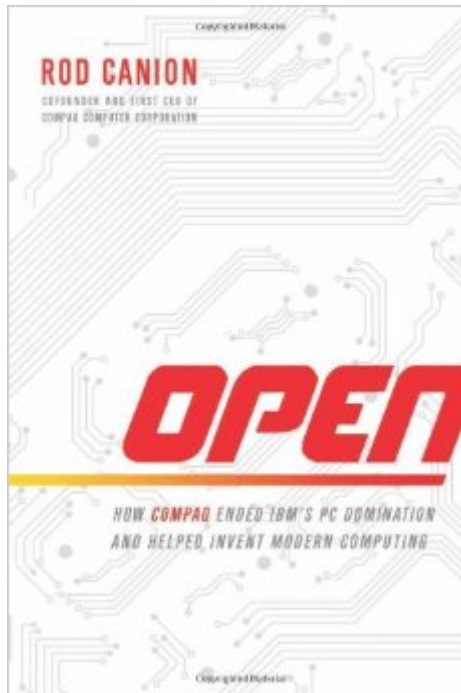# Open: How Compaq Ended IBM's PC Domination And Helped Invent Modern Computing

Synopsis

The story of Compaq is well-known: Three ex-Texas Instruments managers founded Compaq with modest venture funding. Just four years later, Compaq was on the Fortune 500 list, and, two years after that, they had exceeded $1 billion in annual revenue. No company had ever achieved these milestones so rapidly.But few know the story behind the story. In 1982, when Compaq was founded, there was no software standardization, so every brand of personal computer required its own unique application software. Just eight years later, compatibility with the open PC standard had become ubiquitous, and it has continued to be for over two decades.This didnâ ™t happen by accident. Cofounder and then CEO Rod Canion and his team made a series of risky and daring decisions—often facing criticism and incredulity—that allowed the open PC standard marketplace to thrive and the incredible benefits of open computing to be realized.A never-before-published insider account of Compaqâ ™s extraordinary strategies and decisions, Open provides valuable lessons in leadership in times of crisis, management decision-making under the pressure of extraordinary growth, and the power of a unique, pervasive culture.Open tells the incredible story of Compaqâ ™s meteoric rise from humble beginnings to become the PC industry leader in just over a decade. Along the way, Compaq helped change the face of computing while establishing the foundation for todayâ ™s world of tablets and smart phones.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Co-founder, CEO, and author Rod Canion does an excellent job laying out the chronology of

Compaq, starting with the founding of the company and the key decisions: to build a portable PC, to focus (maniacally) on IBM PC compatibility, to focus on high-performance (and luxury pricing), to ship an 80286 machine that was more compatible with the original (8088) IBM PC than IBM's 80286 machine, to ship an 80386 PC before IBM did, to band together with other PC "clone" makers to announce the EISA bus in response to the IBM MicroChannel bus, and the decision to simultaneously launch both an 80486 desktop PC and the dual-processor SystemPro server that had more power at much lower cost than competing "minicomputer" offerings from IBM and HP. These were gutsy -- and winning -- decisions.I worked at Microsoft as a software engineer and engineering leader from 1985 to 1999. And for my first 11 years I worked on operating systems: OS/2 (nee MT-DOS), MS-DOS, and Windows. So this book was a trip down memory lane for me. I never met Mr. Canion, but I was always impressed by the people and products of Compaq. Under Canion's leadership, Compaq designed and built the fastest, most reliable (and most expensive) PCs. I still remember fondly getting my first 80386 machine -- a Compaq 386/20e.The writing style is crisp, functional, and (mostly) devoid of self-aggrandizing praise. I quite enjoyed the book.But I only gave it four stars because the story is incomplete. It seems improbable that in his nine years at the helm of Compaq, there weren't at least a few major mistakes. Yet Compaq goes from success to success.

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