

Some things only a PC does well



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After three years of faithful service, my three-year-old homemade personal computer died on me over the weekend.

While I am still trying to get to the root of the issue and see if the rig is worth salvaging, part of me thinks it would be less of a hassle to just get a new machine.

And when I say machine, I mean a similar personal computer and not a tablet, ultrabook or any desktop replacement.

Despite all the reports on how sales of tablets are outpacing those of desktops and laptops – and some PC pundits even announcing the coming demise of PCs, I cannot picture my household without a proper computer.

Aside from our smartphones, my wife and I also own two laptops and two tablets.

The tablets are for reading the magazines to which we subscribe and downloading children's stories and songs for our 17-month-old daughter.

The laptops are for use during our travels or when we want to make Skype calls to my sister, who is studying in the United States.

But when it comes to watching videos, my wife and I fight over the desktop.

It is the same when we need to work on Microsoft Office, browse Facebook or surf the Web. The loser uses the laptop. And the tablet does not even come into play.

Do not get me started on games as the free ones available on portable devices are more akin to money-grabbing time sinks when compared with the superior graphics and gameplay of well-crafted PC titles.

My wife spends a lot of time managing our growing library of baby photos, carefully backing them up on our many external hard drives.

I spend my nights managing my comics collection and moving videos around so that I can watch some in the bedroom and others in the living room with friends.

With some effort and a lot more frustration, I imagine it might be possible to do all this on a tablet or even a smartphone, but the lack of true multitasking makes this an uphill endeavour.

But my bigger issue is that despite the perceived convenience and mobility of tablets, many people are blind to their shortcomings.

Both Android and Apple's app stores may offer more than a million convenient apps, but they all lack the sophistication of any PC equivalent.

If you do not believe me, try editing and managing thousands of photos using a tablet.

Or typing a 20-page essay on a virtual keyboard. If you have a portable keyboard, see how easy it is to manipulate an Excel spreadsheet.

And for those with hundreds of songs and movies, try managing them all without a proper computer.

Better yet, try all of the above concurrently using only a tablet.

Perhaps PC sales are slumping because more consumers are getting smarter and building their machines to fit specific needs.

Some simply want a media server, while others need a workhorse. Either way, only a personal computer is able to fit both scenarios.

I need a machine that suits my family's basic needs, but still be pumped up for the special occasion when I need to edit videos or play the next Diablo game.

And maybe that is why my computer died. Of overwork.

But being without its services for the last four days has made me yearn for it, which is not something I can say about my tablet.

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