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PCs face inroads from mobile devices

Story by [April Jacobs](#)

NOVEMBER 23, 1998 - LAS VEGAS -- The desktop PC will remain the productivity tool of choice in corporate America for the foreseeable future, but it increasingly will have to share the glory with a wide variety of thin clients and handheld devices.

In fact, users and analysts said, the desktop PC will have to adapt to a new world in which it acts as information hub for mobile devices. That hub, they said, would be a single point of contact management and processing for everything from smart phones and pagers to handhelds.

Brian Brunit, a director at PricewaterhouseCoopers in New York, said PCs will have to adapt to offer reliable connections for end users who are traveling both on the ground and in the air. The connection should work for multiple computing devices, he added.

"The PC is going to become more of a utility in the future, because we are all

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going to be connected somehow — whether through satellite or phone," Brumit said, noting that people's desire to have access to information whenever and wherever they want is driving companies to find ways to make connecting more reliable and easier.

"In five years, I think . . . [PCs] are going to become a lot more utilitarian. A portable PC is going to be truly portable, probably a little bit larger than a tablet," said John Dunkle, an analyst at Workgroup Strategic Services Inc. in Portsmouth, N.H.

CENTRALHUB

"Desktop devices are going to have to be designed so they will accommodate intelligent portable devices [and become] the hub for all other devices," he said.

For example, end users have information stored on various portable devices — from voice mail on smart phones to addresses and phone numbers in handhels — and can't combine and manage that information easily. Addresses and phone numbers are accessed through handhels, while smart phones and pagers contain voice mail.

The desktop PC is "going to have to change and evolve, or die," said Glenn Bonner, CIO at the Bellagio hotel here, which uses thin clients (see related story, page 57). "The device of choice for people is going to depend on their application needs," he said at a Comdex event. Essentially, Bonner said, users will adopt technology that fits their needs as it becomes available, rather than conforming to traditional means if it proves reliable. For example, at the Bellagio, thin clients proved to be more cost-effective than PCs.

Paul Tinnirello, senior vice president of information systems at A. M. Best

Inc., an insurance consultancy in Oldwick, N.J., said senior executives at his company have computer tablets. That's because a trial run with handhelds proved they're too difficult to use as data-processing devices.

Tinnirello said the PC as people know it today "probably won't exist" five years from now. What will replace it? The smallest device that can function like a PC — with speech and voice recognition.

"There will have to be change," he said, "because people are going to be wired and they are going to be mobile."

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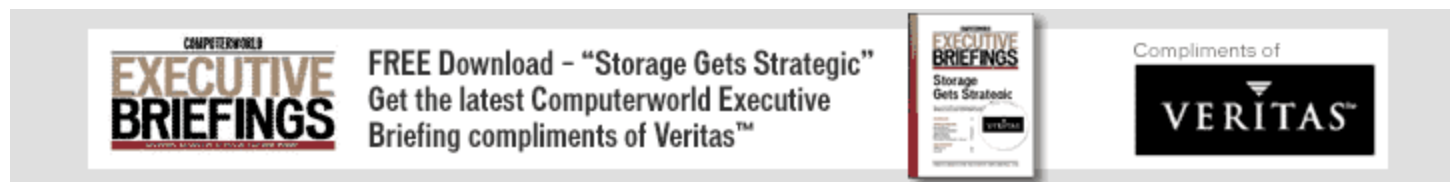
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