

# Buyer's guide to modern PCs

4 key factors for ensuring a future-ready fleet amid heightened worker expectations and game-changing AI.

**BY ROB O'REGAN**



Today's workforce is more mobile and AI-reliant than ever. Work happens around the clock and around the globe. IT teams tasked with supporting a modern workforce walk a delicate balance between adding new functionality, particularly AI capabilities, and protecting their ever-expanding digital ecosystem against cyberattacks.

Foundry's 2025 State of the CIO survey puts a fine point on this balancing act: The top two drivers of IT investment in the year ahead are AI/machine learning and security/risk management. Call it the yin and yang of modern IT.

As IT teams shore up their infrastructure to support compute- and data-hungry AI applications and workloads, many Windows shops face an additional urgency: transitioning to Windows 11 in advance of Microsoft ending support for Windows 10 in October 2025.

These parallel trends are shining a fresh light on aging PC fleets. If your workforce is equipped with outdated, power-hungry, patch-needy laptops, you're making it harder for people to do their work – and you're increasing risk for the business.

When upgrading a PC fleet, it's important for IT leaders to consider both current and future needs, given the accelerated pace of technology innovation. "If you want to remain competitive," says Tom Mainelli, group vice president for device & consumer research with IDC, "buy to where the tech is going, not where it is today."

Don't put off a much-needed refresh. Here are four key factors to consider for your next round of PC purchases.

# 1. User productivity

The evolving workplace is characterized by people who expect to get their work done from anywhere, at any time. They want laptops that are as easy to access and use as their phones, without being tethered to a power cord. In other words, they want performance at consistently high levels, even when their device is unplugged. If your PCs are running at 55%, your workforce probably is, too.

“When you have freedom from your power cord and still keep your performance, that’s a game changer,” says Carmen True, VP, product marketing with Qualcomm Technologies, Inc. “Now you can walk around the building to all your meetings, or to the coffee shop and back, and still do the hard processing workloads – all without killing your battery. Once you have that, there’s no turning back.”

## What to look for

### **“Responsive” performance regardless of power**

**source:** Traditional laptops go into power-saving mode when a device is unplugged, reducing resources to graphics and other processes to maximize battery life. But that’s a tradeoff that businesses no longer need to make: Copilot+ PCs powered by Snapdragon® X Series processors allow the system to perform at maximum power when unplugged without draining the battery – up to 90% faster than other processors.<sup>1</sup>

**High performance, low heat:** The new generation of AI PCs includes a specialized processor, called a neural processing unit (NPU), that is optimized for AI tasks. By offloading these compute-intensive tasks from the CPU and GPU, NPU-equipped laptops can run any app from anywhere without breaking a sweat.

“The NPU runs at a significantly lower power level than your traditional CPU or GPU,” says Craig Tellalian, director field applications engineering at Qualcomm Technologies, Inc. “And it has been optimized to handle AI tasks more efficiently and effectively. The NPU is not meant to run everything – but by running specific AI workloads, it frees up other workloads for the CPU or the GPU to handle more efficiently.”

### **Multiday battery power:**

On-the-go workers expect their laptops to perform like their phones – getting them through the day without needing a plug-in power source to recharge. Copilot+ PCs powered by Snapdragon® X Series processors deliver on the promise of multiday battery life, providing up to 22 hours between charges.<sup>2</sup>

“Users shouldn’t be forced to have a certain type of performance curve when they’re plugged into an outlet and then make a trade-off for battery life when they’re on the train or in a coffee shop,” says Tellalian “It should be the same experience, just like they have with their phones.”

## **Making the business case: How AI PCs deliver long-term ROI**

Modernizing your PC fleet isn't just about performance gains – it's a strategic investment that pays off across your organization. Evaluate new devices not just on specs, but on how they enable better work, lower costs, and greater agility.

### **Here's how AI-powered PCs contribute to business value:**

#### **Improved productivity = measurable output**

Whether it's faster content creation, real-time translation, or intelligent summarization through Copilot+ features, users spend less time waiting and more time creating value. Even a 5-10% boost in productivity across a workforce can have a substantial business impact.

