

Looking back at 2012, it's clear the PC industry experienced a pivotal year. Now, as we move into 2013, the question is, "Which way did it pivot"?

2012 was one that brought Ultrabooks, and Ultrathins into the mainstream, providing a shot of innovation to a PC industry that had stagnated on that front, according to information and analytics provider **IHS**. When combined with Microsoft's Windows 8, the Ultrabook gave the PC industry something that it hoped would be a valid competitor against the hot media tablet. Unfortunately, the Ultrabook fell far short of industry expectations—and even the far more growth moderate outlook expected by IHS.

2013 brings another ray of hope for the PC market. With the total PC market declining in 2012 for the first time since 2001, the bar has been set pretty low for 2013 expectations. However, the PC market still has a pretty big hill to climb before it gets back on track.

IHS predicts total PCs shipments worldwide in 2013 will grow to 371.3 million units, up from 343.2 million units last year. Year-over-year growth will be 8.2% in 2013, much improved from the 2.7% contraction witnessed in 2012.

A major trend to watch for 2013 will be how well Windows 8 is accepted into the consumer market as well as for commercial upgrades. Some businesses are still running the old Windows XP. Since Microsoft is ending XP support, will need to transition to either Windows 7 or Windows 8. Another development to monitor is the adoption rate of the new features Windows 8 generates, such as touch screens, voice and hand gesture recognition and other consumer-friendly options.

Form factor also will continue to be in the forefront in the PC market.

For mobile PCs, convertible tablet PCs that are based on x86 microprocessors are expected to hit the mainstream in 2013. These may be the best competitors against the hot media tablets such as the Apple iPad.

PC Market Will Bounce Back in 2013, IHS Says

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For the desktop space, which is a declining market overall, the All-In-One form factor PCs combined with Windows 8 and touch screens make a great combination.

However, it remains uncertain how successful these PCs will be in diverting consumer attention and dollars away from the lower-priced media tablets. If these new form factors along with Windows 8 do not spark the market as anticipated, then 2013 could end up being another year of struggle for the PC industry.

In the wake of economic uncertainty, total server market growth has been tempered by cautious IT spending in the commercial space. However, the need for continual refreshment and the build out of cloud computing data centers will remain important growth drivers for the foreseeable future.

IHS iSuppli remains cautiously optimistic for 2013, fueled by the new mobile PC market that will help make up for other weaker PC areas, such as desktops and netbooks.