

## Tech Talk: Onslaught of mobile devices leads to challenging choices

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The onslaught of mobile devices continues at a breakneck pace. Apple just announced the latest version of the popular iPhone, a third-generation iPad will likely come out over the next year and new Android tablets come to market almost daily.

Just last week, Amazon introduced a new family of Kindle e-readers, highlighted by its first color e-reader, the Kindle Fire, along with e-ink e-readers that are both touch-based, like a tablet, and keyboard-based, like the traditional e-readers.

Perhaps most notable is that the e-reader is becoming more of a tablet device than just an electronic book. The Barnes & Noble Nook and the new Amazon Fire and Kindle can connect to the Internet and run Android apps. This allows the popular e-readers to be used for browsing the Web, shopping, checking e-mail and watching streaming video. They are, in effect, computers in a very portable tablet format.

The primary decision issue with an e-reader is not so much what it is capable of, but what you want its primary purpose to be. If your primary goal is to read books, then a black and white e-ink based e-reader is likely your best choice.

E-ink is a display technology that is easiest on your eyes, most like reading printed paper and perfect for use in bright light. The glaring (no pun intended) drawback is that e-ink is not backlit, meaning to read in low light or at night, you need a light source like a traditional book. A traditional reading lamp, booklight or e-reader cover with an integrated light will do the trick. The color based e-readers like the Nook and the Kindle Fire are color backlit devices, which makes them great for reading at night and the best choice for reading colorful digital magazines.

This is where some challenging decisions come into play. If color is your preference, then you should compare a color e-reader to a tablet like the iPad or one of the many Android tablets on the market. A tablet will be a great device for reading digital books and magazines if you also intend to use the device for more than just reading. Which device is right for you is really a personal choice. I encourage you to test as many of the available options as you can to find a wide variety of sizes and weights. These may be important considerations.

The standards are emerging around a 7- and 10-inch screen, the smaller being the size of most e-readers and the larger of tablets. My advice is to focus on the ease on your eyes of the respective screens and go with one that is comfortable for reading and surfing the Web.

With the popularity of smartphones, tablets and e-readers growing quickly, these devices need to be taken into account at the workplace, too. All of these devices have wireless network capabilities and more and more, you will find people at work connecting their personal devices to your business networks to get online. This presents some serious security concerns that need to be addressed.

It's not unrealistic to find your wireless network, which may be designed with a few portable computer users in mind, to have dozens of personal smartphones, tablets and e-readers connected to it so people can use them during work or breaks. If you have sensitive data on your business networks, which essentially every business does, you may want to give serious consideration to implementing an insecure guest wireless network that is physically separated from your business wireless network. You could then allow these types of devices to connect to that guest network, while further securing your business wireless network for just business assets and use. This would be a wise step to take now, before this becomes an issue for your workplace.

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