

iPad - lots of hits and a few misses?

Written by Philip Roy

Thursday, 28 January 2010 09:26 -

I have to stress that I'm writing this as I see the news come in about the iPad. Some of the things I might comment on may be due to the fact that I haven't researched enough. I'm really impressed by the iPad, disappointed also...and a bit surprised. I'll start with the disappointment. Adobe Flash. It's evident Apple's out to make sure that Flash isn't part of their platforms these days. Regardless of what sort of processor this thing has, it could, I speculate, handle Flash easily.

Surprise? No forward facing camera (oh, and no multitasking). I was sure a camera was a certainty. Why? Well this thing is going to be an absolute gem for the education sector, and a forward facing camera would make a superb device to give to kids to go off and hold video conferences...or heck, call back to the teacher whilst they are out and about surveying students in school, etc. I could have even seen myself telling my folks to ditch their Mac mini in favour of an iPad, but not now. The second surprise...where does this leave apps versus applications? I'll expand on this a bit more later.

The good news is that it looks amazing...and Apple have yet again shown that when they produce a product they think of it holistically...the whole concept for them isn't just the iPad, but everything that surrounds it...how to buy music, how to buy books, how to view them just looks amazing...and the fact that they have tied them back into the iPhone OS is clever. Just watch how beautiful the user interface is in the Apple videos on the product.....absolutely stunning.

However one of the words I have to disagree with is the term "revolutionary" that is used by Apple in the video. And the people to blame? Apple.

Look at the iPad, watch the video and hear about what they are talking about...in many instances Apple have done those things for the iPhone already. I'm not trying to suggest it isn't an amazing product....just that Apple have been doing these amazing things already.

Now on to applications...this is where I get a bit confused. What constitutes an app for the iPad is slightly blurred with what constitutes an application on a Mac...and the best example of that is the iWorks apps that they have announced for the iPad. Don't get me wrong....superb idea...but I'm curious as to how that is going to work. Where will you save your documents? Do you have

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a hard drive partition that you put stuff on or is it all contained within the app like the iPhone OS apps? I suspect the latter....and maybe you sync with your Mac?

And let's think about this...Apple have just announced a spreadsheet, word processor and presentation app that runs on the iPad. Will they run on the iPhone too? OK, I know that's probably a silly question, but they've taken a little bit of Mac and added it into the iPhone OS. So can others take a little bit of Mac too?

What about Microsoft for example? Will they now produce a version of Office for the iPad? Will they be allowed to publish it by Apple? And if they are, can we have those things on the iPhone too? Seriously....I mean it!

I suspect that I'm never going to be able to do the thing I would want to do...take apps from my Mac and put them on the iPad. Instead, I'm going to have to wait for those to developers to bring out an iPad version of their product and pay for that version. I guess, if I'm honest, I'm not confused about apps versus applications...I just hoped for a bit more freedom with a tablet than what I see.

And how do you print? Can you print? Do you need a Mac or PC to be able to do this? Can you plugin a printer or do you use wifi? Is this more an addition to your computer experience than anything? Is it for those that want something additional to what they use already...or it it a standalone product?

I guess what I am saying is that I have been more than happy that the iPhone was effectively a closed system...and you had one way (sans jail breaking) of getting things on the iPhone and using them. With the Mac, it's more open. Whilst I fully understand that the iPad will be more closed (and iPhone like) than open...part of me wishes it wasn't. Part of me wishes that it gave the user more freedom. Time will tell as to whether this impacts them or not. Whilst a beautiful, superb looking product, when you get this into the education sector (of which I believe Apple will hope to see significant sales in) will they gradually move back to more open systems they can do more with...or will they happily stick with the iPad? I suggest the results will be both.

I guess, putting it crudely...it feels more like a bloody big iPod Touch with a cool new UI and apps, than a tablet....and I feel it is missing a few things or possibly being too restrictive to get it

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nearer to where a tablet should be.