



The new iPad3 reviewed

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You would have to be living under a fairly sizable rock not to have heard of the revolution that has been taking place in computing. Tablet computers – computers you can easily carry and you do not really need a keyboard to use – have been around for some time in one shape or other. But until the release of the first iPad in 2010, no manufacturer had come up with a product that users actually lusted after en masse. It sold worldwide in the millions, and then the tens of millions, and now a new category of computing appliance has been defined.

It is probably fair to say that Apple has turned the computing industry on its head and are rightly credited with leading the movement which is changing the way the world works. In fact, sales of tablet computers are expected to eclipse those of desktop PCs well before the end of the decade. We are at the tail end of the PC era.

* Copycat products

There have been plenty of copycat products since 2010, all of which are intent on emulating the iPad's characteristics and also attempt to capitalise on its well-publicised and perceived deficiencies. No other single model of device, however, has even come close to achieving the same commercial success.

Gartner, the leading global IT research firm, predicts that Apple's iPad will control 60 per cent of the tablet market in 2012 and sell 73 million units this year. They also forecast Apple will retain its staggering lead in this category until well into 2016 at least. This is no fickle blip of fashion, but a lasting and pervasive change.

In the property valuation industry what opportunities await valuers for making the best use of this amazing device? In March, with the release of the new iPad and the reduction in the price of the iPad2, the economics for making





use of this device within a valuation practice have turned into a no-brainer. Even for those outside Apple's fan club, the iPad2's pricing and the features of the new version have added more pressure to competing manufacturers to further lift their game. The winners from this battle are the consumers and users of these devices.

* Why buy the iPad3?

What is new in this iPad and should you be buying this latest model, or is the reduced price iPad2 now the most compelling choice for business? Without a doubt the new display is the iPad's party piece. For anyone used to using the iPhone 4 or 4S, you are already familiar with the extremely crisp text and razor sharp precision of this type of screen. It works by packing in four times the number of pixels in the same space as other screens this size.

By making the pixels so small it is no longer possible for the human retina to see each individual pixel, so the brain is able to process text and lines without the additional processing we subconsciously do to 'join the dots'. All in all, it makes for a very comfortable reading experience.

It is the kind of innovation that you only appreciate once you have used it and then compare it to a different device that does not have it. You then really miss that clarity. For gadget collectors this unique screen – the highest definition one of its size in the world – will be sufficient justification to rush out and buy one.



* 4G capability with a camera

In New Zealand and Australia, Apple got themselves in trouble by advertising the iPad3 as 4G LTE capable. 4G LTE is a substantially faster version of 3G internet access which promises network speed on the go, similar to what we are used to on cable and wired internet access at home or the office. However, the new iPad's 4G system does not work on the frequencies available for 4G in New Zealand and so you cannot currently use it in practice.

The bottom line is that if you are using the new version, you will only be getting 4G speeds when you travel overseas. As 4G networks in this country are still far from being available, this gap in the iPad's capabilities is unlikely to sway your decision either way for the time being.

* Built-in camera

When the first iPad was released, there was near universal condemnation over its lack of a built-in camera. It was possible to use some tricky apps which let you Bluetooth photos between your iPhone and your iPad, but that was still far from convenient or practical in the real world.

With iPad2, Apple band-aided the problem by providing two very ordinary cameras both front and rear. It is fair to say that both cameras on the iPad2 fall far short of the kind of photography most valuers want to produce, except perhaps when used in perfect lighting conditions and with a very steady pair of hands. With iPad3, Apple have come closer, but have not yet succeeded, in solving the problem. For example –

- The front camera's quality remains disappointingly the same as the iPad2, making video conferencing on the device feel as if it is from the last decade
- The rear camera is a real improvement, but oddly still does not rise to the same quality as the iPhone 4S.

It will probably take another generation or two of these embedded camera devices to reach a standard of photography where a valuer will feel fully justified in ditching the separate point and shoot camera for valuation reports.

Connecting other cameras

Fortunately there are some good solutions for integrating your current point and shoot or digital SLR camera with your iPad. For those looking for the cheapest option, there is a camera connection kit you can purchase which lets you import photographs from your camera by plugging in a USB cable or inserting your SD card into the iPad. It is a little clunky, and in practice this is quite an inefficient and annoying process to go through after every inspection.

If you are looking for something more convenient consider getting the Eye-Fi SD card. This is a unique and amazing product that you can use to wirelessly transmit, in real time, photographs that you take with your point and shoot camera on to your iPad. No cables and no fussing



around.

Because it is a normal sized SD card, it can be retrofitted to almost any camera which has a card slot. The card has a very small wi-fi network base station inside it, a very tiny version of the wi-fi router in your home or office, which uses the camera's battery to power itself. Using the free Eye-Fi app, your iPad joins the wi-fi network hosted by your SD card and downloads the photographs automatically to your tablet's camera roll.

To those of us used to transferring photographs the old-fashioned way, this feels somewhat like magic the first few times you experience it. You can impress your tech savvy clients and colleagues with this trick.

* Dictation support and keyboard

Another long sought-after feature missing in the previous two iPads has been viable dictation support. Finally with iPad3 it is here, and it is not bad. Although you do need an internet connection for it to work, there is genuine support now for our non-American accents. A good portion of this article was written by using the dictation feature on the iPad.

Wherever you see the on-screen keyboard, you can dictate instead of getting frustrated by typing. To get the best out of the dictation feature, dictate just one sentence

at a time, correct any issues or simply try again speaking more clearly and slowly. Doing this is often quicker than correcting any mistakes it makes using the keyboard.

If dictation is not your thing, and you find the on-screen keyboard just a little on the clunky side to use, there are some other options for keying in larger chunks of text while you are sitting down. The first is Apple's wireless keyboard which can connect up to your computer or iPad through Bluetooth. You can position the keyboard anywhere within a few metres of the tablet and type away.

For more permanent set-ups, perhaps your home or office desktop, you can also purchase a docking station which will keep your tablet nice and steady while you comfortably type away. Also available are third party iPad covers that incorporate a built-in keyboard you can use. Having an external keyboard frees up the half of the screen which is normally used to display the keyboard. This makes editing documents and producing content a much more familiar experience, like using a laptop or ultra-light notebook.

* Heat, charge and storage

One of the really noticeable side effects is the heat all of this new kit generates. For users of the iPad2, which no-one could accuse of ever providing warmth on a winter's day, the new version is positively toasty if it is used for a reasonable length of time or doing anything graphically intensive. Those who bother to measure such things have determined that it can rise to 46°C, or about 10°C hotter than the iPad2's maximum recorded heat.

Another annoyance is how long it can take to charge. Now that the battery has twice as much power capacity, it can also take twice as long to charge up. Most users of the iPad will forgive these transgressions, which will probably be corrected in future models as these technologies constantly improve with the weight of billions of dollars of annual research and development investment.

The new iPad has the same mix of storage and wi-fi only versus phone network connectivity as previous models. You can pick from 16, 32 or 64 Gb models. Which should you choose? This all depends on how cost-conscious you are and whether your device is going to be used purely for business, or if you are planning on using it for fun and home as well.

For business users, it is unlikely you will need to go for more than the base 16 Gb of storage. Most business apps are fairly slim on storage needs, and if you are using the iPad for business, you are most probably making use of cloud or remote server based applications. As these applications mainly manage storage on a remote server, you can get by with having a minimum on the device itself.

* Is it a good choice for valuers?

Should you get the 4G option? Given the nature of a

