

# On the bogosity of speculation: Guessing the price of the original Surface

 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20190402-00](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20190402-00)

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It appears that Windows 8 followed the *teaser* model: Show people a glimpse of the future, and then don't mention it again until you have another big announcement. It happened in June 2011, when a brief demo of Windows 8 was made at the D9 conference, and then... nothing until //build/. And it happened again in June 2012 with the announcement of the original Surface devices. A glimpse of the future, and then radio silence until launch day.

And since nature abhors a vacuum, people start going nuts trying to scrounge up any information they can, no matter how tenuous or *totally made up* it is.

For example, somebody found Swedish online hardware and multimedia site Webhallen taking pre-orders for 6990 SEK (a bit over US\$1000). This was taken to be incontrovertible proof of the suggested retail price of the device, and people started grousing about how expensive it was. In reality, Webhallen simply made up a number to use as a placeholder. What's more, they chose a number *intentionally higher than what even they thought reasonable* so that there was no chance they would have to go back to their customers and ask for more money. (If, as expected, the price was significantly lower, they would refund the difference.)

And then it happened again: The publishers of the *... for Dummies* book series ran a contest with a grand prize of a Surface RT device plus one copy each of their latest books, *Windows 8 for Dummies* and *Surface for Dummies*. For legal reasons, they had to disclose the fair market value of the prize, which they set at \$350. People took that value, subtracted the prices of the two books, and thereby obtained *incontrovertible proof* that the Surface RT will retail at \$305.

Except that it was in all likelihood also just completely made up. I mean, come on. These people are selling a book about a device they don't even have! (Which makes you wonder about all the other *... for Dummies* books out there.)

And indeed if you look at [the Official Rules](#) [dead link, not available in web.archive.org], the place where they said that the prize package is worth \$350, it says right there on the very next line:

**Total Approximate Retail Value:** \$350.00 USD\*

\*ARV may be adjusted to reflect actual price of device upon release.

These people who latched onto the price information in the first line can't read even one line past the thing they got all so excited about.

Its like the conspiracy theorists who sit around looking for clues in things like the design of the dollar bill to prove their pet theory. As if the people involved in the alleged conspiracy are going to risk exposing their conspiracy by intentionally putting *clues* everywhere.

It reminds me of the old joke:

Person 1: "Can you keep a secret?"

Person 2: (eagerly) "Yes!"

Person 1: "So can I."

**Related:** Ed Bott muses on [what this tells us about Web journalism](#).

The Surface announcement was described by the press as long-awaited. How can you be awaiting something you didn't even know the existence of? Even if you're saying that you merely were awaiting the mystery event, the event was announced only four days earlier, which makes for a surprisingly low threshold for "long-awaited".

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