

LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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Surface Pro 4 vs. Surface Book

When Microsoft introduced the Surface Pro 4, the fourth installment of its popular laptop/tablet hybrid, we were not surprised. Indeed, we had been waiting impatiently as the “new” smell on our barely year-old Surface Pro 3 had just begun to wear off.



BILL & PHIL

*The Bill and Phil Show
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However, what did catch us by surprise was the introduction at the same time of a brand new laptop device from the folks in Redmond, the Surface Book. We were in a dilemma. Which device should we purchase? The long-awaited Surface Pro 4? Or this newest Surface Book that nobody saw coming? We settled the conundrum like we usually do: We bought both!

So, Bill took one device; Phil took the other. We each retired to our respective man caves and ran the devices through their paces. We then compared notes and decided that we would indeed keep both devices. There are good uses for each (or at least that was the excuse for us to add to our growing gadgets collection).

SURFACE PRO 4: A CLOSER LOOK

First, the Surface Pro 4, as mentioned earlier, is simply an upgrade to an existing product line. We are proud to admit that we have owned every iteration of this product since its inception in 2012. That being said, we were not particularly impressed with the early models. Microsoft finally put out a winner in 2014 with the Surface Pro 3. Now, the Surface Pro 4 builds on that successful release and adds even more reasons to upgrade.

The first thing we noticed with the new Pro 4 is that it is actually thinner (and a bit lighter) than the Pro 3 model; however, the viewable screen surface is actually a shade larger. So far, so good. We were duly impressed even before pressing the power button.

After booting up the device, we noted, of course, that the device comes with Windows 10. We've already readily adopted it on all of our PC devices, and find it to be incredibly more accessible and business-friendly than Windows 8. We also noticed that Microsoft has increased the resolution on the Pro 4 screen even more, making the display beautifully bright and sharp. But other than the updated Windows 10 interface changes and the brighter screen, the Pro 4 pretty much functions the same as the Pro 3 model.

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The peripherals are perhaps where Microsoft really upped the ante with the Pro 4. The Surface Pen — which in the previous model hung precariously in a silly stick-on pen loop (we lost two of them) — now is magnetic and sticks securely to the side of the tablet chassis. Even more appealing, the Surface Pen feels more like a real writing instrument, and the response on the Surface screen is as good as any stylus we have used on any device.

The other peripheral that received a serious upgrade is the Type Cover keyboard. Microsoft has progressively gotten better with each release of a Surface keyboard. This one is the best yet, with the feel of real keyboard keys and an expanded and much-improved mouse touchpad. We just wish the keyboard cover was bundled with the Surface Pro rather than paying an extra \$160 for it as an add-on.

So what's not to like about the Surface Pro 4? Hardly anything. We always could use more battery life on all of our mobile devices. Yes, the battery life is improved from the previous model, but we still want more. Despite these minor annoyances, if you are looking for a low-profile, high-performance mobile device that you can use to replace a desktop PC, we think the Surface Pro 4 is a smart choice indeed.

THE LOWDOWN ON THE SURFACE BOOK

Now on to the Surface Book. The Surface Book is a convertible laptop as compared to the Surface Pro 4, which is a tablet hybrid. Of the two machines, the Surface Book is more powerful, has a longer battery life, and can come with its own graphics processing unit ("GPU") stashed in its keyboard. But, the Surface Book is a good deal more expensive — approximately \$300 to \$400 more. The Surface Book also comes with a larger display (13.5 inches).

In addition, the Surface Book has a much sturdier and more useable keyboard included in the price. The keyboard itself is detachable and connects to the display portion (or tablet portion) of the computer via a well-engineered articulated hinge. The keyboard is detachable by pressing a button that releases the magnet that holds it in place. So, all in all, the Surface Book is clearly a "sexier" machine, but there are drawbacks.

First, the Surface Book is quite a bit heavier. It weighs about 3.5 pounds. You won't mind toting around the Surface Pro 4 all day, but the Surface Book will make you fully aware that you're carrying around something in your bag. If you are using a messenger bag, for example, it may cause you to have some serious shoulder droop.

In addition, in the model we tested, we were initially unable to set up the Surface Book. It took a call to Microsoft Support (which was amazingly fast and responsive). We learned that, for some Surface Books, the factory did not properly prepare them for setup. Consequently, and oddly enough, you have to restart (not shut down) the Surface Book in order to make it go through a proper initial setup.

Because of its wider form factor, the stylus pen that secures magnetically to the side of the chassis of the Surface Book is easier to "rub off." Thus, you can be in danger of losing the stylus, which costs about \$60 to replace.

All in all, both are great machines. The quality of the build on both devices is impressive. They both feel, look and act like the expensive products they are. The screen quality is great (except for a flickering problem that has been remedied by an operating system upgrade). On both devices, the

images are very sharp. Typing is easy on both devices, but the Surface Book keyboard clearly has the edge in this regard.

The bottom line is that if you want a machine that is highly portable, the Surface Pro 4 is the device for you. If you want an industrial strength convertible laptop, the Surface Book will become your new best friend.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

William Ramsey, Partner at Neal & Harwell, and LogicForce Consulting President **Phil Hampton** are best known for The Bill and Phil Show. The duo tours often and provides technology news and reviews on their website *www.thebillandphilshow.com*.

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