

Dell Confirms Plans to Enter Tablet PC Market

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Dell has confirmed that it will enter the tablet PC market later this year with a Latitude tablet PC.

In a video file embedded in its [corporate blog](#), Jeff Clarke, senior vice president and general manager of Dell's business products group confirmed the notebook, holding up what was apparently a prototype or production sample.

"I'm here to confirm we are entering the market and we will enter that market later this year with a Latitude tablet PC," Clarke said. "That product is designed specifically for the education, healthcare and corporate marketplace."

Since Dell was one of the few companies not to have sold a tablet PC, speculation was rife that the company would eventually enter the marketplace. Fujitsu recently unveiled its own convertible tablet, the FMV-U8240. Likewise, GETAC recently launched a ruggedized tablet, the V100, built around a fanless design that is based upon the 1.2 GHz Intel Core Duo microprocessor.

The market is relatively tiny, however; according to IDC, convertible tablet PC unit shipments will reach more than one million this year and more than four million by 2010. That compares to about 72.6 million notebook PCs sold during the same period, according to Research and Markets.

Dell's reluctance to enter the market dates all the way back to 2001, when Microsoft's Bill Gates announced the product at the Comdex trade show. There, Dell founder Michael Dell questioned the need for it.

"Go back to the pen PC phenomenon about 10 years ago. Where were all those customers for the pen PC when it was finally introduced?" Dell asked. "You know, making a Tablet PC is not very hard. Find me customers that want to buy it; now that's what Comdex is all about and that's what companies are trying to figure out."

Now, Dell has done "a lot of engineering" that will make the new Latitude "one of the lightest-weight convertible tablets in the marketplace," Clarke said.

"We have spent considerable time working on the interface to make it easy to use, where it has leadership technology in its pen and touch interface," Clarke added. "Technology and customer and usage models have evolved to the point to make it right for Dell to enter the marketplace. We're excited, and everybody, we're coming."

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