Windows 8 is Offish

by Albert Marrero Jr

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Windows 8 is the official name of the next Windows product. This isnâ€™t exactly ground-breaking news, but hey, it means we can put to rest any rumors. It will also only ship with three editions, so no more worrying about Pro, Deluxe, Ultimate, Student, yadda yadda yadda.

The cool thing about Windows 8 (as weâ€™ve discussed before) is that you can use the Metro interface as a touchscreen and then seamlessly move to a keyboard and mouse. Thatâ€™s going to be really critical to the user experience. According to Brandon LeBlanc on The Windows Blog, â€œAll editions offer a no compromise experience.â€• You can read the full article here and definitely check out the features chart (which is an expansive look at all three versions). He goes on to write:

â€œFor PCs and tablets powered by x86 processors (both 32 and 64 bit), we will have two editions: Windows 8 and Windows 8 Pro. For many consumers, Windows 8 will be the right choice. It will include all the features above plus an updated Windows Explorer, Task Manager, better multi-monitor support and the ability to switch languages on the fly (more details on this feature can be found in this blog post),which was previously only available in Enterprise/Ultimate editions of Windows. For China and a small set of select emerging markets, we will offer a local language-only edition of Windows 8.

Windows 8 Pro is designed to help tech enthusiasts and business/technical professionals obtain a broader set of Windows 8 technologies. It includes all the features in Windows 8 plus features for encryption, virtualization, PC management and domain connectivity. Windows Media Center will be available as an economical â€œmedia packâ€• add-on to Windows 8 Pro. If you are an enthusiast or you want to use your PC in a business environment, you will want Windows 8 Pro.

Windows RT is the newest member of the Windows family â€“ also known as Windows on ARM or WOA, as weâ€™ve referred to it previously. This single edition will only be available pre-installed on PCs and tablets powered by ARM processors and will help enable new thin and lightweight form factors with impressive battery life. Windows RT will include touch-optimized desktop versions of the new Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote. For new apps, the focus for Windows RT is development on the new Windows runtime, or WinRT, which we unveiled in September and forms the foundation of a new generation of cloud-enabled, touch-enabled, web-connected apps of all kinds. For more details on WOA, we suggest reading this blog post which shares more detail on how we have been building Windows 8 to run on the ARM architecture.â€•

(According to Mary Jo Foley on ZDNet, there will actually be four versions, one of which is an Enterprise version, but most consumers wonâ€™t worry with that. And if you consider the Chinese language only version, then there are technically five, but the three that we care about are discussed above.)

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