iPad neat, but I'm waiting for ver. 2.0

January 30 2010, By Troy Wolverton

After playing with Apple's iPad at its press debut Wednesday, I want to buy one -- just not yet. One of technology's truisms is that version 2.0 is almost always much better than version 1.0. So it's usually a good idea to wait.

I followed that strategy with the iPhone, waiting until Apple came out with a version that included high-speed 3G networking. I'm betting the same strategy is sound for the iPad. There's a lot to like about the iPad, but it's missing some important features, including support for Adobe's Flash and the ability to run more than one program at once.

But first let me tell you what I like about it. It's got a beautiful 9.7-inch screen, is lightweight and feels good in the hand. It works much like an iPhone or iPod touch, so many people will already know how to interact

with it. And it will be able to use nearly all of the programs that run on those devices.

Best of all, Apple is charging reasonable prices for it and negotiated with AT&T to offer low-cost data networking charges.

I can see buying an iPad as a second computer. I already use my iPhone to surf the Web when I'm at home because I always have it on me, it's easier to handle than my laptop and I don't have to plug it in.

The iPad would be even better in this role, offering much the same portability but with a much bigger screen.

Likewise, I can imagine using it to read newspapers or books. I haven't been impressed with other e-book readers, such as Amazon's Kindle. The screen technology most of those readers use doesn't allow them to display colors and is slow in turning pages.

In contrast, the iPad's e-book reader is full-color and fast. One interesting application demonstrated at Apple's event was a newspaper article that had a video embedded within it. Someone reading the article could watch the video without having to load a new page. That's something you can't do on a typical e-reader.

I also can envision playing games on the iPad. I play games on my iPhone, but the screen often seems cramped, as it does when I Web surf.

The iPad's big screen has plenty of space to use the touch-screen controls without obscuring the action. It's also big enough for multiplayer games like chess or football.

I can also see myself using the iPad as a portable video player. With 10 hours of battery life and plenty of storage capacity, I could load it up for

a long car or plane trip, giving me or my kids plenty to watch.

But despite all the uses I see for an iPad, I think I'd be annoyed with what Apple left out.

One of the main things people are going to want to do with the iPad is surf the Web. But because it doesn't support Flash, they won't be able to see much of the content that's out there, including videos from Hulu or many online games.

Another thing iPad users won't be able to do is listen to Pandora Internet radio while surfing the Web. And if they want to switch between applications, they'll have to continuously close and reopen them.

That's because the iPad, like its iPhone and iPod touch siblings, doesn't multitask. That's unfortunate, because the ability to run more than one program at once is an expected feature of nearly every other modern operating system -- and a big part of how people have used computers for years. Even the lowly netbooks that Apple CEO Steve Jobs likes to disparage allow you to run a Web browser and check your e-mail at the same time.

Another thing missing from the iPad is a front-facing digital camera like Apple builds into its laptop computers. So you can't make video calls, which is potentially one of the killer apps for tablets such as the iPad.

Apple also apparently didn't build into the iPad an easy, wireless way to project what's on the device to a big-screen TV.

I expect Apple to address at least some of these shortcomings soon. I'll be ready and waiting when it does.

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Citation: iPad neat, but I'm waiting for ver. 2.0 (2010, January 30) retrieved 28 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2010-01-ipad-neat-im-ver.html

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