Can Microsoft Compete with the iPad?

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Steve Ballmer holding a Slate

Seattle, WA (rushPRnews) 12/19/10 — Reports indicate that Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is expected to unveil some new slates from Samsung and Dell at CES next month that are designed to compete with Apple's incredibly popular iPad.

The company has not confirmed, and the sources of the info are unnamed, but evidently trusted by the New York Times, which reports:

The Samsung device is described as "similar in size and shape to the Apple iPad, although it is not as thin. It also includes a unique and slick keyboard that slides out from below for easy typing."

The people familiar with this device said it would run the Windows 7 operating system when in landscape mode, but will also have a layered interface that will appear when the keyboard is hidden and the device is held in a portrait mode.

Apple's iPad has been a huge seller. Can Microsoft's platform attain similar success? A keyboard and familiar Windows interface would no doubt be appealing to a lot of users, particularly if it is just an option that is available alongside a more iPad-like touch interface. This could provide the best of both worlds if it's done right.

One of the biggest complaints about the iPad is that it's not the easiest thing to type on, particularly if you have large hands.

Microsoft is a little late to the market in this space, but apparently not as late as it was to the smartphone market (with the recent launch of Windows Phone 7). Granted, we don't know when these knew slates would actually see the consumer market.

Microsoft is of course not just competing with Apple, but all makers of tablets and mobile computer operating systems, and that includes Google, which is gearing up for the consumer launch of its Chrome operating system next year. It's not on tablets, but it's still going to be an option for consumers looking for a new mobile computer. Most people aren't going to buy a tablet and a notebook. Google has the tablets covered with Android, however, like with the Samsung Galaxy Tab, and more to come.

No matter how you slice it, iPad sales are bound to be affected, simply based on the fact that it won't be the only option in its class anymore. It will be particularly interesting to see how big of a hand Microsoft has in the competition.

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