

The World of Tech Today

As the new year begins I have been reflecting on how much the world of tech has changed right before my eyes. Twenty years ago when I started making house calls people owned one computer and maybe a *Palm Pilot* that they wanted to sync with the computer. (Note: I loved my *Palm*, keeping my last model until well into this decade. What a simple device it was to use.) Today we have so many choices in computers and hand held gadgets that it can make your head spin. Since there are so many choices in devices these days I thought it might be a good idea to point out some of the more novel uses of tech.



1990's Palm Pilot with four buttons for Calendar, Contacts, To-Do & Notes

Smartphones

The cell phones of today have completely replaced the *Palm Pilot* and other PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants). Today's smartphones do all the same functions as the old PDA plus an unlimited number of "apps" (short for applications). Developers can create apps for just about anything as simple as a calculator or flashlight all the way up to photography and videography. Businesses can create apps to engage with their customers. Airlines have apps so you can track your trips and book new ones. If you can think it up then there is probably an app for that.

Cell phones are made by many different manufactures: *Apple, BlackBerry, HTC, Kyocera, LG, Motorola, Nokia, Samsung, Sony*, and others. and all smartphones come in one of four main operating systems: [Android](#), [Apple iOS](#), [BlackBerry OS](#), [Windows Phone](#). When choosing a new Smartphone it is more important to pick the right operating system than the manufacturer. If you previously had an *iPhone* it is probably best and easiest to just get another *iPhone*. The switch from old phone to new phone will be straight forward. If you change operating systems, say you go from an *iPhone* to an *Android phone*, the switch will be more time consuming and you will need to learn a new operating system. Some of your app purchases will have to be redone in the app store for your new operating system (and the app store for your new operating system may or may not have the exact same app you are used to).

Everyone knows about *iPhones* and some know about *Android* phones. But I have to tell you that as good as *iPhones* and *Android* phones are there are other great Smartphones out there too. I just purchased a [Windows Phone](#) for my wife and she loves it. Nice [big tiles](#) on the home screen for the key things she uses the phone for. So if you are still using a flip phone and are wondering what kind of Smartphone to buy, don't forget to look at *Windows* Phones. They are a lot less expensive than an *iPhone* and do all the basics quite nicely. It all comes down to personal preferences but at least there are a lot of great choices out there.



Windows Phone with re-sizable tiles

Tablets

Think of tablets as smaller computers with 10-12 inch screens or larger Smartphones with 6-8 inch screens. If the tablet runs a full version of *Windows* as the *Microsoft Surface Pro* does then it is a smaller computer. If the tablet is an [Apple iPad](#), [Android tablet](#) or [Surface RT](#) then it is a larger Smartphone (without the phone functions). Some people ask me whether

they can completely replace their computer with a tablet and the answer is "yes" if you buy a [Microsoft Surface Pro](#) and "maybe" if you buy an *iPad*, *Android tablet* or a *Surface RT* (*Surface RT* comes with [Windows RT](#) (a stripped down version of *Windows* that does not run legacy applications). *iPads* and *Android* tablets only run apps that you can download from their app stores. You cannot install your own software on these. So to completely replace a computer with these tablets you would need to be sure that the tablet has an comparable app to do the same functions that you do on your computer.



Microsoft Surface Pro Tablet with optional keyboard cover

Laptops

Today's laptops come in all shapes and sizes. There are ultra light laptops with small screens that are perfect for traveling with everyday. Others are so large and heavy they can replace your desktop computer (see [Form Factors](#)). As with other devices there are different operating systems that run the computer. [Microsoft Windows](#), [Apple OS X](#) and [Chrome OS](#) are the most well known. Each has their advantages and disadvantages so again it can come down to personal preferences. Here are some unusual examples of each.



Lenovo's Yoga line converts from laptop to tablet and runs *Windows*



Apple's MacBook Airs are ultralight with 11 and 13 inch screens



Google's Chromebooks are good for basic Internet tasks like email and web

Home Automation

Thermostats, lights, door locks, garage doors, refrigerators, ovens, crock pots, security systems and more can all now be connected to the Internet so you can monitor them from afar.



Nest Learning Thermostat and smartphone app warm up your home as your car gets closer



Schlage Touchscreen Deadbolt
unlock the front door over the Internet



A crock pot connected to WiFi
turn it on from work

Tech has come a long way in 20 years and there is a part of me that thinks that we might become so distracted by our tech that we forget to just live life. So take in all this new tech with "a grain of salt" and know that you don't have to get involved with everything new in the tech world. Be selective with the gadgets that come into your life so you don't become a slave to them and remember to have fun with them.

Updates/Upgrades

[Click here](#) to see if you should do an update or upgrade.

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Some of my clients do not realize that my business has expanded to all mobile devices. In fact, any consumer electronic product that you can purchase I can help you with. So if you would like help setting up or syncing your new smartphone or tablet or connecting your new WiFi TV to the Internet, just let me know.

Claude Kerno

Computer & Consumer Electronics Consultant

719.650.9916

claude@kerno.biz - www.kerno.biz