BEN 23 – The End of the PC?

Discussion Questions

1. How often do you buy a new computer, and what do you use it for?

2. Do you consider smartphones or tablets to a replacement for, or a supplement to, a traditional computer?

3. What trends do you expect to see with computers and mobile technology in the coming years?

Transcript

It wasn't long ago that many of us could count on a new computer every three years or so. With both hardware and software upgrades **coming in leaps and bounds**, consumers and businesses **sought** to replace **obsolete** machines for shiny new **boxes**. However, as Forbes explains, things have changed dramatically:

PC shipments are down 14% **year-over-year** despite the launch of Windows 8. While Microsoft and its **fans** might not want to **admit** it yet, Windows 8 is a **flop**. The failure to **generate** new **sales** is bad; the acceleration of the declining trend in PC shipments is **downright awful**.

Users have been **less than impressed** with the new operating system, and as CNET reports, Microsoft may need to rethink its approach if it hopes to **reinvigorate** sales:

While some consumers appreciate the new **form factors** and **touchscreen capabilities** of Windows 8, the **radical** changes to the **user interface**, removal of the familiar Start button, and the costs associated with touch have made Windows PCs a less attractive alternative.

The disappointing results **shocked** many industry insiders, as a major OS release usually leads to higher sales. As Techrepublic suggests, it could be that users are simply satisfied with what they already have:

In years past, an OS upgrade **prompted brisk** PC **sales** as consumers and enterprises **alike** timed their hardware updates to **Redmond's latest and greatest**. Just as recent hardware has been "good enough" for many users, Windows 7 is **hitting the** same **mark** on the OS **front**.

As the Slate noted, computers have improved to the point that they're simply "too good", and a **strategic shift** by Microsoft in recent years means that you no longer need to buy a new machine in order to take advantage of each new operating system:

In the past, you had to replace your computer every few years or else it would become hopelessly **bogged down** trying to deal with the latest desktop applications and operating systems. The result is that PCs have become more **durable** than smartphones and tablets, which are still **puny** enough in their powers that you have to upgrade them regularly.

With the tablet market **on its way** to becoming a $64B industry, consumers are buying new computers less frequently. From CNN:

Even if they won't **render** the PC obsolete, the rise of tablets and smartphones have certainly made them less necessary in our day-to-day lives. They are no longer just an **accessory** to the PC. In many cases, they're a **functional alternative**.

For many, computers are not just laptops and desktops, but also the devices in their pockets. The ability to stay **connected-on-the-go** has an appeal that many find difficult to resist, as Cloudtweak reports:

The **so-called** "death of the PC" is **based on** the increasing popularity and usefulness of mobile devices and **cloud computing**. It is **sexy** and fun to have all of your data **at your fingertips**, and an amazing amount of work can be done with a smartphone and a **Wi-Fi hub** or any other link to the Internet.

Though we won't see business users **dumping** their laptops any time soon, the addition of tablets and smartphones could cause laptops **to fall by the wayside.** The Huffington Post had this to say:

The **severity** of the decline in the market is further evidence that the "post-PC era" **heralded** several years ago by Steve Jobs, was not an **empty slogan**. Jobs predicted that PCs would **endure**, but that smartphones and tablets would become the devices people **favored** for most of their computing needs.

Over the past few years, we have seen a **fundamental shift** in the tech sector. More people are **flocking** to mobile technologies. As the Examiner concludes, while it may seem as though mobile is winning, it may be **premature** to say that PCs are going to **die out** completely:

While the desktop computer will never go away completely in the **professional space**, we may see it **vanish** from the **consumer stage**. Hopefully companies like Microsoft and Apple can find ways to **reinvent** the PC, so it can continue to be a **player** in the homes of consumers around the world.

Vocabulary

(To come) In leaps and bounds: Rapidly or by large movements forward; "The profits of my company are increasing by leaps and bounds."

Sought: Past form of 'to seek'; search or look for something; "I have always sought to create the best language learning materials possible for my students."

Obsolete: No longer produced or used, out of date; "10 years ago, a lot of technology became obsolete within 6 months of being produced."

