

Two visions for delivering PCs to emerging nations

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A correction was made to this story. [Read below for details.](#)

In its effort to bring computers to emerging nations, the nonprofit trade organization One Laptop Per Child has linked up with some of the world's largest contract manufacturers and component suppliers to build its low-cost machines.

Chipmaker Intel, meanwhile, is working with companies like [Zinox](#), a hardware maker from Nigeria you've probably never heard of.

The difference, though, could prove pivotal in determining which vision for expanding computing into [emerging nations](#) spreads more broadly and rapidly. By centralizing manufacturing, One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) says it can keep the cost of its XO computer to a minimum. Taiwan's Quanta will make the laptops while Chi Mei Optoelectronics and FoxConn will supply the screens.

The laptops cost \$150 to make and will go down over time, according to OLPC's founder and chairman, Nicholas Negroponte, and this year about 1 million of the machines will be made each month. The organization is also trying to get governments to subsidize its programs.

"OLPC has one goal: to maximize the number of children who have a connected laptop," wrote Negroponte in an e-mail. "Intel views children as a market and we view them as a mission."

By contrast, PCs based on Intel's [Classmate PC](#) blueprint will cost about \$300 this year and eventually get below \$200, said [John Davies](#), vice president of the World Ahead program at Intel. Although potentially more expensive, the Intel systems will be made in the regions in which they'll be sold, which will lead to local job growth, better customer support and, ideally, the start of a local IT industry. The infrastructure in many places already exists, Davies added.

"Eighty percent of the PCs in Pakistan are assembled by Pakistani companies," he said.

Companies like Taiwan's Via Technologies take a similar tack. Via collaborates with universities and local manufacturers in [Africa and India](#) to develop inexpensive PCs and thin clients based on its chips.

"One factor is local job support and one is local tech support. When the products are out in the field, who is going to stand by and support them? Support is absolutely critical," said Richard Brown, vice president of marketing for Via. "Oftentimes, schools want to buy locally."

Who's right? Who knows, but analysts and outsiders tend to lean toward the Intel and Via view of things.

"There's something to be said for having regional knowledge about your audience," said Richard Shim, an analyst at IDC. "If you do a cookie cutter approach, you can do it more cheaply, but it may not fit the existing situation."



The "build local" ethos can also definitely impact local economies, said Wayan Vota, the director of [Geekcorps](#), which helps bring technology to rural villages in emerging nations. Geekcorps partners with Via.

Correction: This story misstated John Davies' first name, as well as the name of the program for which Davies works. It is called World Ahead.

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