PROSYS

Tech Outlook

More Than a Tablet

Microsoft's Surface Pro 3 delivers laptop-like performance in a sleek package for business users.

Tablet devices have played a huge role in the growth of mobile computing over the past five years, providing a handy and dependable platform for users on the go. However, there has always been lingering doubt about their actual business functionality. Conventional wisdom holds that tablets are great for Internet browsing and checking email, but laptops and other full-function PCs are required to run the applications required to do serious work.

While tablets have enjoyed steady sales growth over the past five years, they haven't dislodged laptops as a trusted business tool. In a recent Microsoft survey of 2,900 mobile professionals, 41 percent said they carry both a tablet and a laptop at all times.

"Tablets are certainly here to stay, but a lot of business users still prefer the power and versatility of a laptop," said Matt Merriman, VP of Professional Services, ProSys. "The problem up to now has been that the most popular tablets aren't built for complex processing tasks, can't handle large datasets and don't work with peripherals. Those are significant disadvantages."

With Surface Pro 3, Microsoft has finally delivered the best of both platforms — a touch-enabled and lightweight tablet that packs the power and performance of a laptop.

The Apps You Want

Available in five different models with different amounts of memory and a variety of processors, the Surface Pro 3 with Windows 8.1 allows users to run their favorite desktop software,

More Than a Tablet

including the full Microsoft Office Suite, and thousands of other essential programs for business and creativity.

"So many people carry both a laptop and a tablet but really want just one device that serves all purposes," said Panos Panay, corporate vice president, Microsoft Surface. "Surface Pro 3 is the tablet that can replace your laptop — packing all the performance of a fully powered laptop into a thin, light and beautifully designed device."

The Surface Pro 3 features a remarkably sleek design, packing an enterprise-level processor and all the supporting hardware inside a case that is just a third of an inch thick. The system internals, designed in partnership with Intel, allow the system to run not only ultra-low-voltage Core i3 or i5 CPUs, but also Core i7 processors. A slim, quiet fan moves air as needed without the telltale whirring sound of the typical fan exhaust.

A 12-inch HD (2160 x 1440 pixels) display and a continuous kickstand provide the screen real estate and multiple viewing angles users want for work and play. The new Surface Pen One allows users to write naturally on the screen to mark up presentations, sign documents and take handwritten notes, as well as for drawing and design applications. Microsoft says the pen gives the most natural writing and drawing experience available on a tablet.

With an eye toward business functionality, Microsoft designed its tablet to be compatible with a wide array of peripherals and compliant with industry standards. Surface Pro 3 is equipped with a full-size USB 3.0 port for fast data transfer and can be used with a USB hub or docking station to connect to multiple peripherals such as printers, projectors or external data storage devices. It comes with other standard ports such as a MicroSD card reader, headset and microphone port, and a Mini DisplayPort for video. It also has all-day battery life, allowing up to nine hours of web browsing.

Security and Versatility

From an IT perspective, the Surface Pro 3 is also manageable and secure, allowing seamless connectivity to Windows Server-based infrastructure. Surface Pro 3 runs Windows 8.1 which means it is automatically fully integrated with the Microsoft platform. Windows' built-in services take care of essentials such as performance, security and manageability. Windows Update automatically offers the latest patches and software updates, and Windows Defender provides virus and malware protection. System Center Configuration Manager and Windows Intune provide mobile device management capabilities.

It delivers the extreme versatility users want from a mobile device, allowing them to be productive whether they are connected to the workplace network, home Internet, a public Wi-Fi network or completely offline. Surface Pro 3 supports all standard Wi-Fi networks with its built-in Marvell Wi-Fi chipset, and connects to wired Ethernet connections via a USB adaptor.

With Office 365 and OneDrive, documents are automatically synced to the device and to the cloud, so users can continue their work whether they are online or offline. Surface Pro 3 supports multiple user accounts, so users can take their apps, settings and documents with them when they log into any Surface device — delivering a personalized experience, even in a shared device environment.

