

# editor's note



**YESTERDAY I HAD MY FIRST CHANCE TO PLAY WITH AN IPAD.** As much as I wanted to dislike it (don't get me started on Apple and its smugness and over-controlling nature), I admit I was impressed (enough so that my first impulse—one which I somehow resisted—was to run out and buy one for my wife for mother's day).

The clarity of the screen was amazing (though it did seem to attract fingerprints like metal filings to a magnet). It looked like it would be a great e-book reader (though it was a touch heavier than I'd like and the glare on the screen was pretty distracting). It was easy to access email (though a keyboard would make typing easier) and connecting to a Wi-Fi network was a breeze.

So after I talked myself out of heading up Michigan Avenue to the Apple Store and buying one, I did start thinking about potential professional uses. Coincidentally, my nephew Jason, an IT professional, had sent me a note the same day about one of his clients who's thinking of getting rid of all their desktops and switching to iPads. But is that really practical? Have you considered anything similar at your company?

My first thought was the lack of keyboards, but as Jason pointed out, Apple does sell a docking station. But the iPad isn't a computer; it doesn't run the usual software we've all become accustomed to. It does, however, connect very nicely to the Internet, which means you can (ironically if you've been following the Apple-Adobe-Google spat) utilize Google Docs for word processing, spreadsheets, even presentations. And if you're using Gmail everything will integrate really nicely. And when you're out of the office, the portability of the iPad makes it a wonderful tool (not to mention the wow factor when you visit clients). And you can minimize IT needs since you're essentially using a simple terminal to hook up to the Internet. No more worries about crashes, viruses, or conflicting programs. If you really have a problem, let the genius desk at an Apple Store worry about it.

But are you really better off with an iPad than with netbooks or thin laptops? Netbooks are clearly the most economical solution, they'll run most programs, and they're easy to tote around. But their screens aren't very good and they're notoriously slow (both for initially booting up and for working online). Thin laptops are much pricier than slates such as the iPad but offer all the functionality you're used to on a desktop computer. But they're still slow to boot up.

For the past six months, I've used an inexpensive netbook whenever I'm out of the office. I like it a lot, but in truth I've found it wanting. My pet peeves? Speed and screen quality. Would an iPad have been better? I write—a lot. I think I need the keyboard. But I think of how often I reach for my Blackberry rather than my netbook and I wonder if I'm wrong.

For now, I'm sticking with the netbook and all of its inadequacies. And I'll look at the iPad again in six months. But I'm even more hopeful that a nice slate computer will emerge with an Android operating system and enhanced voice recognition that lets me speak in place of fingering a keyboard. (Though I haven't completely rules out getting an iPad for my wife....)

If you have an iPad (or another slate device), let me know what you think. Is it just for personal use or are you using it for business too?

  
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