Exodus

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Computers always were my passion ever since I realized I am a wizard. If you know how to talk to computers, then it will do real magic for you, and only wizards can do magic. From that moment, my biggest dream was to have my own personal computer. The very idea of having such concentration of unshared power standing on my desk was overwhelming.

But this dream was too expensive for me. Some old research shows that every year the computer of your dream costs around $4,000. Computers were too expensive, because there were only few geeks who really needed them.

In order to solve the problem wizards needed to make muggles (normal people, who do not know how to program) be interested in computers too. The solution was found, and it was ingeniously simple: companies will buy PCs in order to automate their business, and employees will use these PC to play games. Companies kept buying computers, and prices naturally went down. Soon people could afford to buy more PCs and play games at home. In a sense, muggles pay for PCs, so wizards could enjoy low prices.

For the last 20 years, computes changed our lives: they connected us, they flooded us with information, they eliminated borders, and they forever upgraded us to the digital lifestyle. Finally, it is time to say good buy and let go, because muggles do not need PC anymore. They never did.

Companies outsource their business processes and host their applications with application service providers. They will be better off by using thin clients, or terminals. Consumers already have choice of hardware that replaces many functions of PC: XBox. iPod, TiVo, ShowCenter, MSN TV, BlackBerry, etc. The final missed element is an Internet terminal – one big web browser enclosed in nice plastic box with embedded keyboard or stylus. Actually, Internet terminals are even better than PC, because users do not have to worry about viruses, upgrades, and lost data. Their mail is on Google, their photos are on Flickr, and their files are on Xdrive. Everything muggles are using PC for, can be done without it – only cheaper.

There is only one thing you cannot do with the set of gadgets above – you need PC to write programs. This means that as consumers exit PC market, people who want and need to develop programs became an outcast. Try to disconnect your computer from the network. If you will be able to find some use for your PC, then probably you are one of us and you are in trouble.

Last year I have realized that I would not buy any of the PCs that can be found in stores. They all are optimized for gaming, watching movies, and Internet browsing. These machines are designed for consumer market, not for developers.

In 1981, an IBM PC with 4.77 MHz 8088 processor, 64KB memory, 10MB hard drive and with 11.5-inch monochrome text monitor would cost you around thirty eight hundred bucks. When IBM sold their PC business to a Chinese giant Lenovo, you would think that IBM gave up PC market. Not so fast. This table shows two PCs that are offered on the IBM and Lenovo web sites:

IBM IntelliStation A Pro (621722U)	Lenovo ThinkCentre M52 (8113D5U)
AMD Opteron™ Processor Model 250 (2.4GHz)	Intel Pentium 4 Processor 630 with HT technology (3.0GHz)
64MB NVIDIA Quadro FX 1400	64MB NVIDIA GeForce 6200
AC-97 Audio Integrated	SoundMAX with SPX
2GB PC2-3200 CL3 ECC DDR-2 SDRAM RDIMM	2GB PC2 4200 DDR2 SDRAM NP (533MHz)
80GB Serial ATA 7200rpm HDD	80GB Serial ATA 7200rpm HDD
IBM 48X/32X/48X/16X Max CD-RW/DVD-ROM Combo	48X/32X/48X/16X Max CD-RW/DVD-ROM Combo
Broadcom NetXtreme Gigabit Ethernet	Integrated Gigabit Ethernet w/ Wake on LAN (WOL)
$3,869.00	$1,409.00

Table 1 Developers' workstation and consumer desktop

While Lenovo sells desktops, IBM called its machines "workstations". Even considering the difference in some components, the price gap is too wide. And the IBM PC dream machine is still costs $4,000.

I think that prices of consumer PCs will continue to go down until they reach the bottom. Eventually PCs will be replaced by multi-functional media devises. The developers will then have a choice to buy expensive workstations or install Linux on a hacked Xbox. IBM is ready for that time, are you?