Surface Pro 3 is also designed to provide a greater degree of durability than most tablet computers. It is the only device on the market with a unique magnesium alloy molded casing, which is extremely strong and three times lighter than aluminum. Because of these properties, magnesium alloys are also often used in the manufacture of racing cars. A highly compressed atom glass composition makes the display scratch resistant and better able to withstand the bumps and drops that often result in cracked or broken screens.

"The Surface Pro 3 delivers the power and performance you need to conduct business with confidence," said Merriman. "Best of all, it can be deployed, managed and secured with most of the same tools IT is using with other Windows-based endpoints. It really is the tablet that can replace your laptop."

News Briefs

Outages Vex Network Managers

Network slowdowns or outages and poorly performing applications rank as the most common issues faced by IT professionals, according to survey of more than 400 IT management professionals from 10 countries.

The survey, conducted by Kelton Research for IT performance analysis vendor TeamQuest, focused on IT optimization and data center performance. Results indicated that IT managers on average deal with eight unexpected IT issues per week, each requiring seven staff members to resolve. Network outages and slowdowns were reported by 42 percent, followed by poor application performance and availability issues, at 37 percent each. Equipment failures (36 percent) and unanticipated change requests (34 percent) round out the top five most common IT issues.

An overwhelming 95 percent of IT managers said the success of their data centers relied on both proper performance analytics and IT optimization, with close to half reporting their data center is "extremely reliant" on these. However, just 24 percent of IT managers describe their IT organization as able to predict the timing and consequences of a forecasted scenario and to identify the steps to remedy it.

"IT professionals around the globe seem to agree that their data centers are more reliant on IT optimization tools, proper capacity planning and the ability to use analytics," said Per Bauer, TeamQuest Director of Global Services. "Not only are they proving to have a significant impact throughout the enterprise, delivering on everything from preventing cloud outages to improving overall business productivity, but they are also allowing IT the time they need to focus on improvements rather than incidents."

Advances Bring RRAM Closer to Market

A breakthrough form of computer memory that could theoretically allow one to store hundreds of times more data on a smartphone or tablet is moving closer to mass production, thanks to researchers at Rice University.

Resistive random access memory (RRAM) is being developed by several companies, but fabrication usually requires high temperatures or voltages, making production difficult and expensive. The Rice researchers have shown a way to make RRAM at room temperature and with far lower voltages.

"This is a major accomplishment, and we've already been approached by companies interested in licensing this new technology," said Rice chemist James Tour.

RRAM is under development worldwide and expected to supplant flash memory technology in the marketplace within a few years because it is faster than flash and can pack far more information into less space. Several companies are making progress towards commercializing RRAM, including Crossbar, a startup that expects some of its products to be available as memory in wearable devices by 2016.

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Positive ID

Centrify Server Suite uses Active Directory to provide unified identity management across Windows, Unix and Linux servers.

Each of us has multiple identities — personal, consumer, business. To his family a man might simply be "Sam," but to his employer Sam is a complex array of user IDs, passwords and access privileges across numerous network resources and applications.

When you consider that Sam's is just one of hundreds or thousands of identities within an enterprise, you begin to understand the challenge of identity management. Faced with growing numbers of end-users who require access to IT resources, many organizations devote significant time and effort to the task of adding, changing and deleting user information and permissions.

Microsoft Active Directory handles user authentication and authorization in Windows domains but not other types of systems. In many cases, user identities must be manually updated across disparate applications and resources, leading to data entry mistakes and delays that impact productivity and increase the risk of internal security breaches. Mobile applications and the cloud add new complexities as access privileges extend beyond organizational boundaries.

"The strategic implications of identity management are even more profound, particularly in light of regulations that require strict control over information access," said Matt Merriman, VP of Professional Services, ProSys. "How do you effectively terminate access privileges that are no longer appropriate? How do you properly audit access via 'administrator,' 'root' or other privileged accounts?"

