

Weak growth seen in PC shipments this year: Gartner

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A woman shops for a computer at a Best Buy store in 2009 in Miami, Florida. Personal computer shipments are expected to remain weak this year amid growing competition from tablets and even high-powered smartphones, research company Gartner said Thursday.

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Gartner said worldwide PC shipments are expected to grow 4.4 percent in 2012 to 368 million units, better than just 0.5 percent last year but far from the historic highs of the recent past.

The research firm said it expects global PC shipments of more than 400 million units next year.

"PC shipments will remain weak in 2012, as the PC market plays catch up in bringing a new level of innovation that consumers want to see in devices they purchase," [Gartner research](#) director Ranjit Atwal said.

"The real question is whether Windows 8 (Microsoft's upcoming operating system) and ultrabooks will create the compelling offering that gets the earlier adopter of devices excited about PCs again," Atwal said.

Apple released its third-generation iPad on Wednesday and chief executive [Tim Cook](#) said his California-based company sold more iPads last quarter than any single [PC manufacturer](#).

Atwal said PCs will face more competition not only from the new [iPad](#) but from tablets powered by operating systems from [Android](#) and Microsoft.

"The use of applications such as email, [social networking](#) and Internet access, that were traditionally the domain of the PC, are now being used across media tablets and smartphones, making these devices in some cases more valued and attractive propositions," Atwal said.

"Consumers will now look at a task that they have to perform, and they will determine which device will allow them to perform such a task in the most effective, fun and convenient way," he said. "The device has to meet the user needs not the other way round."

Gartner said it expects the slim, lightweight laptops known as ultrabooks to "garner greater attention in the latter half of 2012, as the industry looks for this platform to reinvigorate the [mobile PC](#) form factor."

PC manufacturers will also be looking to emerging markets for growth.

"Emerging markets are key to driving worldwide PC growth in both the

short and long-term, and our expectation is that 2012 and then 2013 onwards will be supported by growth in emerging markets as their share increases from just over 50 percent in 2011 to nearly 70 percent in 2016," Atwal said.

"Emerging markets have very low PC penetration and even with the availability of other devices we still expect a steady uptake of PCs."

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