

## Learning The Apple Way

Joel Hans, Managing Editor, Manufacturing.net



[A recent survey](#) [1] shows that 1 in 5 Americans now own a tablet computer of some sort, between the likes of the Kindle Fire, Barnes & Noble Nook, and, of course, Apple's iPad. The [survey itself](#) [2], from the Pew Research Center, has some pretty interesting bits of information, but what struck me hardest was exactly how precise Apple is at getting people to buy something they don't really need. Their recent push into electronic textbooks is indicative of this effort.

The first part of the survey shows that tablet ownership jumped from 10 percent in December to 19 percent in January, meaning a good chunk of Americans bought tablets during the holiday gift-giving season. The survey doesn't give a breakdown as to who owns what kind of tablet, but a *PC World* [article](#) [3] analyzed some of the recent numbers. Amazon offloaded roughly three million Kindle Fires between its launch at the middle of December, and likely sold another 4-5 million over Christmas. Apple, by comparison, sold 13 million iPads in the last quarter.

What perked my interest was the income levels at which Americans bought their gadgets. Of those households making between \$30,000 and \$49,000, 16 percent owned a tablet. That number more than doubles for those making more than \$75,000. I think this best proves Apple's cunning in being first to market, even with something that's fairly expensive. One out of every seven or so households firmly in the middle class — if not below that — own a tablet. Do they need one? Absolutely not. If they were in need of a computer, a Dell or HP from Best Buy would do *much* more for the same price.

The brilliance of the tablet is that it's convinced those who don't make much money that they *do* need one, despite all indications otherwise. Think about it: For those who make \$30,000 a year, an iPad is a whopping 1.7 percent of their entire year's budget. At the same time, tablets have become another gadget that the wealthy purchase simply because it's the new thing on the block, or because it's branded by a certain partially-eaten fruit. Apple forged the marketplace by hitting all sectors at

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once. This isn't a \$2,000 dream laptop — anyone can “afford” an iPad and get all of that Apple glitz and glam.

And now, the company has just launched its assault on the “old school” textbook. The company claims that its offerings, at \$15 a pop, will help students learn more efficiently, and more cheaply. The problem is, of course, that one needs to first purchase an iPad in order to access the eTextbooks (is that a thing yet?). It sounds like the company will soon start lobbying school districts on the merits of their iPad-based system — they've already cited the lower costs and portability.



Apple has already made significant headway in the fight to get their laptops on college campuses. Some universities — or at least certain programs within them — require that students purchase an Apple laptop. There's a pretty popular picture on the Internet (see below) that shows an entire lecture hall of students (supposedly of the The Missouri School of Journalism), somewhere in the hundreds, with their faces all aglow by Mac screens. The sea of lit-up Apple logos is actually a bit creepy.

Now, education has undergone a good deal of change in the last twenty years. Somewhere in my elementary school years, the system transitioned into the expectation that essays would be written on a desktop computer, which meant that in order to meet these minimum requirements, parents had to make an investment. It seems like Apple believes the iPad is a similar revolution. It's just — who would actually fall for that?

My biggest issue with this movement is that Apple doesn't care one bit about the actual education process, or the efficacy of their iPad-based solution. Thinking otherwise is a mistake. They're simply pushing for a new market — **No Child Left Behind (Without an iPad)** — and that's simply not what I want the future to look like. Apple is proffering another argument as to why everyone, especially those who shouldn't be spending that money, needs to buy their device. Their message reminds me of that wailing character from *The Simpsons*: “Won't someone *please* think of the children?”

If Apple has their way, future parents would ditch the argument over the color of the nursery's walls and settle for another one entirely: 16, 32, or 64 gigabytes? Do toddlers need a mobile connection, or just WiFi? Because there's no way that three-year-olds and 10-inch sheets of glass don't mix.

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But in a sea of Apple-based education, there's some hope. Did you pick out the holdouts in the above picture? They're pretty hard to see. The first is near the middle of the picture: four rows back, second seat from the aisle. A *non-Apple laptop*. I don't know what brand it is, but I'm sort of proud of its owner, defying the buy-Apple mandate.

But I can do you one better. How about that guy on the left of the picture, wearing the yellow "Mizzou" shirt? Three rows up, right on the aisle. No computer at all, just the good 'ol pen and paper. Makes me long for the days when a company that [earns \\$13 billion a quarter](#) [4] didn't tell us how best to learn. I took all my lessons through hand cramps and my trusty Pilot G2 pen, thank you very much.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.manufacturing.net/news/2012/01/study-says-tablet-e-book-ownership-soar>

[2] <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/E-readers-and-tablets/Findings.aspx?view=all>

[3]

[http://www.pcworld.com/article/248562/1\\_in\\_5\\_american\\_adults\\_own\\_a\\_tablet.html](http://www.pcworld.com/article/248562/1_in_5_american_adults_own_a_tablet.html)

[4] <http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2012/01/24Apple-Reports-First-Quarter-Results.html>