

# Why IT decisions will make or break businesses

May 1 2013, by Greg St. Martin

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EMC Corporation Chairman and CEO Joseph M. Tucci said Friday at Northeastern's CEO Breakfast Forum that businesses' future success will be increasingly defined by how they innovate and take advantage of opportunities presented by information technology's transformation. Credit: Brooks Canaday

Society's growing reliance on mobile devices and digital resources has led to a tectonic shift in information technology, according to Joseph M. Tucci, chairman and CEO of EMC Corporation. He said that shift is forcing businesses to increasingly make decisions based on bytes,

trillions of them, and that their future success will be increasingly shaped by how they innovate and take advantage of opportunities presented by IT's transformation.

"How businesses, in any industry, handle this transformation will define their future," Tucci said.

Tucci was the keynote speaker Friday morning at Northeastern's CEO Breakfast Forum. The series, hosted by President Joseph E. Aoun, features leading CEOs who share their expertise with audiences of other CEOs and senior executives from the Greater Boston area. The Hopkinton, Mass.-based EMC is a global leader in information technology, employing some 60,000 across 85 countries. Aoun lauded Tucci for his leadership at EMC, which, he said, has to continually meet the challenges presented by evolving technologies.

Tucci, a member of Northeastern's Board of Trustees, highlighted the "special" relationship between EMC and Northeastern. EMC's founders, Richard J. Egan and Roger M. Marino, are Northeastern alumni, and the company has been a longstanding supporter of the university's signature co-op program, hiring more than 700 students since 2002 for a range of experiential-learning opportunities. Nearly 450 alumni are currently EMC employees, and the partnership has extended to Northeastern's high-tech MBA program for more than a decade.

In his talk, Tucci pointed to four trends that will drive information technology in the immediate future: mobility, cloud computing, big data, and [social networking](#), all of which, he said, are interrelated. He also said they hinge on "trust," meaning businesses and individuals must feel that their private information is secure.

These trends present limitless societal applications, according to Tucci. Sensors, for example, could monitor a marathon runner's heart rate and

provide real-time data about maintenance required by a jetliner.

Tucci noted IT has evolved across three platforms. First came mainframes and mini computers, followed by desktops and laptops. Now mobile devices serve billions of users and soon will provide millions of apps.

Massachusetts, he said, is positioned to seize the opportunity to become a leader in the mobile platform by capitalizing on its strengths in areas like industry and research universities like Northeastern, and forming dynamic collaborations that lead to innovative solutions. One such collaboration is the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center, a partnership between state government, companies including like EMC, and local universities including Northeastern.

As information technology opportunities expand, Tucci said higher-education institutions will play an integral role in training the next generation of data scientists and building curricula that blend creativity with the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, known collectively as "STEM."

"We have a massive amount of data in so many places, and we need people who can reason over this data in real time to make better decisions and change business models," Tucci said.

Following his talk, Tucci fielded several questions from the audience and online viewers that ranged from creating a pipeline of data scientists to how [information technology](#)'s evolution in surveillance and privacy. When asked by Aoun how the U.S. is positioned to compete in the IT space on a global level, Tucci said American innovation will continue driving its leadership, but that the country must maintain its commitment to excellence as countries like China and India continue their global ascension.

Provided by Northeastern University

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