

- November 7
- 7:30
- VBCG Main Library
- Come and bring a guest
- No Microsoft Office SIG this month
- Check SIG Schedule at [www.vbcg.org](http://www.vbcg.org)

# HOMEPAGE

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## Speaker, Eric Price

### Windows 8 & OS 5 for iPad and phones

This month Eric will show us what Windows 8 will look like. He is using the Beta Version to give us an idea of what to expect.

Come to the meeting and see Eric demonstrate this

new OS from Microsoft. I am sure he will know all there is to know about this new system.

## A Little information about Windows 8

This is a touch-based and desktop OS all in one. Microsoft says they are "Reimaging" Windows.

It should not be necessary to upgrade your PC to use Windows 8 if you are running Vista or Win 7 because it should use even less resources than Windows 7.



## Disks - What would our computers be without them?

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

Well, they'd be Tablets, or Smartphones, neither of which have disks as integral parts of the hardware. The Disk or Disk Drive usually refers to the component of the computer that typically stores large amounts of data. Storage can be, only readable, or readable and writeable (or recordable). There are two types of Disk Drives that are usually part of a Personal Computer, Magnetic and Optical. Magnetic drives are typically readable and writable. Now-a-days, magnetic drives store in the hundreds of Gigabytes (1 Gigabyte = 1,000 Megabytes). Optical drives are either readable (ROM) or recordable (RAM). Optical drives come in three different storage sizes, CDs (Compact Disks) which hold 700 Megabytes, DVDs (Digital Versatile Disks) which hold 4.7 Gigabytes, and BDs (Blu-ray Disks) which hold 25 Gigabytes.

Magnetic Disks or Magnetic Disk Drives, or Hard Drives, (can any of you remember the term, Winchester Drive), are at the very core of the personal computer. For those of you who remembered "Winchester", the original IBM PC didn't even have a hard drive. It only had one or possibly two 5 ¼ inch floppy disks. Remember the a: drive? And I bet there are only a few of you who ever had a b: drive (the second floppy).

The hard drive came along around 1983, with the IBM PC/XT, and was assigned as the c: drive. Then came Optical drives, the CD ROM (around 1985), and the recordable version, the CD RAM (around 1990). These were typically assigned as the d: drive. Finally, The DVD came on the scene with backward compatibility with CDs. The DVD ROM appeared around 1995 and the DVD RAM around 1998. DVD equipment is backward compatible meaning they can use DVD or CD media (the actual disk). BDs are relatively new, coming on the scene around 2009. The BDs come in BD R which is recordable only once, and BD RE which is recordable and re-recordable. BD equipment is backward compatible meaning they can use BD, DVD or CD media.

Specifying a magnetic disk drive is pretty straightforward. The only variables are the storage capacity and the speed. Today, typically, the speed is 7200 rpm. Although there are some older units around that rotate at 5400 rpm, and there are some fast drives that are running at 10,000 rpm, but they are the exception. So, the defining item is the storage capacity, which today runs from 100 Gigabytes to a few Terabytes (1Terabyte = 1,000 Gigabytes). Once the manufacturer is chosen and the speed and storage is picked, the job is about done. The only other factor is the interface. SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment), today, is the preferred interface, but only if your computer has the hardware to support it. The older interface is called IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics), and sometimes called PATA (Parallel Advanced Technology Attachment)

Specifying Optical Disks is somewhat more involved. The first decision is the storage capacity. Today, DVD drives are probably the most cost effective (the best storage per dollar). Because DVD drives are backwards compatible they can be used with DVDs or CDs. BD drives are currently quite expensive and will probably not be found on most personal computers.

## DISKS *Continued*

BD drives will probably be around \$100 in contrast to about \$35 for a DVD drive. If you have only one DVD drive on your computer, it should probably be a drive that is capable of writing disks as well as reading them. If you have the luxury of two optical drives (probably on a desktop), one can be just readable, which will keep the cost of the pair to a minimum. Optical Drives that are capable of writing are sometimes called “Burners” because the writing operation uses a laser to “burn” data spots on to the disk media.

