

By [Ankitha Bharadwaj](#)

With 2016 coming to a close, we at Blink find ourselves wondering what 2017 holds in store. Here are six UX trends to watch as the next year unfolds.

AR & VR are here

User tests VR headset

2016 bore witness to one of the most puzzling, exciting, annoying, and sometimes [lethal game](#) – [Pokemon Go](#). The use of augmented reality (AR) gave the Niantic game a huge push to go viral. Pokemon Go gave us a glimpse of how AR can be integrated into everyday life, making it seem less futuristic and more approachable. We can expect to see AR applied to realms such as social media or apps for communication à la Snapchat.

As for virtual reality (VR), we can expect to see some real progress in terms of hardware and software in 2017. There are five strong consumer headsets in the market ranging from the HTC Vive at \$699 to Google's Daydream Viewer at \$79. This goes to show that the hardware is becoming cheaper and more accessible. A big potential VR use case is the live sports experience. Companies like NextVR are on the cutting edge of making VR more approachable.

We can also expect to see leaps in technology related to the emerging area of mixed reality, the more interactive version of AR, especially in the realm of wearables.

2017 will reveal how the hardware and software evolve over the next year to address inevitable [usability issues](#). We might not see everyone walking down the street with VR headsets, but we can expect to see and hear more about VR this year.

Wearables revamped



Wearables like Google Glass had difficulty gaining traction because they are overtly gadget-y. Expect to see wearables start to fit seamlessly into daily life in 2017. Consumers have made it clear they will not fully adopt bulky items that they must integrate smoothly and inconspicuously with everyday attire.

The [Spectacles by Snap](#) is a good example of how wearables might be designed moving forward. The glasses themselves look like regular sunglasses (a change from Google Glass that looked far too futuristic and out of place), and they feature indicators that tell the public when the glasses are in capture-mode. This addresses another concern many had with Glass – fear of being recorded in public without one’s knowledge. The future for wearables looks bright, but it is contingent on how the technology is integrated into inconspicuous everyday items like jewelry or clothing.

The other big opportunity for wearables is to innovate on how they can help us interact with other devices. The [ViBand](#) is a project out of Carnegie Mellon University and it’s a good example of how a smartwatch can be used to navigate both digital and analog experiences. The ViBand is an enhanced smartwatch that has an advanced accelerometer that can detect small changes in vibration around the wrist. Devices like this have the potential to enhance gestural interactions with our devices or create contextual experiences based on the type of object the wearer touches. For example, imagine a watch that prompts the wearer to make a call when she picks up a business card.

We might not get to the “Minority Report” level of interaction, but we can certainly expect to see further innovation in wearable-enabled gesture UX.

The Internet of Things UX



Internet of Things (IoT) devices are no longer early-adopter technologies. As IoT devices become more and more common, UX professionals need to prioritize optimizing the user experience.

One of the focuses in 2017 will likely be the security of IoT devices. The [recent DDos attack](#) brought to the forefront how easily hackers can access IoT devices and infect them with malware to spread throughout the world. The challenge will be to balance robust security with an easy user experience.

We can also expect to see further innovations in the smart vehicle space. 2016 was a big year for innovations in [connected cars](#). Now that 4G and LTE services are becoming commonplace in cars we will need to work to fine-tune the UX in 2017. The challenge will be to craft the UX carefully as to not overload the driver’s cognitive load.

Autonomous cars will become more prominent in 2017. IBM and auto company Local Motor have been making some interesting progress in this space by leveraging the intelligence of [Watson](#) (IBM’s cognitive system that’s revolutionizing AI) to create an autonomous vehicle called [Olli](#). Besides being adorable, Olli is both energy- and time-efficient. We can expect to see more innovations in this area.

Increased intelligence focused on

conversational UX

We've already seen innovation in home automation with the Amazon Echo and Google Home, and we can expect to see more advancements in increased intelligence. The focus on conversational UX will be important this year as there is increased adoption of such devices, which means future products must handle more accents and everyday language.

2017 will be interesting for chatbots – those little robots that offer help when you're on a consumer website. While chatbots aren't new, their application as a customer service tool is gaining traction. Companies are increasingly using chatbots to help users troubleshoot. We can expect to see chatbots get even smarter by leveraging conversational UX to help people more effectively. For example, the productivity app [AnyDo is adding an intelligent agent](#) to get its users moving through their to-do lists faster and more painlessly.

AI and machine learning go mainstream

Google's [Quick, Draw](#) is an AI experiment that has taken the Internet by storm. The objective is simple: draw the word presented to you and see if the computer can guess the word. As more people participate, the computer learns different visual interpretations of a word and becomes smarter at guessing it the next time. Though seemingly frivolous, Quick, Draw has huge implications for AI in 2017. We can expect to see more automated online processes to help improve the user experience with more personalization and customization. For example, we can expect services like Netflix, Hulu, or Amazon leverage AI to more accurately tailor recommendations and offerings that are custom to the user.

Enduring focus on Enterprise UX

While the vast majority of consumer-oriented websites and apps have embraced the importance of UX, enterprise systems—so-called “back office” systems used by employees to do their jobs—have lagged behind. This has started to change as companies realize not only the productivity gains to be had by a superior UX but also the importance of UX to employee satisfaction. The bottom line: employees expect workplace applications to have consumer-grade experiences. (For more about what we mean by consumer-grade, see this recent [blog post](#).) The trend for consumer-grade enterprise UX will remain strong in 2017.

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