



>: ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL: ~Origami™ -- Microsoft™s BIG Secret

Tuesday, February 28, 2006 / Wayne Mulligan

Hey, folks, I hope everybody is doing well.

Today I wanted to do something I haven't done for a while and just talk about a new Technology. I'll obviously discuss some of the business implications behind it and the company involved -- but I really just want to focus on the technology here for a minute.

First, let me give you all a little bit of background:

A few years ago, Microsoft (Nasdaq: MSFT) realized they had the home technology markets on complete lockdown. The company had the PC, the web browser and a ton of software and web sites in between. But, that's as far as it went.

Microsoft didn't have access to what users were listening to on their stereos or playing on their video game consoles. Thus began the journey of Microsoft into the home entertainment market with its launch of the Xbox. The company has done surprisingly well in that market, and with that success, is focusing on beefing up its home entertainment or personal entertainment offerings.

There have been whispers in the industry as of late of a new handheld device the company is planning to launch. However, people at the company have been less than forthcoming with information on the new product. The only thing one company executive, Richard Scoble, would say on his blog was that this new project -- which is code-named 'Origami' (I love this clandestine, Mission Impossible type stuff) -- is a handheld device, and more information will be available in the coming weeks.

But what kind of Tech Stock Insider would I be if I couldn't dig (codename for 'pay off Microsoft employees' -- totally kidding by the way) and find out more about this secret project?

So, let me tell you what we know so far ...

This product won't directly compete with the iPod, but will certainly offer features that allow users to play music ... but not so much as a personal music player. The product is being dubbed as a higher-end PDA. From early screen shots (there will be links below so you can see them, too.) we can see that users can play video games, use it as a remote control for their computers, use it as a navigation system in a car, and a number of other interesting things.

Other screen shots have shown the device being used as a digital picture frame, and it even has an attachable keyboard so it can be used as a fully-functional portable PC.

One of the coolest features appears to be the integration of Microsoft's Tablet PC technology -- which has been extremely popular among corporate users, but due to its high cost, never took off with the consumer market. You can use a stylus to write directly on a touch screen. It's almost like writing on a sheet of paper.

We haven't been able to find much information on pricing, but that same Microsoft executive referred to the price as being 'fairly low-cost.' Mr. Gates himself commented on a product last year that would be priced between \$500 - \$800, have an all-day battery life, and weigh less than a pound. This was likely a reference to the future Origami project that we're hearing about now and will officially learn more about on March 2nd.

The project's official web site is: <http://www.origamiproject.com>