

## StepUp Computing Joins the Pen Tablet Brawl

Three former executives of eMachines have started a new PC company called “StepUp Computing” ([www.stepupcomputing.com](http://www.stepupcomputing.com)). Founded 9/02 and launched 11/02, StepUp Computing’s stated mission is to bring “innovative yet cost-effective alternative solution desktop, mobile and wireless computing products and services to small and mid-sized business users and consumers in targeted specialty and vertical markets.” The company, funded by private investors in Korea, will utilize “state-of-the-art outsourced manufacturing efficiencies from Asian partners” (i.e., Korean ODMs). Patti Adams, VP of corporate marketing and communications, said StepUp Computing was “not planning to build another money-losing company like eMachines,” but instead planned to “bring low-cost products to under-served market segments.”

StepUp Computing’s first product is a “traditional” pen tablet called the DocuNote (see Table 1 for specifications). Billed as a “Tablet PC,” the product is actually a hybrid webpad. Similar to FIC’s AquaPAD and Sewoo’s SMP-3000 (also known as the “SmartTablet”), the product uses a 667 MHz Transmeta CPU and an 8.4” SVGA TFT screen with a touchpanel. The use of a touchpanel and the presence of legacy ports prevent StepUp from licensing XP Tablet PC Edition from Microsoft.

StepUp Computing says they are focusing their marketing efforts for the DocuNote on VARs and systems integrators. In other words, they’re (wisely) going after vertical markets with the product, since previous products in this space have shown that there clearly isn’t a consumer market for hybrid webpads with any size screen. The DocuNote will be available on a build-to-order basis, with VARs able to choose the final hard drive, memory and operating system. Channel pricing will be as low as \$799, which StepUp Computing said should allow VARs to sell a base configuration including Windows and a leather portfolio case with an integrated USB keyboard for \$999. According to StepUp Computing, deliveries started in December 2002.

Tablet 1: Comparison of StepUp, Sewoo and FIC hybrid webpads.

<b>Specification</b>	<b>StepUp Computing DocuNote</b>	<b>Sewoo SmartTablet</b>	<b>FIC AquaPAD</b>
CPU	667 MHz Transmeta	600 MHz Transmeta	500 MHz Transmeta
Display	8.4" SVGA	8.4" SVGA	8.4" SVGA
Video	SMI Lynx EM+, 4 MB	SMI Lynx EM+, 2 MB	SMI Lynx EM+, 2 MB
Screen Rotation	Yes (Pivot)	Yes (SMI)	No
Digitizer	Touch	Touch	Touch
HDD	20 GB, 2.5"	10 GB, 2.5"	IBM Microdrive (up to 1 GB) in CF slot
Memory	256 MB	128 MB	128-256 MB
OS	Win 2000, XP; Linux (Lindows 3.0)	Win 98, ME, 2000; Linux	Win 98, ME, 2000; Linux; Win CE
Slots	1 Type II	1 Type II	1-Type II, 1-CF
Ports	USB-1.1 (1), VGA, Audio, IrDA, 10/100 LAN (RJ-45), Dock (adds parallel, serial, PS/2 mouse & KBD, 4 USB-1.1), built-in 250K pixel USB camera	PS/2, USB-1.1 (2), mini-VGA, Audio, IR (for KBD)	USB-1.1 (2), Audio, IrDA
Buttons	4-way jog, 2 mouse, 3 hotkeys	4-way jog, 6 hotkeys	Brightness & volume only
Battery Size	10.8V at 2700 mAh (29.2 Wh)	11.1V at 3450 mAh (38.3 Wh)	7.2V at 3600 mA (25.9 Wh)
Battery Life	3.5 – 4.5 hours	"About 5 hours"	2.8 – 3.5 hours
Bridge Battery	No	No	No
Housing	Plastic	Plastic	Magnesium
Size (Volume)	10.13" x 7.88" x 1" (80 in <sup>3</sup> )	10.1" x 7.13" x 1.14" (82 in <sup>3</sup> )	10.8" x 6.5" x 1.05" (73.2 in <sup>3</sup> )
Weight	2.6 lbs.	2.65 lbs.	2.5 lbs.
Software	PenOffice (Calligrapher handwriting recognizer); Pivot for screen rotation; G2 video capture for USB camera	Sewoo character recognizer	No bundled recognizer for Windows; PenPower for Linux; Transcriber for CE
URL	<a href="http://www.stepupcomputing.com">www.stepupcomputing.com</a>	<a href="http://www.smarterminalcomputer.com">www.smarterminalcomputer.com</a> and <a href="http://www.glaciercomputer.com">www.glaciercomputer.com</a>	<a href="http://www.fica.com">www.fica.com</a> and <a href="http://www.aquapad.org">www.aquapad.org</a>