The round 120 millimeter (4.7 inch) disk that you insert into the Optical Disk drive is called the disk media. The media type should match the Disk Drive type, meaning that you typically use CD media in a CD Drive, DVD media in a DVD drive, and BD media in a BD drive, although there is backward compatibility. For Optical disk media, readable means that the disk can be written only once and then read many times; read/writable means that the disk is readable and can be written and re-written many times. CD disk media comes in two types, CD-R (readable), and CD-RW (read/writable). Unfortunately, DVD disk media comes in two disk varieties DVD- (the dash variety), and DVD+ (the plus variety), as well as being readable or read/writable. The good news is that, now-a-days, all drives can use either of these varieties. (Although, I have heard that some people prefer the DVD- for movies. They have reported better results with that variety for movies that were created on the computer DVD disk drive and then played on their living room DVD player.) So, typically, DVD Drives can accommodate DVD-R (read only), DVD-RW (read/writable), DVD+R (read only), or DVD+RW (read/writeable) media. This is usually indicated by stating that the drive can be used with DVD±R disk media (readable), or DVD±RW (read/writable) media. Fortunately, BD disk media does not have the same problem. There is only one variety for BD disks, BD-: BD-R (readable), and BD-RE (read/writable). Now that we have chosen an optical disk drive based on storage capacity, and we now know what media we can use with the drive, the last thing to look at is the speed of the drive. For Drives that only read, this is not really an issue because the read speed is typically faster than any of the writing speeds. An Optical Drive writing speed is specified as #X. Currently, for DVDs, # is a number between 1 and 52. This number indicates the speed relative to the original disk writing speed. So an Optical Disk capable of writing at 12X would write a disk 12 times faster than the original writing speed. The original writing speeds for the different Optical Drive types are: CD=.15Mbps; DVD=1.35Mbps; BD=4.5Mbps. So a 12X DVD Drive would write data at 12 times 1.35Mbps, or 16.2Mbps. Optical Disk media is also rated for writing speed in the same way. When you buy Optical Disk media it is always good to buy media that is at least as fast as your drive so that you take advantage of your drive's maximum speed. If it is not at a great expense, faster media will probably give you better, although not faster results.

Disk drives, magnetic and optical, give the computer the ability to store and access enormous amounts of data. Without these devices we might be confined to only using the “cloud” for our storage (do any of you remember “mainframe” computing?). But, even with these devices, they may be the direction personal computing is taking, anyway.

Commentary: President's Corner by Greg Skalka,  
President, Under the Computer Hood UG, CA  
An End to the "Tablet Takeover?"

## An End to the "Tablet Takeover?"

August was an interesting month for computer news. First we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the introduction of the IBM PC. Though "personal" computers were already available, when the IBM PC came on the market on August 12, 1981, it started the adoption of this technology by business and individuals. A week after the PC anniversary, HP announced it was discontinuing its TouchPad tablet and apparently abandoning the tablet market. Sales of the \$499 device touted as an "iPad killer" were slow until they were given a close-out price of \$99, at which point they flew off the store shelves. Finally, the mastermind behind the iPad, as well as iPod, iPhone, iTunes and most things "i", Steve Jobs, stepped down as Apple CEO for medical reasons. Apple's ailing founder will remain on the board, with his recommended successor, Tim Cook, at the helm.

All these events make me think the predictions of the death of the PC and the takeover by tablets are at least premature and possibly downright wrong. Traditional computer manufacturers have seen a slip in sales and have been working on their own tablets, but I think a device that has lasted 30 years in the market is not ready to be replaced yet. Tablets bring a lot of great features to the table, but they appear to be more of a niche performer. The current tablet craze may well turn out to be similar to that of the netbook a few years ago, introducing a new kind of computing tool that adds to the arsenal, but cannot supplant the traditional laptop and desktop.

I do believe the tablet computer concept is a good one, so much so that I bought one. Though I call my Velocity Micro Cruz Reader a poor man's iPad, it is really just an e-reader that can surf the web, get email and display color pictures and video. At only \$120, it is certainly not a substitute for a laptop PC, but to me, neither is a \$500 iPad nor other manufacturer's similar Android tablets. The 12.1" Asus eeeSlate tablet PC, which has an Intel Core i5 processor and runs Windows 7 might be a substitute for a traditional PC (with the tablet's external keyboard), but it also costs \$1000. To take a bigger chunk out of the PC market, tablets will have to be lower in price. To take over the PC market, they will have to be as capable as a laptop or desktop, a tall order for a device based so much on portability.

Right now, the notebook computer or laptop is the king of computer value. The current back to school advertisements show a lot of capable laptops (even with Intel Core i5 processors) for around \$500. There used to be a premium paid for the mobility of a laptop as compared to a desktop PC, but now a similar desktop setup costs more. Since 2005 there have been more laptops than desktops sold in the U.S., and at our Microsoft Store tour last year their staff reported laptop sales at 80% of the total computer sales. Those economies of scale in manufacturing have no doubt allowed laptop prices to be reduced below desktop prices.

