

# Does Apple's iPad Really Mean Business?

Love It or Hate It, You Should Probably Start Paying Attention to Apple's iPad

by Todd Swensen and Eric Harper

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**What was your gut reaction when Steve Jobs first unveiled Apple's new iPad tablet computer on January 27th? Fawning admiration? Healthy skepticism? Open hostility? All of these reactions were well represented and expressed in a frenzy of articles, blog posts, tweets and coffee shop conversations. When the iPad finally started showing up in retail stores in early April, millions of people already wanted one (although most couldn't have told you exactly why). Since then, surprisingly robust iPad sales—together with unprecedented interest in developing apps for the iPad—seem to indicate that something big is happening. So whether you consider the iPad another overhyped consumer fad built for people who like to show off at Starbucks, a legitimate technology game changer, or something in between, it's hard to argue with success. And that probably means it's time to at least start asking questions about what the iPad might mean for your business.**

## > Gauging the iPad's Potential

Before the iPad shipped, technology experts and reviewers joined millions of consumers in wondering exactly what this heavily hyped new device was and how people and businesses might actually use it. Would it suffer from the same limitations (and limited success) as other tablet PCs? Would it offer something unique—an experience you couldn't get from a less expensive smartphone, netbook or other portable device? Would it have anything compelling to offer businesses? Now that the iPad is actually available, experts, reviewers and users have started chiming in on some of these questions. Wall Street Journal tech reviewer Walter Mossberg said, "After spending hours and hours with it, I believe this beautiful new touch-screen device from Apple has the potential to change portable computing profoundly, and to challenge the primacy of the laptop. It could even help, eventually, to propel the finger-driven, multitouch user interface ahead of the mouse-driven interface that has prevailed for decades." (WSJ article March 31, 2010)

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## NOVELL MONOTOUCH 2.0—IPAD APPS FOR .NET DEVELOPERS

Microsoft is not currently developing any iPad apps, but thanks to Novell, the same does not hold true for Microsoft .NET developers. Novell MonoTouch 2.0 provides .NET developers with the tools they need to:

- Develop applications for the Apple iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch using Microsoft .NET languages
  - Extend iPad development to .NET developers around the world
  - Create apps that turn the iPad into an efficient, productive business tool
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On the business side, Salesforce.com chairman and CEO Marc Benioff believes the iPad has important implications for the next generation of cloud computing. In a recent guest post on TechCrunch, he said, "What's most exciting is that this fundamental transformation—cloud + social + iPad—will inspire a new generation of wildly innovative new apps that will change entire industries... This will result in a new generation that looks more like Facebook on the iPad than Yahoo on the PC." (<http://techcrunch.com/2010/03/29/ipad-cloud-2/>)

There are also some legitimate iPad concerns and criticisms to counter the enthusiasm—especially in a business context. Many worry about Apple's relatively closed application development and distribution model, its restrictive DRM controls, and the company's overall propensity for control over openness. And of course, the iPad introduces the same security and management challenges as any new, untested portable device. These concerns are causing many businesses to take their time with the iPad. But given its fairly remarkable early success, it's also becoming clear that the iPad is not something businesses can afford to ignore.

### > Putting the iPad to Work

Some of the industry's most prominent enterprise software vendors are certainly paying attention. PeopleSoft, SAP, Oracle, Novell and many others are actively working on developer kits and enterprise iPad applications. In fact, Oracle already has eight iPad applications available through Apple's App Store. Many of these early CRM and database apps are nearly identical to their existing iPhone counterparts, but developers are building specific business apps that take advantage of the iPad's beefy processor and other unique capabilities. This level of activity from major enterprise application providers is notable, given that the iPad has only been available for a few short weeks.

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#### IPAD IN THE ENTERPRISE

- Oracle Announces Siebel CRM Support for the iPad (link to: <http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/press/068482>)
- Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff on the iPad and Cloud 2.0 (link to: <http://techcrunch.com/2010/03/29/ipad-cloud-2/>)
- IBM launches Lotus software for the iPhone platform (link to: <http://www.forbes.com/2010/02/11/ipad-iphone-apple-technology-cio-network-ibm.html>)

### > The Microsoft Exception

The most significant exception to this trend is Microsoft, which to this point has chosen not to develop any applications—including Microsoft Office—for the iPad. Stephen Elop, the president of Microsoft's business division, recently told Bloomberg that they were taking a "wait and see" approach to the iPad. "We never say never," said Elop, "but we have no current plans to develop a version of Office for the Apple iPad."

At one level, this makes sense. Microsoft doesn't typically like potential game changers, because they prefer the game (which they currently dominate) just the way it is. It will be interesting to see how this strategy plays out—especially given that Apple's Pages word processor is already available for iPad. Google, which is directly targeting Microsoft Office dominance with Google Apps, is also actively working to optimize its offerings for the iPad (despite intriguing rumors of an upcoming "[Google iPad killer](http://gizmodo.com/5514989/google-preparing-ipad-rival)"). (<http://gizmodo.com/5514989/google-preparing-ipad-rival>)

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**IS AN "IPAD KILLER" ON THE WAY?**

According to a recent [New York Times article](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/12/technology/12slate.html) (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/12/technology/12slate.html>), Google, HP, Microsoft, Nokia, and others are all working on new slate computers that will compete directly with the iPad. The upcoming Google and HP devices will both run Google's Android OS, and Google is apparently working quietly with publishers to explore distribution options for books, magazines and other content. [Link to: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/12/technology/12slate.html>]

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### > **Off and Running**

When the iPad was first announced, a number of industry watchers and reviewers openly wondered why Apple chose to put such a powerful 1GHz A4 processor into such a simple device. Clearly, Apple was counting on people (and businesses) wanting to use the iPad for much more than reading books, browsing the Web, and watching movies. That bet appears to be paying off. It has been less than 3 months since the iPad became available in the U.S. People apparently want them more than ever. Only now, they actually know why.

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