2026 Technology Industry Predictions

Despite several years of turbulence caused by stymied dealmaking, growing cyber risks, and volatile market conditions, technology industry leaders should not expect the road ahead to smooth just yet. In 2026, technological and market forces will continue to disrupt every corner of the tech industry as agentic artificial intelligence (AI), alternative connectivity solutions, advanced robotics, and consolidation will reshape internal operations and customer-facing interactions.

Here are **BDO's seven tech industry predictions** for the new year. Companies that internalize these trends and master related tools, technologies, and ways of working could gain a strong competitive edge in the year ahead. ▶

Streaming Wars End, and Super Aggregators Take the Throne

The streaming wars, which have dominated the media industry over the last ten years as companies worked to meet consumer demands for easier access and more choice in entertainment, are coming to an end. In 2026, we expect to see accelerated consolidations among major streaming platforms, with newly formed mega players dominating the landscape.

Consolidation will enable these super aggregators to bundle entertainment, commerce, and community features into unified ecosystems that offer personalized and adaptive user engagement. Consequently, competition will no longer center on content libraries alone. Winners in this era will be platforms that can offer customers the most comprehensive media experience under one roof, while smaller services find their own niche audiences or get absorbed into larger entities.

32%

According to BDO's *2025 Media Report*, 32% of media companies say they are **planning to pursue buy-side mergers and acquisitions** (M&A) to fuel growth in the year ahead, illustrating the scale of the coming consolidation wave.

AI-Powered Networks Unleashed: Self-Healing, Self-Optimizing, and Smarter Than Ever

The past several years saw substantial advancements in the use of AI to manage complex enterprise networks. In 2026, this fast-moving trend will continue. Targeted agentic AI pilots will be extended throughout entire enterprises, elevating network management from reactive troubleshooting to autonomous problem resolution. Where current automations using machine learning typically detect and flag issues for human teams to resolve, next-generation networks will deploy agentic AI to diagnose problems, fix issues, reroute traffic, and tailor bandwidth allocations with significantly less human intervention.

These intelligent, governed agents will be able to make decisions independently across the whole network infrastructure. Predictive analytics and pattern recognition will also enable agents to anticipate failures before they occur and automatically implement solutions. With agentic AI at the helm, companies could reduce incident downtime from hours to seconds, while freeing up human IT teams to focus on strategies initiatives rather than reactive firefighting.

But supporting **agentic AI** integration will require thoughtful preparation. Innovations in 2026, and into 2027, will focus heavily on robust AI governance frameworks, including tools for observability, interpretability, bias testing, and auditability. Companies will need to ensure their **technical infrastructure** can support these innovations by granting compliant network access where applicable and establishing a strong data foundation capable of supporting AI-led decision making. These changes will require companies to enable their IT teams with tools, training, and escalation paths that empower humans to review, analyze, and adjust AI use on an ongoing basis.

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Off the Grid and On the Rise: Alternative Connectivity Takes Center Stage

Alternative forms of connectivity will cause significant disruptions for telecoms in 2026 as advancements in fixed wireless access (FWA), low-orbiting satellites, private 5G networks, and even 6G mature. Forward-thinking telecom companies have already begun to incorporate technologies like satellite connectivity into their offerings, and early-adopters will set new standards for the entire industry.

New players are likely to emerge and threaten the market positions of even the most longstanding companies. These startups will be able to avoid the costly infrastructure barriers that have helped protect the market position of larger, more well-resourced telecom organizations. The industry may even see a new class of cellular service providers arise, that eschew cell towers entirely in favor of connecting phones solely via satellite.

As entire households and individual devices come to rely on these emerging connectivity solutions, consumer expectations will center even more on speed and reliability, rather than coverage area. These technologies may also open new funding opportunities for telecoms seeking outside investment, which in turn will empower companies to scale new tech at an accelerated pace.

44%

The rise of alternative connectivity is already fostering increased private equity (PE) interest in the telecom industry. Nearly half (44%) of PE-backed telecom say **private 5G networks will have the biggest impact** on their operations in the year ahead, compared to just 23% of telecoms overall.

Wearable Tech Leaves Cellphones Behind

The wearable technology market will explode in 2026, moving far beyond the smartwatches that consumers are accustomed to today. Smart glasses have emerged as the next "hot" item in the wearable tech frontier, offering hands-free computing power and augmented reality (AR) experiences that blend seamlessly into daily life and may even begin to offer a competitive alternative to cellphones. These mediums will transform activities like communicating and shopping, and businesses will seek to integrate their digital offerings into smart glasses software, offering enhanced, tech-enabled in-store experiences.

The line between tech and textiles will blur as wearable tech is also integrated into clothing. Fitness apparel will be able to monitor vitals like heart rate and blood pressure during a workout as well as track biometric data throughout the day. These smart garments will work in tandem with devices like glasses and watches to display the data they collect. Real-time health insights will be accessible to everyone, everywhere, in a shift that will forever change healthcare monitoring, athletic performance tracking, and personal wellness management.

