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\$100. Dustin Moskovitz, one of the founders of Facebook, sketched out that rosy picture this week when asked about the potential for the company that consumes his time these

days.



In the early days of cloud computing, it was easy to believe that an entire new generation of online business apps would rise up and overthrow the old powers of the software world. Entrepreneurs who had made their names on the consumer internet shifted their attention to the so-called "enterprise" market, where the real money had

It certainly hasn't turned out that way. Microsoft briefly inched ahead of Apple this week to become the world's most valuable company. It is Office 365 — the new, cloudenabled version of Office — that has been behind its recent rebound in growth.

is a direct showdown with Microsoft, which is coming after Slack's business with a rival service of its own. It can take a long time for companies like these to hit a high-growth curve. Asana, for

instance, says its revenue growth rate has just accelerated for seven quarters in a row,

"best of breed", will eventually be sucked into integrated suites of software, which are easier to manage and prevent the build-up of data silos within big organisations. Cloud applications — known as software as a Recommended

service, or SaaS — have resisted this seemingly

inevitable consolidation wave longer than most.

That is partly a reflection of the huge growth in

manage their work would be valued at nearly

many categories of software.

suggests that most standalone applications such as Asana, known in the industry as

Who would have thought, for instance, that a company whose software is used by IT FTfm John Dizard departments to track their assets could be Data in the cloud falls back to earth worth more than \$30bn (ServiceNow)? Or that a set of tools mainly used by other developers to

It is an open question how many start-ups will survive the coming consolidation. Mr Moskovitz, for one, says that he's in it for the long haul and vows Asana will be the last company he ever founds. But then again, his stake in Facebook is currently worth \$6.7bn, so his day job might

The rivalry between the giants of cloud computing — led by Amazon, Microsoft and

to sell out, though he says that this is definitely not his "plan A".

not mean as much to him as it does to most people.

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starting to shine through, though, as the winners reach greater scale and a round of consolidation takes hold.

Besides Mr Moskovitz they included Bret Taylor, one of the creators of Google Maps (Quip), David Sacks of PayPal (Yammer) and Stewart Butterfield of Flickr (Slack). To these and many others, "collaboration" and "productivity" software — the technology that white-collar workers rely on to get their jobs done — would become the preserve of cloud-native applications that were easier to use and tapped into data stored centrally. Microsoft's Office was deemed to be a dinosaur.

always been made in tech.

Meanwhile, some of the collaboration and productivity wannabes have been falling by the wayside. Quip and Yammer have fallen to acquisitions (by Salesforce and Microsoft, respectively). Slack, which is eyeing an IPO of its own, is among the few to have reached the escape velocity needed to have a shot at being a long-term winner, though the prize for success

reaching 90 per cent in the latest period. A funding round announced this week values it at around \$1.5bn, up more than 60 per cent from the previous round in January. The money is intended to underpin a round of international growth, including a data centre in Europe and expansion into Japan. How long companies like this remain independent is an open question. Tech history







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