Centrify Server Suite can help alleviate these problems and streamline business processes. It uses existing Active Directory infrastructure as a centralized framework for managing user attributes, credentials and entitlements throughout the enterprise and beyond. It also provides centralized authentication and access control, role-based authorization, and privilege management, enabling policy enforcement and compliance for on-premises and cloud resources.

Border Patrol

Active Directory is one of the most widely used and well understood identify repositories. Many organizations use Active Directory for account administration, user authentication, policy management, event logging and auditing. Centrify leverages Active Directory as a bridge to Unix, Linux and Apple Macintosh systems, minimizing the time, money and effort involved in managing user accounts.

"With Centrify, Unix, Linux and Mac accounts reside in Active Directory, enabling policy-based control of configuration and security settings," Merriman said. "Administrators can centrally create, manage and delete accounts and groups for those systems, and enforce Active Directory authentication and role-based access controls. The root account can be secured because privileged access is provided through Active Directory, using credentials that are associated with a specific user in a least-access model."

Cloud computing models have created new challenges in terms of identity management. Organizations are now grappling with a new definition of "identity" — one not just contained within internal applications and data. Security and compliance policies must be applied consistently to every system within a hosted environment.

"Cloud computing offers compelling financial and operational benefits because it allows capacity to scale rapidly to support growing application demands. In order to reap those benefits, organizations need to extend access policies across public and private cloud environments as well as on-premises systems," said Merriman.

"Centrify's easy-to-deploy cloud-based service and seamless integration into Active Directory means IT can leverage existing technology, skill sets and processes to secure cloud environments. No intrusive changes to the firewall or Active Directory itself are required — corporate identity information remains centralized in Active Directory and is never replicated in the cloud."

Efficiency and Control

Regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley and HIPAA are primary drivers of identify management adoption. Sarbanes-Oxley requires that public companies have verifiable access controls surrounding financial applications and data. HIPAA requires that certain healthcare providers, insurers and related organizations establish procedures and mechanisms to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of electronic health information.

"Centrify improves security and regulatory compliance by ensuring that end-users have appropriate access to the right resources at the right times," said Merriman. "Given that employees are responsible for more than 70 percent of unauthorized access to information systems — and more than 95 percent of intrusions that result in significant financial losses — organizations can dramatically bolster security by controlling access privileges."

Identity management can also reduce IT costs. According to Gartner, a 10,000-person enterprise can achieve savings of about $3.5 million in a three-year period by implementing an automated end-user identity provisioning system, primarily by cutting thousands of hours of IT and help-desk time.

"The best identity management solutions incorporate a number of elements, including access control, password management, provisioning, single sign-on and many others," Merriman said. "Unlike individual point products that address one or two of these elements, Centrify encompasses the complete identity lifecycle, from creation through propagation, maintenance and termination, and makes users' lives easier by eliminating password sprawl."

Whether contained internally or spreading across the extended supply chain and into the cloud, identity management is becoming a near necessity for organizations with ever-increasing numbers of end-users, applications and information resources. Centrify enables organizations to reap the efficiency, security and regulatory compliance benefits of identify management using existing Active Directory infrastructure.

