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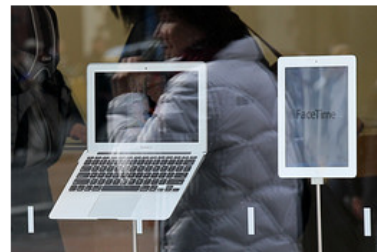
## Are the Computer's Days Numbered?

By Quentin Fottrell



The computer is dead. Long live the tablet. Or smartphone. Or a combination of both.

Apple's laptops and desktops may be turning into iPads and iPhones. Apple CEO Tim Cook just unveiled a new "Mountain Lion" operating system inspired by the kind of features most people enjoy playing with on their tablets. "We see that people are in love with a lot of apps and functionality here," Cook told [The Wall Street Journal](#) in an



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interview. That means more apps, instant messaging, games and the online storage service iCloud on Mac computers.

Experts say Apple's new software points to a bigger trend: the convergence of technology where tablets and computers become almost indistinguishable. "Both Apple and Google are working to merge the computer world with the mobile world," says Todd Day, a wireless industry analyst at Frost & Sullivan. And, as SmartMoney.com reported this week, companies are already creating [Smartphone/tablet hybrids](#). Is a laptop or desktop computer no longer necessary?

Consumers want the same ease of use on their personal computers as their smartphones and tablets, tech-pros say. "We all are creatures of habit," says Rick Singer, CEO of [GreatApps.com](#). "It's hard for us to adapt at times, especially with electronics." Intel has

already made progress with apps for the [Ultrabook](#), he says, "which are faster and lighter laptops. More power, more battery life, more portable."

Some businesses are already moving away from desktops. Wayne Irving, an app developer based in Laguna Niguel, Ca., only has two desktops in his company's office, which saves on much of the costs of tech support. "We don't need to call in people to fiddle with wires," he says. Irving also uses cloud-sourced [Google Docs apps](#), which he says are easier to share than Microsoft Word documents. Day says "cloud services" offered by services like [SugarSync](#), [Dropbox](#) means content is available 24/7.

That said, consumers – rather than businesses – are leading the demand for devices that operate as both a tablet and computer. “Desktop computers are still a large part of the global market especially with businesses,” says Singer. But while many people still like to use full-sized keyboards and screens at work, Day says office desktops will soon need to have “seamless syncability” with all the apps and documents stored on Smartphones and tablets. “People want mobility, simplicity and convenience,” he says.

In the meantime, demand for apps are expected to double in the next year. Market research firm Deloitte estimates there will be two million apps available to download or buy by the end of this year, up from one million at the end of 2011. Apple alone provides over [500,000 of those apps](#). “The convergence of all the desktop, TV, laptop and the phone has been coming long before the iPad was ever conceived,” Irving says. “It’s been around since, well, Star Trek.”