

PC days not numbered



By [Tom Manners](#)

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Scarcely two weeks ago, the Industrial Development Corporation issued an [official announcement](#) that not only portrayed the PC industry as a sector in absolute free-fall but also blamed Microsoft's perceived failure to get Windows 8 off the ground as the reason for the decline.

According to IDC Program VP for clients and displays, Bob O'Donnel, "At this point, unfortunately, it seems clear that the Windows 8 launch not only failed to provide a positive boost to the PC market, but appears to have slowed the market.

"While some consumers appreciate the new form factors and touch capabilities of Windows 8, the radical changes to the UI, removal of the familiar Start button, and the costs associated with touch have made PCs a less attractive alternative to dedicated tablets and other competitive devices. Microsoft will have to make some very tough decisions moving forward if it wants to help reinvigorate the PC market."

Almost simultaneously, Gartner issued an announcement championing the growth of the smart device market.

Naturally, this sparked a slew of 'The PC is Dead' blog posts and news articles around the world. To the masses, it seems, the personal computer is as antiquated a relic as the typewriter or public telephone.

Melodrama rather than reason

However, unlike the empirical reasoning and mathematical logic that governs hardware and software, the technology sector can often be melodramatic and mercurial.

Perhaps it is the sheer pace at which new developments occur in this environment that encourages those who follow it to write off old technologies or underdog concepts expeditiously or its history, pockmarked by stratospheric success and dismal failure, that has engendered a bloodlust for catastrophe.

The logic is fundamentally flawed. The reality is that PC replacement cycles have slowed as mobile devices have entered the market. Furthermore, the popularity of hybrid offerings such as tablet notebooks suggests that the PC form factor is simply evolving, not dying out.

PC industry evolving

In a Darwinian turn of events, technology has adopted a development cycle that is directly related to the external

environment and availability of food (cash).

This argument has been brandished around without too much attention being paid by international press or bloggers. In fact, Intel sales director for Europe, Middle East and Africa - Steve Shakespeare recently went as far as to reject single-mindedly the suggestion that the PC is no longer relevant during a recently held Intel Solutions Summit in Dublin.

"The PC industry is not dying. I disagree. We have seen some changes, but there is no way it is dying. It is changing and innovating and we are responding to that."

It would be shortsighted to argue that in five years the PC will no longer be a part of our daily lives. Have you tried to populate an Excel spreadsheet on a tablet? Mobile devices are wonderful, but they pale in comparison to notebooks and desktops when one is looking to write a scientific thesis on sub atomic particles.

The truth is that the market will purchase the device which best suits its daily needs. Mobile devices will continue to gain traction, as long as people continue to consume information on the go. Similarly, the PC will evolve and maintain its popularity, as long as folks write books, create financial models or design websites.

As for Windows 8, it feels very early to attribute the so-called crash of the PC market to an operating system. Let us cut the dramatics and look at the technology market for what it is - an ever evolving, dynamic environment that is almost impossible to predict accurately in the long-term. That is why it is fun.

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