#### **Reduced IT burden**

With built-in AI diagnostics and predictive maintenance, support teams can resolve issues faster – or prevent them entirely. Zero-touch provisioning and always-on device management reduce onboarding time and allow leaner IT operations.

#### **Longer life cycle, higher utilization**

AI PCs are built for what's next. With dedicated NPUs, they're optimized to handle tomorrow's applications without bogging down. This headroom extends device lifespans and defers costly refresh cycles.

#### **Lower total cost of ownership (TCO)**

AI PCs powered by Snapdragon® X Series processors offer multiday battery life, reducing the need for constant recharging and extending battery health over time. Fewer service calls and lower power consumption can translate into thousands in savings across your fleet.



## 2. AI out of the box

The rise of AI PCs promises to bring powerful new capabilities directly to users, with dedicated processors providing the computational power needed to churn through complex AI models and deliver rapid results. Analysts expect to see an uptick in AI PC purchases in 2025 as more organizations transition to Windows 11.

“Windows 10 end of service, where a lot of companies will already be looking to refresh their four-year-old PCs, is an opportunity to start putting AI PCs into the installed base,” says IDC’s Mainelli. IDC predicts AI PCs will represent nearly 60% of all PC shipments worldwide by 2027.<sup>3</sup>

Organizations are exploring and deploying AI across a broad variety of use cases, including employee productivity, customer support, product development, and advanced analytics. On-device AI capabilities and ultra-fast responsiveness give marketers, designers, and other creators the power to collaborate, innovate, and bring their ideas to life without limits.

“By utilizing AI agents to do the mundane parts of their job, people can focus more on strategy, or building relationships, or adding their own creative flavor to their work,” says True. “They see the value, so they really want to have these tools integrated into their devices and their workflows.”

### Matching AI PC capabilities to workforce needs

Role	Needs	AI PC benefits
Knowledge workers	Multitasking, collaboration, productivity tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faster Copilot+ assistance (summaries, search)</li><li>• All-day battery for flexible work</li></ul>
Creative professionals	Graphics, rendering, media editing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NPU acceleration for image generation and editing</li><li>• Quiet, cool performance</li></ul>
Sales/marketing	Presentations, travel, customer engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instant wake/always-on connectivity</li><li>• Local AI tools for content creation and personalization</li></ul>
Executives	Portability, security, fast access to insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High TOPS for real-time analytics</li><li>• Hardware-level security with chip-to-cloud controls</li></ul>
Developers/engineers	Code compilation, testing, modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parallel processing across CPU/GPU/NPU</li><li>• Extended battery life for deep focus sessions</li></ul>
Field/remote workers	Offline access, durability, device tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiday battery and low heat</li><li>• GPS/patching support even without Wi-Fi</li></ul>
IT/security teams	Device control, risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AI-enabled self-healing systems</li><li>• Real-time telemetry and remote provisioning</li></ul>

