



# The Race for Perfect: Inside the Quest to Design the Ultimate Portable Computer

*Steve Hamm*

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Personal computing has reshaped economies and industries, and is transforming how we express ourselves and relate to one another. The most personal of personal computers are the portables. We carry these gadgets with us wherever we go, whether they're laptops, smartphones, or the coolest new Web-surfing devices. *The Race for Perfect* tells the story of two generations of entrepreneurs, designers, and engineers as they have struggled to make ever-better portables.

Steve Hamm takes the reader into a world where inspiration, design, engineering, and marketing come together to produce wave upon wave of the innovative products that we love to talk about and use. From the earliest days of portable computing, 40 years ago, entrepreneurs and designers have pushed forward relentlessly in a quest to create the perfect device. Their efforts have produced a few fabulous successes and many failures. But they never give up. They're driven by the basic rule of the tech industry: innovate or die.

In addition to a fascinating read, *The Race for Perfect* offers valuable lessons for business people in any industry, revealing how they must

**INNOVATE** constantly to differentiate their products

**CREATE** design principles that are timeless

**INTEGRATE** design and engineering so products are both useful and fun to use

**IMPROVE** quality and convenience without compromise

**TAP** social networks to turn customers into fans

At the center of this tale is the story of a single product, Lenovo's ThinkPad X300 laptop. Lenovo, the first Chinese company to seek to establish a global consumer brand, bought IBM's PC division in 2005 primarily to get the company's storied ThinkPad laptops. The X300 was conceived as a "halo" product that would draw customers to Lenovo's entire line. Woven through *The Race for Perfect* is a case study of how this ambitious company, with teams in Japan, the United States, and China, marshaled its resources to pursue laptop perfection. As X300 came close to the finish line, it collided head-on with Apple's super-slim MacBook Air?-with surprising results.

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