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Apple Company Profile

by James G. Barr

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Preview

Apple is still about computing at its core, but consumer entertainment and handheld devices are now the company's real strength. The company that reinvented itself and transformed the digital music industry with the iPod and iTunes is now shaking up the mobile marketplace with the iPhone 3G. In January 2010, Apple introduced the iPad, a tablet-type device for browsing the web, reading and sending email, enjoying photos, watching videos, playing games, and reading e-books. This report profiles Apple and its recent activities.

Report Contents:
- Fast Facts
- Related Reports
- Profile
- Technology

Competing with itself. With the introduction of the Apple iPad, a tablet-type device positioned between the Apple iPhone and the Apple line of laptop computers, Apple may have outsmarted itself by offering consumers too much choice. If I need an e-mail and Internet-capable mobile information device, where do I start? Do I buy a laptop, an iPhone, or an iPad? And, oh yes, what about a "Netbook"?

Outlook

Leadership Question. With much of the success of Apple coming from the popularity of its non-descript iMac stove jobs, Apple's customers are troubled by the idea of an Apple without stove jobs. It remains to be seen if the company will continue its rapid growth in the long term without its visionary founder and leader.

Continued Digital Music Leadership. Apple's role as a leader in the digital music sector will likely continue. On the other hand, Apple faces increasing competition for the iPhone from vendors who are upgrading their smartphones with touchscreen features, combined with business features and security that is lacking on the iPhone. Microsoft and Google are also in the act, as they continue to push their Android and Windows operating systems onto rival handsets. The iPhone is starting to lose ground, and even US President Barack Obama's interaction with iPad's Blackberry is having an effect on the iPhone's market share.

Desktop Development. Apple's share of the PC market hovers around 10 percent in the US, but it does not rank among the top vendors internationally. Apple should continue to be popular with desktop publishers and graphic designers, while the company will continue developing and introducing peripheral devices and services.

iPad, iPhone, and iTV. Just as the iPhone dominated Apple's business model since its launch in 2007, Apple's future (at least its immediate future) may be tied to the iPad. Critics who suggested that Apple unveiled little more than an "Amiga" that won't fit in your pocket don't want to understand that the iPad is not a computer, it is a device for consuming media, not creating it. The question is: Are media developers and publishers, including gaming firms, ready to deliver it?

New versions of these key Apple products are expected soon. iPad 3 is initially expected to launch during the first week of March, 2012, and iPhone 5 is expected to hit the market during the summer of 2012. Additionally, a new version of iTV is expected to integrate 3-D image recognition software.

Product Lines

[i] return to top of this report

Apple produces computer systems and software, including ICs, workstations, servers, personal computers, and operating systems. The company's significant products are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Apple's Products and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product/Service</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desktops</td>
<td>iMac - This inexpensive, high-performance PC is designed to work as a digital entertainment hub. It has multiple USB ports and five FireWire ports as well as</td>
<td>Dell, Acer, and HP.</td>
</tr>
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