

HP dabbling with Windows 7 tablet computer

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The word from the US-based computer giant came as speculation mounted that HP had abandoned a Windows 7 "slate" in favor of a tablet computer based on an operating system from freshly-acquired Palm.

"In reference to a Windows 7-based slate, we are in customer evaluations now and will make a determination soon on the next step," HP spokeswoman Marlene Somsak told AFP.

Customer evaluations could involve providing a prototype HP slate to businesses to get feedback and learn how they might use it.

Microsoft chief executive [Steve Ballmer](#) said last week that the technology titan is teaming up with nearly two dozen hardware makers to release Windows-based tablet computers, devices like Apple's popular [iPad](#).

"This year one of the most important things that we will do in the smart device category is really push forward with Windows 7-based slates and [Windows 7](#) phones," Ballmer said.

The list of potential Windows 7-based slate partners given by Ballmer included HP, Lenovo, Asus, Dell, Samsung, Toshiba, and Sony.

Apple has sold more than three million iPads since it went on sale in April and Microsoft and other technology giants have been seeking to develop products to rival the touchscreen device from the California gadget maker.

Microsoft in April sidelined a "Courier" project said to be focused on building a twin-screen [tablet computer](#) that could be used for entertainment and work.

That same month, HP made a deal to buy struggling US mobile phone maker Palm for 1.2 billion dollars in a bid to become a player in the fast-growing smartphone market.

HP executive vice president Todd Bradley said at the time that the widely praised Palm webOS mobile operating system would allow HP to expand "our breadth of products" from smartphones to netbooks to "slate," or tablet, computers.

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