Box/Beige Box: computers: Informal/slang for 'computer'.

Year-over-year: The measure of performance in one year compared to the previous year.

Fans: Supporters, followers, or enthusiasts; "Football fans in Brazil are already preparing for the World Cup in 2014."

To admit: Confess or acknowledge to be true, typically with reluctance; "It's difficult to admit when you're wrong, but the best way to learn is from your mistakes."

Flop: A significant failure; "Although her recent movies have been a huge box office success, this recent film is a giant flop; nobody will go to see it."

To generate sale: To create, make, or produce sales; "In order to generate sales, we need to develop a strong marketing plan."

Downright awful: Absolutely or simply terrible; "It wasn't just the service in the new sushi restaurant that was bad, the entire experience was downright awful. We'll never eat there again."

To be less than impressed: To be unhappy or unimpressed.

To reinvigorate: To put strength or health back in to something; "If we advertise more, it should reinvigorate sales."

Form factor: The size, configuration, or physical arrangement of a computer hardware object; "Users of the iPad mini prefer the smaller form factor to the original iPad dimensions."

Touchscreen: The ability to use an electronic device though touch interface.

Radical: Extreme, drastic, or significant; "Greg's management style is such a radical change from our old manager, but the team seems to have adapted well."

User interface: The means by which the user and a computer system interact, in particular the use of input devices and software.

To shock: To surprise, stun, or amaze; "It shocks me that someone with such little experience could be given such a great job."

To prompt: To cause to act; "News of the change in interest rates prompted the stock market to drop nearly 2%."

Brisk sales: Strong and consistent sales over a short period of time.

Alike: Similar to each other: "The three brothers were very much alike in their interests, appearance, and plans for the future."

Redmond: Location of Microsoft's development headquarters.

Latest and greatest: The most recent and also the best; "Every summer, the magazine promotes the latest and greatest technology accessories; there are so many great things!"

To hit the mark: To be correct, suitable, or successful; "She had a good business plan, but her sales presentation didn't quite hit the mark."

Front: Position or perspective; "On the staffing front, we still need to fill a few marketing positions."

Strategic shift: Carefully planned and considered change; "Their strategic shift from imports to exports should allow them to keep costs lower while also creating up to 30 new jobs."

To bog down: To slow or be impeded; "With my current project finishing at the end of the month, I'm going to be very bogged down for the next few weeks."

Durable: Tough, strong, or sturdy build; "One of the strengths of MacBook Pros are that they are extremely durable machines."

Puny: Small, tiny, or weak; "His company offers a great salary, but puny benefits."

On one's way: Moving towards or approaching; "They're well on their way to becoming the most profitable business in the country."

To render: To make, cause, or become; "The rainy weather conditions rendered travel to the mountains nearly impossible for most of the day."

Accessory: Something nonessential but desirable that contributes to an effect or result; "Travel accessories such as power adapters, SIM cards, and USB cables are essential when visiting a foreign country."

Functional alternative: Logical substitute for an idea or product that is already being used.

Connected-on-the-go: State of being in contact or communication with others, generally through the use of mobile technology.

So-called: Incorrectly termed or defined; "My so-called investors haven't given me any of the money they promised they would when we signed the contract."

To be based on: To use particular ideas or facts to make a decision, do a calculation, or develop a theory; "Prices are based on two people sharing a room."

Cloud computing: The use of computer programs and storage that are on the Internet rather than on your own computer; "In order to remain competitive and press their advantage further, small companies should look to the cloud computing revolution as a way to upgrade their technology without spending too much money."

Sexy: Highly appealing, interesting, or attractive; "In recent years, investors have shown us that startups are sexier than small businesses."

At one's fingertips: Easily available or accessible; "He has all the information he needs at his fingertips."

Wi-Fi Hub: A location or site that offers Internet access over a wireless local area network.

To dump: To dispose, get rid of, or eliminate; "After the media reported on the CEOs legal problems, many people dumped their stocks."

