

### Pamper Your Sweetheart

No, I am not referring to viruses or spyware or any of the other things that can invade your computer to thwart its operation. Much rather, the biggest plague in the computer is the increase in “marginally specified” computers. Let me explain.

In the past few weeks, we have had a rather historic number of calls from people who have purchased computers from a wide variety of nameless national companies. Trying to keep the price down, these computers have cheap onboard video circuitry, with onboard sound circuitry, along with many other “features”. Unfortunately, these low end, and marginal computers don’t really have the capabilities many games and applications need for proper and optimal operation.

The sad thing is that they did not need to be assembled this way, but it is really the newest form of the “bait-and-switch” tactic. An incredible offer is made, and there is some customer interest. However, after some “sales talk”, the customer ordinarily comes away with much more than what he had bargained. The unfortunate thing is that with the Internet, and net based sales, many people end up buying the “bait”, and the “bait” computer is not anything to write home about.

While computer parts and peripherals are forever changing, nothing has changed in the computer business. There are always people willing to undersell people - to make the quick score, and then move on. The best advice is still the same: “find a reputable computer dealer”, and consult with him or her. Buy all of your computer components from that particular dealer, and expect to receive superlative service - something that “Big Box Dealers” just simply can not provide.

But what about the computer gurus in your family??? The next article deals with the problems and difficulties that “self professed computer technicians” have given the industry, and in this

case, the largest, and best Hard Drive manufacturer.

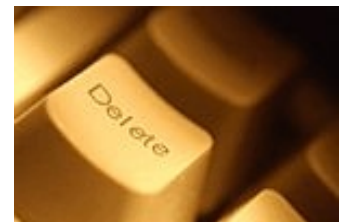
Christmas is around the corner. Don’t be fooled by a low price. Look at the specifications, and know exactly what you are getting with your purchase. We would be happy to look at any quote. While we don’t make exaggerated claims about whether we can match the price, we do make the claim that we can help you find the perfect fit, for your present needs, and give you a real option for the future.

#### The Difference is Quality !!

In a recent email to one of our technical people, the Hard Drive Manufacturer: Maxtor, made the following announcement. *“Maxtor announces new Standard Warranty Periods for hard drives to its worldwide distributor channel. The new warranty provides Maxtor’s customers with improved levels of warranty protection and demonstrates the confidence we have in the outstanding quality and reliability of our industry-leading drives.*

*The Standard Warranty Period for FireBall®, DiamondMax® ATA/SATA and DiamondMax Plus ATA/SATA drives (non retail hard drive kits) is now 3 years. The Standard Warranty Period for MaXLine™ ATA/SATA and Atlas® SCSI drives is 5 years, and the Standard Warranty Period for Maxtor branded retail hard drive kits is 1 year.”*

Notice the phrase: “non-retail hard drive kits”. While it is only our guess, it is this computer geek’s opinion that Maxtor has found there to be a big difference in the number of returns. *The average Joe can buy a retail kit, and screw up the installation in some manner, and then return*



the unit for replacement. Maxtor must have a good handle on the failure rate of their drives. But, I think that when you compare this return rate with the OEM or non-retail hard drives, their return rate is much, much less.

The difference is obvious. Computer technicians install non-retail hard drives, and do so in a static-free room, they have the appropriate tools, and most importantly the professional experience and expertise.

For Maxtor to TRIPLE the hard drive warranty period for non-retail installations, is a glaring example of the problem in the industry. They can not afford to let the self proclaimed computer expert install computer hardware. Selling drives through the appropriate channel, e.g. the Professional Computer Integrator or Technician, reduces their failures. The Maxtor Corporation must be more comfortable with this professional installation, and thus the longer warranty period for purchase made through Mentor Computers.

While this is a personal opinion shared by a few other industry professionals, we would be happy to hear from you. What is your take on the difference in warranty periods???

## **Death of the Floppy Disk**

For all intents and purposes, the floppy disk is unofficially dead. While it was the media of choice, it is rather expensive, and can not handle a lot of data anymore. With a single MP3 song requiring between 4 and 5 MB of storage, this single, and popular use, makes the Floppy Drive largely a useless piece of technology.

For the past few years, the media of choice has been optical. Almost every computer, has at least a CD-ROM drive, and therefore you can certainly read another user's CD, but not everyone has a CD burner. As well, it is rather cumbersome to copy the information to a CD as the software is rather different than the format used when copying files to other media.

No one has certainly declared this, and the industry has not made anything else a defacto standard, but I would like to suggest a more compatible solution - the USB flash drive. While a year ago, there was still some problem getting this to work perfectly on some systems, now it is very difficult to find a computer which does not have a USB port. Things are so USB port friend, that the

USB flash drive is certainly the mode of transporting or exchanging information.

The USB flash drive is so small that some are made to fit on a keychain. The beauty is that they retain stored data without any power and as well, require only a USB port.

While there are many different makes and models, at the time of writing, we at Mentor Computers, have settled on the Kingston Technology series DataTraveler. With a cost of only \$ 49 for 256MB, and \$ 70 for the 512 MB models, portability of your data does not cost a lot. While there are cheaper units available, I think that the good name that Kingston has in the industry makes up for the small number of dollars saved by going with a "no name" brand.

As well, the Data Traveler ELITE comes with 128 bit AES encryption as well. A whopping 1.0 GB of storage with the security makes this a device any discriminating technician would be loath to be without.

## **Final Word**

"Friends don't let friends buy Dell" is our "headline". While we certainly don't mean to "bash" any one company, there has been a lot of advertising from many companies, not just Dell, which cater to the "cheapness" in all of us. The price of a unit is the single most important feature. It should really not be the case at all.

BUT, don't get me wrong. I think that Dell has some very good computers as well. When we compare our "Power Bundle" to a comparable solid Dell system, we don't see much of a price difference, but this is our point. Dell does not mean quality. What Dell puts into their computer systems represents quality. So, we poke a little fun at Dell, but this is the real meaning behind the jibe.

**Say you read this issue, and receive 25% off the labour for ANY repair from now until Christmas !!! Perfect for those Christmas Peripherals. Save 10% on product - and gift certificates too !!!**

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