

Microsoft through the Years: From Gates to Nadella

The Associated Press



Microsoft has named Satya Nadella, head of its cloud computing business, as the company's next CEO. He immediately replaces Steve Ballmer, who had announced in August 2013 that he would retire from the world's biggest software company after more than 13 years at its helm.

Here's a look at key moments in Microsoft's history.

- 1975: Microsoft is founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen.
- 1980: Ballmer joins the company.
- 1981: IBM ships first personal computers running MS-DOS operating system.
- Nov. 20, 1985: Microsoft ships first version of Windows, more than a year after Apple came out with its Mac computer with a graphical user interface and a mouse replacing keyboard commands.
- 1992: Nadella joins the company.
- Aug. 24, 1995: Windows 95 is released in one of Microsoft's biggest product launches ever.
- May 18, 1998: Justice Department and 20 states sue Microsoft, accusing the maker of the ubiquitous Windows operating system of abusing its market power to thwart competition from Netscape and others.
- July 21, 1998: Widely seen as the successor to chairman and longtime friend Gates, Ballmer is named president of the software company. He'd previously led Microsoft's sales and marketing.
- Jan. 13, 2000: Gates promotes Ballmer to CEO of Microsoft while staying on as chairman and chief software architect.
- Nov. 2, 2001: Justice Department announces settlement of Microsoft antitrust case.
- Nov. 15, 2001: Microsoft releases its Xbox video game system, one of the company's most successful products.
- March 26, 2004: At a conference for online advertisers, Ballmer says Microsoft's biggest mistake was failing to develop its own search engine, which caused it to fall behind rivals Google and Yahoo. "That's probably the thing I feel worst about over the last few years," says Ballmer. Ballmer vows to put more money into research and development of search technology at Microsoft.
- May 4, 2006: Ballmer says MSN Search, Microsoft's search engine, is gaining steam against rivals, but still trails Google and Yahoo.
- November 13, 2006: Microsoft launches the Zune music player, its answer to Apple's iPod. The company discontinues the Zune five years later, in 2011.
- Feb. 1, 2008: Microsoft makes unsolicited offer to buy Yahoo for \$44.6 billion. Microsoft withdraws its offer months later due to resistance from Yahoo.
- April 12, 2010: Microsoft unveils the Kin phone, an attempt to compete with Apple's iPhone. The phone was discontinued two months later.
- May 10, 2011: Microsoft announces it will buy Internet phone service Skype for \$8.5 billion.
- Oct. 25, 2012: Microsoft holds a launch event in New York for Windows 8, a major overhaul of its ubiquitous computer operating system. It introduces touch-based controls, a response to the growing popularity of smartphones and tablet computers.
- Jan. 29, 2013: Microsoft releases new version of Office and sells subscriptions to consumers for the first time. The idea is to get households to pay \$100 a year for the package and future updates, rather than a one-time fee that starts at \$140 for a single machine.
- April 10, 2013: Research firm IDC says PC shipments fell 14 percent in the first three months of the year, the deepest quarterly drop since the firm starting tracking the industry in 1994. IDC blames Windows 8 for accelerating the sales decline by confusing too many people who had become accustomed to using the old operating system.
- May 7, 2013: Microsoft says it will retool Windows 8 to address complaints and confusion. Microsoft also discloses that it has sold more than 100 million Windows 8 licenses.
- July 11, 2013: Ballmer announces a sweeping restructuring of the company to cope with the quickening pace of technological change and competitive challenges presented by Apple and Google.
- July 18, 2013: Microsoft books a \$900 million write-down for slashing the price of its Surface RT tablet. Its revenue and earnings come short of Wall Street forecasts in the April-June quarter.
- Aug. 23, 2013: Microsoft says Ballmer will retire in the next 12 months after 33 years with the company.
- Nov. 22, 2013: Launch of latest video game console, Xbox One.
- Feb. 4, 2014: Microsoft names Nadella as CEO. The company says Gates is leaving his role as chairman to serve as an adviser. He will spend a third of his time working on future products and technology.

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