



July 2007 Newsletter

I don't know about you, but I am really starting to get irritated with retailers jumping the gun on sales. The fireworks from the 4th are still warm and I just received my first back-to-school ad. What's next? Christmas ads on labor day? I think from now on I will start boycotting the first advertiser for each holiday. For those of you who don't know or never shopped there, CompUSA closed over half of their stores in May, which means I now have to go to Cambridge for a good selection of parts or order online. I am really missing the convenience of having a CompUSA store just down the street.

Update on Windows Vista



Well, it has been about 6 months since the release of Windows Vista and not much is really happening with this new Microsoft operating system. A few early bugs have been fixed, a few more drivers are now available, but the business world seems to be

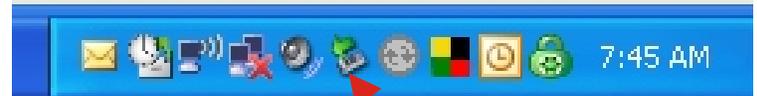
holding off and many PC buyers are still ordering computers with Windows XP. Even though the price for Windows Vista is about the same as XP, the actual cost is much higher because you have to purchase a faster processor, more memory, and usually a better video card to meet the hardware requirement for this new operating system. I still recommend that you wait another six months to try Vista. Personally, I don't really see any compelling reason to switch to Vista in the first place. Yes it visually pretty, but that is about it.

Avoid Damaging Your USB Drives

Almost everyone is using or has used a USB flash drive or a USB hard drive for backup or transport. But did you know that you can permanently damage these devices if you do not eject them properly. Even though most all USB devices are designed to be simply plugged and unplugged from your computer, USB storage devices such as hard drives, flash drives, and cameras really should be ejected before unplugging. I know most of you are saying that you have never done this before and never had a problem. That may be true, but you increase your chances of damaging the memory if you just yank it out of the USB port. All it takes is



unplugging it at just the wrong moment and you might lose all your data. So, to be on the safe side, always eject by clicking on the **safely remove hardware** icon and select the device you want before unplugging it from your computers USB port. It will then tell you that it is now



Safely Remove Hardware

safe to remove the device. It is always better to be safe than sorry when it comes to protecting your precious data.

Not All Batteries are Created Equal

I once thought all AA batteries were pretty much created equal. To me, Duracell, Eveready or Rayovac; it did not really matter. Alkaline *did* seem to last longer than the old standard Carbon Zinc designs, but it never seemed to be a huge difference. **Until NOW...**



If you have not tried Lithium AA batteries in your digital camera, Mp3 player or wireless keyboard, you are really missing out. These new batteries truly live up to their advertised "7 times longer life". Even at the high price of about \$6 for a pack of 2 AA batteries, they can really be a life saver for some applications.

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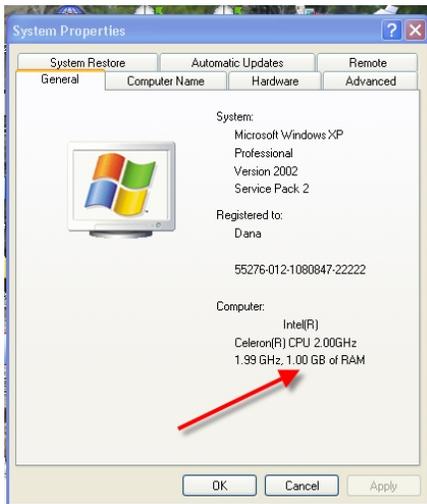
New Life For 2-5 Year Old Computers

If you have a computer that is somewhere between two and five years old and you are starting to see signs of it slowing down, you are not alone. Your computer may be a good candidate for an upgrade. A few upgrades could make it run as well or even better than it did when you first purchased it. Keep in mind that it is generally not worth upgrading if your computer is running anything older than Windows XP (i.e.. Windows 95, 98, ME or 2000).

Memory(RAM)

Many of the early Windows XP computers came with only 256 meg of memory (which at the time was the minimum requirement for Windows). The price of memory was much higher than it is

today so many manufacturers would simply install the minimum. Today, with additional things running such as antivirus, antispysware and firewall software and updated versions of Windows, it is now recommended to have a minimum of 512 meg of memory. Additional memory can be purchased for as little as \$50 and can make a huge difference in the overall performance of your computer. To check how much memory your computer has, Right Click on MY COMPUTER and Select PROPERTIES. Selecting the GENERAL tab will display your version of Windows as well as the type of computer and the amount of installed memory.



Hard Drive

Other than a few fans and your CD or DVD drive, the **hard drive** is about the only moving part in a modern computer. It is also the part of a computer where all of your information is stored. Every photo, video, email and document that you create is stored on a series of rotating platters. Spinning at speeds up to 7,500 rpm, the average hard drive, with normal use, has a typical life span of about 5 years. These days, far more stress is put on your hard drive with daily virus scans, spyware scans, photos, videos, music and



highly complex games. Many drive manufacturers have reduced their warranties to only 3 years now and I am now seeing far more drive failures than ever before. A new hard drive typically costs less than \$100 and can be installed for about \$79, providing your previous hard drive is still in working order. It is a fairly easy process to copy the data from a working drive to a new hard drive. However, if you wait until your drive actually fails, not only do you risk the likelihood of losing all your data but you will have to pay for the labor to reinstall everything. Many avid computer users are now starting to replace their hard drives on a scheduled basis rather than actually waiting for them to fail. After all, you wouldn't think of waiting for a blowout to decide to replace your tires on your car.

Signs of a Failing Hard Drive

Although a hard drive can up and die without any prior warning or notice, sometimes there can be signs of pending failure. If you notice any of the following, seek help immediately:

1. Increased whirring or whining sound
2. Strange Clicking Sounds
3. Excessive Drive noises
4. Extreme overall Slowness
5. New Error Messages
6. Bursts Into Flames (Don't Call Me)

NOTE: if you suspect a hard drive problem, it is important to make sure you backup up your data

CALLING for HELP!

I can not stress enough the importance of getting help as soon as a problem appears. Waiting can often lead to major issues. I often hear from customers, "I did not want to bother you, but it started a few weeks ago". In many cases, I may have been able to easily fix the problem if I was able to get to it sooner. So please, don't hesitate to call or drop me an email, anytime and for any issue.



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