

Microsoft shows off Windows tablets at gadget show

January 7 2010, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer



File photo shows a model posing with a Hewlett-Packard tablet PC. Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer has unveiled a new tablet computer from Hewlett-Packard and announced closer integration with the world's top computer manufacturer.

(AP) -- Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer showed off a new touch-screen, tablet-style computer from Hewlett-Packard Co., the first of several such devices expected to be unveiled this month.

The tablet - also known as a slate, a one-piece portable computer without a physical [keyboard](#) - was one of several new PCs Ballmer demonstrated Wednesday as he delivered Microsoft Corp.'s customary keynote presentation on the eve of the International [Consumer Electronics Show](#) in Las Vegas.

During the talk, which was shown live over the Web, Ballmer said the HP tablet will be available later this year. He also gave a glimpse of two similar devices from Archos and Pegatron Corp.

Tablet-style computers that run Windows have been available for a decade, but HP's new machine is bound to draw extra attention thanks to expectations that Apple Inc. will launch a similar device later this month.

Apple, notoriously secretive about upcoming products, has not commented on the matter. But given the iPhone's success, which propelled competitors to come out with copycat touch-screen phones and centralized "app" stores to sell add-on software, all eyes are on Apple to define what a slate or tablet-style computer should look like and how it will be used.



Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer gives the keynote address at the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010. (AP Photo/Laura Rauch)

Robbie Bach, president of Microsoft's entertainment and devices division, announced that Natal, new technology that lets video game players control the action by moving their whole bodies instead of using

a joystick, will go on sale for the Xbox console in time for this year's holiday shopping season.

Bach said in an interview that devices built for touch, gestures and other so-called natural user interfaces will become much more mainstream in the next few years. While Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates has for years said the same thing, Bach says computer science and hardware technology are now sophisticated enough to support Gates' and other visionaries' big ideas.

Bach also called out some of the big-name Xbox 360 video games that will launch in 2010, including the next installment of the popular "Halo" franchise, and unveiled Game Room, which will let Xbox users play favorite early video games from the Atari and arcade era. More than 39 million people now own Xbox 360 consoles.

[Microsoft](#) also said it forged a new search distribution deal with HP that will make the company's Bing search site and MSN.com content portal the default search engine and Web home page on new HP computers sold in 42 countries.

The software maker has signed similar deals in the past, including one with HP in 2008 that made Live Search, Bing's predecessor technology, the default on computers sold in the U.S. and Canada. People who buy such computers can still change their preferred search engine to something else.

Ballmer announced a new version of Mediaroom, its technology that delivers TV over the Internet on such services as AT&T Inc.'s U-verse system. The newest version of Mediaroom will let subscribers watch live and recorded TV and video-on-demand on Windows computers and phones and through Xbox 360 consoles, in addition to a set-top box. It will work over regular broadband, not just special fiber connections.

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Citation: Microsoft shows off Windows tablets at gadget show (2010, January 7) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-microsoft-windows-tablets-gadget.html>

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