



## Welcome to 2012, the Year of the Tablet

USE A TABLET FOR 10 MINUTES AND YOU'LL WONDER HOW YOU WORKED WITHOUT ONE. TABLETS ARE UNLIKELY TO REPLACE DESKTOP COMPUTERS OR EVEN NOTEBOOK COMPUTERS BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT GOOD CHOICES FOR CREATING WEBSITES, EDITING PHOTOGRAPHS, OR CUTTING VIDEOS TOGETHER. BUT TABLETS REPRESENT A NEW COMPUTING PARADIGM AND OFFER NEW CAPABILITIES.

Prediction: You're going to start seeing tablets everywhere because they deliver useful capabilities to locations that are not served by mainframes, minicomputers, desktop systems, notebook computers, or smart phones.

Attend just about any meeting at any company and you'll probably see at least one tablet. Companies that offer Wi-Fi access to their corporate LAN (and that's most smart companies) are driving the trend.

I've seen this scene play out several times: One person in a department buys a tablet and everyone else laughs. The person with the tablet leverages it to accomplish tasks that others can't. Suddenly everyone in the department has a tablet.

Computer manufacturers have recognized the opportunity. It's no longer just the Apple Ipad. Now Amazon has the low-cost Fire and I would expect at least one (and maybe two) new models from Amazon this year—models that offer more high-end options.

Google's efforts to promote Android for phones and for tablets have brought Asus, Sony, Acer, Samsung, Toshiba, T-Mobile, Lenovo, and HTC on board. Microsoft will ship Windows 8, which is tablet-ready this year. So far Acer, Samsung, Lenovo, and Dell have announced Windows 8 tablets. Asus, Sony, Toshiba, and others are unlikely to stay on the sidelines.



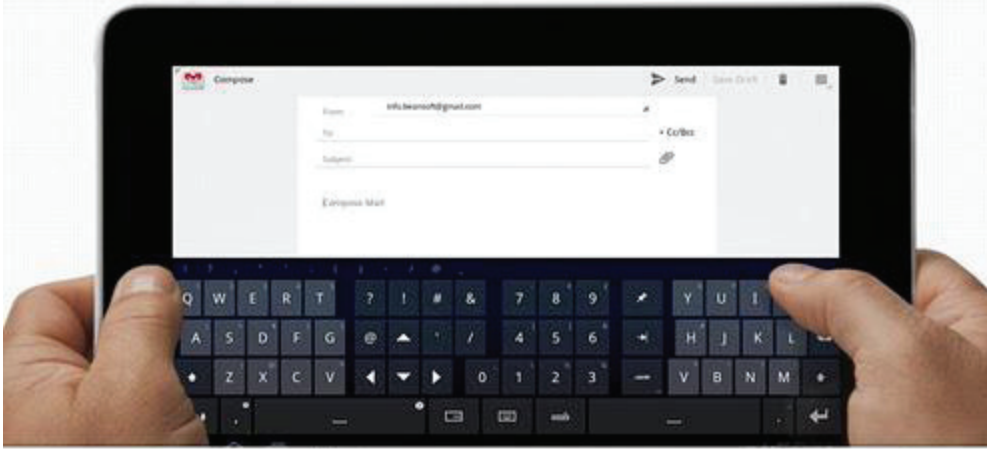
### It's the Apps

UNTIL APPLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR HARDWARE, THE HARDWARE IS USELESS. TABLETS NOW HAVE ENOUGH APPLICATIONS THAT BUYING ONE WILL MAKE SENSE FOR MANY PEOPLE, WHETHER FOR BUSINESS USE, PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY, OR FUN. CONSIDER A TINY CROSS-SECTION OF WHAT'S AVAILABLE.

Applications range from news and weather to finance and communication. From lifestyle and entertainment to photography and education.

**Kindle for Android:** You may have a Kindle, but adding the Kindle app to your tablet allows you to read books you've purchased from Amazon (depending on licensing) even if your Kindle is at home.

