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Dell's Project Ophelia could be more bad news for PCs

Thumb-drive sized Android PC is a cost-effective tool for virtualized, cloud-connected companies

By Tony Bradley | **PC World**

Dell is **shipping Project Ophelia** devices to early beta testers. PC sales are already suffering at the hands of mobile devices, and now Dell's Android PC-on-a-stick threatens the relevance of traditional PCs from a different angle.

First, a little about Project Ophelia. The device is about the size of a large USB thumb drive. Instead of just flash-based storage, though, Project Ophelia packs a Rockchip RK3066 processor and 1GB of RAM, as well as both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectivity into that small space. It also has a microSD card slot to add additional storage if necessary.

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It runs on Google's Android mobile OS. The device demonstrated at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona earlier this year ran Android 4.1 (a.k.a. "Jelly Bean"), but it seems reasonable to assume Dell will ship the device with the current version of Android before its official launch, which is expected to be the end of this year.

Project Ophelia is not a revolution that will make PCs irrelevant overnight. Android is great at what it does, but much of the business world runs on the Microsoft Office productivity suite and line-of-business or custom applications developed for a Microsoft Windows environment. Project Ophelia is rumored to be a meager $100 and plugs into an HDMI or MHL port on a TV or monitor. HDMI doesn't transmit power, so it requires a separate USB connection when using that input.

If that describes your company, Project Ophelia probably isn't for you. However, businesses that have embraced virtual servers and virtual PCs and take advantage of cloud-based servers and applications could benefit from a device like Project Ophelia.

Although Android itself is not a threat to Windows as a desktop operating system, the value of Project Ophelia is that it's not limited to what you can run on Android or on the device itself. It connects to the Web, which means that it can access and work with just about any cloud-based applications and services, and it connects with Dell's Wyse PocketCloud, which can be used to run a virtual desktop environment.

Project Ophelia can't run Microsoft Office natively, but it can connect to services like Google Docs or Office Web Apps, or an Office 365 account. It won't run Windows-based software, but it can connect to a virtual server or desktop environment, and accomplish the same thing.

A small or medium business with the right infrastructure can shed traditional PCs, and replace them with inexpensive Project Ophelia devices that fit in your pocket and turn any display with an HDMI or MHL port into a functional computer.