



JIMS VIRTUAL WORLD

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BlackBerry unveils PlayBook tablet to take on iPad

Canadian wireless giant Research in Motion (RIM), the maker of the BlackBerry, unveiled its tablet computer called PlayBook to take on Apple's iPad. Targeted mostly at business people (like its BlackBerry smart phone), the PlayBook is half the size of the iPad. Weighing the same as the iPad, it is just 9.77 millimetre thick.

The tablet, which will fit neatly into a small corporate suitcase, is to hit the North American market early next year and available elsewhere later in 2011. Unveiling the PlayBook at the company developers' annual meeting in San Francisco, RIM co-CEO Mike Lazaridis said, 'RIM set out to engineer the best professional-grade tablet in the industry with cutting-edge hardware features and one of the world's most robust and flexible operating systems.'

"The BlackBerry PlayBook solidly hits the mark with industry leading power, true multitasking, uncompromised web browsing and high performance multimedia."

The PlayBook supports 1080p high-definition video and carries two high-definition front and rear-facing cameras. Supported by one GHz dual-core processor, the tablet offers all BlackBerry applications as well as security specifications needed for business users.

The cheering news for BlackBerry users is that through a secure wireless link, the Playbook can also be used as a second and bigger screen for their smart phone. And when they disconnect the two, no secure BlackBerry will be left on the PlayBook.

Wherever Wi-Fi is not available, users can access the Web by linking to their BlackBerry smart phone.

Whereas Apple didn't use Flash in its iPad on the grounds that Adobe's software is full of bugs and drains battery, RIM's PlayBook offers Flash for video and interactive material on the web. In a way, Flash will make the PlayBook less dependent on third-party applications.

"I don't need to download a YouTube app if I have got YouTube on the web. Much of the market has been defined in terms of how you fit the Web to mobility. What we're launching is really the first mobile product that is designed to give full web fidelity," said the RIM co-CEO.

As expected, the PlayBook will operate on a new software platform built by QNX Software Systems. The BlackBerry maker had acquired Ottawa-based QNX Software Systems for \$200 million in April to have exclusive access to its software technology for its tablet.

Indicating how powerful this QNX operating system is, RIM says it can work on machines that run four, eight, 16 and 32 processors.

The unveiling of the PlayBook is a smart move by the BlackBerry maker to remain as the top provider of mobile devices for business people, say analysts.

According to them, since most companies have their IT department already deeply integrated with RIM technology because of their use of BlackBerry smart phones, corporates and businesses will adopt the PlayBook, helping RIM establish a niche position in the tablet market despite early lead by Apple's iPad.

After the launch of Apple's iPad in April, Dell, Samsung, Cisco and RIM are all rushing into the tablet market.