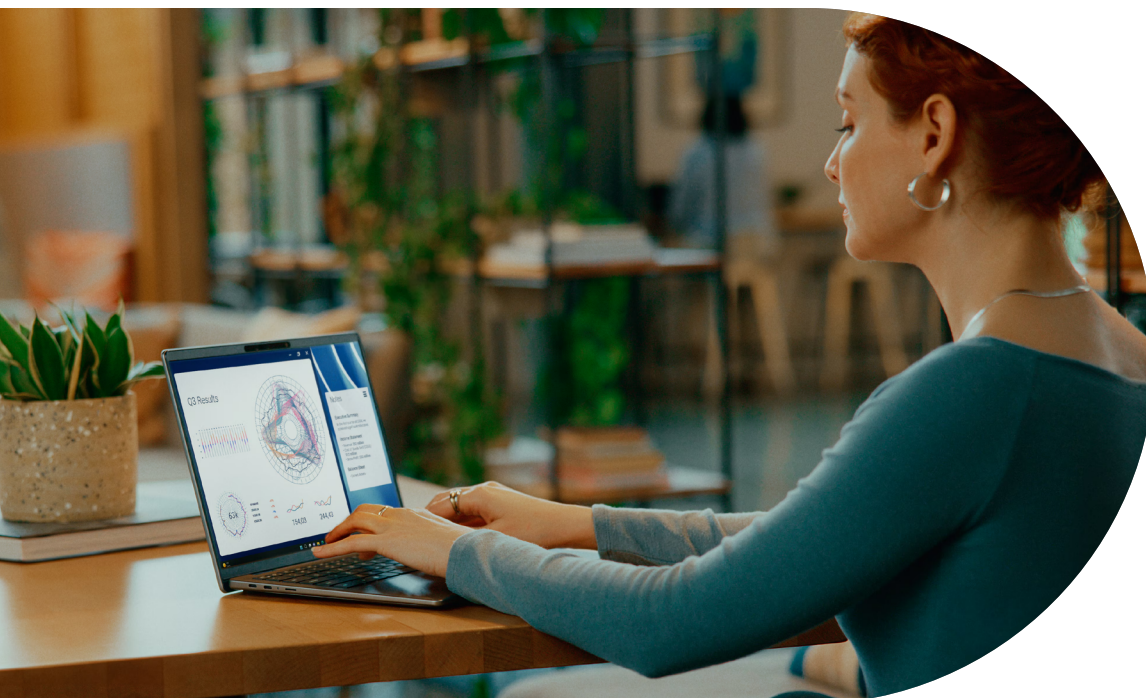
Zeeshan Sabir, vice president of information technology, Qualcomm Technologies, Inc., expects to see a rapid influx of new AI software and features built into AI PCs as software vendors ramp up development. ITOps teams will need to track these developments closely so they can provide proper training and governance to ensure effective, secure use of such powerful functionality.

“AI PCs include numerous built-in features designed to improve user productivity and experience, but these features may not be enabled by default,” says Sabir. “IT departments will need to allocate time for initial configuration and user communication/training. And they will need to establish strong governance to evaluate and approve their use, considering legal, cybersecurity, business, enterprise architecture, and financial aspects.”

### **What to look for**

AI workloads run significantly faster on devices with higher TOPS (trillions of operations per second) values. Look for PCs that perform above the industry-standard of 40 TOPS so that your PCs can handle increasingly powerful AI apps.

Copilot+ PCs are an emerging class of Windows PCs that include an NPU with at least 40 TOPS, 16GB of memory, and 256GB of storage. Copilot+ PCs enable AI-enhanced experiences in Windows 11 and popular applications, including image creation, real-time audio translation, and advanced search.



### 3. IT manageability

Advanced AI capabilities, combined with evolving flexible workplace models, are likely to put IT teams under additional stress to figure out the best ways to deliver enhanced collaboration and productivity tools while maintaining a secure environment. The good news is that AI PCs can help mitigate stress levels by improving IT teams' ability to provision, support, and refresh devices across their organization.

AI tools will help IT teams monitor, detect, and prevent potential system or network issues before they become critical problems. Chatbots and automated support processes will reduce IT problem resolution times and improve the user experience. Windows 11 features modern tools such as Microsoft Intune to further streamline deployment and management.

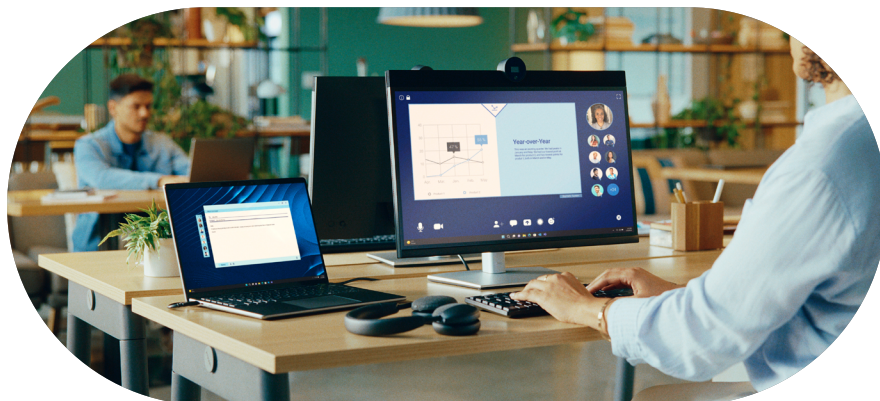
"AI tools are revolutionizing IT operations by facilitating predictive maintenance, offering proactive insights, automating code generation, expediting access to crucial information, and improving self-service functionalities," says Sabir. "These tools help with automation of routine tasks and complex analysis, allowing IT teams to focus on higher value activities and interactions."

