



iPad, uPad, theyPad?

IN COMMON WITH EVERYONE else, Tek Elements noticed - the build up to the iPad could not have been more extreme. For weeks, Apple telegraphed the announcement while at the same time saying little or nothing to confirm or deny rumors. Geeks, Nerds and the Bloggisphere went wild with speculation, contributing to the kind of excitement seldom seen in the Tek world. Was it worth it – did Apple deliver?

For the real answer, we will need to wait until April when the iPad is available to buy. For sure, this was masterful viral marketing in the true Apple tradition. There were carefully leaked tidbits from “informed insiders” which were carefully mulled over but which we were all cautious about accepting – after all everyone knows that Apple jealously guards information. Virtually every analyst, blogger and tech writer had some comment or other to make about the Tablet’s functionality, form factor, software etc.

Did they get it right? Does it matter? What is certain is that few if any companies can be assured of this level of free marketing – it is a Marcom practitioner’s dream.

Hence when Steve Jobs and team announced the iPad and gave demos the level of expectation was intense. It would have been near impossible for Apple to have satisfied either the blogisphere or the techies out there. Does this mean iPad is another Newton or Lisa - doomed to obscurity? Or worse still, will the final judgment be that it is just another tablet... It is hard when reality

meets fiction especially when we are talking about Apple.

Back on Planet Earth, let’s think back to the iPhone 2G launch. Never was a smartphone more eagerly awaited – and the lines round the corners at every sales outlet confirmed that the public was very eager indeed. Let’s remember that the 2G product came under very heavy criticism back then (from the same tech and blog community which is critical about the iPad) – not 3G, no cut and paste, little or no multi-tasking, no MMS, etc. None of these were really relevant.

In the end, iPhone changed the market for mobile telephones not because of its technology, design or functionality but because of the AppStore. All of a sudden, there were lots of good things a customer could do with the device which were easy to find. Thousands of applications were written specifically for the iPhone and were easy to discover via a know platform, the AppStore “corner” of iTunes. The device became a platform in a way that Symbian and Windows Mobile devices never had. Better – it appealed to consumers who had the disposable income to acquire but never thought to spend so much on a phone before.

Whether the iPad has functionality “lacks” (no Flash support, camera or firewire port, questionable multi-tasking, etc) or not, these in and of themselves are unlikely to hold it back. Fact is, iPad is a beautiful looking device likely to serve its purpose effectively. Of course the question is what is its purpose and how well will it serve it?



Apple's success in this marketplace will turn primarily on the availability of content and applications that will attract users... For this, the AppStore and book self will be the key.

First and foremost there needs to be a great selection of ebooks (ibooks?), newspapers, periodicals and videos that customers want to buy at a price they are willing to pay. We understand that Apple has extended the AppStore revenue model to this segment – certainly a very attractive option for Publishers. Apple will also need Electronic Arts and the other large game producers to get busy creating/recreating games for the platform. Resizing iPhone apps will not do the iPad justice. Users will want to find games and other applications that make maximum use of the iPad's functionality.

Even more important will be the “small developer” community – individuals and small companies that develop for the iPad following the same pattern as they did for the iPhone. The sheer diversity of applications for iPhone is mind-boggling and is the real iPhone advantage ... Apple really needs iPad users to be able to find the same level of choice.

For us all to iPad and for the device to capture the public imagination like the iPhone did the application community will be the key. Apple has ensured that the price is right and had created the conditions for success. Now we shall have to wait and see what the public verdict is.

Tek Elements believes that ultimately the iPad is bound to succeed – and should lead to a significant expansion of the market for a device class which until now has been very underdeveloped. It is not that Amazon and the Netbook OEMs

have failed, just that they have yet to exploit the full potential for this class of device.

ABOUT TEK ELEMENTS:

We are a highly nimble consulting firm serving telecommunications and information technology clients from our offices in Silicon Valley California and Johannesburg South Africa. Since our foundation in 2005, we have been helping clients looking for assistance with Go to Market, Marketing, Competitive Analysis, Partnering, Sales Readiness and Emerging Market strategies & tactics. Our advice is both analytical and actionable, leading to a high degree of implementation success.

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