



I think, therefore iPad

I work, I travel, I plan, I research, I review, I email, I read, I browse, I play, I listen, I update, I write, I think...therefore iPad.

I had a very interesting insight into the current thinking about the role of the iPad and similar tablets in the business world the other day. In a coaching session with a senior partner in one of the top tier law firms, I was told that all of the partners were being issued with iPads as Christmas presents. Her excitement was clear to see, although her next question was "What will we do with it?"

Where does the iPad fit?

The iPad is a completely new experience. Born from the inevitable merging of the laptop and the smartphone, it blends mobility with practicality. It does not replace the laptop for our main computing needs, but because it is so portable, with instant on and off, it can replace some of the functions that we traditionally used the laptop for in the past. It is also not a smartphone, actually it is not a phone at all, but again, it replaces some of the functions that we tried to do badly on our small screen phones. The real surprise for me though, once I used it for a while, was that the main thing that it replaced was not another device, but *paper*. All of those piles of paper I used to take to meetings, bring on interstate trips, and take home to read, suddenly became accessible on the iPad. Freedom at last! More on that later.

iStrengths

The iPad is still a first generation device, so has a long way to go to be as good as it could be. There has been much written about its shortcomings, especially around Apples refusal to support flash video. But it is a game changer because it has some real strengths. Unlike a laptop, it is instant on, instant off. This removes a barrier for use in many situations. It can be used with minimal

interruption in meetings. It is easily accessible on the bus or the train. At the moment, as I write this article flying from Melbourne to Brisbane, I can comfortably write in between take off, the meal and landing. No boot up time, great battery endurance and the fact that it fits neatly in the seat pocket mean that I *bother* to use it on short flights. More than I can say for my laptop. Don't get me wrong, I still use my laptop every day, but it has its place, and the iPad has its own place.

The other strength that cannot be ignored is the amount of apps, or applications available for download. Apple got it right when they allowed developers to create programs to run on the iPhone and iPad quickly and easily. This means that whatever your need, there has probably been an app designed to help you do it. Whether you need to manage your tasks, plan a project, access your intranet, brainstorm ideas or manage your finances, you can download an inexpensive app in a flash.

iWeaknesses

As you can tell, I am a bit of a fan. But there are some weaknesses worth mentioning, but none that really stop me doing what I need to.





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The main weakness talked about is the inability to view flash video. This means that when browsing the web, many video features do not play. This is an inconvenience sometimes when I want to see footage of the latest Messi goal, but I can live with that until I am at my desk (sorry, at home). There is an app that allows access to YouTube videos.

The second major complaint that I hear is that there is no USB port for transferring data. Once you understand that the iPad is a content consumption device, you realize that this is really not a barrier. Documents can easily be emailed to your self for viewing on the iPad, or a service like Dropbox can ensure access to any document from any device. More below.

I'm App, App, Appy

Apps, or applications can be downloaded in seconds from the Apple store on the iPad. They usually cost between \$2 and \$10 Australian dollars, and are usually very quick and easy to start using. They are quite safe to use as Apple has very strict approval requirements. The following are my top 10 apps that I could not survive without on the iPad. I believe that the productivity increase that I get by using these intuitive apps is worth its weight in gold.

1. **Dropbox:** This is a revolutionary app that will allow access to any document, anywhere. Once installed on your iPad and PC, any documents can be marked for synchronization. Any changes made on either device will immediately update. Simple to use and a lifesaver when you need that important document.
2. **TaskTaskHD:** The iPad does not have a native task application. For those of you using tasks in MS Outlook, this app will seamlessly synch your tasks both ways, and provides a useful view of your tasks broken down by day.

Useful Links

<http://www.apple.com/au/ipad/business/apps/>

<http://www.apple.com/au/ipad/apps-for-ipad/>

<http://www.mactalk.com.au/ipad/>

3. **iMindMap HD:** This MindMapping app, designed by Tony Buzan, the inventor of mindmapping in the 1970's, is a fast and intuitive way to brainstorm and plan. Using your finger, you can create an information map using keywords. This is a quick and creative way to capture ideas and structure written material on the run.
4. **DocsToGo:** This is the iPad version of MS Office. It allows full editing of Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents. It is a slimmed down version of these programs, but has most of the features that are needed on the run.
5. **Kindle Amazon:** Although there is a book reader produced by Apple called iBooks, the books available on the Australian market are still limited. I have found a much greater range available through Amazon, so have downloaded their Kindle app for the iPad. Most books are just a click away, and don't take up space in my bag anymore!
6. **iAnnotate PDF:** This is a must for anyone who needs to review and mark up other people's work. iAnnotate allows you to highlight text, write side notes, cross out text and generally take a document to pieces, all using your finger. The marked up document can then be e-mailed to the relevant parties, who do not need an iPad to view the results. Any PC will do.



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7. **Keynote:** Keynote is the Apple version of PowerPoint. By emailing presentations to my iPad, and converting them to Keynote presentations, I have been able to run through slides in small meetings far more comfortably than with a laptop and projector. Whereas a laptop became a barrier in a one-on-one situation, the iPad is like a sheet of paper between you. Great for explaining concepts or reviewing data.
8. **ABC iView:** If you missed that episode of Midsommer Murders the other night, what better way to catch up but by watching it on iView on your iPad. Just plug in your headphones and stream away! You need to be in a WiFi zone, such as a home wireless network to use this as the data downloads are pretty high.
9. **Flipboard:** This is an interesting app for reviewing web content in a user friendly "magazine" format. The idea is that you subscribe to official publications or blogs, and the content is pulled into this app for easy viewing. I like it as it pulls content that is relevant to me into one space, and allows me to browse headlines. I can then dip into a headline for the content if it interests me. Content can easily be "flipped" to others if relevant to them.
10. **Dragon Dictation:** This is a recent app for me, but potentially a real time saver. This is a free version of the PC dictation software for the iPad. Just press record, and start speaking, and it will convert your speech to text. As long as you are in a quite place, accuracy is quite good, and can save a lot of typing. The results can be e-mailed from the app.

iPad or not iPad?

So, lots of practical uses and time-saving applications. But is it for you?

Before you run out to buy one, you may need to consider the following questions:

- » Will your workplace support the use of an iPad?
- » Are you away from your desk enough to get value?
- » Will you carry it around or end up leaving it behind?
- » Do you prefer a computer screen with a keyboard?

If you decide that an iPad is for you, enjoy. You will be at the cutting edge of a new way of doing things that our kids will take for granted. In the meantime, don't let them near it as their grubby fingerprints are a pain to clean off the screen!



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