

Why you should budget to attend CES

I know there's a straitjacket on nonessential travel, but there is one conference that you should push to attend. On Jan. 7, 2010, the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) opens in Las Vegas. This four-day event is the largest display of innovations in the world with over 100,000 participants. Gadgets, cutting-edge technology, experimental prototypes, and games in a wide range of applications, from the trivial to the educational are on display.

I attended my first CES last January and, as a lifelong banker (now a bank technology consultant), I was totally amazed. There were so many booths and so little time. I must have walked 300 miles. I was obsessed! I just did not want to go back to my office, read an article about the show and experience a "holy cow!" moment about something I missed. What pressure and what sore feet!

Now that I know how the show works, the second time will be different. First, I am going to set up visits and follow up on a few of the products that I have already blogged about such as Toshiba's spatial interface. Next it will be holographic displays, and the Microsoft Surface, a table top, multi-device/multi-user interface. Just put an iPod on the surface, drag and drop a selected song, picture or video. Other devices present on the surface can pick up the content in the same manner. No files to upload and send via the web.

Next I'll check out handheld devices, netbooks, and 4-G communications devices. Yeah, there is a space beyond broadband and it is all around us. We just have to access it, but we need the right device.

As you can tell, I'm jazzed about this show. As I said after last year's trip, I truly believe every bank executive and technologist—especially retail bankers—should go to CES. It is a great way to get to know your customers and employees—the people who will be using all this stuff before you can even say "retirement." The scary thing is that most of us 21st Century bankers think mobile banking is radical. In reality, the future is passing us every day, but there are glimpses of it if we seize the opportunity.

I'll blog about what I see when I'm at the show, but trust me, it's not the same as being there.
Dan Fisher, The Wombat!

About the Author

Dan Fisher is president and CEO of The Copper River Group, a consulting firm headquartered in Fargo, N. D., that focuses on technology and payment systems research and consulting for community financial institutions. For nearly 30 years, Fisher has worked in the financial industry using technology to improve the bottom line. He was CIO of Community First Bankshares (now part of BancWest), has served as a director of the Federal Reserve Board of Minneapolis, the chairman of the American Bankers Association Payment Systems Committee, and was a member of the Independent Community Bankers of America Payments Committee. Fisher has written numerous articles on banking technology and the payments system. He has authored or co-authored six books and recently published a book titled, "Capturing Your Customer! The New Technology of Remote Deposit." You can contact Fisher at dan@copperwombat.com.

P.S. To understand Dan's nickname, check out "About the Wombat" on his website, www.copperwombat.com.