Tadpole Technology

Sun Success Story

"The UltraSPARC® IIe microprocessor has it all for laptop deployment — open architecture, price/performance, low heat generation and power consumption. The service and support we consistently get from Sun is just as important. No matter what, Sun is always there for us. We're committed to Sun."

Dave Tyler
Director of Sales Operations
Tadpole Technology

Tadpole Technology, the creator of the first SPARC® based laptop ten years ago, has built a thriving business by providing products based on SPARC microprocessors and the Solaris™ Operating Environment. The UltraBook IIe, the latest in a long succession of Tadpole laptop computers built with open technology from Sun, breaks new ground in price/performance while retaining 100 percent binary compatibility with all Sun desktops and servers.

Today, a key ingredient in Tadpole's laptops' success is the UltraSPARC® IIe microprocessor. This low-power UltraSPARC processor combines high speed with cost-effectiveness, small size and low levels of heat—along with reliability that has long been a Sun hallmark. Sun accompanies its microprocessors with an array of strong development tools and support.

A Decade of Experience Providing State-of-the-Art SPARC/Solaris Technology in Laptops

Tadpole, a Sun Master Value Added Integrator (MVAI), is headquartered in Carlsbad, California with European operations in Cambridge, England. The strategic relationship between Sun and Tadpole dates back to the early 1990s. Tens-of-thousands of satisfied customers later, the Tadpole brand stands for Sun portability around the world. Tadpole's innovation, reliability and business-centric commitment to customer service have proven to be important competitive differentiators.

Tadpole's distinction as a best-of-breed builder of UNIX® laptops for compute intensive environments is well earned. Over the past decade, it has systematically strengthened its position in the Sun computing space and has become the trusted vendor of choice by Fortune 500 enterprises and federal agencies alike.

"The value of mobile computing had been well proven by the early 1990s, but all laptops at the time were Intel based, and we wanted to offer the same mobility benefits to UNIX users," explained Graham Brown, President of Tadpole. "Besides Sun, we briefly considered other vendors, notably HP, but they couldn't, or wouldn't, make their microprocessors work in a laptop environment. They were too big and produced too much heat, and HP didn't seem very interested in working to resolve these problems for us. Only Sun combined a microprocessor suitable for incorporation into a laptop with a caring, supportive attitude—which has persisted to this day."

Company

Tadpole Technology

Industry/Market

Computers/electronics

Products/Services

- Sun UltraSPARC® IIe microprocessor
- Solaris™ 8 Operating Environment

Key Business Challenges

- Provide mobile solutions for users of Sun technology
- Base products on an open, integratable architecture
- Minimize heat buildup while meeting exacting needs for performance, form factor and battery life, at favorable price points
- Maintain forward and backward compatibility with other SPARC and Solaris based systems
- Secure strong support from Sun for development of new products
- Build revenues despite difficult business climate

Key Business Solutions

- Succession of laptop solutions, closely following release of new processors and operating environment versions from Sun
- All products based on open standards
- UltraSPARC IIe microprocessor enables new breakthroughs in price/performance, heat dissipation, and power consumption
- 100 percent binary compatibility up and down the Sun product line
- Sun Design Kit program, coupled with strong engineering support from Sun, reduces development cycles
- Large installed base with Sun ISVs and substantial deals with the US military

Tadpole began with predecessors of today's UltraSPARC microprocessor family and followed with new product introductions in lock step with Sun's releases of ever more powerful SPARC processors and Solaris Operating Environment versions—consistently delivering laptop computers incorporating Sun innovations six to nine months after Sun's initial deliveries.

"One reason we've been so quick with new products is that Sun knows how to address the needs of an OEM," said Dave Tyler, Director of Sales Operations. "Sun continually asks itself what it takes to make a company like ours successful. Then they come through with the right products and services to expedite our development such as the Design Kit Development Program."

UltraSPARC IIe Microprocessor: Right-Sized for a Laptop

Tadpole's newest model, the UltraBook IIe, was introduced in January 2002. At its heart lies the UltraSPARC IIe chip, the highest performing low-power microprocessor that Sun has ever released, and the Solaris 8 Operating Environment. "Sun did a great job of squeezing the costs out of the UltraSPARC IIe, which in turn allows us to offer excellent price/performance to our customers," said Tyler. "Our foremost challenge in laptop design is heat dissipation and the UltraSPARC IIe helps us manage the heat problem most effectively."

Like every SPARC chip, the UltraSPARC IIe microprocessor adheres to open standards. "The openness of the SPARC architecture is a huge advantage for us," said Tyler. "The UltraBook IIe is 100 percent binary compatible with every SPARC based machine out there, no matter how old its processor or operating environment might be. It will also be 100 percent binary compatible with every new machine Sun introduces, since Sun has a very clear forward strategy for its SPARC and Solaris technologies."

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A Favorite in the Sun ISV and Federal Markets

One example of Tadpole's market successes is the Sun ISV community. ISV sales personnel use Tadpole laptops to conduct demonstrations at customer sites, showing compatibility with the installed base of 1.8 million SPARC based systems running the Solaris 8 Operating Environment. Tadpole's UltraBook IIe gives these reps the mobility they need to show more, sell more, and reduce the sales cycle.

Another market where Tadpole has achieved success is the US military, where Tadpole is valued as a best-of-breed vendor. In March 2002, Tadpole and Sun Federal announced a strategic business alliance targeting improved anytime-anywhere mobile capability of US Department of Defense (DoD) agencies. Under terms of the latest alliance, Sun Federal plans to deploy Tadpole's world-class portable Sun solutions to US DoD agencies through the Navy's Tactical Advanced Computer Solutions contract.

Since the military's applications are mission-critical, the Tadpole UltraBook IIe's reliability is a fundamental requirement. "Reliability is one of our watchwords in designing and manufacturing the UltraBook and a big part of our great reliability record is the combination of Sun's microprocessors and operating environment," said Tyler. "We couldn't have done it without such a solid foundation."

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