#### What to look for

Tools for zero-touch provisioning to securely onboard employees from any location

Auto-healing device resilience from corrupt firmware and BIOS

The ability to manage policies, push software patches, or get GPS coordinates for devices, even when they're out of Wi-Fi range. This enables IT teams to maintain compliance and avoid update fragmentation



## 4. Chip-to-cloud security

In today's flexible work world, employees and their laptops are everywhere – and threats are, too. Windows 11 is the most secure version of Windows ever – by default and design – to help IT teams stay ahead of those threats. Windows 11 includes robust phishing protection and provides an extra layer of security against common and persistent cyberattacks.

“The advanced security features in Windows 11, including TPM 2.0, secure boot, passwordless authentication, and memory integrity, provide enhanced protection,” says Sabir. “But they also require stricter hardware standards, making upgrades from older PCs more challenging.”

All PCs provide several layers of protection, starting with the silicon.

### Hardware-level protection includes:

- **Secure processing unit:** Provides a secure, tamper-resistant execution environment.
- **Secure boot:** Ensures a device boots using only software trusted by the PC manufacturer.
- **Key management:** Built-in, secure backend storage to save cryptographic keys created by client applications
- **Memory protection:** Firmware that protects the system's SRAM
- **Hardware-accelerated encryption:** For enhanced performance and security of cryptographic operations such as encryption, decryption, digital signatures, and hashing



AI PCs provide an additional layer of protection by processing data locally, which enables organizations to run sensitive data through AI models and deploy AI-powered security software from the device, without relying on external servers.

In addition, AI PCs provide the processing power required to support multiple security tools with no performance degradation. Security application vendors are beginning to release agents that transfer security workloads from the CPU to the NPU, allowing agents to operate with greater speed and efficiency compared to those running on the CPU. This approach will further improve processing times.

“Upgrading to AI PCs powered by Snapdragon® X Series processors will significantly improve the user experience,” says Sabir.

### What to look for

A persistent connection to all devices for real-time updates and security patches

Increased device telemetry to help detect threats and remediate vulnerabilities in real-time

Trusted device attestation for tamper-proof, chipset-based identity, device authenticity, and connection integrity

On-demand chipset upgrades and the ability to remotely activate/deactivate chipset features as needed during the life cycle of the device

Hardware-based protection through TPM 2.0, enhanced authentication methods, and default virtualization-based security.



## Planning your PC refresh

Upgrading your PC fleet to modern, AI-powered devices requires more than a bulk order. Use this checklist to guide a smoother rollout:

### Assess current fleet readiness

- Create an inventory of aging devices and OS versions
- Identify users impacted by Windows 10 end-of-support (Oct. 2025)

### Prioritize high-impact users

- Target creators, execs, and mobile-first users for early AI PC adoption
- Use pilot groups to gather feedback and refine deployment

### Align with organizational goals

- Map device capabilities to key business initiatives (e.g., AI adoption, flexible work models)
- Evaluate TCO and potential productivity gains

### Plan for training and change management

- Prepare onboarding process for Copilot+ and AI-enhanced apps
- Communicate benefits clearly to drive adoption

