

TECHNOLOGIZER

# Welcome to the Beginning of the End of the PC Era

By **HARRY MCCrackEN** Thursday, June 09, 2011

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A 1981 IBM desktop computer  
AFP / Getty Images



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Tech pundits have a bizarre habit of declaring products dead long before they're actually goners. (Here, for instance, is an article that **says Facebook is toast** — from 2008.) Me, I do my damndest to resist the temptation to play premature coroner. I will say this, though: if the PC era does end up mortally wounded someday, we may look back at early June of 2011 as the moment when its death warrant was signed.

In the past eight days, Microsoft and Apple have shown off upcoming versions of their operating systems. Their plans differ in fundamental respects, but both companies are looking past the PC era we've lived in for the past three decades. They're building software for an age in which people do their computing and communicating on all kinds of gadgets — ones that are simpler, more portable and more Internet-centric than PCs as we've known them.

(See a **consumer wish list for Windows 8.**)

First, the Microsoft news. At the *Wall Street Journal's* D9 conference in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., last week, Windows honcho Steven Sinofsky **presided over the first public demo of Windows 7's successor**, which for now is going by the sensible code name Windows 8. (Microsoft posted a similar preview as an **online video.**)

The demo showed only one aspect of Windows 8, but it was a lulu. Windows is getting its most dramatic makeover since at least Windows 95, with an all-new interface that looks a lot more like **Windows Phone 7** rather than anything that currently runs on a desktop PC or laptop. It's clever, colorful and designed to be navigated with fingers rather than a keyboard and mouse, showing plenty of iPhone/iPad influence without being a mere knockoff.

The old-school Windows interface isn't gone; existing software will still run. But Microsoft is prepping for a transition **similar to the migration from DOS to Windows that happened a couple of decades ago.** It may take a while to complete, but it's under way.

Coming to any definitive conclusions about Windows 8 on the basis of last week's demos would be like reviewing a movie on the basis of a teaser trailer that came out a year and a half before the film. (Microsoft isn't saying when the software will ship, but mid- to late 2012 is a good bet.) The sneak peek was enough to leave me asking a lot of questions, though:

**Will Windows 8's dual interface feel like the best of both worlds rather than a disjointed mess?** Making it make sense will be a massive challenge. (I'm keeping an open mind until I get some hands-on time.)

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DISQUS



Real-time updating is **paused**. (Resume)

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Jordan Canning

"Did I mention that Apple and Google aren't the only tech behemoths trying to figure out what comes after traditional PCs?" Should read as "Did I mention that Apple and Microsoft aren't the only tech behemoths trying to figure out what comes after traditional PCs?"

4 hours ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Pummell

I have no use for a tablet. Sure they look neat and I could check the news/blogs/email on the go. But most of my work and play still needs a real keyboard. I can't stand touch screens, they always get it wrong, half the time I try and hit and 'n' the touch screen thinks I am hitting the tablet and so forth.

They seem like fun toys, and I could see a utility for them from a work perspective 'out on a site reviewing plan sets, etc.' not needing the paper drawings... But really my laptop is just... **show more**

8 hours ago 2 Likes

Like Reply



Kayak22

There are many, many, reasons for maintaining personal data on private hard drives, and other private media. With all the security apps there is still daily news of the latest hack that broke into some "super secure cloud" or some virtual hard drive that is maintained off site and is accessed via the internet or some data link. Even the method that provides access to the remote site is not truly secure. Does anyone want to fool with 128 bit or higher encoding methodology for their data. I think not. At least not in the immediate future. Casual data, yes,... **show more**

10 hours ago 2 Likes

Like Reply



RichardR

Kayak22 you hit it right on! Like lemmings in mass leaping into the computer clouds will make the hackers exploits even more enticing since the data that defines each and every one of else becomes more and more exposed to hack this and hack that.

3 hours ago in reply to Kayak22

1 Like

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The Offended Blogger, Blogging the offended and the ...

I predict Time magazine may become obsolete possibly by mid to late October 2015. Of course I'm probably wrong, but still, I feel the need to write this down for some reason....

11 hours ago 4 Likes

Like Reply



TomT

Time Magazine is already obsolete.

8 hours ago in reply to The Offended Blogger

2 Likes

Like Reply



zaglossus

For my current work and lifestyle my old PC works just fine for most of my computer needs. If I go post-PC, it will not be because it's no longer trendy or hi-tech or articles like this that pronounce its coming death, it will be because it no longer works or something works better enough to justify the costs and learning involved.

12 hours ago 2 Likes

Like Reply



Historian

I wrote my first computer program in 1964 on an IBM 1401. I have watched as pundits have predicted this and that for four decades. None of them were right. The "trends" in computing are based on technology, not what Microsoft or Linux or Google or Apple sells. It is determined by what people buy and use. Cloud computing is nothing more than a return to mainframe computing of the 1970s. It worked OK then, but it has outgrown its place in technology. Microsoft has NEVER determined what works in computing. MS typically borrows someone else's idea and makes... **show more**

13 hours ago 14 Likes

Like Reply



Historian

All change is bad

B Cupp 1980

13 hours ago

Like Reply



FmrChgo

Typical, You forgot Linux, which now runs on the tiniest devices to the largest computers in the world. Linux is found EVERYWHERE and most people don't even know they are using it. Linux IS the future of computing and it is here NOW!

13 hours ago 4 Likes

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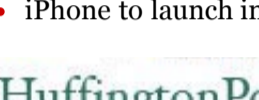
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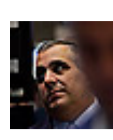
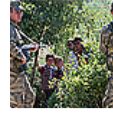

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 *"Analysis of the contracts reveals that many of the deals will provide few jobs and will force many thousands of people off the land."*

ANURADHA MITTA, director of the Oakland Institute, a California-based think tank, discussing a land grab by U.S. universities, including Harvard and Vanderbilt: the schools plan to buy or lease vast areas of farmland in seven African countries

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