

First choose operating system then handset

 By [Kevin Bassett](#)

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For those planning to upgrade their cellphone in 2013, care must be taken, given the three elephants of computing (Google, Apple and Microsoft), who are stomping on mobile territory. Users need to know who's who in the zoo, because they are fundamentally different.

The best user experience will come from sticking to one operating system (OS) across all devices - from mobile handsets and tablets to laptops and media centres. When it comes to technology, it is no longer hardware first. It is OS first, hardware second. To get the most out of your technology, choose your OS first and then pick hardware to match it.

Options for operation

- **Apple** - You will need to purchase an Apple iPhone 5 running iOS 6 and own an iPad tablet to fully benefit from automatic synchronisation. If you go with Apple, you'll be buying into a brand that sells the hippest devices and has the biggest app store. To get the full Apple experience, you should also own a Mac computer and an Apple TV.
- **Google** - If you prefer an OS that's based on open software architecture, Google is for you. Planning to store everything in the cloud - then purchase a handset running the Android 4.1 Jelly Bean operating system (like the Samsung Galaxy S III or Google's Nexus 4). A matching Nexus 7 tablet will pair with a desktop device running Google's Chrome operating system. Google plans to release a device that will allow you to stream movies from Google Play. If you choose to go this route, you will be buying into the best search-and-suggest engine and cloud storage system.
- **Microsoft** - Your office environment probably uses Microsoft. Which means you will need to consider using Microsoft Windows 8 across all your devices. Microsoft has partnered with Nokia to launch the Lumia 920, but there are other Windows 8 handsets such as the HTC WP 8X. Other manufacturers, like Samsung, will also release phones running on this OS. Microsoft has launched its own Surface tablet running two versions: a basic version called Windows RT and a business version called Windows Pro, which comes with Microsoft Office pre-installed. To complete the process, buy an Xbox for entertainment and gaming.

Mobile and desktop operating systems

One of the main issues to do with the Apple and Google OS technology is that phones and tablets run on different operating systems to laptops and PCs. Microsoft, however, uses the same system for both mobile and desktop devices.

This means that any file saved to Microsoft's cloud storage system, SkyDrive, is automatically available - and editable - on any other Windows 8 device. You do not need to download additional applications to convert or edit documents created on

a desktop device.

An additional feature of Windows 8 and SkyDrive is that you can remotely access any device that is logged into your Windows Live account. If you have not uploaded a document to SkyDrive yet and you decide to work on it from home, you can remotely access the file from another device if it is logged in.

Turning tablets into business tools

If Microsoft can merge mobile device software to function using Windows 8 - successfully - tablets won't just be readers and browsers; they'll become functional business tools. Microsoft may not be sexy, but if it can do this, it will be able to dominate both the desktop and mobile software arenas.

Where to start

All the operating systems do similar things - except for processing and storage. Apple and Microsoft store files on your computer and then synchronise devices via their cloud storage software. Google stores your files in their cloud system and then gives you permanent access via the internet. This can be tricky in Africa where internet access is limited, unreliable and expensive.

The answer is that you should only dance with one elephant, so choose your next phone carefully. Prioritise your requirements, choose an operating system and then go handset shopping.

A brief and basic buyer's guide:

- Choose Apple for the planet's most desirable devices, for apps and for synchronicity.
- Pick Google for a cloud-based system or for superior search capabilities.
- Go for Microsoft if you are looking for a tool to meet your business requirements.

Tech news hot off the press

Mark Shuttleworth has announced that he will launch an Ubuntu Linux operating system on certain smartphones. It will allow them to act as PCs when connected to a monitor and dock. His aim is to converge cloud computing, data centres, PCs and consumer electronics into one unified operating system.

The Linux-based Ubuntu OS is an enterprise system; it works on anything from a smartphone to a supercomputer, seamlessly. A feat that none of the other dancing elephants can boast. Ubuntu is targeted at Africa - with its vast number of first-time tech users. My prediction? It will be huge, and not only in Africa.

ABOUT KEVIN BASSETT

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