

Why the tech pundits got it wrong

Written by Darryn Lowe

Sunday, 07 February 2010 15:05 - Last Updated Monday, 08 February 2010 05:58

In ten years of Microsoft trying to push the tablet as a computer the tablet just hasn't ever taken off. The one thing the naysayers of the iPad have never asked themselves is why has tablet computing failed up until this point?

The answer is simple... they're too under powered to do the work people think they should be doing. Essentially what is happening is people expect to work on a tablet the same way they do on a laptop but the specs of a tablet and the ridiculous price of these tablets make them useless for a computer replacement. In fact the idea that the tablet is meant to replace the computer is actually proof that no one really understands the concept of the tablet.

A tablet computer is not designed to replace computers but to act as a compliment to computers. It's best to think of it as a compliment to a desktop rather than a compliment to a laptop because as soon as you introduce a laptop into the equation people will think it makes no sense to replace the laptop with something so under powered. And to a lesser extent they would be right. That being said though a tablet does make a pretty good alternative to a laptop when conjoined with a desktop.

Imagine a doctor or a nurse going to a station that has a central computer connected via WiFi. They can get all the records for a patient right from where they are without having to lug around a laptop which when carried all day can be quite hefty. A MacBook Air is a little under twice the weight of the 3G version of the iPad which is a little lighter than two 60 sheet A4 drawing pads. Now which would you rather carry around all day. Something that weighs the equivalent to 4 drawing pads or something that weighs the equivalent to 2? To put that into perspective remember your days at High School when you had a pad for every subject you had and remember the weight of that that you had to carry around all day?

Imagine a store-man going around doing inventory. What do you think he'd like to use? Something with a screen which makes it very uncomfortable to hold because the centre of gravity is wrong or something that lies flat and can be rested on an arm like a clipboard?

How about someone like me who is a field engineer and I need to go around customers. I also carry around a tool kit and parts so I'm lifting heavy things all the time. Do you really think I want a laptop weighing me down even more than I already am?

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Think about students. Imagine a student turning up to school with an iPad that has their textbooks with them and when in class they can fire up Voice Recorder and start recording then change into Pages and start taking down notes while still recording the lectures.

You see the very ones saying the iPad has no place really don't understand the potential and therefore can't see past the sum of its parts. They've failed to write objectively about the device because it doesn't meet with their expectations of what the device is supposed to achieve when the device wasn't even designed to meet most of those expectations in the first place. So let's look at some of those ridiculous expectations.

It doesn't multitask:

Umm yes it does. Where does this idiotic idea come from. Here's what multitask means:

"the simultaneous execution of more than one program or task by a single computer processor."

So can the iPhone multitask and ergo the iPad as it runs the exact same operating system? Yes it can because you can play your music while working in another application such as surfing the web or writing documents. You can actually run Voice Memos while taking notes in Documents to Go or even Notes. This notion that the iPhone/iPod Touch/iPad can't multitask is a blatant lie based on the fact that they can't run more than one application at one time. I put it to you that that ideology for computing is not fitting for a low power device such as a device running OS X (not to be confused with Mac OS X which is its bigger brother). Having a chat program open while editing a document just to be able to perform two tasks at once doesn't make sense for low power devices. The resources are minimal and yet you feel the need to waste them on chat programs instead of concentrating on writing? Apple built a system that makes far more sense than running two applications at the same time with one just sitting idly by waiting for someone to send you a message. It's called Notifications and is singlehandedly the most useful feature of OS X. Why have an application open when messages can be sent to the device telling you that you have a message then you simply say you want to view it and it closes down the application you're working on and then opens the chat application? It works well and even better you don't lose resources by having more than one application open. It might work on a laptop or a desktop but when you're talking about Megs of RAM as opposed to Gigs of RAM you can see why Apple refuses to allow more than one application running at a time.

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In summary yes the iPad WILL have multitasking but no it will not allow more than one app running at a time.

The iPad lacks a camera:

Actually it does. In fact the iPad has a camera that is far superior to any built-in one. It has a camera that can be anything from half a megapixel up to a 40 megapixel camera. It has this because it isn't tied down to an internal camera but by using a really cool device that I already use on my 60GB iPod it can load images from any camera you have access to including an iPhone. How many iPhones or cellphones in general in fact do you know of that have a [40 megapixel camera](#)

?

