

Tablet Wars

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On March 11, 2011 I was standing in line at a live event that was happening throughout much of the United States and few other countries. In line I noticed various age groups and decided to run a quick exam of people's own history of technology. Granted knowing the answer to some of these questions not only made me feel my age but also just how Cliff Clavin I am. Here is a quick list of some of the things asked and people's responses:

1. What is a VCR - Majority knew about these and still used them.
2. What is a walkman - Technically everyone was right since one generation knew the Cassette version versus the CD version.
3. TV remote Controller - Most of the younger crowd knew it was a handheld device to change channels on the TV. Most of us adults knew the real answer was standing there changing the channel manually for our fathers while they ate dinner.

But the question that nobody had an answer to was what and when the first perceived tablet was. Most people assumed that it was when Compaq (now HP) sold its first T1000 running Windows XP Tablet PC Edition. The crowd was surprised to find out that the first patented device was made approximately 123 years ago. Let's take a quick look at when technology in the tablet industries was started as compared to where it is about to go.

In 1888, Elisha Gray was granted a U.S Patent for an electrical stylus device for capturing handwriting. The stylus captured handwriting, nothing else, just handwriting. Can you imagine what Elisha would have said 123 years ago looking at the technology that we have produced today? 62 years later, the 1950s, the Styalator electronic tablet with a pen for an input and software for recognizing handwriting text in real-time was invented. Most people do not even know what a Styalator is/was. Then 1993 came. This was a big year for a lot of technology companies. Fujitsu released the Poqet PC which was the first pen tablet to use an integrated wireless local area network. Apple released the Newton PDA, otherwise known as the Apple MessagePad. IBM's first portable tablet computer the ThinkPad 750P and 360P released. The EO Personal Communicator which combined a PenPoint with wireless communications was released by AT&T. Finally BellSouth released the IBM Simon Personal Communicator. This unit combined an analog cellphone and a touch-screen display. You could not handwrite on the screen but you could write and send messages as faxes. Step forward 20 years and Bill Gates from Microsoft demonstrates a prototype Tablet PC that becomes later known as Windows XP Tablet PC Edition.

Then the year was 2010 and Apple introduces its "magical" device called the iPad. The iPad ran a 1GHz Apple A4 processor, a 9.7" glossy screen with a resolution of 1024 by 768. It came in 6 models: 16, 32, and 64 GB with Wifi only or 16, 32, 64 GB Wifi and AT&T 3G. The risky apple device was a major hit. It sold 1,000,000 devices in 28 days. It was the shot heard around the technology world. No other competitor was even close to releasing a device like this. The device is being coined for giving us the Post PC ERA and has ignited a technology war that has not been seen in quite a while.

Nine months after the release of the Apple iPad, Verizon, at CES 2011, showed off the Motorola Xoom. The device would run Android Honeycomb 3.0, created by Google. The device released to the public a month later. The Xoom has 1GHz dual core processor, 10.1" inch with 1280x800 screen resolution, 1 GB internal RAM and 32 GB of storage. It also has a front and rear facing camera, Wifi and Verizon 3G (with slot for free upgrade to 4G). The device is everything that Motorola stated it would have: speed, multitasking, Internet, email and a handful of apps designed just for the Honeycomb operating system.

March 11, 2011, Apple releases iPad2 with the same design, same look and feel, but smaller, faster, and in different colors and ability to use on two wireless carriers. The iPad2 has a 1GHz dual core Apple A5 processor, 512 RAM and approximately 1/3 the thickness of the original iPad. This was also the introduction to iPad white, the newest color that has everyone talking. March 11th could set records for the new device that comes in 36 models to choose from. The models are the same as iPad one, but double it for the added White versus Black model and Verizon versus AT&T.

As Apple and Google battle it out on technology fame, which is next? HP? Blackberry? Actually yes to both of those.

Blackberry's playbook should release in the beginning of next quarter making it the third player in the Tablet Wars. The Playbook will have a 1GHz dual-core T1 processor, 1 GB RAM, and a 7" screen running at 1024 by 600 resolution. It will have 3 models for storage: 16, 32, and 64 GB. The Playbook will support Wifi, 3G and 4G and be equipped with front and rear cameras.

The TouchPad by HP will be released approximately June of 2011. The TouchPad will have a 1.2GHz dual core processor, 1 GB RAM, and a 9.7" screen with 1024 by 768 resolution. It will come in 2 models 16 GB or 32 GB. It will support Wifi, 3G and 4G and be equipped with front and rear cameras.

Regardless of what device you purchase, it is going to come down to what you can do with it. There are Apple lovers, Android fans, and devoted Blackberry owners, but what will these devices help change in your life or help you do better at work? The answer is simple - nothing. These devices do not change your life; they give you the potential to enhance your life to be freer. They give you the ability to leave other devices in the office or at home. But with all these devices available it will still come down to this - what software can I run on it. What applications do I use at the office or at home that I can run on one of the devices? Do those software packages justify the \$499 or \$899 that you might pay to have these devices? Well each manufacturer of the device is banking on it and betting against the next guy.

Did you notice the one player that is missing from all of this? If you didn't, I will give you a hint - they made the main Operating System loaded on a majority of today's computers - their current version is 7.

Microsoft... But that is a different story and one that might not be talked about until the fall of 2012.