

From the first computer to the tablet revolution

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digital publishing platform tools

It all started way back before the first iPad hit the market. Only the very smartest could see in the early eighties that a computer that previously filled several rooms would one day fit into a back pocket. The question today is how to make your content available on the mobile in that pocket.

From the first ideas to the first computer

Possibly the first sketch of a computer was made by Leonardo da Vinci, but is not as well-known as many of his inventions. In 1623, Wilhelm Schickard designed the first mechanical calculating machines. The first programmable computer was designed by Konrad Zuse in 1936. The idea of reading a daily paper on a computer at that time is probably one that not even Zuse could have had. Development continued and, in 1945, the first universal, fully electronic computer was constructed – ENIAC. You may have seen the computer in the *Imitation Game* movie. It had an area of 140 meters square, weighed 40 tons, contained 18,000 tubes, 1,500 relays, 10,000 capacitors and 7,000 resistors. It consumed as much energy as a small village.

The need for communication was growing and this resulted in the emergence of computer networks and the Internet. The idea for the dissemination of digital content for the masses exploded. It took another 40 years until the tablet reached the mass market. It took this long due to the limits of the technology and very high development costs.

The first tablet design was Dynabook – a personal computer intended for children for interactive learning. Dynabook was proposed in 1972, but never produced. At that time, the cost of production was USD 6,000 per unit. It wasn't Steve Jobs who launched the tablet world but Alan C. Kay, who also came up with the first notebook – the laptop. A significant step was the emergence of e-readers. In the 1994, the US publishing giant,

Knight Rider, released a promo movie with the slogan: Today's News in the Electronic Age. They presented The Tablet and had the vision that newspapers might change entirely over the next 15 years. They didn't know how right they were in saying that people want a computer that does not need a manual. Once again, The Tablet was never produced, but a prototype was developed to present how information would be accessed in the future.

In 1996, several prototypes were built of NewsPAD devices – a tablet size device, with a color LCD display, whose main purpose was again providing news. Walt Disney, Microsoft and other companies had similar ideas, but none were successful.

Apple iPhone, launched in 2007, was the game changer. It opened the door for this type of product: a revolutionary phone with touch control. The secret of success was its ease of use, as had been predicted 13 years previously. Users were suddenly open to the idea of buying content and consuming digital information. In 2010, Jobs presented iPad 1 in an unconventional way. Sitting in a chair he opened a newspaper on the tablet, and then the e-mail and the internet. This was exactly the way people wanted to receive information, without a heavy laptop or the need to sit at an office desk: convenient, quick and easy. There was no way back for publishing houses and companies; tablets were here and were the future. Over a number of years, companies were exposed to examples of the coming digital era, but many of them are struggling with digital content even today. Perhaps the unsuccessful adaptations, concepts and failures up to that

time convinced them that the media future was elsewhere.

Paperless publishing

Going digital? What kind of content? What does digital publishing mean? These are questions that publishers ask themselves over and over again. The world of tablets brought another dimension: integrated interactivity and multimedia. Digital publishing was an industry with great potential. Mere presence on mobile devices was soon not enough. Touch devices opened new possibilities. Modern publishers designed layouts for tablets, added videos and photos. Everything that print could not contain was added to digital editions. But this increased data size and costs enormously. Other publishers chose the path of least resistance and published a print replica. Many have failed and some, even giants like *The Daily*, went under. The fundamental problem is the adaptation of publishers to the digital world, poor flexibility, and sticking to old rules. This market

and the reader's needs are rapidly changing.

So what is the right way to satisfy an audience and generate revenues? It is important to assess the audience, enhance the content and find the golden mean, so at the end of the day the reader is not annoyed by the advertising. In the digital world, the maxim "less is more" is doubly true. Another trump card is a simple and quick way of direct payments. More steps mean a lower likelihood of a purchase. The price needs to be reasonable and to reflect the content value and marketing – nothing sells without strategic promotion. Last but not least, an appropriate digital publishing platform must be chosen. There are many solutions, with different pricing, features, robustness and support services. The key has always been, and always will be, the content itself. Content that people want to read.

Morning walks to the newsstand have changed into up-to-the-minute news right at your fingertips. Anyone who wants to survive in today's digital world, must discard beliefs such as "either print or digital." The two can coexist. The way is to offer something special in both areas to increase the motivation to purchase. Those who understand the reader's needs will succeed.



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