To fall by the wayside: To no longer be successful, important, or necessary; "Many of Wal-Mart's smaller competitors have fallen by the wayside; they simply can't compete with the prices."

Severity: Significance, importance, or degree; "Wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle or motorbike can significantly reduce the severity of head injuries."

To herald: To announce, indicate, or proclaim; "Since he started working for the company he has always been heralded as the most likely person to replace the CFO."

Empty slogan: A false/inaccurate phrase expressing the goals or nature of an enterprise, organization, or candidate.

To endure: To tolerate, sustain, or withstand; "After enduring such difficult market conditions for nearly 5 years, Marco was finally able to find a job doing what he loved."

To favor: To prefer or support; "The CEO clearly favors cutting costs while market conditions are so poor."

Fundamental shift: Significant or drastic change in the direction or objective of a company; "In order for some countries to regain their competitiveness, a fundamental shift in how the Eurozone's economy is managed needs to be made."

To flock: To gather or move in a large group; "Thousands of people flock to the seaside during the summer vacation."

Premature: Early or impulsive; "It's a premature announcement, but we expect the negotiations to be finalized in the next few hours."

To die out: To stop or finish being used; "Magazines and newspapers have started to die out since tables and smartphones became more popular."

Professional space: Work or business environment.

To vanish: To disappear; "At 4:30pm on Friday afternoon, everyone vanishes from the office, hoping to miss rush hour traffic."

Consumer stage: The market segment for consumers as opposed to business or companies.

To reinvent: To redo or remake completely; "After nearly going bankrupt 10 years ago, Dexter has reinvented his business and is now one of most successful companies in the market."

Player: Someone actively involved in a competitive field or process; "Apple and Google are the two biggest players in the mobile technology space."

Language Review

A. Collocations
Match the words in each column to make collocations from today's lesson. (Look for collocations specific to this lesson, as more than one answer is possible for some.)

1. Downright	a. Impressed	
2. Consumer	b. Slogan	
3. Professional	c. Alternative	
4. Fundamental	d. Awful	
5. Functional	e. Shift	
6. Less than	f. Stage	
7. Empty	g. Space	

B. Review Quiz

1. According to the article, which of the following is NOT a reason for the drop in PC sales?

    a. Increased demand for Windows 8
    b. Better hardware and software
    c. Greater selection of tablets and smartphones
    d. Cloud computing

2. Which is NOT a reason for people to choose tablets or smartphones over traditional computers.

    a. They can always be connected
    b. Tablets and smartphones can supplement PCs
    c. PCs last longer now than they used to
    d. Tablets and smartphones generally have better hardware and software

3. "Let's keep things simple; we're not trying to _____ the wheel!"

    a. Vanish
    b. Render
    c. Reinvent
    d. Reinvigorate

4. "My computer has been really _____ recently. I think I may have a virus."

    a. Obsolete
    b. Boggy
    c. Shiny
    d. Shifty

5. "Overall, his performance during the presentation was less than _____."

    a. Impressing
    b. Impressed
    c. Impressively
    d. Impressive

6. Their campaign really _____ and they failed to get the support of the voters as they had hoped.

    a. Hit the mark
    b. Missed the mark
    c. Hits the mark
    d. Misses the mark

7. The financial crisis has been a test of our _____ for nearly 5 years.

    a. Endurance
    b. Durable
    c. Endure
    d. Durably

8. Our new business plan is _____ different than the one we prepared when we started in 2009.

    a. Seeking
    b. Rendered
    c. Radically
    d. Prematurely

Answers

A. Collocations

1. Downright	a. Impressed	**Downright awful**
2. Consumer	b. Slogan	**Consumer space/stage**
3. Professional	c. Alternative	**Professional space/stage**
4. Fundamental	d. Awful	**Fundamental shift**
5. Functional	e. Shift	**Functional alternative**
6. Less than	f. Stage	**Less than impressed**
7. Empty	g. Space	**Empty Slogan**

B. Review Quiz

1. A; 2. D; 3. C; 4. B; 5. D; 6. B; 7. A; 8. C

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice:**

Launch Quiz