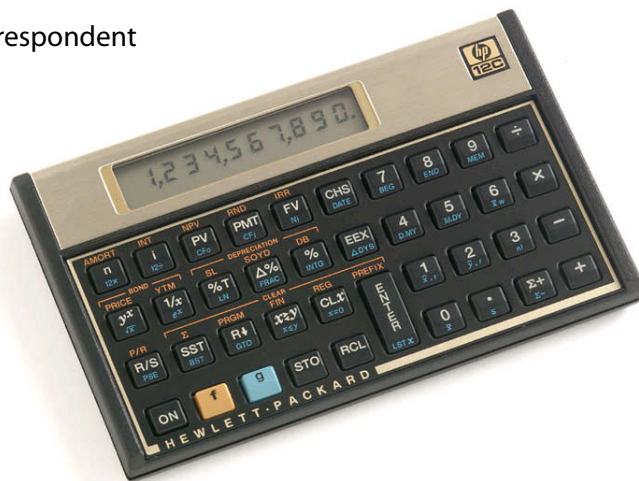


Silver anniversary dawns for HP's iconic calculator

By **PHIL BAKER**, Daily Transcript Technology Correspondent
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With so many of today's technology products becoming obsolete in as little as six months, it's refreshing to find a product that's been selling with virtually no change for 25 years.

It's Hewlett Packard's 12c business calculator, introduced in 1981 and still being sold today. To date, more than 15 million units have been sold, and it's still going strong.



The 12c financial calculator, noted for its 3-by-5-inch horizontal layout and reverse Polish notation (RPN) entry method, performs all sorts of business and statistical calculations including payments, net present value, internal rate of return and days between dates. It's the product of choice for investors, real estate professionals, accountants, loan officers and business students.

I used it in business school in 1983, just two years after it was introduced, and my daughter used it 20 years later in her MBA classes. It's been standard issue at many business schools all this time.

While the cost of financial calculators has fallen to as little as \$20, the HP12c continues to sell at a premium price. Today it's priced at \$70, compared with its original \$150. Of course, its internal components have changed over the years, but it works and looks the same.

The HP12c was invented and initially manufactured in Corvallis, Ore. Manufacturing moved to Singapore about six months later and now is in China. U.S. headquarters for the 12c and other calculators are here in San Diego.

Why has this product been so successful for all these years? Certainly it would be possible to add features to it, a bigger LCD, additional calculating functions and so forth. But it's one of those products that got everything right the first time and has become almost a status symbol. HP, to its credit, has been smart enough not to tinker with a successful product, though it did add a premium model with more built-in functions and both RPN and algebraic entry that sells for \$100.

"The 12c meets the specific needs of millions of users: the right features, at the right time, for the right audience," said Fred Valdez, HP's calculator general manager. "And these qualities have contributed to its timeless appeal and success."

HP is sponsoring a contest for 12c owners, asking for entrants to submit their most incredible real-life success stories involving the calculator. More information is available at www.hp.com/go/12canniversary.