

Is Microsoft too late with 8? Are you?

On October 26, Microsoft began offering the new Windows 8 operating system for sale. Basically speaking, the system represents a fundamental shift from the Microsoft point of view on how we, as humans, interact with the MS world. Yes, Microsoft has entered the touch, drag and drop world in a big way!

This, however, is not new. In 2001, Microsoft unveiled a tablet computer only to have it go nowhere fast. In 2008 at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, which ABA Banking Journal attended, Microsoft unveiled the Microsoft Surface touch content interface. Now, in 2012, Microsoft has combined the Surface technology with tablet and workstation computing using MS Windows 8.

In contrast, Apple sent this technological combination into orbit with its iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, and now the iPad mini. Further, the smartphone could be viewed as the great enabler and the new de facto platform.

Where does leave Microsoft? Many would argue that they were the first on the tablet only to lose the advantage. Now they have become the followers. Are they committed to the touch, drag and drop interface? If they want to remain relevant, they don't have choice.

The real question is: do you have a choice? It's obvious that the traditional computing interaction of the keyboard and mouse is rapidly being replaced. As subsequent versions of Windows 8 are released and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) produce computing devices with embedded MS Surface touch interfacing, financial institutions will be faced with some very tough decisions about existing vendor relationships. Do you stay with a vendor that only offers traditional desktop computing devices or do you begin to plan the switch to the new MS Windows 8 Surface enabled technology?

Frankly, it is not a choice at all. Employees and customers alike will demand, if not require, the new more efficient and intuitive technology. Furthermore, financial institutions should not wait. A dialogue with key vendors should begin immediately, informing them of your expectations and timeline. Processing contracts need to be reviewed and an exit strategy established to move away from vendors that are not keeping up. It will take time to plan a migration to the newer technology and there is no doubt that if you wait, it may be too late for your institution to catch up once you realize you are behind.

Microsoft has recognized the trend and is responding to it with a huge initiative to upgrade all of their technology. They have the economic resources, in addition to the staff needed to catch up… do you? Planning now will save you from having to say you were too slow to respond and it is too late!

The Wombat!

About the Author

Dan Fisher is president and CEO of The Copper River Group, a consulting firm headquartered in Fargo, N. D., that focuses on technology and payment systems research and consulting for community financial institutions. For nearly 30 years, Fisher has worked in the financial industry using technology to improve the bottom line. He was CIO of Community First Bankshares (now part of Bank of the West), has served as a director of the Federal Reserve Board of Minneapolis, the chairman of the American Bankers Association Payment Systems Committee, and was a member of the Independent Community Bankers of America Payments Committee. Fisher has written numerous articles on banking technology and the payments system. He has authored or co-authored six books and recently published a book titled, "Capturing Your Customer! The New Technology of Remote Deposit." You can contact Fisher at dan@copperrivergroup.com.

P.S. To understand Dan's nickname, check out "About the Wombat" on his website, www.copperrivergroup.com