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[EMAIL](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[RSS 2.0](#)
[ATOM 1.0](#)

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[Get Your Geek On](#)
[INFORMATICS 2007: Premier Conference for IT Professionals](#)
[Getting Ahead of Longhorn](#)

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[Interviews](#)
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[Services](#)
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[Interview] Part 6: Dr. Nakashima

This is the next blog in the [continuing series](#) of interviews with leading professionals.



In this blog series, we continue our talk with Professor Hideyuki Nakashima: President Future University – Hakodate; the internationally renowned computer scientist, inspirational visionary and top-ranked leader. To find out more about Dr. Nakashima, go to the first blog in this series.

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Nakashima at the invitation-only international large society summit where CIPS participated/presented. Hideyuki's reputation for innovation and leadership is well known worldwide and this led to this blog series. Dr. Nakashima was the youngest professor to ever be offered the presidency of a university in the history of Japan, due to his significant and outstanding achievements. Dr. Nakashima is creating new branches of computer science and merging others that will impact the world into the future. It's worth your time to follow his work. There is an element of "Star Trek" which I find compelling and in talking with Hideyuki, I can feel his passion...I wanted to share this with you too!

Thank you and Enjoy!

Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS](#), [I.S.P.](#), [MVP](#)

Future IT trends; Semantic Search/Computing; Biggest Business Challenge; Mashups/Unconferences; IT Skills Shortage—Causes/Solutions; Career Tips; Second Life (Virtual Worlds).

Stephen: What should businesses know about future trends in the Internet environment? What are the implications and business opportunities? Why should businesses care?

Hidey: People are talking about "Web 2.0". It is actually a good start toward a new use of the Internet and computing technologies. However, it is by no means near the end. There are much more capabilities of IT to have newer systems. One of the examples is semantic-based search engine (in contrast to the currently used keyword-based search engines). As I said earlier, the Internet was initiated as an application of ICT. Web 2.0 focuses more on IPT. The next trend is "semantic" computing, I believe. How does this relate to your business? It is up to your imagination of a new use.

Another large application area of IT is transportation. Even though Amazon.com changed the way products are sold, the final stage of service, transportation of goods to individual houses remain the same. I believe IPT in the near future will change the system drastically for more energy efficient transportation systems.

Stephen: My audience is quite diverse from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. For this audience, can you describe further what you mean by semantic computing and semantic search and its applications?

Hidey: I was visiting Stanford University frequently in 1990's. I once tried to search for a good restaurant around SRI International in Menlo Park. I entered keywords "restaurant", "near" and "SRI International", and got information of "a restaurant near the international airport at Sri-Lanka". This is the shortcomings of keyword matching. To use keyword-based search engine, you have to be creative. But if you use semantic-based search engine, you can just tell what you want in a plain sentence just as you see in movies like "List restaurants near SRI International". You can even search for a word from its description.

Stephen: What is the biggest issue facing organizations/businesses today and what is your recommendation for meeting this challenge?

Hidey: Issue: The biggest issue is that the meaning or role of "organization" in our society is changing. The most significant role of organization used to be to connect people, both internally and externally. Internal structure of organizations may become simpler and more flexible. Part of that flexibility comes from on-the-fly assembly of task force for each specific target. This kind of flexibility had to pay a large administration cost before, but it became efficient with the help of computing power used for constraint satisfaction [removing constraints or barriers]. This flexible management can also be applied to inter-organizational assembly and results in so called virtual companies.

Recommendation: Plan ahead of the trend.

Stephen: This is a great site for our next series. What do you think about mash-ups and unconferences?



John Osley Director Community Evangelism
Microsoft Canada



Archives

May 2007 (6)

April 2007 (20)

March 2007 (14)

February 2007 (21)

January 2007 (18)

December 2006 (4)

November 2006 (18)

October 2006 (16)

September 2006 (23)

August 2006 (28)

July 2006 (26)

June 2006 (38)

May 2006 (28)

April 2006 (30)

March 2006 (38)

February 2006 (41)

January 2006 (28)

December 2005 (26)

November 2005 (8)

October 2005 (8)

September 2005 (2)

August 2005 (7)

Stephen: This question ties into your last answer. What do you think about mash-ups and unconferences?

Hidey: By "mash-ups", I take you mean a novel combination of applications rather than creative art works. I do not know any effective IT to support mash-ups automatically yet. But I believe technologies catch up soon. Object oriented programming makes combination of systems easier. Aspect oriented programming under research may take over in the near future.

In conferences I attended or organized recently (both international and domestic), I observe that the distinction between oral and poster sessions are disappearing, or changing the definition. It used to be that oral sessions are where high quality full papers are presented and poster sessions are for weaker shorter papers. I see many conferences having more emphasis on poster and/or demo sessions because those systems allow presenters and participants to have denser interaction. In some of the workshops I attended in Japan, a chat system was used on-line while the speaker is presenting. Two screens are used, one for the power point presentation of the speaker and another for the chat. Participants exchange their opinions and/or questions. The speaker may sometimes reply to the comments.

Stephen: What are your views about a skills shortage in IT? How serious is it, what are the causes and solutions?

Hidey: Honestly, I do not know the situation abroad. But it is serious in Japan. Many software productions rely on programmers abroad in India or China. The shortage is caused, in my personal opinion, by the wrong plan of leaders of large companies in Japan. Up to ten years ago, the Federation of Economic Organizations declared that Japan does not need domestic software development because foreign programmers are cheaper. They simply confused designing systems and programming them. To design a good system, the designer needs a good knowledge on IT. They recently changed their opinion 180 degrees and blame universities that they did not produce enough software engineers. Actually, there are not enough university departments for IT in Japan to produce enough IT engineers. Anyway, the Ministry of Education launched a series of projects to support universities to educate students with high-level IT skills.

Stephen: For those considering a long career in computer technology, what tips would you pass on to ensure their success?

Hidey: Software products, including those to support large societal systems, do not have to follow physical laws. "Scale-free" networks are an example. It can exist only on information networks. Physical networks, such as road network, cannot be scale-free because of physical limitations. If we can imagine a good system, we can construct it with IT. Imagination is a key ability required for information architects.

Stephen: There is popular new forum or virtual world called "second life." People can hold meetings in this virtual world and even conduct commerce. There is a university campus in this world now. What are your views of this kind of world: <http://secondlife.com/>?

Hidey: I believe it an interesting place. It shows human's ability to live on imagination. I believe that life in virtual world may have the same or more reality than the real life. I am a fan of Science Fictions and one of my favorite "Snow Crash" describes some such life.

However, I myself am busy living the real life. I enjoy it so much that I need more time here. I ride motorcycles, drive cars and fly airplanes (yes, I am a private pilot). I am currently challenging to get a boat license.

Stephen: Hideyuki, we will continue to follow your contributions to the computing field. We thank you for sharing your time, wisdom, and accumulated deep insights with us.

Hidey: It was my pleasure to talk with you, Stephen. Thank you again for providing this opportunity to present my opinion from Far East to the world.

I encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at sibaraki@cips.ca.

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