

April 2007 Newsletter

Every time a new operating system is released by Microsoft, it usually generates a flurry of activity, but this time I don't think most computer users really care that much. When Windows XP came out in 2001, everyone jumped on the upgrade just to get rid of all the problems they were having with Windows ME or 98. For the average public; Why fix it if it ain't broke? I think most of you are perfectly happy with Windows XP and will just wait until their next new computer purchase to make the transition to Vista.

Windows Vista is Finally Here!

The long anticipated Vista operating system is finally here. But should you bother upgrading or not? Unlike previous releases of Windows, there are 4 versions of Vista to choose from as well as fairly complex hardware requirements. In general, if your computer is more than a year old, it is probably not worth upgrading. Even if it is only a few months old, you may still need to upgrade the memory or install a new video card to be able to reap the benefits of this new operating system. **So What is New in Vista?** Well, to be perfectly honest with you, there is not much that will really change the way you work. Microsoft claims greater security, but we will see. The fancy new Aero Interface is cool, but it is only available on the higher end Vista Premium versions and not on Vista Basic. I have not really seen anything that will speed up or improve the way you read email, surf the Internet or write a letter. But if things like video screen savers and see-thru window panes are something you really want, then maybe Vista is for you. However, I would recommend giving it a few months just to work the bugs out. I will keep you posted as time goes on. For more information and a feature comparison chart go to www.waylandcomputer.com.



Laptop V.S. Desktop

The difference between Desktop computers and laptops is really starting to blur. Originally laptops were 2 to 3 times the price of a comparable desktop, but today the price is about the same, although you do get slightly less for your money in terms of performance with a laptop or notebook computer. Having said this, the actual cost of owning a laptop is still much higher. Why?

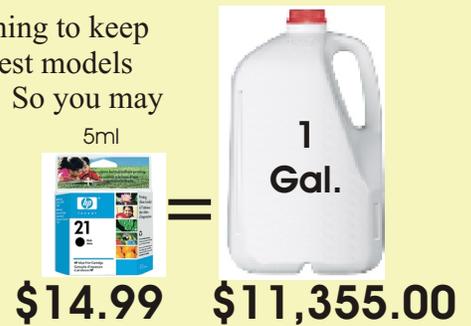
1. Laptops generally do not last as long as Desktop Computers.
2. Repair prices are much higher for laptops, often 4 to 5 times higher.
3. Many users will reuse their Monitor once or twice thus reducing the overall cost of owning their desktops.
4. Unlike Desktop Computers, most laptops are limited in how they can be upgraded with the latest hardware so they become obsolete sooner.

So why are so many people buying laptops? The main reason seems to be the smaller size and the ability to move around the home or office, especially with the increased availability of wireless networks.

Cheap Printers, So What's the Catch?

It is truly amazing how much printer you can get for under \$100. And in some cases they are giving them away for free when you purchase a computer. You can get one that Prints, Scans and Copies for \$59, a little more and you can fax as well. The print quality and speed just keeps improving as the prices continue to fall. So what is the catch?... The secret is in the ink. Every company wants to sell you the ink. They make a fortune on ink and the more features they add to the printer and the faster it can spit out pages, the more often you will be running to the store to buy their ink. If you print a fair amount you can spend hundreds of dollars per year on ink for your \$49 printer. Ink can cost between \$1.00 and \$3.50

per ml, which works out to between \$3,700 and \$13,000 per gallon. One thing to keep in mind is that many manufacturers have reduced their ink prices on the latest models to stay competitive with getting your photos printed at your local Walmart. So you may find that simply purchasing a newer model can save you big money. If you find that you are printing a lot of color pages, then you may want to consider a color laserjet printer. The color laserjet typically has a lower cost per page and a faster print time, however they do not have the same print quality as an inkjet printer and would not be as useful for printing photographs. However, the color laserjet is perfect for printing color brochures, flyers and web pages. One thing that I should mention is that unlike Black and White laser printers, color laser printers tend to be slower, noisier and when you need to replace the toner, you need 4 toner cartridges (1 for each color) at a price of about \$89 each. One of the best cost saving measures is to purchase a B&W laser printer for everyday printing and use an inkjet just for when you need color.



Watch out for online Antivirus and Security subscriptions

Many security software companies are changing the way they offer online renewal and upgrades. Rather than just selling you another years subscription, many providers are now trying to get you to sign up for automatic renewal which means they will automatically charge your credit card every year. Other vendors are now offering monthly payment plans for Security Software that are included in with your regular monthly service charge. Verizon offers their own security software for about \$4.00 per month. All these companies are hoping that you will just forget, so that they can continue charging you forever. I don't normally recommend purchasing downloaded versions of security software online, but if you decide to, just take the time to know exactly what you are actually buying. Some websites make it very difficult to determine if you are just "renewing your subscription", "Updating to a new version", or signing up for "automatic renewal". Keep in mind that there are still many great free products out there to protect your computer and I believe that Comcast is still offering McAfee for free to their customers.

How Long Should MY Computer Last?

The average computer should last about 3 to 5 years and is usually replaced due to obsolescence more often than an actual failure, although desktop computers tend to last longer than Laptop or Notebook computers. However, you should be aware that the most common failure in any computers is the hard drive. The hard drive is a small rectangular unit about the size of a paperback book that has storage platters that can spin at speeds up to 10,000 RPM. It is not a matter of **IF** it will fail but **WHEN**. Everything that is on your computer is stored on this disk and when it fails, you can lose everything. This can include all your photos, music, emails and documents that you have ever saved. Most drives fail without any warning, so the only way to protect your data is to have backups. If you plan to keep your computer for longer than 3 years, it is a lot more cost effective to replace the hard drive before it fails. A new hard drive typically costs about \$100 and can be installed in about 45 minutes. If your current drive is in working conditions, copying the data over to the new drive is a fairly simple process. However, if you wait until your drive actually fails, Windows and all of your programs will have to be reinstalled from scratch and then your data will have to be recovered from the old drive, if possible. This can take many hours assuming you have all your original installation CD's. Even if you have backups of your data, it can still cost you hundreds of dollars in labor to reinstall the operating system, programs and get everything back to the way it was before the failure. Don't get me wrong, I also have a few computers that are 10 years old and still working fine, but they are the exception. Keep in mind that hard drives are working a lot harder today because of the increase storage of photos and music as well as the constant hard drive activity from virus and spyware scanners that automatically scan every day. We will not know for several years, but I would guess that hard drive failure rates will only increase.



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