

# CES 2012: Microsoft, new tablets and the future of television in focus

Some are wondering whether the sprawling Consumer Electronics Show — which opens with Microsoft Chief Steve Ballmer addressing the tech faithful — has lost its beating pulse

With 150,000 attendees flocking the displays of more than 2,500 exhibitors, the four-day CES in Las Vegas remained the most important showcase in the consumer tech space. It might not be a year of startling innovation or heart-stopping products. Still, it was a touchstone for tech as an integral part of our lives. Some feel that CES was as much about relationships as products.

“Technology doesn’t wait for CES anymore,” said Mitch Kaner, the CEO of branded marketing firm 2Degrees. “It’s where you can have a centralised conversation. But you don’t have to be here for the products.”

There were five trends, devices and narratives to look out for at CES 2012. Microsoft said this was its last year at CES, so it seemed like a fitting place to begin. The company launched its Windows 8 operating system, with a beta coming as early February. It is designed to optimise the tablet experience. Will Windows 8 enable Microsoft to become a major player in the tablet market? Too soon to tell.

2011 saw a massive surge in public adoption of the devices, and a similarly substantial increase in the number of products out there. Sure, the HP TouchPad and RIM’s Playbook both flopped, but the iPad is more popular than ever and there’s a new player in the sphere



Showgoers are reflected in a pair of Recon ski goggles

— Amazon.

In mobile, everyone wants to design the new iPhone (or at least make a phone that is half as popular). In the tablet arena, the iPad remains king. In the computer business, the company’s vast array of laptops and desktops dazzle.

Will there be a Google TV 2.0 — an actual television not the

current set-top box? Uncertain. In the realm of the definite, two things we’ll assuredly hear more about are the 3DTV and the Smart TV. Whether or not you think the 3DTV will transform the home entertainment experience — paint us sceptical — the product could very well take another step forward this year.

While television is still the dominant viewing platform, more and more people are watching video that is distributed digitally. Whether it is streaming movies on a tablet or watching YouTube videos on your laptop, there are too many other platforms and distributors to keep track of.

## Protection and recovery as Rena continues to break

**Almost the whole stern of the Rena which ran aground on a reef off the coast of New Zealand is now underwater**

More than 100 containers have floated away since the ship got into trouble in early October. Remaining containers are still stuck on Rena since weather conditions caused the breakup. According to salvage unit manager David Billington, it is too dangerous to recover the cargo, “It’s still considered too hazardous to actually dive on the wreck. For obvious reasons now, there’s prob-

ably going to be a great deal of torn steel.”

Authorities are anticipating more oil from the wrecked cargo ship might reach the shore. Booms are being used to keep the slick from reaching the beaches. Meanwhile, bulldozers are busy clearing debris from the containers that have already washed up and people are being warned not to scavenge. It has already been called New Zealand’s worst maritime environmental disaster with estimates putting bird deaths as high as 20,000.



Residents check washed up containers at Waihi beach



Members of the media gather around the Toyota hybrid concept car

## Detroit Auto Show opens amid signs of recovery

**As the Detroit Auto Show opens the US car industry is celebrating a total turnaround, gearing up for good times having morphed from meltdown three years ago to robust health now**

Analysts and car company executives expect sales to grow between and four percent and nine percent this year, the third consecutive annual gain. The National Automobile Dealers Association is predicting a total of 13.9 million vehicles

this year. The number of cars sold last year in the US rose just over 10 percent to 12.7 million. However, analysts warn that a return to the boom years of 17 million annual sales will not happen any time soon. With sales set to slide in Europe, Asian and European manufacturers are looking to the US for some of their growth. That means General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, which is now controlled by Fiat, can expect stronger competition in their home market this year.

## Dotcom dilemma for world bodies

**International Internet regulators are trying to reassure world bodies such as the UN and the IMF about an expansion of website address names that they say threatens their online identities**

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers has just begun accepting applications for a vastly expanded range of domain names — the .com or .org type code that appear at the end of Internet addresses. The UN and IMF are among 26 organisations to have complained that their domain names could be seized by so-called ‘cybersquatters’ who apply for the ownership of addresses with the aim of selling them on.

## Iliad launches mobile service

**Xavier Niel, the billionaire founder of broadband provider Iliad, launches its long-awaited mobile service**

Iliad — which trades as Free — has unveiled aggressive offers that sharply undercut rival operators’ prices. In a six year battle Iliad has had to fight off tough lobbying from the existing providers.

In the run-up to the launch, Mr. Niel had pledged to cut mobile prices by up to one-half, arguing that France Telecom, Vivendi’s SFR, and Bouygues Telecom were charging more than operators elsewhere in Europe. Iliad’s arrival will transform France’s 21bn Euro mobile market, which is mature and has few growth prospects since 63 out of 65m residents already have mobiles.

## Polish art student hangs his own work in museum

**Why wait decades for your talent to be recognised?**

One young artist in Poland wanted his work displayed now. So he added one of his paintings to exhibits at a major gallery, filming himself in the process. Three days went by before it was identified as an imposter.

“After completing four years of studies, I decided not to wait anymore and to take matters into my own hands and become visible on the art market,” said Andrzej Sobiepan, acknowledging that he was inspired by Banksy, the elusive British-based street artist. The National Museum in Wroclaw saw the funny side, putting the painting on show in its cafeteria.

The painting has already made a name for itself and its creator.

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