's vice president of product management, platform applications.** "Companies that future proof will win. The good news is that it's getting easier to do."*

Trend #3: The “blur” is coming, created by a glut of data, paralyzing unprepared enterprises.

Data is produced at enormous rates. Mobile devices, wearables, and IoT are not just consumer

focused—more and more businesses rely on them. But not all data is of equal value. We must be able to separate the most essential data from the rest and treat it as a commodity that needs to be acted on quickly.

This becomes harder and harder as the ability to create more data continuously expands, blurring decision making and hiding opportunities in plain sight.

What's coming next:

“*Everyone wants data on demand, but there's more to it. Surviving 'the blur' happens when a business can corral data and put it to work before it becomes an unmanageable monster,” said Steve Grabow, Lumen's senior vice president of edge computing solutions. “If a business's experiences and decisions aren't already powered by real-time data, they soon will be.”*

Trend #4: Amidst shrinking budgets and hiring freezes, enterprises and governments resurrect staffing by turning to managed services.

Hiring is hard. Economic uncertainty mixed with increased demand for employees who know how to work with big data, machine learning, A.I., cloud, and cybersecurity have created a terrifying tightrope walk over a hiring and skills gap.

To help fill it, organizations will turn to outsourced professional services managed by trusted providers to help keep up with today's tech, [reduce capital expenditures](#), do more with less and keep [internal IT teams lean](#).

What's coming next:

“*Tech teams are battle weary. Don't let them down. The longer they wait for reinforcements, the closer an organization gets to losing the innovation game,” said David Capote, Lumen's vice president of product management, managed and professional services. “An uneasy global economy has everyone looking at staffing and budgets. Businesses can skirt danger by embracing à la carte services to protect their bottom line.”*

Gen Z, futureproofing, the blur, and the battle-weary—our Lumen experts are always looking into

the future to leverage it, not just predict it.

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