Rightsizing for AI: Shifting Resources Front of House

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The AI revolution is driving companies to rethink how they allocate resources and talent. A "30% rule" is emerging as a guiding principle for defining AI–human workflows: roughly 70% of tasks within a process are routine and well-suited for automation, while the remaining 30% require human judgment to review data and make decisions.

In 2026, organizations will accelerate this operational shift, reallocating routine tasks to AI and freeing humans to focus on value-added, customer-facing functions. AI is increasingly being deployed to handle time-consuming, repetitive activities such as searching for information, processing and interpreting large volumes of data, and orchestrating operational workflows. Tech leaders are discovering they can run leaner support teams by leveraging AI agents that can reason alongside the "human in the loop." Professionals can then spend higher-quality time with customers, creating more value.

Expect companies to place a premium on talent for sales, product innovation, and strategic advisory roles — areas where human creativity, thoughtfulness, and collaboration deliver impact that AI cannot replicate.

To stay competitive, tech leaders should prioritize aligning workforce composition with AI-augmented business models, preparing for a future where routine work is automated and human connection drives differentiation. Successful organizations will adopt a two-pronged approach: redeploying some tasks to AI agents and redirecting talent toward relationship-building and complex problem-solving. They will focus on attracting new employees who not only understand the company's core products and solutions but also know how to collaborate effectively with the new generation of AI agents.

AI Driven Energy Efficiency Will Begin to Counteract its Own Rising Consumption

As **data center construction** accelerates, new facilities can place substantial demands on local or municipal power grids, creating concern that energy requirements might act as a bottleneck to AI growth. But in 2026, AI-driven energy optimization will begin to offset its substantial power demands.

Recent advances in cooling, which involve liquid flowing through power-consuming chips, are showing promise and reducing demand for energy previously required to power cooling systems. AI algorithms that consume massive amounts of power to fuel their thinking are also being improved to run more efficiently.

In 2026, smart grid management systems will continue to evolve, using more sophisticated models that enhance AI's ability to predict energy needs, balance loads, and reduce waste across entire networks. Advanced Demand Response Programs will become even more precise in their ability to make small, targeted corrections in energy allocation. Internally, data centers can also deploy AI algorithms to monitor and make continuous adjustments to cooling systems and server use, automatically mapping nonurgent workloads to times of day when renewable energy is most abundant. New buildings will use AI to fine-tune HVAC systems, lighting, and other equipment in real time.

These potential efficiency gains mark an inflection point where AI will become part of the solution to its own sustainability challenges.

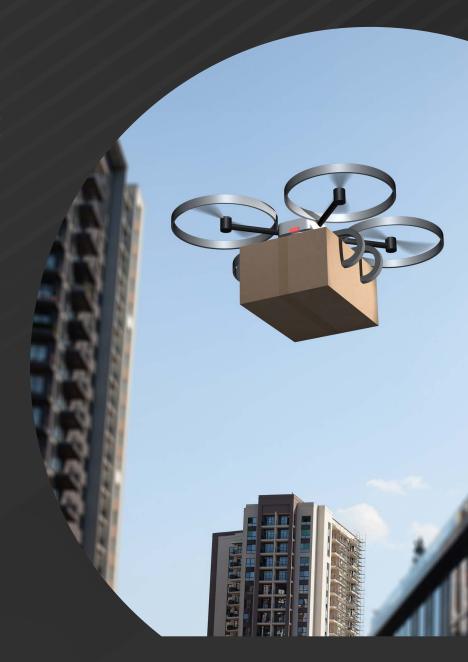**Data centers are the backbone of modern digital operations.** They face an array of security threats that extend beyond energy considerations, from **cyber threats** to environmental disasters. As risks multiply and the costs of downtime increase, facility owners and operators must continually evaluate evolving threats and update plans to mitigate them.

Robotics Break Free: From Factory Floors to Everyday Life

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Robotics technology is set to break free from its industrial roots and enter consumer-facing environments at scale. In 2026, we expect to see robotic delivery systems and **autonomous vehicles** become commonplace sights, fundamentally changing transportation systems, retail logistics, and last-mile delivery processes.

Thanks to advancements in edge computing technology, sidewalk robots will be able to navigate dense urban environments to deliver food and packages, while driverless semi-trucks will populate highways and revolutionize long-distance freight transport. Service robots with onboard AI integration will appear in hospitality buildings, event spaces, **brick-and-mortar retail stores**, and office real estate. They will serve multiple roles, from maintenance and security to customer relations and navigation.

This robotics revolution means more than simple automation. It will redefine how goods and services are rendered, transforming operating models across key segments like restaurants and healthcare. As robotics mature and adoption accelerates further, the cost of entry will decrease and businesses of all sizes will reap the benefits.

Are You Ready for the Year Ahead?

Even the most diligent organizations can't predict every shift in industry and market trends. The key to success lies in building resilience and agility, enabling your business to adapt to unexpected changes with confidence. Explore our curated resources to learn how strategic resilience can position you for a successful year.

An Agile Framework for Navigating Economic Shifts

Activate Resilience in Your Organization

How AI Drives Strategic Resilience and Business ROI

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