
[Is the PC dead? No. But someone would like to murder it.
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Many "news" about the imminent death of PC are appearing around despite its 30th birthday, replaced by smartphones and tablets. What's true in that? Let's look for a moment at the past history, and the *personal* computer revolutions. Before that there was centralized systems from which you could rent some processing time and highly proprietary systems using software paid yearly (clouds, anyone?), and consumer electronics were made by highly specialized devices that could usually only *consume proprietary* contents. Media production and distribution was strictly controlled, allowing for huge revenues.

The first *personal computer* wave, the Commodores, Sinclairs & C. machines was still mostly proprietary systems and still very little powerful, but paved the way. For the first time, users had a device that could be expanded by users themselves to perform tasks and produce contents that weren't even envisioned by the device maker. The IBM PC, its standard hardware architecture, and the fact it was allowed to *clone* it, gave people a common platform to build upon. When coupled later with the worldwide network called the Internet, the genius was out of the bottle.

Users discovered they could not only be *passive consumer of expensive contents*, but they could actually produce their own contents, and distribute them worldwide. I'm not speaking of software only, hacking and programming was one of the early activities, but as computers became more powerful and a large number of peripherals were added to accomplish specific tasks (music, visual arts, games and simulations, etc.) they became compelling for a wider audience that for the first time had a way to produce professional contents without a huge investment.

For some industries, especially the media one, it was a shock. People started to *consume* less media controlled contents (especially newspapers and TV, but not only) *produce* more, and even *consume* contents not controlled by the media industry. Being now able to produce identical copies of digital contents (and distribute them) worsened of course the situation.

Enter the smartphones and tablets. Soon it was realized these are the perfect *consumer* devices. Apple even paved the way of a device almost totally controlled by its maker, where only Apple approved applications and contents could be run without "jailbreaking" it. The highly lucrative content production industry understood the genius could be put again in the bottle. All the freedom of these devices is you can carry them around easily, but that's all. There are no other degrees of freedom.

You're not going to create original software or contents on them (you would need a PC, and probably pass the device maker approval process also), and even if you're going to publish some original content elsewhere you are less likely to setup your own site, maybe on your own machine. Probably you're going to use an existing infrastructure for which you may have to pay for (money or giving them almost total control of your data..), after all all that overvalued sites where investors put a lot of money have to find a way for profit, haven't they? To find new ways to use your expensive device,

you need to keep on buying new apps, because the strict controls placed upon applications stop any other way to augment and improve it.

But to accomplish that they have to *murder the personal computer*. They have to persuade you you don't need such a powerful machine. Especially you do not need to create newer software and contents yourself. All you need is a stylish - to stimulate your *feel good factor* - device you don't control, and doesn't let you do anything but to *consume* contents, better if you have to pay for them. Only this way they can put the clock hands thirty years back, and return to a market that allowed them to maximize their revenues with very little effort to deliver good products - they left and will leave very little choice, take that or nothing.

That's why news about the imminent death of the PC are spread around. Don't get me wrong, I am not a Luddite against smartphones and tablets (actually, I got my first smartphone in 2002... yes, they've been around for almost ten years already), they are good auxiliary devices and there are times when you don't ask any more than being a *consumer*. But I will never be without a machine that let me take control and create fully on my own.

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