Chips for Today's
Mobile Workforce
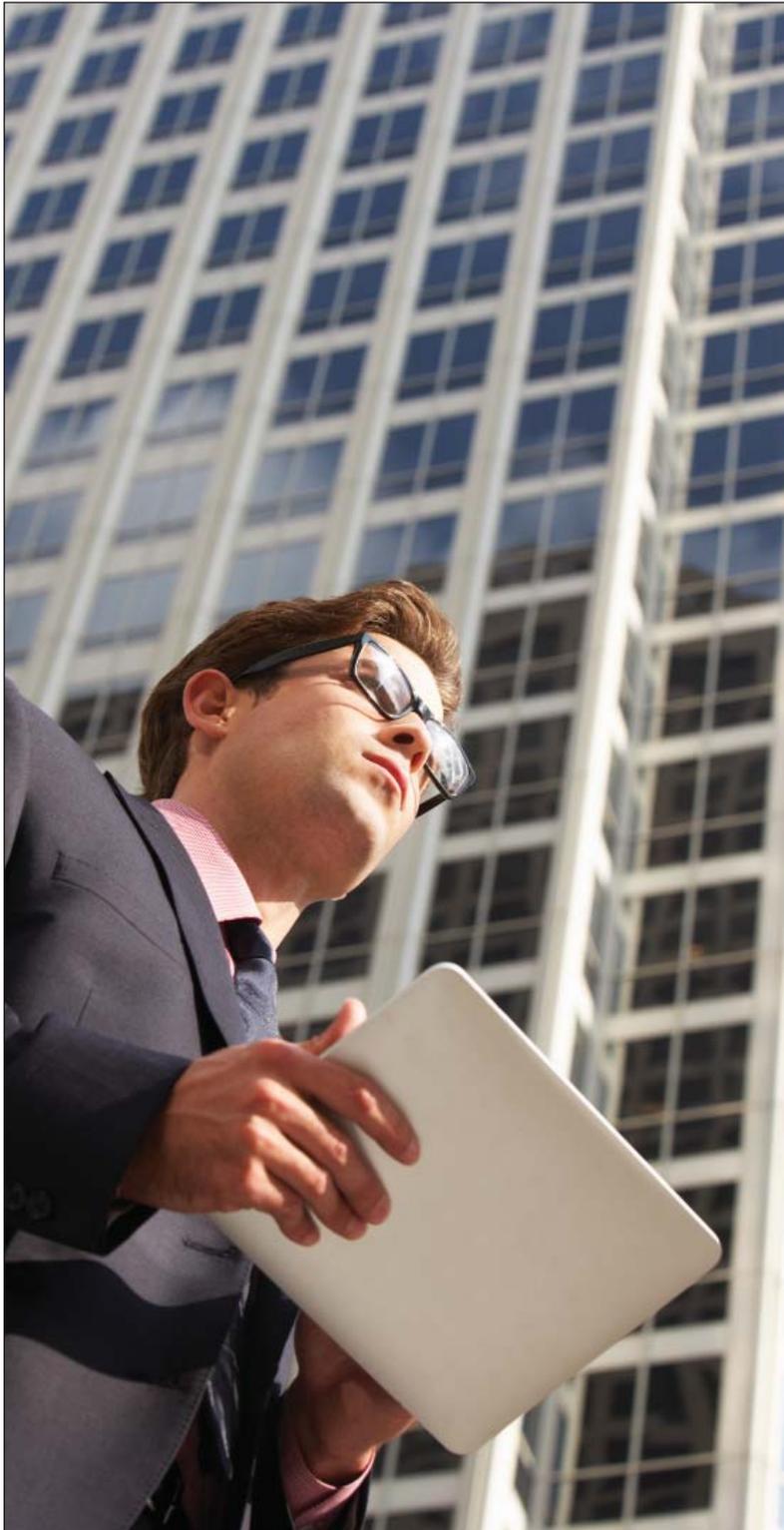
Intel's fifth-generation vPro processors deliver mobile display and docking capabilities, built-in security and improved manageability.

M ost of us are familiar with operating system updates on our PCs and mobile devices — routine maintenance that takes place at the software level. Intel has brought those capabilities down to the hardware level with its vPro chips. vPro includes Intel's Active Management Technology, which enables IT administrators to access remote PCs even if the operating system is down or the power is shut off.

Now Intel has expanded the capabilities of its vPro chips, providing cutting-edge features to meet the needs of a more mobile and dynamic workforce. Intel's fifth-generation Intel Core vPro processor family offers wireless innovations, built-in security, faster performance and improved manageability that will allow workers and companies to improve their productivity and stay competitive.

