While the Windows 8 developer preview (available following the BUILD 2011 conference) is meant for developers, it confirms one fact-- Microsoft designed the latest Windows update for tablet use.

That's before mentioning the 5000 BUILD attendees who got free Windows 8 Samsung tablets, in an obvious gesture against Apple.




Confirmation comes as soon as one loads the OS-- a Windows Phone-style "lock screen" greets the user, who has to drag an image upwards to reveal a login prompt. A clumsy gesture for mouse users, but natural for touch-based use.

Then there's the Metro UI, the tile-based system looking like Windows Phone for tablets (users can still switch to a "desktop" option providing the more familiar Start Menu).

Windows 8 is also compatible with ARM processors (as well as x86)-- even if legacy software is not cross-compatible with ARM devices.

Microsoft will also sell Windows 8 software through an iTunes-style online store.

Will Windows 8 prove to be the mytical "iPad killer"? Obviously, it's too early to tell-- but Microsoft appears to have a good chance to (at least!) take over the market share left by the ailing RIM Playbook.

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