

Netbook - choosing tough economic times?

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In 2008, the concept of netbooks first appeared. Global PC makers are trying to win the netbook market dominance. Economic turmoil, consumer tightening spending has led PC makers to put more hope on netbooks that are more 'soft' than regular laptops.

The world's three leading PC firms - two US companies Hewlett-Packard and Dell, and Taiwanese Acer - are launching laptops called netbook features in developing countries, considering it an alternative. expensive desktop and laptop. Most 'mini PC' generations have screens less than 10 inches and cost between \$ 300 - \$ 600, but they have full operating systems like Windows XP or Linux.

Optimistic manufacturer

The new market reflects a strong shift from desktop computers to mobile devices and reflects new tastes in developed countries like the US and Europe.



' Three or four years ago, this type of product could not achieve such great success, because people had to buy their first laptop ,' said Eszter Morvay, a researcher at a technology consulting firm. IDC in London said. ' Now their needs are becoming more sophisticated. They just need a web surfing device, or a 2nd, 3rd laptop to work with, or for older parents or for children to use. Therefore, netbooks bring new wind to the market . '

A year ago, Asustek, a little known Taiwanese computer company, launched the Eee PC. Price is under 300 USD, the first version has 7-inch screen, Linux operating system. Asustek's idea is simple: consumers mainly use laptops to surf the web, check email and view photos, without the need for a large desktop computer. The Eee PC is an attempt to respond to the commercial version of the XO laptop, the product of the non-profit One Laptop Per Child project, targeting developing countries.

Eee PC achieved unexpected success. Last year, it was the most sought-after laptop on Amazon.com. That has attracted the attention of the PC industry.

In April, Hewlett-Packard, the world's No. 1 PC maker, launched the Mini-Note with an 8.9-inch screen, starting at \$ 499. In September, Dell, the No. 2 PC, started the race with the Inspiron Mini 9 with a 9-inch screen, priced at \$ 349.

Acer introduced the Aspire One mini laptop, an 8.9-inch screen at the Computex exhibition in Taipei in June, with prices starting at \$ 399. The company has high hopes for netbooks because of the charm of mobile Internet devices. 'The Internet is now an indispensable part of people's daily lives, and this is a very convenient and useful device for the Internet,' said Henry Wang, an Acer representative, 'that's the main reason why. We are optimistic about the future. ' Acer hopes to sell more than 5 million Aspire One mini by the end of this year.

Asustek, which owns the Asus brand, said it will sell 10 million netbooks globally in 2009.

Intel has predicted more than 50 million netbooks will be sold in 2011. Chip makers also have reason to pursue this trend: many netbooks use its Atom processor, and Intel is promoting Classmate PC prices. Its cheap in the education markets around the world.

The future is uncertain

But the market for mini laptops is an untapped area and manufacturers are still not sure how many consumers will sacrifice features for price.

If the mini laptop takes off, the most profitable will be subcontractors in Taiwan, who have and will have orders from the world's three largest PC brands, as well as Asus. These subcontractors include Pegatron, Quanta Computer; Inventec; and Compal.

Helen Chiang, a market researcher at IDC, said netbooks may hinder the growth of the PC market in the short term, and the market is not strong enough for producers to be assured of a long-term strategy. Meanwhile, an important part of a laptop is a battery, and the vendors charge a lower profit from the mini laptop battery, making batteries not their top priority.

The fire at LG's Korean factory, the leading laptop battery supplier, in March made the battery problem even more difficult. In the long term, Chiang said, companies will consider whether mini laptops will gain a large market share from more expensive products, or expand the entire PC market. ' 2008 is an important first year of netbooks ,' Chiang said. Global laptop sales are expected to exceed desktop and server sales by 2010.

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