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## COMPUTER COMPONENTS

# 2012 CES Trends in Your Future

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**Roman Kepczyk** • Feb. 08, 2012



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Our annual two day pilgrimage to the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) each January is complete and there are a number of trends and products that we believe will impact the accounting profession in the year ahead. For those not familiar with CES, it is one of the largest trade shows in the world with over 153,000 attendees reviewing thousands of new consumer gadgets in venues covering 1.8M square feet (or to put that into perspective-37 football fields).

While most of these products debut on the consumer /end user side, the successful tools eventually find their way into accounting firms. We found four key CES trends with the potential of impacting accountants technology decisions in 2012: ultra-

mobile devices, hyper-convergence, component miniaturization, and the evolution of personal clouds.

**1. Ultra-Mobile Devices:** While there were numerous tablet rollouts this year, none were interesting enough to have us consider jumping ship from our iPad2 (yet). Where we did see a significant trend was in the number of ultra-portable laptops that are copying Apple's streamlined Airbook format. Intel showcased at least twelve laptops that were less than one inch thin, weigh less than three pounds, and have extended battery lives of eight to ten hours.

At the same time Mobile Technology ([MMT2.com](http://MMT2.com)) debuted their latest mobile monitor that sports a 15.6" screen and even one version that can also integrate an iPad or Android tablet. The benefit to this combination is that accountants will be able to carry the laptop and a dual screen into the field in significantly smaller and lighter package that is about the size of a traditional laptop. The mobile monitor with integrated tablet bay also allows accountants to present information on their tablet while allowing clients sitting across from them to simultaneously see what is on their screen.

The ultraportable HP Envy Spectre and Samsung 9 Series had great specifications, but the product that we are waiting to compare them to is Dell's latest XPS laptop that has a 13" screen but fits in a form factor that is closer to a 12" device. This smaller form factor will allow road warriors to actually work on small regional jets (even when the person in front of them leans their seat back) for five or more hours. Lenovo displayed their Yoga device which is an ultraportable laptop that can convert into a touch tablet (which was one of the first devices we saw demonstrating Windows 8 touch screen capabilities). Intel also showcased future prototypes of this type of device pointing to future laptops being less than a half inch thick and easily converting between a tablet and a laptop with a keyboard.

**2. Hyper Convergence:** The convergence between smartphones and tablets was obvious, with both products integrating each other's capabilities. While the screens on smart phones stretch to become larger, the tablets are integrating better mobile phone capabilities (as evidenced by products such as the Samsung Galaxy) to the point where both devices will do the same thing and it is just a matter of the user deciding what size screen they want to carry and work on.

While auditors will most likely use smartphones, along with their laptops, tax personnel and consultants may opt for the larger screens of a tablet that has the integrated voice telephone features including cameras. This quality of the integrated

cameras is surpassing the “point and shoot” cameras that many of us carry and as one presenter joked: “watching someone take pictures with an iPad is fairly awkward, but you have to admit they have a pretty big view finder.” We see this convergence taking accountants from the realm of yesterday’s PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) to today’s PIDs (Personal Internet Devices), which gets our vote for the best three letter acronym of the show.

**3. Component Miniaturization:** Intel announced their first Android smartphone which has similar functionality to a miniature netbook, but stuffed into a form factor one tenth the size. While we are always impressed at how many features they are stuffing into these smartphones and ultra portable devices through miniaturization of components, other devices such as scanners and projectors are also being impacted. There were a number of PicoP projectors demonstrated and we can expect that they will eventually find their way into our “converged” devices such as 3M’s Camcorder Projector and the MicroVision devices hoping to eventually find their way into cell phones.

In addition, from an imaging perspective, the smallest unit we saw (other than your smartphone camera) was the HoverCam Mini which can be used for presenting and projecting video or images which could be tax returns or financial statements. By the way, if you are impressed by the slim profile of the Motorola Droid Razr and Fujitsu Arrows Es smartphones, check out the Huawei Ascend P1 which is less than 7mm thin!

**4. Cloud, Cloud and More Clouds:** The consumer electronics industry realizes that most people use a variety of cloud applications prompting InfoWorld to rebrand the show as the “Cloud Electronics Show.” In addition to consumers using the cloud for personal email, social networking, digital sharing of files and photos on the web, and services such as banking and portfolio management, vendors were touting the “cloud” resources behind their products. Users today want to access the same information and resources on multiple devices (smartphone, tablet, PC and Television) so that they can pick up where they were regardless of what tool they are using (think about having your timesheet open on all these devices at all times. Consolidation of these features into personal clouds is already occurring and companies (such as Facebook and Google) are making it easier to build both a personal cloud and public cloud.

With accountants adopting portals for secure delivery of client data, we can expect to see integration of our clouds with other business, personal, and public clouds so that

clients can eventually go to one place to manage all of our information. Consumer products such as Sugarsync, Dropbox, and Apple's iCloud will be driving developers to do the same for "work clouds."

CES 2012 was another great experience and we see these consumer trends pushing into tomorrow's accounting firms allowing us to more effectively serve our clients, which is why we are in this business in the first place.

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