

# Foreword

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Vinnie Mirchandani aptly describes today's "dark ages" of information technology. Let me tell you how much darker it was eleven years ago when I started salesforce.com. Companies were paying hundreds of thousands to buy enterprise software, and then they were blowing millions to install it. The worst part? It didn't even work very well. A change was necessary, but the change we were advocating—delivering services through the Internet—wasn't readily accepted, or even understood.

The industry was suffering from "The Innovators Dilemma," a concept popularly attributed to mature technology companies. There were too many defenders of the status quo (analysts, media, investors) who were financially integrated into the current model and too self-interested to consider the potential for a better future.

But innovation was far from dead; it was just emanating from a different place than we were expecting. And, in fact, a revolution was underway. The rapid evolution of the Internet sparked an industrywide transformation. Innovative companies such as Amazon.com, eBay, and Yahoo! changed everything for consumers and changed the business landscape as well.

Inspired by the consumer Web, we developed a better way to serve enterprise customers. We knew we could deliver business applications cheaply through a Web site that was easy to use. The skeptics didn't think much of it (history always repeats; there's always persecution with some new ideas), but in just a few years we were able to transform the enterprise software industry. The old model of how people bought and built software was disrupted and the packaged services that companies used to buy separately from software vendors, systems integrators, hosting providers, and offshore application management firms were compounded into a single contract and service agreement.

The idea—and the rapid adoption of the cloud computing model—addressed the challenge of massive waste in most IT budgets. A recent Galorath study showed that our model led to a five-year cost savings of

78 percent and a development and time savings of 75 percent. Recycled-countertop maker Vetrazzo built a custom ERP suite at half the cost associated with a traditional software implementation; Japan Post Network created a custom app for 40,000 users in only two months; and Haagen-Dazs Shoppe built a franchise management app with no capital expense. We can look back and see that the last decade was the end of the dark ages and, in fact, the start of a period of enlightenment.

Now, in this new decade, the Renaissance continues—and matures. There has been massive innovation in mobile and social technologies that, when brought to the enterprise, will create more value for users, customers, and vendors by an order of magnitude over what we saw in the last wave. And while information technology continues to massively evolve, newer sectors of biotechnology and green technology have also been growing exponentially. This sets us up for the next revolution.

The best companies—from established corporations to pioneering start-ups—are creating incredible value by succeeding in a new way: amalgamating distinct strands of technology (infotech, cleantech, healthtech, nanotech, biotech) to create compound new products, services, and processes that address the big and small problems in this world. These are what Mirchandani calls the New Polymaths (Greek for the Renaissance men and women who excelled at multiple disciplines) and nothing captures this powerful, emerging pattern in the marketplace like this book.

I am honored that [salesforce.com](http://salesforce.com) which amalgamates the consumer Web, social, and mobile technologies—as well as philanthropy to effect change—is profiled as a New Polymath. I am also humbled.

These pages are filled with incredible examples of passionate entrepreneurs, established leaders, and multinational companies innovatively leveraging technology to tackle big problems, “grand challenges,” related to health, hunger, and natural disasters—and, of course, information technology. You’ll meet individuals like Elizabeth Horn, the mother of a child with autism, who has created ChARMtracker, a Web-based treatment management software to get children, parents, and the medical community the important cause/effect data they need to identify biomarkers that may help guide treatments in the future. You’ll be inspired by the “refugees” from information technology, like Ray Lane, who fled Oracle and now, as a VC, is investing in a new generation of cleantech companies addressing various energy and environmental challenges. You’ll travel the halls of General Electric’s Global Research Center and see how it brought together multiple technologies to respond to problems in healthtech with access to clean water supply.

The book shows us that the future can be brighter because people and companies are doing more by leveraging various technologies to make it so.

In what we can expect from someone as knowledgeable, prescient, and committed to industry disruption as Mirchandani, the most pivotal trends a company needs to know are illuminated. Through his R-E-N-A-I-S-S-A-N-C-E framework (each letter is a chapter that discusses a building block for the New Polymath), we learn about 11 key ideas: Residence; Exotics; Networks (Bluetooth to broadband); Arsonists; Interfaces; Sustainability; Singularity; Analytics; Networks (social); Cloud Computing; and Ethics. This is the first book to reveal why these changes are important and how to take full advantage of them for your business.

Mirchandani not only explores thought-provoking topics, but he walks us through compelling case studies and high-impact examples, such as how the Schumacher Group, through its aggressive deployment of cloud computing and MAXroam, will make the entire world one area code with no mobile roaming charges. We also learn where innovation is coming from (and where it's not), especially in telecom, where we see the biggest breakthroughs from Apple and Skype and Google and Ericsson, and less from the telcos themselves—an important theme, which we see mirrored in other industries (e.g., IT, publishing, music).

One of the best parts about this book is its courage to take a stand. Mirchandani is never afraid of saying what is required of us (he was known as a “growling tiger” at Gartner) and he closes his RENAISSANCE framework with a focus on ethics with conviction and compassion. This deftly harkens back to the historical polymath like Plato and Socrates, who were also philosophers—and is an idea that is timeless. Ethics must not be an afterthought, but woven into the culture of innovation.

We live in a time of great change and with that comes great responsibility. In today's business world, Milton Friedman's famous mantra “the business of business is business” is dated. The business of business is not only business. The business of business is to do good while doing well.

There is a way to combine creativity, ingenuity, and business acumen to address social issues—from substandard health care or schools in developing nations to problems with homelessness or illiteracy. We combined philanthropy into our business model. Our 1-1-1 model (1 percent employees' time; 1 percent equity; 1 percent product donation) has allowed us to donate more than \$19 million in grants, deliver our service to over 8,000 nonprofits for no charge, and give more than 178,000 hours of community service. This charge also changed our company. It established us as a meaningful place to work and made us more committed to the success of our employees and our customers. And it was easy. Being a polymath isn't that difficult—and it always yields multidimensional rewards.

*The New Polymath*—a book about how to unlock innovation—is told through the perspective of a true innovation seeker who is dedicated to

implementing productive and disruptive change. And what better guide to walk us through examples of a modern-day polymath than a true polymath himself? Mirchandani's varied career as a technology advisor, outsourcing executive, industry analyst, entrepreneur, and implementation consultant makes him one of the industry's most provocative thought leaders. Most important, his fresh insights and wise counsel prepares us for how to best navigate, compete, and flourish in this Renaissance.

The well-researched examples in this book will inspire you. But the people who are going to change the world aren't only in this book. They are reading this book. Join them—as entrepreneurs, as executives, as leaders. You are in a position to make a contribution to people's lives in a meaningful way. No large enterprise was ever built by addressing only a small market. And the world's problems are not a small market.

We are now in a time of extraordinary opportunity. People always ask me: What's in store for the future? Where is technology going? Where is philanthropy going? Predicting the future is simple. The future is whatever we imagine. What's ahead of us is whatever we innovate.

What do you see in the future? I see less disease. I see less poverty. I see new sources of energy, amazing advances in healthtech, and a planet on which the next generation can still breathe. I see hope because I know there's a generation of talented people out there combining a renaissance of new technologies to help us make pivotal changes.

You have the power to create or join organizations that address society's issues. You do not have to decide between making a social contribution or building a successful company or career. You can do many things. You can be a polymath. As Mirchandani says, "It's time for AND not OR."

Read on; be inspired. I'm looking forward to enjoying the future that we create.

Aloha,  
MARC BENIOFF  
Chairman and CEO of salesforce.com