

# Microsoft tablet computer a big bet on future

AFP, San Francisco

Microsoft's decision to make its own tablet computer is a sign of frustration with its longtime hardware partners and a big bet on the technology giant's future, according to analysts.

Microsoft's empire was believed to be at stake in a gamble that it can dethrone Apple's iPad in the tablet market, and weather backlash from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) that license its software.

"It's a bold move by Microsoft, and it shows just how concerned they are about Apple and the threat Apple is to their ecosystem right now," Gartner analyst Michael Gartenberg told AFP.

"This is (chief executive Steve) Ballmer pushing all the chips to the middle of the table and betting really heavily," he continued. "Microsoft is clearly all-in."

Microsoft on Monday unveiled its first tablet computer, the Surface, running on Windows software to take on iPads.

Chief executive Steve Ballmer described the iPad challenger -- complete with ultra thin covers-cum-keyboards in a range of colors -- as a tablet that "works and plays" as he presented it at a press event in Los Angeles.

"It looks like a really nice product; well designed and well thought out," said NPD Group analyst Stephen Baker.

Microsoft did not reveal when Surface would be available, or the prices for the various models. But it appeared the tablets would debut with Windows 8 operating software later this year and be priced on par with similar devices.

Analysts agreed that Microsoft had the components for success:

impressive hardware, stunning screen quality, an online shop for "apps," and troves of films, music and other content at Zune and Xbox Live.

Microsoft recently announced SmartGlass applications that let tablets synch with its leading Xbox 360 videogame consoles and invested more than a half-billion dollars in Barnes & Noble's Nook e-book business.

Microsoft also owns Skype internet telephony service.



The Redmond, Washington-based company has an ample war chest to invest in promoting its tablet.

What remains to be seen is whether Microsoft can put those pieces into a winning formula or whether it will repeat the failure it had when it launched Zune MP3 player hardware to compete with Apple's iPod devices.

Independent analyst Rob

Enderle of Silicon Valley hung blame for the flop on Microsoft's shoulders, contending that the company didn't give Zune the funding and resources it needed to be a market hit.

"This is Microsoft's chance to show they have learned the lesson from the Zune," Enderle said.

"This time Microsoft is really going to have to step up," Enderle continued. "With the right resources, this could work."

While Microsoft could shrug off losing the MP3 player market to longtime rival Apple, it can't afford to lose a tablet market with the promise of eclipsing and even replacing the desktop computers, according to analysts.

"This time, if they lose, it is the desktop computer and with that goes three-fifths of Microsoft," Enderle said.

"OEMs are saying that the PC doesn't matter anymore and that the tablet really is the future; which is what Bill Gates said in the early

2000s," he added, referring to Microsoft's famous co-founder.

"It has just been unfortunate that Apple has been proving him right on their platform."

Forrester analyst Sarah Rotman Epps warned that Microsoft could be "its own worst enemy" if it overwhelms consumers with configuration options and chipset choices instead of focusing on keeping tablets easy to pick and simple to use.

Among the reasons that this change of strategy is dramatic is that it promised to make adversaries of partners that license Microsoft software to put into devices.

It appeared Microsoft was taking a page from Apple's playbook by taking control of the tablet "ecosystem" from the hardware to the software to the delivery of digital content.

"It felt like they were channeling Steve Jobs at some point," Gartenberg said of the Surface event.

"This whole thing had a very Apple-esque feel and the only company that has been good at being Apple is Apple."

To some extent the tablet move was pay back of a sort to Microsoft partners who have embraced making tablets on Android software provided free by Google, according to analysts.

While competing with companies that license its software will strain relationships, Microsoft would irk them further by undercutting them with low tablet prices to gain market share.

"So many details are missing that we will just have to wait and see," Gartenberg said.

## Huawei to launch new Windows Phone 8

IT &amp; TELECOM DESK

Huawei, a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, has announced that it is expanding its relationship with Microsoft Corp for the creation of Huawei's first Windows Phone handset.

The Huawei Ascend with Windows Phone 8 expands Huawei's smartphone portfolio and brings the Windows Phone operating system to an even bigger audience.

Huawei is one of the selected vendors in the world to carry the Windows Phone 8 operating system on its smartphones.

"2012 is building up to be a great year for Huawei. Now, we are poised to end the year with a big bang with the introduction of our first smartphone running on the Windows Phone platform. We're very excited about this relationship with Microsoft which will enable us to provide our customers with a bigger array of Huawei smartphone choices," says Shao Yang, chief marketing officer, Huawei Device.

"It's great to welcome Huawei to the Windows Phone family. The only phone with Live Tiles, Windows Phone brings you closest to the people and things you care most about," said Terry Myerson, corporate vice president of the Windows Phone division at Microsoft.

## With Siri and new alliances, Apple takes on Google search

REUTERS, San Francisco

When Apple Inc sends out its coveted invitations to major events, one CEO has always been making the guest list of late: Jeremy Stoppelman.

