Microsoft now leads in tech layoffs

Tech industry layoffs this year total about 50,000

Computerworld - Microsoft's planned 18,000 job cuts, or 14% of its workforce, is the biggest tech layoff announced this year, surpassing Hewlett-Packard's announcement in last May that it was cutting 16,000 jobs.

Similar to HP, IBM and other multinational technology companies, Microsoft is not saying how many of these cuts will be in the U.S. But the area with the most Microsoft employees, the Seattle metropolitan area, will see a reduction of 1,351 employees, or about 3% of the 43,000 Microsoft employees in this region, reports the *Seattle Times*.

Industrywide, there have been nearly 50,000 tech industry layoffs, including Microsoft's, announced so far this year, according to outplacement firm Challenger and Gray. Companies reporting fewer than 1,000 layoffs were not included on this list. After Microsoft and HP, in third place for announced layoffs this year is Intel, with 5,350.

Microsoft said about 12,500 of its job cuts are related to its recent Nokia acquisition. The mobile phone maker had 32,000 employees last fall, when the acquisition was announced, including 4,700 employees in Finland. The *Finland Times* reported that 1,100 jobs will be cut locally.

Janco Associates, which does labor market analysis, said that about 21,900 tech jobs were added over the past three months in the U.S. But the economy isn't adding enough IT jobs to meet the needs of recent graduates, and will need to gain 30,000 to 35,000 jobs a month to keep pace, said Victor Janulaitis, the CEO of Janco ∎

Lenovo halts sales of compact Windows tabls in US

Lenovo has pulled its smaller Windows tablets from US shelves, citing a lack of consumer interest in the devices. Sales of the Lenovo ThinkPad 8 and Miix 2 have been stopped with immediate effect. However, the company claimed its larger tablets are having more success.

"In North America, we're seeing stronger interest in the larger screen sizes for Windows tablets and are pleased with initial customer demand for the ThinkPad 10," Raymond Gorman, a spokesman for the company, told.

All is not lost for its sub-10in devices, though, with Gorman reporting high demand for the ThinkPad 8 in Brazil, Japan and China, where the company will now be 'focusing its inventories'.

Stronger sales overseas : UK buyers need not worry either - at least for now. A spokesperson told *PC Pro* this country is not affected by the decision, and we found the devices still available through various electronics retailers, as well as Lenovo itself. However, Gorman did say it would 're-evaluate' its strategy if demand changes. For those over the other side of the Atlantic disappointed by the move, there are still other options for Windows 8.1 tablets.

The Toshiba Encore 8in 64GB was one of our favourite Windows compact tablets when we reviewed it and is still available in the region for about $349 - a comparable price to the MiiX 2 and ThinkPad 8.

The Dell Venue 8 Pro is also still on sale, and comes in slightly cheaper at about $250. Plus, cheaper compact Windows tablets are on the way. Earlier this month, it announced it will be releasing a $99 Windows tablet before the end of the year - possibly the long awaited Surface Mini ∎

Apple, IBM Partner to Boost Business Adoption of iOS

Apple will allow IBM software on its phones, and IBM will sell iOS devices to business clients. Apple has teamed up with IBM to bring IBM's enterprise software to Apple's lineup of iOS devices. As part of the exclusive IBM MobileFirst for iOS deal, IBM will sell iPhones and iPads loaded with software for its business clients.

"For the first time ever we're putting IBM's renowned big data analytics at iOS users' fingertips, which opens up a large market opportunity for Apple," Apple CEO Tim Cook said in a statement. "This is a radical step for enterprise and something that only Apple and IBM can deliver."

The deal will include: more than 100 industry-specific enterprise solutions, including native apps, developed exclusively for iPhone and iPad; IBM cloud services optimized for iOS; AppleCare tailored for enterprise customers; and Apple devices directly from IBM. The deal appears to help the companies break into areas both have been eyeing. Apple can push deeper into the enterprise with the backing of IBM, a well-known name in the space. And IBM, which has lagged in recent years despite its illustrious history, gets an injection of Apple "cool" and can offer up products that businesses really want. The joint Apple-IBM "made for business" apps are expected to be released this fall and into 2015. They will target specific industries, like retail, healthcare, banking, travel and transportation, telecommunications and insurance, and more.

The platform, meanwhile, will include a private app catalog, data and transaction security services, and a productivity suite, all of which will be available on Bluemix, IBM's development platform on the IBM Cloud Marketplace. AppleCare for Enterprise, meanwhile, will be available 24/7, with on-site service provided by IBM ∎

Google Play Store Revenue to Catch up to Apple by 2018

IDC projected that Android's market share would reach 78.9 percent in 2014, compared to iOS's 14.9 percent market share. However, IDC expects both operating systems' market share to drop slightly by 2018, with Android projected to come in at 76.0 percent and iOS at 14.4 percent, pointing to the expectation that Microsoft's Windows Phone will rise from 3.9 percent in 2014 to 7.0 percent in 2018.

As *Quartz's* Patterson points out, the $335 average selling price of a smartphone last year is 'nearly half' the unsubsidized price of an iPhone 5s, and the difference between what Apple and Google are able to offer consumers with their mobile operating systems has continually narrowed. While most developers still release iOS apps before their Android equivalent, the App Store and the Play Store fulfill the same functions for developers and consumers, without much distinction between which platform is better for distribution or merchandising. The two app stores are also very similar in the makeup of their revenue, with freemium apps accounting for 95 percent of the App Store's revenue in May 2014, the month when freemium app revenue reached 98 percent of the Play Store's revenue. That means that developers with apps in either app store — and most distribute their apps to both — are equally focused on promotion and advertising strategies that will get their apps noticed, downloaded, and consistently used, giving users more opportunity to make the in-app purchases on which freemium apps depend.

Both Apple and Google are likely to continue to slowly make small improvements to their tools for the development and marketing of apps, leveraging those improvements in advertising and marketing to get users to spend more on in-app purchases ∎