One can apply the cliche for just about every year, but 2013 was quite something, wasn't it? While arguably less eventful than previous years, it was still full of exciting headlines , and that's before taking our industry into account! So join our retrospective into what we we think were the major happenings of, well, 2013!

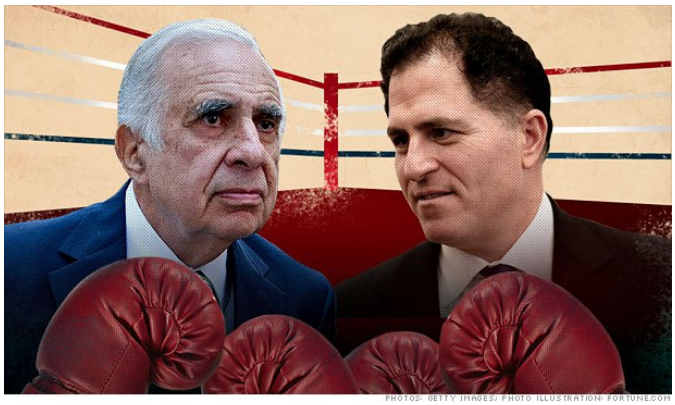


1. Microsoft buys Nokia: The biggest acquisition of 2013 came as a late-night surprise Microsoft became the owner of the Devices & Services division of one of the biggest (if waning) mobile vendors , an acquisition worth a cool €5.44 billion. The deal brought about various reactions from industry luminaries, such as Tim Cook's dismissive "everybody is trying to adopt Apple's strategy," as well as the first Nokia Windows tablet, the Lumia 2520.

2. Ballmer announces retirement: Less than a month before Nokia acquisition infamously bullish Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer announced his retirement , leaving the once technology leader without a clear leader. The news came 6 weeks after a "far-reaching realignment" of company management , part of an effort to create a "One Microsoft" out of the gigantic corporation. One thing is certain-- Ballmer and his exuberant on-stage appearances will be missed.

3. PCs are down, down, down: "Continued to shrink, declining faster than expected," these are the words the likes of Gartner and IDC tend to say on the PC market, be it in W. Europe, EMEA or across the globe. The blame, of course, is customers moving away from PCs (in order to buy tablets), as well as Windows 8.1 launch preparations and product transitions to Haswell and Bay Trail CPUs. Either way, it looks like PC market's downwards trend will continue apace, even if both desktops and laptops will remain relevant to a decently-sized consumer base

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4. Dell buys itself: After months of struggle culminating in the advance-- and eventual retreat-- of hardnosed mega-sholder Carl Icahn, on September 2013 Michael Dell managed achieve his ambition of taking Dell private , winning stockholder approval of the proposal. ""We are going back to our roots," the Dell head honcho said back then. The road to taking Dell private (technically in partnership with investment firm Silver Lake Partners) was long and twisty enough to fill an HBO series, and culminated in the paying of $24.9 billion, an "all-too-low" price that spurred Carl Icahn and company's war of attrition in the first place.

5. Android, king of tablets: Android beats iOS when it comes to tablet market share , thanks to lower cost entry-level devices from both major and small-to-micro vendors in a variety of sizes. Particularly popular are smaller 7-inch devices, although larger, 10-inch models might bounce back as customers decide to buy large smartphones instead. In the meantime Microsoft should also see some growth , particularly if it fixes the fixes the confusion surrounding its multiple Windows versions. And speaking of Windows...

6. Windows updates to 8.1: The 8.1 update on the latest Windows version (both regular and RT flavours) rolled out on October 2013. Formerly known as Blue, the update brought about a number of changes, chief of which being the return of the Start button on the bottom left corner of the desktop. It also allows users to skip the Windows 8 Start Screen and boot straight to desktop, and provides new splitscreen app options, Internet Explorer 11, new gestures, new apps and enhanced SkyDrive functionality.

7. Next-gen gaming kicks off: Sony and Microsoft launch the next generation of gaming machines, the PlayStation 4 and the Xbox One . Both are,

shockingly enough, similar-looking black boxes, even if the PS4 posits itself as a "pure" games machine while the Xbox One presents something more akin to a living room hub complete with HDMI passthrough functionality. However the two companies might face a dark horse in shape of the Steam Box(es), console-style PCs armed with a custom Linux-based OS from game developer turned online game merchant Valve...

8. EU Crisis is (hopefully) over: Good news! The European economic crisis appears to be over, at least according to GfK. Bad news! The recovery is best described as modest (0.4% Q-o-Q growth during Q2 2012), with "considerable" increases in France, Germany, Portugal and the UK and at least "slight" recovery in the still-shrinking Spanish and Italian economies. But hey, all good news is good news, even if the continent still sees a stark divide when it comes to average purchasing power.

9. Retailers ramp revamps: What do El Corte Inglés, Dixons and Media-Saturn have in common? Okay, they all sell CE, but they are also trying to do so through new store formats. Such stores tend to emphasise interactivity and customer engagement, with areas where customers can test out devices or receive advice from shop staff. In other retail news, times remain tough for all, Apple recruits Burberry CEO Angela Ahrendts as senior VP of retail and online stores and Carphone Warehouse teams up with no other than Kate Moss.

10. Curved smartphones finally appear: Two years ago we declared 2012 the year of the bendy mobile device. Oh how wrong we were. But will 2014 be the year for such devices? Probably not, even if October 2013 saw Samsung and LG releasing curvy smartphones with the Round and the G Flex. Too bad both look like little more than overpriced curios, meaning the form factor has little or no chance of garnering market acceptance. Then again Apple is rumoured to be working on a curved glass iPhone (like it is working on a TV, and a smartwatch), so who knows?