At \$500 for a decent laptop, a \$500 tablet computer does not make much sense, either as a substitute or complement to the notebook PC. This was certainly proven out by the HP TouchPad being discontinued. HP had problems selling them at \$500, but one can only wonder how many could have been sold for \$99, were they willing to manufacture more at a loss. The correct price point to me for tablets would seem to be no more than \$250; that is where the Barnes & Noble Nook Color (Reader Tablet) is priced. Amazon would do well to keep that in mind if the rumors of a future emailing and web surfing Kindle are true.

## An End to the “Tablet Takeover?”

Continued

How does Apple sell so many iPads for \$500 or more? I think there must be a lot of people out there with more expendable income than I have. I admit I’ve never used an iPad, and don’t know anyone that has one, but based on experience with those I know that own the iPhone, the iPad is probably quite good as products go.

Apple’s products are usually innovative and ahead of their time, and remind me of hybrid and electric vehicles. They are technically advanced and forward thinking, copied by their competitors and carry a premium price, but often don’t make economic sense initially when compared to existing products. There will soon be a lot of electric and hybrid cars on the market, but they are all so expensive that unless gas gets well over \$5 a gallon, a conventional gasoline-powered economy car is still a better overall value.

I was able to participate in a GM-sponsored event this month in the Qualcomm Stadium parking lot, where I got to drive a lot of different new cars (with no sales pressure). The Corvette and Camaro were fun to drive, but the most interesting ride was undoubtedly the Chevy Volt. In my opinion it blows all the existing and near-term hybrid and plug-in electric vehicles away. The Volt is a plug-in electric car (wheels driven by electric motors which are powered by a battery charged by external 110 or 220 VAC), but it also has a gasoline-powered generator to provide electricity for driving when the battery is low. Unlike the Nissan Leaf, a plug-in electric with no gas engine, the Volt can be driven across the country like a gasoline-powered car if there is no time or place to plug in. Unlike the Toyota Prius hybrid which can’t be recharged from external power, it can operate on battery alone at all speeds for trips within its battery’s range. The Volt is the future for electric cars. No matter how much I like it, however, I’d never own one, because they cost \$40K. They can call me when they get the price down to \$25K. Apple can call me when they offer the iPad for \$250.

The tablet’s strength is in bringing portability to web access and graphical media. Without a real keyboard, however, I can’t imagine using any tablet as my primary computer. Writing this column on a touchscreen would be a big pain; the times I wrote it in a car on a laptop were painful enough. I admit I once thought a laptop keyboard was a lot harder to type on than a full desktop keyboard (and I don’t do touch typing). Now of course a lot of businesspeople use a laptop as their primary computer. I know typing a lot on my netbook is a pain, and its smaller display screen makes for difficult reading by older eyes; a tablet computer display would be similar. While I suppose I could perform graphical tasks like photo and video editing, create large documents or file my tax return on my netbook, I wouldn’t want to if a computer with a larger display was available.

In my view, the tablet PC is good for consumption of media (photos, videos, music, web pages), but its smaller screen size and lack of a keyboard make it less useful for the creation of such material. A tablet might be acceptable for email, but it wouldn’t be so great for creating an important document like a resume. The market for tablets will thus be limited to content consumers, while content creators will still prefer traditional PCs.

The final problem with the tablet’s takeover is its competition from the smartphone. While portability is the tablet’s big advantage over all forms of the traditional PC, the smartphone has it beat there. You can carry an iPhone in your pocket, but you need a case or bag to take an iPad. While I’m hoping the tablet continues to develop and evolve as an alternative computing platform, especially if it can come down in price, I don’t see a way that it can take the place of the laptop or desktop computer in general business or personal usage anytime soon. And I’d like to remind those of you out there with Apple stock that the company did not do so well between 1985 and 1996, while Steve Jobs was absent. His shoes will be hard to fill.

# AGAIN! TABLET OR PC?

I love my iPad and would hate to have to give it up. I even recommend it for seniors and teens who have never owned a computer and plan to do no more than Email, Facebook, Read Books, play games and Surf the Web. It is so nice to take wherever you go and wireless is just about everywhere now. I often take mine to meetings and make notes using sticky notes. I set alarms in the calendar to remind me of appointments — **BUT!** — What about the things we do on our computer. I spend hours each month using Publisher, Word or Excel and many more editing photos in Photoshop. Businesses use a lot of Laptops when the representative is on the go, but rarely use them for heavy processing. The real work is done on a desktop. I scan a lot of documents and send them .pdf via email. I make copies of my music CDs to use in the car CD player.

Just stop to think of all the things you do using your computer that would be impossible on a tablet.

Check the SIG schedule on our web site.  
[www.vbcg.org](http://www.vbcg.org)  
Plan to attend a SIG this month and Bring a friend.



Plan to attend the meeting November 7th. I am sure you will enjoy learning about Windows 8 and the new OS for the iPad and iPhones.