The “post-PC era”:
What is the future of the desktop?
January 2014 Update
Whoever coined the phrase ‘evolution, not revolution’ had it right.

Our faithful friend the desktop PC may well be undergoing significant change right now but has such change not been an essential part of its whole existence? A few people may question whether the desktop can survive at all in a world of iPads and smartphones but most recognise its importance. It all comes down to a question of relevance.

As one of the world’s leading end user service specialists we manage over three million desktops across Europe (one million in the UK & Ireland alone); we design and produce desktop, laptop and tablet hardware and deliver over three million end user devices every year. Whether managed or unmanaged, mobile or static, the future of the desktop is intrinsically linked to the future of Fujitsu.

A result of Fujitsu’s own funded research, conversations with Fujitsu customers and industry experts, and inclusion of recently published Gartner and Forrester market trends analysis; this opinion article sets out to dispel a few myths and provide a new vision for the desktop – one that embraces evolutionary change.
Where to start?

There has been much press over the preceding year with PC sales declining combined with a slow uptake of Windows 8 pushing people into thinking we are witnessing the death-knell of the PC. So should we all be planning the wake or should we use this as an opportunity for a wakeup call and the impetus to implement a truly optimised end user computing (EUC) and enable a restructuring of the way you do business?

We think the latter and in all of our customer conversations we try to outline how this window of opportunity can be used to set the organisation on a new course – one that takes advantage of the “brave new world” of business agility.

Of course, we can all wax lyrical about the benefits of new hardware, new software and new ways of working but in practical terms what does this actually mean? Not just in the short-term but over the next three to five years.

No business wants to spend money unnecessarily and the last thing we would advise any customer to do is spend its IT refresh budget without first thinking, “What is best for my business?” We understand that you want to get it right first time and you want to avoid having to go through another major transformation or upgrade five years from now.

That said, ignoring the direction businesses and the market is going in is not a real option. While you can realise great benefits from a short-term “version uplift”, our aim is to ensure that every organisation has all the facts at hand before making any snap decisions.
Our advice is simple; use this window of opportunity alongside a large number of other organisations to implement an End User Computing delivery method to enable some or most of your users to experience what Microsoft call "Optimised Desktop" and what we in Fujitsu like to call "User Centric End User Computing". In moving to a user centric approach many aspects of the desktop environment will be centralised in data centres — applications, processing, user storage, user profiles and more.

The higher costs of support
IDC provides compelling evidence of the high cost of supporting older systems. IT labour costs per PC per year leap from £291 in year 2 to £494 in year 5. From an organisational perspective, the costs associated with diminished user productivity almost double from £114 in year 2 to £209 in year 5.

Mitigating Risk —
Why Sticking with Windows XP is a Bad Idea, IDC, 2012
Compared to a traditional, device centric approach, this evolutionary approach will provide you with the improved management, security, agility and analysis the organisation craves. In addition, the centralisation of components sets you well on your way to successfully manage an evolution to the next paradigm in end user computing – the Cloud Centric model.
User Centric End User Computing:

Desktop computing built around the end user

What makes your PC, your PC?
It is not the hardware or the operating system but the applications you run – your own personal configuration and data. By splitting each of these parts and storing them centrally, it makes life easier when you want to change just one of them – the software, for example.
Cloud Centric End User Computing – it’s a long way off, right?

It’s a fact: Cloud Centric End User Computing is already here. Public cloud services are now widely available and being used by organisations to support office automation, collaboration and user storage.

These solutions will only grow and continue to mature, making them increasingly cost-effective and functionally competitive when compared to owning and delivering your own desktop environment. As Windows 7 nears the end of its scheduled life in 2018 (albeit with extended support out to 2020), it is expected that many organisations will make the shift.

According to Gartner, a major acceleration toward cloud office systems (including email) will begin by 1H15, with “early majority” adopters migrating in earnest and “late majority” adopters beginning this move by 2017†. The traditional Microsoft Windows PC will also be replaced by other integration services – many cloud based – allowing users to easily work with many different applications without the need for a traditional desktop operating system.