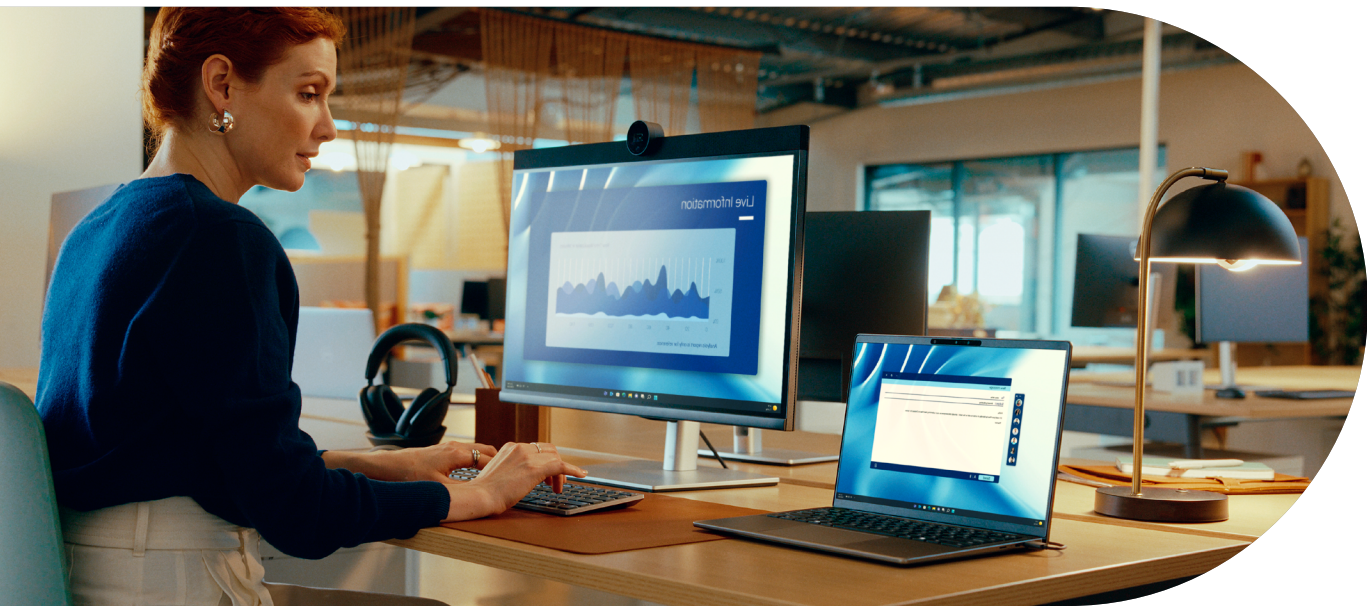
### Strengthen governance and security

- Define policies for AI tool usage, device telemetry, and data privacy
- Ensure compatibility with current security stack and device-management tools

### Work in phases

- Use a phased rollout to manage procurement, support, and budget cycles
- Capture success metrics and apply lessons to future phases





## Summary

The technology landscape is evolving ... rapidly. Organizations need a new kind of PC to keep up. A future-ready PC refresh isn't just about IT infrastructure – it's a strategic upgrade to how your business works.

The new generation of AI PCs powered by Snapdragon® X Series processors provide multiday battery life, ultra-responsive performance, built-in AI capabilities, and device-level security to meet evolving enterprise demands. In addition, these AI-enabled PCs come in a variety of price points, meaning IT teams no longer have to decide who gets the “good” laptops.

Future-ready PCs will empower everyone in your business, from executives to creators, to redefine what's possible.

“AI PCs represent an amazing opportunity for leaders to put powerful tools into the hands of everyone in their workforce,” says True. “But they need to get started now to be ready for this revolution.”

### **Learn more**

*Snapdragon branded products are products of Qualcomm Technologies, Inc. and/or its subsidiaries.*

<sup>1</sup>CPU Performance is based on Geekbench v6.2 Single-Core on Windows 11 OS run in October 2024, Snapdragon X Elite (XIE-80-100) was tested using a Dell XPS 13 (9345) on “Balanced” Power Mode in Windows and “Optimized” in Dell Power Manager. Intel Core Ultra 7 256V was tested using a Dell XPS 13 (9350) on “Balanced” Power Mode in Windows and “Standard mode” in Windows and “Optimized” in Dell Power Manager. The AMD Ryzen AI 9 HX 370 was tested using an ASUS Vivobook S 14 (M5406WA) on “Balanced” Power Mode in Windows and “Standard mode” in MyASUS. Power and performance comparison reflects results based on measurements and hardware instrumentation of given devices. Battery life varies significantly with device, settings, usage, and other factors.

<sup>2</sup>Battery life varies significantly based on device, settings, usage, and other factors.

<sup>3</sup>IDC, IDC Forecasts Artificial Intelligence PCs to Account for Nearly 60% of all PC Shipments by 2027, February 7, 2024, <https://my.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS51851424>