

## Post-PC era PART 2: The acceptance of Appliance computing.

I hold very strongly to the idea that there are two 'tablet device' markets - the first is the much older 'Slate PC' one that saw PCs & laptops gain expensive convertible options around 2003. These slate PCs are still around today & provide a reasonable compromise between a full PC & a touchscreen, but generally with a higher price.

One still has to know how to operate a full computer to use one.

Since the rise of smaller, mobile devices that mark the start of a post-PC era, elements of 'full computing' have increasingly become available as part of their feature sets. Such things as the light productivity of email & web surfing, as well as viewing & consuming documents & media can all now be done almost anywhere at anytime, & with better battery life & often direct touch. These devices I've been calling 'Tablet PCs', but the launch today of the Amazon Fire tablet has got me thinking that phase 2 of the Post-PC era is upon us & we should instead be saying 'Appliances', or Appliance computers. Why?!

In phase 1, I think large segments of the tech industry & their user base have stuck to the idea that a slate or tablet computer should just be the classic PC + touch - that nothing else really needed changing. When the iPad debuted & didn't try to be just a PC-replacement, it really messed up all these notions & led to nearly 2 years of discussion about what should a tablet PC be. Most similar devices released since the iPad by Motorola, Samsung, Sony, RIM etc have tried to hedge their bets by ape-ing the form factor while still advertising their 'PC' features, - their USB ports

and multi-tasking abilities. Perhaps they do offer a useful middle ground, or transition zone for those used to the PC-only era, but the general public has not adopted them in numbers any greater than they did the previous convertible Slate PC's. So what have they been adopting?

I think we all know. Not a tablet focused on being a PC replacement, but one that I see as having deliberately left-out USB ports & as many buttons as possible so it can't be confused as a PC. Now for almost the first time since the iPad was released, a tablet is being released by a major player that also doesn't seek to be seen as a PC-replacement. The Amazon Kindle Fire is a touchscreen eReader & media consumption tablet - an e-Content appliance basically - & at US\$199, will be priced as such. So now that another 'tablet as appliance' device by a major company has been released, I think this whole space just got a lot clearer - Slate PC's for the older & smaller 'PC in a tablet' professional market, & appliance tablets for everyone else. Which market would you like a company you hold shares in to target?

NB. Of course what I haven't stated is why the appliance tablets are the ones selling - just for the record, it's because they are simpler (and in many cases, cheaper).

NB.2. Of course Microsoft's Windows 8 on tablets may muddy this space again, but I think you can see that if all it does is go for the 'a tablet & PC should be the same' model then they will miss the 'computing for everybody-else' potential of the post-PC era.

NB.3. Of course these thoughts are my own entirely.