

Opportune Inventions

The computer industry has enjoyed over fifty years in which a given amount of computation power and storage steadily declined in cost, size, weight, and power consumption. The decline of this "raw material" was unprecedented in any previous industry. As a result, opportunities arose repeatedly to produce generation after generation of computers, each generation having one of the following characteristics relative to the previous generation: (a) greater computation power and storage capacity at constant cost, or (b) constant computation power and storage capacity at reduced cost.

All competent computer manufacturers were capable of doing the former because the cost (and other parameters) of the components with greater speed and capacity remained nearly constant.

Greater opportunities came with the latter, because the type of software running on the computers could then be offered at a lower price to a broader audience.

As we saw before in Chapter 5, some of the greatest opportunities actually came from inventing software applications (VisiCalc and desktop publishing) that appealed to a much broader audience at the same time as lower-priced computers were introduced, even though neither application was developed by Apple.

Watch for opportunities that open up as the cost of a device becomes lower and lower. These are often where inventions occur that have the most dramatic effect on the market.

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Get Out of the Way!
How to Manage Development
of Timely, Innovative, and Relevant Products
by John V. Levy, Ph.D.