

Review: Samsung sees tablets' future in business

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While tablets are still largely thought of as consumer devices, their future may be as business machines.

Count Samsung among the manufacturers pushing tablets in that direction. It recently released the Galaxy Note Pro 12.2, which includes a suite of features designed to appeal to businesses and office workers.

The innovations are intriguing, but too often they come across as incomplete or half-baked.

The "12.2" in the Note Pro's name stands for the size, in inches, of its screen, which is also the first thing you notice about it. The display is about the same size you'd find on an average notebook computer and is nearly 50 percent larger than that of Apple's iPad Air.

There are obvious trade-offs that come with the larger screen. Samsung's gadget is about 50 percent heavier than the Air. It doesn't fit easily inside the average purse, and it's awkward to hold with one hand.

But there are definite benefits, too. The larger screen makes it easier to view documents as you write or edit them, and gives you a more immersive experience when watching videos.

A larger device also provides room for longer-lasting battery. Samsung says the Galaxy Note Pro should last up to about 13 hours on a charge with active use, compared to about 10 hours for the iPad Air.

One way Samsung has tried to take advantage of the large screen is by allowing users to display multiple applications at the same time. In fact, it provides users two methods to do this.

Users can divide the screen into as many as four areas with a single app visible in each one. This method resembles the Snap feature in Windows 8. The other method looks a lot like what you can do on a typical PC - apps run in resizable windows that you can stack on top of one another or move around.

The ability to view multiple apps at the same time goes a long way toward making a tablet a more capable office device. You can switch from one application to another without having to go back to a home

screen or to a "open applications" area. And you can simply drag and drop text, picture or graphics from one application to another, something you can't do on an iPad.

But the multitasking features on the Galaxy Note Pro feel a bit rough. They only work with a handful of applications that have been customized to run in windows. For example, you can split your screen between the Facebook and Twitter apps, but LinkedIn and Google Plus can only run full-screen.

And the two different multitasking methods feel disconnected. There's no direct way, for example, to turn a windowed application into a split-screen one or vice versa. Once an app is running full screen, there's no way to shrink into a windowed application. And you can't close a minimized application without opening it back up again.

Another business feature Samsung has included with the Galaxy Note Pro is a productivity suite from a company called Hancom. It includes a word processor, a spreadsheet program and a presentation application, all of which work like, and are largely compatible with, Microsoft's Office. Indeed, the only Office document the Hancom apps had trouble displaying in my tests was a Word file with an extraordinarily complicated layout.

The Hancom programs work mostly well. You can attach a wireless keyboard and mouse to the Galaxy Note Pro and use the suite much as you would Office on a notebook or desktop computer.

The suite did have a few bugs and shortcomings, though. The word processing app crashed on me a couple of times and wouldn't allow me, when I had it in split-screen mode, to drag a picture into it from the tablet's gallery app. Also, there's no way to open files from [cloud storage](#) services such as Dropbox from within the Hancom apps. Instead, you

have to open the files from the cloud storage apps.

Samsung has included a few other business-type applications on the Galaxy Note Pro, most notably one called e-Meeting. The app allows users in the same conference room to view, annotate and edit the same electronic document. It's a way of guaranteeing that everyone in a meeting is on the same page, literally.

Unfortunately, the app only works on certain Samsung tablets; you can't view the same document if you've got an iPad, a Windows machine, another Android tablet or even a Samsung Galaxy phone. And you have to be on the same Wi-Fi network to share the app; if you happen to be a remote worker, you'll be left out.

The Galaxy Note Pro 12.2 offers a glimpse at how tablets are evolving into business machines. Unfortunately, it also shows how that transformation is still a work in progress.

What: Samsung Galaxy

Note Pro 12.2

Likes: Large, super high-resolution screen; Office-compatible productivity suite; ability to display multiple apps at once; long battery life; fast processor

Dislikes: Relatively heavy and bulky; productivity suite isn't well integrated with cloud storage services; multitasking features only work with a handful of apps; e-Meeting feature only works with certain Samsung tablets

Specs: 8-core processor; 12.2-inch, 2560 x 1600 pixel screen; 2-megapixel front and 8-megapixel rear cameras.

Price: For Wi-Fi only models, \$650 for 32-gigabyte and \$750 for 64-gigabyte versions. For 32-gigabyte Verizon LTE version, \$750 with two-year contract.

Web: samsung.com

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