With the new fifth-generation Intel Core vPro processors, Intel addresses three specific areas to enable a better way to work and provide a better experience for users and companies: PC design innovation, wireless display and wireless docking.

Businesses can choose from a variety of never-before-seen PC designs across 2-in-1s, Ultrabooks, ultrathin clamshells and mini PCs that offer up to twice the battery life and more than twice the performance, enabling form factors that are up to three times thinner and 50 percent lighter than a laptop PC from just four years ago.

Device Innovation

Intel Pro Wireless Display makes every presentation and conference room a cable-free zone. While delivering enhanced usability for business users with flexible presenter controls and privacy,

it also supports key IT requirements such as wireless channel management to mitigate network congestion risk and security vulnerabilities, and the ability to efficiently update and manage adapters remotely.

Intel Wireless Docking allows users to be connected and ready to work the moment they walk up to their desk. This secure and manageable, wire-free technology based on Intel Wireless Gigabit technology enables systems to automatically dock to monitors, keyboards, mice and USB accessories and eliminates the need for traditional mechanical docks.

"Our goal is to enable all users to simply work better by offsetting the growing challenges of today's businesses," said Tom Garrison, vice president and general manager of Intel's Business Client Platforms. "With new devices based on fifth-generation Intel Core vPro processors, we aim to transform the user experience by helping them compute from virtually anywhere without the clutter and burden of wires."

New 2-in-1s, Ultrabooks, ultrathin clamshells and mini PCs based upon fifth-generation Intel Core vPro processors are available now from 12 leading PC manufacturers with more expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

"There is a long history of technology-led, workplace transformation," said Genevieve Bell, vice president and Intel Fellow. "Innovations in form factors, design and infrastructure has shifted not only the way we work, but the kind of things we can do at work."

Improved Security and Manageability

In addition to device innovation and workplace productivity improvements, fifth-generation Intel Core vPro processors provide hardware-enhanced security and manageability capabilities. When paired with the Intel Solid-State Drive Pro 2500 Series, IT departments can implement built-in data encryption capabilities, while users enjoy protection so smart they'll never feel the difference. Intel Identity Protection helps to simplify authentication and ensure the right people have access to the right information at the right time.

As workplace needs become increasingly mobile, it's even more critical for IT to be able to keep devices healthy and protected while not impacting user productivity. Remote management over wired and wireless networks and across all device types is made possible with Intel Active Management Technology, even if the operating system is down or the device is powered off.

The fifth-generation Intel Core vPro processor family enables workplace transformations that can result in hundreds of billions of dollars of productivity enhancements to businesses of all sizes. By removing the wires, delivering outstanding performance and battery life, and choosing the optimized form factor to meet the needs of each employee across the spectrum of innovative designs, Intel is delivering a truly optimized business platform that will change the way work is done.

Surface Pro 3

Everything you need to replace your laptop.

Surface Pro 3, with a stunning 12" display in a sleek magnesium frame, has all the power and performance of a laptop that can run your desktop apps, but in an incredibly thin, light, versatile form. It is the device that will replace your laptop and your iPad. Bundle it with the Surface Pro Type Cover and Surface Pro 3 Docking Station for a premium desktop and laptop experience.

Microsoft

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Surface Pro 3

Surface Pro 3 is ready for business. Run your desktop apps or modern touch apps, plug into peripherals, take notes with Surface Pen, and get the trusted support of Windows 8.1.

Surface Pro 3 Docking Station

Simply click into the dock to create the ultimate desktop workstation. Instantly connect to power, Ethernet port, Mini DisplayPort, three USB 3.0 ports, and two USB 2.0 ports.

Surface Pro Type Cover

Enjoy the speed and functionality of a classic laptop keyboard without adding noticeable weight or thickness. With enhanced magnetic stability, you can work just as comfortably on your lap as at your desk.

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