

OLPC Notebooks Delayed Until Fourth Quarter

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A representative from the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) initiative confirmed on Friday that notebook shipments will be delayed until the fourth quarter of 2007.

The representative denied that the hold up was in any way related to Quanta Computer, the company manufacturing the XO notebooks, and instead cited OLPC-initiated design changes that are being made to improve the notebook's performance.

The current target date for notebook shipments is now mid-September, according to the OLPC. In November, the first prototype laptops were produced .

In 2006, project leader Nicholas Negroponte announced plans for the One Laptop Per Child initiative, a plan to seed the world's emerging markets with low-cost notebook PCs that could be connected to the Internet. Laptops powered by hand cranks and running the Linux operating system would be donated to poor rural areas like Thailand and Brazil, with a price target of about \$100. The plan is similar to AMD's 50x15 initiative, as well as Intel's Eduwise or Classroom PC.

Late last week, DigiTimes reported that Quanta Computer's OLPC shipments were to be pushed back from the third quarter to the fourth, due to "a delay in designs of varied application scenarios for different emerging markets."

The paper cited sources at the Taiwan-based component makers as saying that Quanta has not yet released its orders for parts and components needed for the OLPC notebooks, indicating that the manufacturer will not be able to start shipping the low-cost notebooks in July as scheduled.

DigiTimes also reported that "the delayed OLPC shipments may not only affect Quanta's first-year projected shipments of about 10 million XO notebooks but also the projected revenues of component suppliers, including Simplo (batteries), Sunrex Technology (keyboards), Global Mixed-Mode Technology (ICs) and Realtek Semiconductor (ICs)."

For its own part, the OLPC has confirmed orders for 1 million of the laptops this year. Several countries have also signed up for the project, including Argentina, Brazil, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Uruguay.

While there remain critics of the program, the OLPC project continues to attract a large number of supporters, including members from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), Red Hat, and Google.

AMD's project, meanwhile, has been in existence since 2004. In March, AMD 50x15 program director Dan Shien called 2007 "the year of scale," as the company adds projects to its list. AMD works with existing organizations and partners to develop a series of "capsule" programs ; six have been published, and four to five more are in development, Shine said then. About 18 will be launched in 2007.

AMD's efforts are designed around eventual profit, however; according to Shine, Uganda has purchased several hundred AMD-powered laptops after seeing the benefits of computing through an AMD project. However, Shine said that AMD sees projects like the OLPC as a partner, rather than a competitor, as the OLPC's efforts help its own.

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