The co-founder and chief executive officer of consumer review website Yelp Inc has never taken the stage at these gatherings, but his company has become an important weapon in Apple's arsenal as it steps up its assault on ally-turned-rival Google Inc.

Yelp and a handful of other major consumer content sites, including movie reviewer Rotten Tomatoes and restaurant reservation service OpenTable, will be helping to power Apple's Siri, the voice-activated iPhone personal assistant, in the new mobile operating system iOS6.

The relationship between Apple and Yelp illustrates the power struggle over how people find what they are looking for on the Internet. Much more than just a clever feature, Siri is emerging as a key tool for what some in the industry call "casual search" - quickly finding routine information such as a restaurant location.

This can bypass Google and other traditional search engines. That serves the interests of Apple, which sees an opportunity to muscle in on its rival's core business and build related advertising revenue.

Siri is also a potential lifeline for Yelp and other content companies, which have found themselves competing with Google.

"Google is a direct competitor to Yelp, and I am sure Yelp is aware of that," said Larry Cornett, founder of product strategy firm Brilliant Forge and former head of consumer products at Yahoo Inc. Yelp, which depends a lot on Google for traffic, will probably be "ecstatic" about the direct traffic it will get through Apple's upcoming version of Siri.

Google still reigns supreme in search, loved by consumers for its relevant results and advertisers for its reach. Deep-pocketed rivals, particularly Microsoft Corp with its Bing search engine, have tried in vain for years to reduce Google's dominance.

Rather than compete with Google on keyword search - which would mean battling algorithms refined by the millions of searches performed every day - Apple is taking a different tack by focusing on a subset of the search universe that users are mostly likely to scour while they are out and about.

That includes restaurants, movies, sports, business listings, maps and locations - where quick, digestible bite-sized results are desired, rather than the more involved research that users perform with Google. The increasing use of mobile devices for accessing the Internet only plays into this trend.

Advertisers value these searches, which are closely linked to location, time and intent, said David Tennenhouse, venture capitalist with New Venture Partners and former CEO of A9.com, the search unit of Amazon.com Inc.

The stakes are high, said Oren Etzioni, a search and artificial intelligence expert at the University of Washington's computer science department.

"Google is very difficult to dislodge on the desktop," he said, "but mobile search is a very different beast, and the jury is still out on the question of who the ultimate winner in mobile (search) is."



## CFICC after Eid



IT &amp; TELECOM DESK

D.Net, jointly with Citi Foundation, announced that the 4th Citi Financial IT Case Competition (CFICC) will be held after the Eid-ul-Fitr. The date will be also announced after the Eid.

Registration for the contest has already begun. Last date for registration is July 10.

For registration procedure and detail information are available at [www.cficc.dnet.org.bd](http://www.cficc.dnet.org.bd).

The CFICC is a prestigious award for students in the field of business & ICT in Bangladesh.

The 4th CFICC aims to provide an opportunity for young and talented minds from different public and private universities. They will compete in the development of unique software and information system solutions for the financial sector in Bangladesh.

The competition will nurture future leaders of the country and help students improve their knowledge on the use and application of technology in the financial sector.

Each team will consist of 5 members- 4 university students (2 from IT and 2 from business) and 1 faculty member from either department, who will play the role of project manager.

The teams will compete against each other at different four rounds.

At the end of four rounds, the top three teams will be awarded US\$ 3,000, US\$ 2,000 and US\$ 1,000, respectively.

Another team will be selected for the award of "Best Innovative Idea" and will be given a crest and certificate.



### TECHPHOTO

A visitor tries Japanese high-tech giant Canon's new mixed reality (MR) system with a newly developed see-through head mount display (HMD) at a virtual reality exhibition in Tokyo on June 20, 2012. Canon introduced the new MR system enabling the display of a merged image of real and virtual worlds with a special HMD, which has two video cameras, one each located in front of the left and right eyes of the HMD.

PHOTO: AFP

## Google sets out to save dying languages

AFP, San Francisco

Google on Wednesday set out to save the world's dying languages.

In an alliance with scholars and linguists, the Internet powerhouse introduced an Endangered Languages Project website where people can find, share, and store information about dialects in danger of disappearing.

"People can share their knowledge and research directly through the site



and help keep the content up-to-date," project managers Clara Rivera Rodriguez and Jason Rissman said in a Google blog post.

"A diverse group of collaborators have already begun to contribute content ranging from 18th-century manuscripts to modern teaching tools like video and audio language samples and knowledge-sharing articles."

The website at [endangeredlanguages.com](http://endangeredlanguages.com) is designed to let users upload video, audio, or text files and encourages them to memorialize recordings of rare dialects.

Only half of the approximately 7,000

languages spoken today are expected to survive past the end of this century, according to an Endangered Languages video posted at Google-owned video-sharing venue YouTube.

"Documenting...languages that are on the verge of extinction is an important step in preserving cultural diversity, honoring the knowledge of our elders and empowering our youth," Rodriguez and Rissman said.



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