Those organisations that have adopted a large scale user centric delivery method in 2014 will be able to successfully exploit Cloud Centric services earlier, and in a more integrated way. More information will be available to guide selection of new services – for example actual application usage – and services can be switched on and off much more easily.

A glimpse into the future

In a recent study Gartner† predicts that:
- By YE14, at least 10% of enterprise email seats will be based on a cloud or software as a service (SaaS) model seems well in hand.
- The number of cloud-provisioned users will grow 28.5% a year to 695 million users by 2022 (and constitute 60% of the larger user universe that will exist by then)
- We’re expecting cloud-provisioned users to constitute 33% of the enterprise universe in 2017.

†Source: New Developments in the Cloud Office System Market – Tom Austin (Gartner) – 22nd May 2013
So is it all about the applications then?

Well, yes, if by applications you include the data and end user personalisation. Consider how many organisations have a real handle on their applications estate.

To complete a successful transformation project and to avoid another one in a few years’ time, it is well worth adopting application lifecycle management to manage the selection, usage and subsequent retirement of your unused applications.

One large organisation we have been working with identified 6,000 WINTEL applications for upgrade. After a review we found that only 1,800 were actually in use. Further business-led rationalisation reduced this number to 1,200.

These 1,200 applications are all COTS (commercial off the shelf) products so they did not include anything developed within the application itself (for example, Excel macros).

This example simply serves to highlight that careful management of your applications can actually reduce the burden on IT support and save on the costs of licenses and training. Our rule of thumb is that most businesses have a 10:1 ratio of users to applications. By looking at your portfolio holistically, questioning whether individual applications are actively utilised by enough users and continuing to match software with business needs, the organisation can reap the rewards.

If you take away just one thing:
Actively manage your applications and use an enforced strategy (one which dictates the criteria on which an application is considered for use) on new purchases or in-house development.

75% of your applications are likely to be or soon to be out of support.

90% of applications are used by fewer than 10 users.
So where does BYOD and ‘consumerisation’ come into it?

While bring your own device and the consumerisation of IT are here to stay it is not guaranteed that they will be successful for all organisations.

Some may well adopt BYOD throughout the entire organisation but in all probability this will prove to be the exception not the rule. In the vast majority of organisations, full BYOD is unlikely to replace a managed desktop service.

Why? Because both corporate and individual security is key to the acceptance of BYOD, alongside the softer elements around education, policy and legalities. This will be a major challenge for many organisations and even some of the earliest adopters are now rolling back and looking at alternative solutions.

In the world of BYOD, the early adopter walks into the office, sits down, plugs in their personal laptop and then an automated corporate system runs its security checks only to find a virus. With the end-user now responsible for their own IT provision they are also responsible for IT support. If they do not have the knowledge to cleanse the system and eradicate the virus then how else is the problem going to be fixed? All of which leaves the employee (an expensive corporate resource) sitting there unable to work.

Consumerisation, on the other hand, is already widely accepted - not as a replacement for the managed desktop service but as an “add-on”. For example, giving employees the ability to read emails on their smartphone or tablet but not necessarily across the entire organisation and only for a select number of key personnel (say 10-20% of the total).

Both BYOD and consumerisation will only ever work for certain user types. Justifying the business case for the entire organisation will be a challenge and both will require access to corporate applications to make the end user more productive. Whether those applications are cloud based or more traditionally hosted, and whether they are a subset or the full list of required applications, are all key considerations.

Real world definitions

**BYOD** (Bring-Your-Own-Device) is a response to one of two issues:

1. The IT department is not providing the users with the equipment and service that they want (rather than need), or
2. The organisation is looking to shift the burden of cost and responsibility for supporting devices onto the end user (e.g. with contractors).

**Consumerisation** covers the use of “consumer” products within the corporate environment, often driven by end users wanting the same experience as they get at home.
In recent years, IT departments have been slow to match the pace of change. However, this window of opportunity represents the perfect time to restructure and achieve a level of agility previously considered impossible in most organisations.

Organisations can embrace BYOD as a stopgap but in reality they must get their act together to provide the right corporate IT and offer CYOD (choose your own device) from a catalogue of options instead.

