



Sample Short Report

This document illustrates a sample worksheet and a final short report of 1100 words. Of course, you will be able to choose the problem area to suit your expertise as well as specify the target audience for your text. The document type below is a feasibility report, which addresses a specific company problem. You may focus on a more general level science and engineering problem for the industry or general science.

Task 1: Sample worksheet

Document type: feasibility report

1. **Problem/need** (*Briefly describe the real-life need or problem*)
Old heavy laptops in an Finnco engineering company should to be upgraded. An investment decision is needed to replace these laptops.
2. **Client** (*What organization or other target audience has this problem/need*)
The management of Finnco, a Finnish engineering company.
3. **Proposed solution** (*What is it and how would it solve the problem?*)
Trendy tablet computers are assumed to provide a more portable and convenient solution than laptops. However, a feasibility report on tablet vs. tablet computers is needed to verify or disprove this assumption before starting in the investment process.
4. **Sources** (*e.g., Internet links to the solution*)
 - <http://tablets-review.toptenreviews.com>
 - http://reviews.cnet.com/2733-3126_7-936-4.html
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tablet_computer

For more information on document types:

Feasibility reports

D. McMurray, Online Technical Writing, "Recommendation and Feasibility Reports. State and support your opinion...professionally," available at <https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/feas.html#feasibility>, accessed 21 Feb 2017.

Case studies

Online Handbook, Engineering Communication Program, University of Toronto, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, "Case studies," available at <http://ecp.engineering.utoronto.ca/online-handbook/types-of-documents/case-studies/>, accessed 21 Feb 2017.

Feasibility report

Tablet Computers: Comparison and Recommendation

1. Introduction

¹The laptop computer has become the default tool for frequently traveling professionals who need a mobile means to edit documents and access the Internet. ²The *Finnco engineering company* employs a number of technical sales representatives who frequently travel between countries in order to maintain customer relations as well as provide on-site technical support and training sessions to clients. ³Technical sales representatives rely on laptop computers to check and reply to urgent emails, access information on the Internet, and read through company documents needed for client meetings.

⁴However, many Finnco technical sales representatives have complained about the burden of carrying a large, heavy laptop or, more recently, the difficulty in reading documents on the minute screen of small netbooks. ⁵Although many laptop computers currently available on the market are very compact, using a miniature physical keyboard can be a cumbersome task for most people. ⁶Moreover, operating a laptop without a proper mouse while traveling by train or airplane poses a considerable problem for average users not familiar with complicated keyboard shortcuts.

⁷Recent developments in touch-screen and portable communications technologies for smart phones have produced a new viable alternative to laptops: the tablet computer. ⁸Smaller than a laptop computer, tablet computers typically combine the features of these traditional technologies into one device. ⁹This report evaluates the feasibility of using tablet computers as an alternative to laptops at Finnco's technical sales department.

2. Tablet Computers

¹⁰A *table computer* (also known as a tablet) is a portable electronic device that incorporates most features of a laptop computer. ¹¹Tablets share many similarities and differences with laptops and mobile phones. ¹²Instead of a physical keyboard or mouse, a tablet is operated by touching the screen using a virtual keyboard and hand movements. ¹³Some tablet models even include a digital pen for use in tasks requiring precision, such as handwriting or drawing. ¹⁴Due to the lack of a physical keyboard and mouse, tablet computers are usually smaller and lighter than laptop computers.

¹⁵Typically, tablets are divided into three categories based on their size: *slates*, *mini tablets* and *phablets* [3]. ¹⁶Slates are the largest of the tablets, with screen sizes ranging between 7 and 10 inches (diagonal). ¹⁷The small tablets include mini tablets and phablets, which have diagonal dimensions of 6 and 5 inches, respectively. ¹⁸Devices with smaller dimensions are normally classified as smartphones. ¹⁹Similar to smartphones, tablets can be used to take pictures or record video and sound. ²⁰However, they cannot be used to make regular phone calls, as this function has not been implemented.

²¹In order to compensate for a physical keyboard and mouse, tablet manufacturers have developed specialized operating systems and user interfaces that exploit multi-touch hand gestures and virtual keyboard. ²²For this reason, tablets share the same operating systems with smartphones, including Android, Blackberry OS, iOS, Linux and Windows.

