

Windows Phone 8 fades out as Microsoft mulls mobile strategy

July 13 2017, by Glenn Chapman



Microsoft Corporate Vice President Joe Belfiore shows off features of Windows Phone 8 in 2012. The tech giant is ending support for that version of the system, amid speculation on its next move in mobile

Microsoft has ended support for its Windows 8 smartphones, as the US tech giant focuses on other segments, amid ongoing speculation about its strategy for mobile.

Users of Windows-powered phones—which have failed badly against rivals from Apple and Google Android—were invited to upgrade to its latest Windows 10 version after Microsoft officially stopped supporting the earlier version on Wednesday.

But Microsoft, which is now concentrating on business services, cloud computing, augmented reality, remains a part of the mobile landscape with applications, digital assistants and other offerings.

"I think it's the death of Windows 8 phones; not the death of Microsoft's offerings in mobility," said Moor Insights and Strategy principal analyst Patrick Moorhead.

"Microsoft is very active in mobility, just not active in [phone](#) devices."

Microsoft in May unveiled a forthcoming Windows update aimed at keeping its desktop and laptop computers at the heart of lifestyles increasing reliant on smartphones.

Enhancements to the widely used operating system to roll out later this year are designed to make applications built on Microsoft technology work more harmoniously across an array of internet-linked devices, according to demonstrations given at the company's Build developers conference in Seattle.

All your devices

One key addition of the Windows 10 Fall update will allow people to leave what they are doing on one device and pick up where they left off on another—be it a Windows, Apple, or Android driven machine.

Windows personal computers "will love all your devices," said Microsoft operating systems group corporate vice president Joe Belfiore.



Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, seen in 2016, is focusing the tech giant on services and Windows 10, which can integrate a variety of devices

Windows 10 will be able to integrate with a wide range of devices, including smartphones, tablets and virtual or augmented reality gear, executives said.

Microsoft has held firm that it has not given up on the mobile market, but in the interim is updating Windows to remain relevant in a smartphone-centric world.

Better tuning Windows-powered computers to mobile devices could also serve as a "bridge" to what is being heralded as the next big computing platform—mixed reality infused with artificial intelligence, according to analysts.

Microsoft is aggressively creating a mixed reality technology platform and HoloLens augmented reality gear, which Windows 10 is crafted to support.

"Microsoft has the lead on augmented reality hardware, which might take 10 years to take hold but is the point where the phone gets less important," Moorhead said.

"They will be patient."

Some reports say Microsoft could launch a Surface phone, spinning off the success of tablet computers by that same name.

While Microsoft's main business remains software and services, having its own handset would enable it to optimize and own the entire experience, much the way Apple has control over all aspects of its iPhones.

"I think that's why Microsoft would consider a Surface [device](#)," Moorhead said.

"I do think with the success they have had with Surface gives them some permission to try it again, but it would be super risky."

Meanwhile, Windows phone sales continue to fall due to a lack of new hardware partners or enthusiasm for a platform showing little life, according to industry tracker IDC, which estimated its market share at 0.1 percent in the first quarter of 2017

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