We pretty much just need two icons on our desktop these days: the Firefox browser and a trash can. Nothing else.
It turns out that about 95 percent of what we do on a computer can now be accomplished through a browser. We use it for updating Twitter and Facebook and for blogging. Meebo.com lets us log into several instant-messaging accounts simultaneously. Last.fm gives us tunes, we use Google Docs for word processing, and if we need to record video, we can do it directly from webcam to YouTube. Come to think of it, because most of our documents reside outside the netbook thanks to cloud computing apps, we are not sure we even need the trash can.
Netbooks have ended the performance wars. It used to be that when you went to an electronics store to buy a computer, you picked the most powerful one you could afford. Because, who knew? Maybe someday you'd need to play a cutting-edge videogame or edit your masterpiece indie flick. For 15 years, the PC industry obliged our what-if paranoia by pushing performance. Intel and AMD tossed out blisteringly fast chips, hard drives went on a terabyte gallop, RAM exploded, and high-end graphics cards let you play Blu-ray movies on your sprawling 17-inch laptop screen. That dream machine could do almost anything.

But here's the catch: Most of the time, we do almost nothing. Our most common tasks—email, Web surfing, watching streamed videos—require very little processing power. Only a few people, like graphic designers and hardcore gamers, actually need heavy-duty hardware. For years now, without anyone really noticing, the PC industry has functioned like a car company selling SUVs: It pushed absurdly powerful machines because the profit margins were high, while customers lapped up the fantasy that they could go off-roading, even though they never did. So coders took advantage of that surplus power to write ever-bulkier applications and operating systems.
For just over $400 you can own a netbook. But it's also possible that the next time you're replacing an aging laptop, you'll walk into the store and wonder, "Why exactly am I paying so much for a machine that I use for nothing but email and the Web?"

For most of today's computing tasks, the biggest performance drags aren't inside the machine. They're outside. Is your Wi-Fi signal strong? Is Twitter down again? Netbooks prove that the "cloud" is no longer just hype. It is now reasonable to design computers that outsource the difficult work somewhere else. The cloud tail is wagging the hardware dog.
Using free cloud applications like your FotoFlexer, Google docs, Xmarks, open office, email clients like your Zimbra and Thunderbird etc
Because this is the future of hardware. For a few users who need a high-performance device, PC makers will offer ever-more-blisteringly fast, water-cooled boxes with screens the size of your living room—at $2,000 a pop. For everyone else—lawyers looking for something to do on the train, women desperate for something that fits in their handbag, show-offs in coffee shops and airplanes—netbooks will dominate. It's the rise of the very small machines.

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