BY THE NUMBERS

The Post-Pandemic Computing Landscape

2021 looks like it will be another stellar year for laptops.

The year 2020 proved to be lucrative for laptop sales as much of the U.S. population was pushed to work from home and into remote learning models. This shift forced many Americans to focus on upgrading their offices and the technologies within those offices to stay productive. And 2021 looks like it will be another stellar year for laptops. According to CTA's *Dynamic Forecast for Laptops (April 2021)*, mobile PCs saw an all-time high in the survey with 27% of participants intending to purchase a laptop within the next six months.

Mobile PCs, classified as notebooks, netbooks and convertible PCs, are one of the largest categories within the forecast. In 2020, CTA estimated that mobile PCs alone generated just over $40 billion in shipment revenues which accounted for almost 15% of hardware shipment revenues for all tech products in the forecast.

Outfitting the Home Office

Mobile PCs are the main influencers for other home office tech products. As consumers continue to purchase mobile PCs for working at home, the need for computing peripherals remains as well. Peripherals like PC monitors, mesh networks (so people can work wherever they want at home), docking stations, mice, keyboards and headsets are all expected to see increased sales and will have excellent momentum in 2021.

In the January 2021 version of the five-year outlook, early data implied that unit shipments were much higher than first expected, so CTA's estimate was raised to account for a better 2020 market for laptops. CTA now estimates that just under 70 million units of netbooks and notebooks shipped in 2020, which was an increase of over two million units from the previous estimate. This increase is attributed to the increased reliance on teleworking and the efficient adoption of remote working and learning by students studying at home.

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Keeping Steady

After an all-time profitable year in sales, CTA is forecasting demand to remain relatively stable in 2021, believing that repeating last year's record growth is unrealistic under normal market conditions. Market resistance factors are beginning to creep into forecast estimates, notably the global chip shortage and consumer saturation. Realistically, consumers cannot keep adding to their stock of home computing devices. On the flip side, businesses are expected to pick-up some of the slack, resulting in a strong year-end unit shipment number.

Amid the chip shortage and supply constraints, CTA is projecting that unit shipments of mobile PCs will decline in 2021 to just under 68 million units shipped. However, rising prices will keep revenues steady generating just under $40 billion in shipment revenues for the year. For the five-year outlook CTA projects unit sales and revenues will continue to drop but will remain higher than 2019 for the entire five-year forecast window.

Last year proved to be a historic year for sales of mobile PCs and with demand still at an all-time high, 2021 could be on par with 2020, even when challenged with the chip shortage and supply chain constraints. ■

Source: CTA Market Research