

## Why Is Microsoft Buying Perceptive Pixel?

Written by Bob Snyder  
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Imagine 16,000 partners in a coliseum style setting all cheering for a single vendor... Welcome to the **Microsoft Worldwide Partners Conference**, WPC2012 in Toronto.

On stage there Microsoft confirmed it's on track for the touch-enabled Windows 8 RTM for general availability by late October.

CEO Steve Ballmer is on center stage, strangely enough seated as his true nature is to [bounce and bounce on stage](#) like Winnie the Pooh's Tigger ("Bouncing is what Tiggers do best.")

One suspects this chair is a PR ploy to ground the buoyant CEO but while you might pin his body to the floor, you can't nail down Ballmer's rhetoric.

"This year is the most important year," he tells the crowd. "This year is really unparalleled...It's the core of Microsoft reinventing itself for a modern era...This is the year for all of us..." The crowd is enthusiastic for all this...(If Apple has fanboys, what do you call 16,000 Microsoft partners?)

It may be the year for all of us but last month Microsoft totally confused the AV industry when it hijacked its presentation table moniker (Surface) to label their new tablets, their "iPad-killers" (they said that, not us). "Why would you do that?" we asked. And the only answer we came up with (as our AV industry has really does have an inferiority complex) was that [Microsoft Surface was moved to a more important product and industry.](#)

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Meanwhile on stage at WPC2012, Ballmer announces... "There's one more thing we'd like to show." The CEO of world famous software company then announces **Microsoft will acquire Perceptive Pixel, a hardware maker of multitouch displays**

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Jeff Han, founder of Perceptive Pixel Inc. (PPI), takes the stage and demos how Perceptive Pixel technology can work with Windows 8 on a large-scale screen. He shows the ability to pinch and zoom, to zoom-in for greater detail, and to mark up content on screen with a stylus while also manipulating that content with your other hand.

And it's that collaboration component that Microsoft likes most.

Kurt DelBene, president of Microsoft's Office division, says Perceptive Pixel's large-touch displays will combine with Microsoft's hardware to increase productivity and collaboration possibilities. That's right...**the display products will go under the Microsoft Office division.**

Perceptive Pixel was founded in 2006 and shipped its first large-wall display solutions a year later. It gained recognition when CNN and other broadcasters used its displays during the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

Now maybe we can rest assured Microsoft appreciates the visual display business, and still

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loves us. **Maybe building a Surface brand mattered less when you own another multitouch brand**



One more important point: now we know **Surface will not be just a reference design for a Windows 8 tablet**. Microsoft is now committing to the hardware business. CEO Steve Ballmer has publicly said the old division of labor between OS developer and OEM meant Microsoft had “ceded some of the boundary between hardware and software innovation” to Apple, and he vowed not “to leave any space uncovered to Apple.”

Ballmer’s new focus on blending hardware and software development means Microsoft has developed respect for the Apple market approach and will do what Microsoft has always done best: copy the concept and make it their own.

What, you thought we forgot that when Microsoft was in the dark age of DOS that it took years to copy Apple’s click-on-icons OS explaining that copying was OK because Apple had copied the concept from Xerox. Even though Xerox Lab was a think-tank and never had a commercial product using it. Years later few remember that Windows was a copycat strategy and that shows you how successful it was for Microsoft and Ballmer.

You should remember that Bill Gate’s 1996 book, *The Road Ahead* may have famously missed the Internet...but it nailed the tablet. Microsoft promoted the tablet concept almost a decade before iPad. Yes, Microsoft feels ripped off by Apple “copying” them!

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