**If you take away just one thing:**
Having a flexible application delivery method will mean you can take advantage of BYOD / CYOD and consumerisation should you choose to.
When is the right time to use cloud or mobile applications?

Public cloud applications such as Microsoft Office 365, Google Apps and Salesforce.com offer various benefits but most are related to reducing the overall IT spend for your organisation.

The theory being that the provider takes care of your core applications, allowing you to concentrate on your core business.

Of course, there are the usual challenges around data residency, data compatibility and feature poor mobile clients to consider. But public cloud applications can deliver real and significant business benefits – particularly around reduced IT support and development costs, end user access to current software and near-zero capex charging.

That said, the author of this piece uses two types of cloud-based applications. One is public (Salesforce.com) and the other is private (my email account) and in both cases I still use locally installed applications to interpret the data and work offline.

If you take away just one thing:
Your organisation should not be held back by legacy systems. However, look at the business case before moving your key applications to the cloud. Real benefit can be delivered to mobile workers during this window of opportunity but make sure you factor in all use case scenarios during your business case assessment.
What about future-proofing?

In the simplest of terms, the nirvana for every organisation should be a flexible way of delivering and controlling access to applications – one that allows you to quickly “on-board” and manage new cloud-based applications while still giving you access to your legacy WINTEL applications.

This type of delivery mechanism is already available and is equally at home delivering applications to a desktop in a call-centre or a tablet device in a coffee shop, offering complete security, protecting corporate data and controlling who can access which applications from which device and in which location.

To that end, Fujitsu has developed its optimised User Centric End User Computing delivery solution to successfully exploit the Cloud Centric delivery paradigm.

The core element of this optimised EUC service is based around our virtual desktop technologies (or Virtual Client Services (VCS) as we like to call it). Over time, VCS will actually process fewer and fewer legacy WINTEL desktop applications within the organisation - shifting its value towards integrating public cloud services and legacy desktop applications and offering a seamless, highly flexible enterprise solution for the evolution to Cloud Centric End Use Computing.

VCS - Cloud Centric Enablement

If you take away just one thing:
Invest in a flexible application delivery method which utilises the concepts of User Centric End User Computing, giving you the ways and means to stay agile, to gather management information to guide selection of new services, and to control access to those services centrally thus minimising your costs and increasing security.
So, what IS the future of the desktop?

Prior to April 2010 (the release of the iPad) the most common mobile devices we had were Blackberrys with access to corporate email or laptops with locally held data.

After 20 years of a Microsoft-dominated market there has been a mini revolution that few could have predicted.

However, the world has already moved on from this mini-revolution and recent press and the end of Windows XP is not the “end of the desktop”. It is simply the next stage in an evolutionary process as:

- The use of cloud based application usage continues to increase,
- Mobile devices and mobile applications grow in popularity,
- Offline access via Enterprise File Sync and Share applications removes the need for any data to be stored permanently locally,
- BYOD is replaced by CYOD as IT departments take the best of both worlds, and
- Security requirements escalate in importance.

So does this mean the demise of Microsoft’s dominance or the death knell of the PC?

The short answer is no.

Your desktop may change in appearance or form but it will still be an important device within the enterprise. My main productivity device is the same as it was 18 years ago (albeit slightly newer). But now I have two additional mobile devices that allow me to be more productive. Trust me, I did not write this piece on a tablet but I did review it on the train to the office on my iPad.

Whatever the size of your organisation, you need to “right size” the device your users employ to access your corporate applications. One size does not fit all and - whatever you decide you want to do for your organisation during this window of opportunity – make sure you deliver a service that can adapt to the continuing evolution of the desktop. Your next window might not open until 2020.

Fujitsu is committed to developing our optimised EUC service to keep pace with our customers’ needs. We are the only UK Systems Integrator with both Microsoft and Citrix employees embedded within our teams to ensure we can continue to innovate and develop the market leading optimised EUC service that our customers expect.

Your investment in an optimised EUC service will deliver not merely your next generation desktop but an evolutionary desktop solution."