3. Suitability of Tablet Computers at Finnco

²³To determine the feasibility of the tablet as an alternative for laptop computers, this report evaluates the tablet in terms of four features: usability, communications technology, and data storage.

3.1 Usability

²⁴Usability is the extent to which a tablet computer can be used in order to effectively achieve specific goals. ²⁵Although the concept of usability can cover numerous use cases, the following features are essential for Finnco's staff: (1) *weight and dimensions* and (2) *user interface*.

²⁶In terms of *weight and dimensions*, a tablet computer is particularly well suited to the needs of Finnco's technical sales representatives. ²⁷Having lighter weight and smaller size than that of a laptop computer, a tablet can be more easily operated in areas where the space is limited, such as in a crowded commuter train or airplane. ²⁸Since tablets computer lack a physical keyboard and mouse, their overall weight and dimensions are also lower than those of laptops.

²⁹The *user interface* refers to the approach used by the user to control or manipulate the tablet. ³⁰Users are able to control tablet screen events using their fingers through a variety of hand gestures, including tapping, swiping, and pinching. ³¹In this respect, tablets differ greatly from laptop computers which require a physical keyboard and mouse (or touch pad).

³²The *overall usability* of tablets computers can summarized as follows. ³³Although smaller dimensions and missing physical keyboard provide improved usability in some circumstances, the same features may also hamper usability in other situations. ³⁴Since Finnco's representatives are frequently required to update and edit large documents (e.g., reports) or spend considerable time typing email messages, some users may initially find the virtual keyboard to be error prone and laborious to use, due to the absence of haptic feedback. ³⁵Such users could alternatively acquire and install a separate physical keyboard.

3.2 Communications technology

³⁶Both the laptop and tablet computers allow easy access to the Internet. ³⁷Whereas most laptops include support for both wired and wireless communication, some tablet computers may only support wireless Internet connectivity. ³⁸Moreover, connectivity to other peripherals may only be possible via a Bluetooth connection if the tablet model contains no USB port.

3.3 Data storage

³⁹Modern laptop computers within the same price range as tablets commonly contain a physical hard drive that can store several hundred gigabytes (GB) of data. ⁴⁰Similarly, the random access memory (RAM) available in laptops usually ranges between 2 and 8 GBs. ⁴¹In contrast, a typical tablet computer contains no hard drive and relies only on a limited amount

of storage space (e.g., 16 GBs), which can be extended in some models up to 64 GBs with a microSD memory card [1-2].⁴² However, the RAM memory of tablets is usually restricted to 1 to 2 GBs.⁴³ Thus, such limitations in data storage space and memory can prevent users from accessing documents or programs with high memory requirements.

4. Conclusion

⁴⁴This report compared selected key features of tablet computers against laptop computers currently used by Finnco's technical sales representatives.⁴⁵ The comparison indicates that slate-sized tablets would provide usability features, such as low weight and small dimensions, which are beneficial in situations where Finnco's representatives mainly read, review, or present information.⁴⁶ Such use cases include reading company documents, responding to short emails, or presenting promotional material to customers during meetings, presentations and fairs.

⁴⁷ However, this report also revealed features, such as the lack of a physical keyboard and limited data storage capabilities, which may considerably limit the feasibility of tablets for those representatives that frequently need to edit, modify, create, or store large documents.

⁴⁸ When fully-fledged computer capabilities are a necessity for a representative to work effectively, this report recommends that Finnco continue providing a suitable laptop for these representatives.

References

- [1] TopTenReviews, "2012 Best Tablet side-by-side Comparisons and Review," [Online]. Available:
<http://tablets-review.toptenreviews.com> [Accessed 4 Sept. 2012].
- [2] CNET Reviews, "Best 10-inch tablets," [Online]. Available:
http://reviews.cnet.com/2733-3126_7-936-4.html [Accessed 4 Sept. 2012].
- [3] Wikipedia, "Tablet computer," [Online]. Available:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tablet_computer [Accessed 6 Sept. 2013].