But what about a forward facing camera for video conferencing? It's a nice idea but I'm not entirely convinced. For it to work then you'd have to have APIs in place to allow things like Skype access to that camera. It's not undoable but for it to be universal then the iPhone would need one as well because the iPhone is the communication device Apple made. The iPad is not made for communication. Yes there is a 3G version but you'll notice that the dataplans for the 3G version under AT&T are exactly that... DATA not voice so clearly the market aim is not to act as a communication device but to get access to data. While Apple is moving towards allowing VOIP over 3G it's not currently ready so it's not much sense to include a camera in a device that isn't ready to act as such. Who knows, maybe the 3G version in June/July will include a camera but I wouldn't get one's hopes up. Being restricted to WiFi at the moment means there's really no reason why video conferencing can't be done at a desk. I mean seriously, where do you video conference? In a crowded area or in a quiet office? And generally when you're video conferencing are you doing it with a computer or with a proper video conferencing unit? That rules out video conferencing for big business. As for consumers then if they're running Mac they will all have cameras in their machines so it makes sense to do it on devices that are beefier not on a device that is low powered just so you can relax on your couch while talking to someone.

It doesn't run Flash:

Many people think that the iPad won't work because it won't support Flash and therefore is locked out of much of the content of the Internet. Incidentally they said the same thing about the iPhone but it's still browsing the web 3 years on with no issues at all.

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In fact I challenge you to give me one example where Flash is so absolutely vital that the task can't be done some other way. Google is moving away from Flash video in leaps and bounds and if you're like me and you've signed up for the HTML5 beta on YouTube you'll see a massive difference between Flash and HTML5 in favour of HTML5. Checkout this video player done completely in HTML5 and can be played on the iPhone although it does invoke the video player on the iPhone:

<http://jillion.com/sublime/video>

Flash isn't really an issue anymore because more and more developers are moving away from it in favour of a standard that just makes sense. I won't dwell too much on Flash because that's the topic of my next post but suffice to say the fact the iPad can't play Flash content is a good thing and will start to get more developers thinking about the way they develop their websites.

The iPad isn't a revolutionary device:

Contrary to popular belief the iPad IS a revolutionary device. Those who claim it isn't really need to read the dictionary because this is what revolutionary means:

"involving or causing a complete or dramatic change" - Dictionary on Mac OS X

"constituting or bringing about a major or fundamental change" - Merriam Webster

"radically new or innovative; outside or beyond established procedure, principles, etc" - Dictionary.com

So three very different locations all seeming to agree on meaning. So... does the iPad fit in with those given descriptions?

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Involving or causing a complete or dramatic/fundamental change

This accurately describes the iPad. It is completely changing the idea that we have about tablets. As I mentioned at the outset the tablet computer has failed in the 10 years that Microsoft has tried to push it. Anyone who's ever used a tablet knows how bad they have been up until now. The iPad fundamentally changes our idea of how a tablet works and in doing so has actually created a product that works. How do I know it works? Because I've been using one in the form of the iPhone for the last 2 years. The operating system was the key and so far only the operating system of the iPhone and iPod Touch has actually worked the best for the role a tablet should be used for.

Radically new or innovative

Yep, the iPad scores on this as well. It's interface is radically new compared to other tablets which are traditionally stylus based. The problem is people say they've seen it all before on the iPhone and iPod Touch but they're not reasoning correctly. Why would you compare a tablet to a phone and a music player? That's just idiotic. If you really want to get pedantic all the things I do on my MacBook Pro I've seen done first on my Mac Mini. It's ridiculous to say that just because the iPhone and iPod Touch were doing multitouch first that the iPad is nothing new or radical because it is. Did anyone actually watch the Keynote, Pages, and Numbers demos? Did anyone watch the demo of NOVA? I'm picking not because they wouldn't be saying the iPad isn't a revolutionary or innovative product. The multitouch interface on the iPad is innovative because no one's done that that on that large a screen before to the levels seen in the keynote speech.

By very definition the iPad IS a revolutionary product there is no doubting it. You can argue semantics all you want but while the iPad might have similar features to other devices it is doing things so radically different and causing a massive paradigm shift that to decry it as not being innovative (*"featuring new methods; advanced and original"*) or revolutionary just proves how little the decriers know or understand about technology.

Will I be getting one? You better believe it. It fits my NEEDS perfectly. Yes I can do the same thing with other technology but only the iPad gives me a screen that makes it easy to see what I'm doing. Only the iPad gives me the ability to interact with data like never before while giving me access to that data no matter where I am. Only the iPad allows me to edit that data no matter where I am. I can do those things on my iPhone and my MacBook Pro but they're either

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too bulky or too small a screen to be effective. In my books the iPad is the perfect tablet.