**Thumb Keyboard:** Keyboards are this platform's greatest liability. Some have docking stations with a keyboard and one or two models even have slide-out keyboards but most users must make do with the virtual QWERTY layout. That's fine if the tablet is lying on a table but most of us interact with tablets while holding them and we



type with our thumbs. Thumb Keyboard places numbers in the center of the layout and letters near the edges where they're within reach of your thumbs. This application does a lot more but if that's all it did, it would be more than worth the \$2.30 price.

**Google Docs:** Those who use Google Docs will want this free app. Manage and edit Google documents from wherever you are. When collaboration and sharing are important, the Google Docs applications are good choices because Google includes word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation applications. You can also read PDFs and even use your tablet's built-in phone to take a picture and then add it to a document.



**Terminal Emulator:** Below the Android's graphical user interface you'll find Linux, so if you're a Linux maven you might want to modify something at the operating system level or use the operating system to perform tasks that aren't available through the GUI. If terms such as "VI" and "Grep" are meaningless, this is not an application you'll use.

**StumbleUpon:** Although this is a major time sink, StumbleUpon can be interesting and sometimes even educational. The application is free.

**Poweramp:** Android tablets have a built-in audio player but Poweramp replaces the no-frills player with something that makes listening enjoyable. For around \$15 you can add an extra 16GB of storage so there's no need to carry an Ipod. Poweramp supports most audio file formats such as MP3, MP4, M4A (Apple's format), OGG (open source), WMA, FLAC, WAV, APE, VW, AIFF (another Apple format), and TTA. It's not entirely clear what the differences are between the free and paid versions of this application but I feel the developers earned their \$5.

**What Wi-Fi signals are available? The Wi-Fi Analyzer, one of many utilities available for Android, will show you.**

**Talking Tom:** I have to classify this application as useless fun. Tom is a cat. Tickle him and he purrs. Touch is tail and he swipes at you. Poke him in the nose and he falls over. Or talk to him and he'll repeat what you say. You can also record a video of Tom talking and e-mail it to someone.

**Browsers, readers, and reference works:** Download a browser to replace or augment the built-in Browser application. Both Firefox and Opera are free.

If you use Google Earth on your desktop or notebook computer, you'll probably want the equivalent application on your tablet.

Tablets are outstanding places to keep reference materials. In addition to a dictionary, I have reference works for HTML5, PHP, Linux, and JQuery.

Many news organizations have Android applications, too, so I have quick access from any location with Wi-Fi to the *Columbus Dispatch*, *New York Times*, *Associated Press*, *CNN*, *NPR*, *Huffington Post*, *Slate*, *Columbus Business First*, *Al Jazeera*, *USA Today*, and several news aggregators that provide links to smaller newspapers. I can even read the *Bellefontaine Examiner* on my tablet.

## Personal Productivity?

TURN WAITING TIME INTO USEFUL TIME. I RECENTLY HAD A 6AM APPOINTMENT FOR SOME MINOR AUTO SERVICE AND I WAITED AT THE DEALERSHIP. IN THE WAITING ROOM, I TURNED ON THE TABLET AND USED IT TO CONNECT TO THE DEALER'S FREE OPEN WI-FI SERVICE.

While waiting, I read several articles from *Slate*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Toronto Star*, and a couple of tech publications.


Instead of spending an hour sitting comatose in front of the TV screen (fortunately none of the other early morning patrons felt inclined to turn it on) I was able to do the same thing I might have been doing had I been at home on a vacation day.

## No Notebooks or Desktops?

TABLETS ARE BY FAR THE MOST USABLE HAND-HELD DEVICES YET BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO USE ONE TO EDIT VIDEO OR AUDIO, TO DEVELOP A WEBSITE, TO DO ANY SERIOUS DATABASE WORK, OR TO EDIT A MANUSCRIPT.

Tablets are handy when it comes to providing quick, easy, and portable access to data. They are far less capable for tasks that require a lot of interaction with the device.

Tablets don't have the power needed for many of the tasks I listed. Not yet, anyway, but I'm being careful not to say that the time won't come. Ω



**n-Lighten.us**  
Division of William Blinn Communications

179 Caren Ave., Worthington, Ohio 43085  
614/859.9359 • www.n-lighten.us