

Microsoft to kick off Office 2010 in June

December 4 2009, By Sharon Pian Chan

When Microsoft starts selling Office 2010 next year, the company will take its workhorse software suite and move it one step closer to its vision of cloud computing.

The company confirmed Tuesday that the [software](#) will launch in June, without a specific date.

In a major shift, the launch will include Office Web Apps -- free Web versions of word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software -- to compete with Google Docs. [Microsoft](#) has also said it will release a new version of Office Mobile for smartphones.

Those steps represent a branching out of the Office suite as computing moves increasingly beyond the personal computer and toward the so-called cloud, where work is done on the Web, with the data and applications stored in distant servers.

Test versions of Office 2010, also known as a beta release, are now available for anyone to download from Microsoft's Web site to try out.

Office is made by Microsoft Business division, which accounted for 32 percent of the company's sales in its 2009 fiscal year, or \$18.9 billion. The Office 2010 release will also include new versions of SharePoint Server, Visio and Project.

"People have historically thought of Office as a desktop or PC thing. With 2010 we are really focused on giving that productivity experience

across the PC and browser," Takeshi Numoto, corporate vice president for [Microsoft Office](#) marketing, said in an interview last month.

The company has said its vision for the future of computing is three screens connected by a cloud -- the PC, the television and the phone. In the case of Office, though, the company substitutes the Web browser for the television.

Matt Rosoff, an analyst at independent Kirkland research firm Directions on Microsoft, said the enemy of Office is not Google, but the Office clunker sitting in the garage.

"The biggest threat is that companies will look at the current version they have and say, 'It works good enough. Why buy a new version?'" he said.

Rosoff considers Office 2010 an "incremental" improvement over the last version, Office 2007, which redesigned its menu system with a graphical ribbon bar. He said some companies are still using Office 2003.

Rosoff does not think [Google Docs](#) is a short-term threat to Microsoft, given how many more features Office has.

"While ([Google](#) Docs) has features that a lot of people use, for a lot of users of Office there's one particular feature that may be particularly obscure, but it's the one they need," he said.

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