

Memory *and* Storage

While I was driving to the office this morning, I thought of the perfect opening paragraph to this article.

Once I got into the office, the phone was ringing, there were already four voicemails to answer, and my secretary had a stack of documents for me to sign. Now I was racking my brain, thinking *what was that opening paragraph I had thought of just 10 minutes earlier?!*

So my memory is not what it used to be. With so many things going on in our lives, we multitask more than our computers. And like our computers, if we don't manage our thoughts (or files) stored in our memory, they're bound to get mixed up.

I heard meditation is good for the human mind, but what about computers?

Your computer is your personal and business lifeline. Try sitting at your desk for just an hour with the computer off and see if you're not tempted to power it up.

If the memory goes on your computer, you won't have the option of powering it up; everything will be lost. Power failure can cause memory loss, too, but I'll cover uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) in a future article.

Your computer has several types of memory. RAM or random access memory is what the computer itself uses to run the whole show. The latest type of RAM—DDR2—is very sophisticated compared to what was available even a year ago.

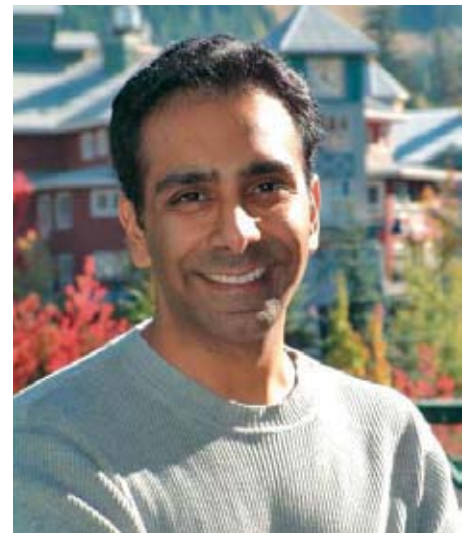
...unless of course your last name is Bond, first initial "J," and you receive your hardware from someone known as "Q,"...

There is a memory module in the video card in your computer. The video card is what helps the computer display the images on your monitor. The more memory on this card, the better and faster the image on your screen.

The most commonly known computer memory type is the hard drive. While 80 GB (gigabytes)—about 8000 MB (megabytes)—was standard again about a year ago, the minimum these days is 250 GB. The bonus is that these larger drives are the same or a lower price than last year's smaller ones. More drive, less money . . . must be the new math.

External Drives

While most hard drives are built into your computer, external drives are becoming popular. New USB port (and FireWire port) drives such as



LaCie's SAFE Mobile Hard Drive with Encryption, iomega's Minimax, and Maxtor's OneTouch give you instant backup of your main hard drive, without the complicated setup.

The Minimax cannot be beaten as an add-on for your Apple Mac mini. It sports 3 FireWire ports and a 3-port USB integrated hub. To keep things on the cool side, an interactive cooling



system with a thermal probe automatically regulates fan

speed. The Minimax comes in 160 GB and 250 GB capacities.

The LaCie drive has fingerprint scanning protection, so only you can access the drive. Up to five users can be registered with customized access privileges such as read/write or read-only, unless of course your last name is Bond, first initial "J," and you receive your hardware from someone known as "Q," you can pretty much access anything you want.

The drives will connect to a Windows XP machine (and the upcoming Windows Vista), a Mac OS X machine, and some Windows 98SE machines with downloaded drivers.

These new external drives can be used as a main drive, a backup drive, or your multimedia drive. In one setup, I have the external drive as my media

monster; all my mp3s, video clips, pictures, and backup files are stored on it. Forget the 6-disc CD changer, this device can hold more than 10,000 songs. Having a party at home? Press play for some dance music and guaranteed every time, your guests will tire before the music runs out.

USB Keys

If you want to move files from one computer to another that were not connected through a network, you could email them as attachments, but that is a very slow method. Floppy disks were the old method, but good luck trying to find a new computer with a floppy drive (you can't).

The easiest method is a USB key or a USB flash-drive. These tiny little devices let you store and transfer files quickly and easily through the USB port. Windows XP and Mac OSX will recognize the drive, without having to install any special software. The drive will appear on "My Computer" in XP and on your desktop in OSX.



The sizes of the drives range from 256 MB to 8 GB, more than enough for even the largest files. For comparison, a standard

recordable CD will hold 650 MB and a recordable single-sided DVD will hold 4.7 GB. The main benefit of using a USB flash drive is that it can be written on and erased thousands of times with no loss in quality.

There are several types of USB flash drives on the market. The SanDisk Cruzer gives up to 1 GB storage and has a fingerprint scanner built right in, perfect for storing your EFS digital key. The security feature is limited to the Windows operating

system, though. The SanDisk Cruzer Profile comes with a 5-year warranty and a toll-free 24/7 tech-support line

Other versions are simple, straightforward flash drives, but offer helpful features. The SanDisk MicroUSB has a retractable USB connector, protecting it when it's not in use. The SanDisk Cruzer Titanium is encased in a rugged covering, protecting it from the inevitable fall or when it gets tossed around in your pant pocket.

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The Store 'n' Go USB drive from Verbatim looks really cool and now comes in an 8 GB capacity version, the largest on the market.

My recommendation is utilizing some form of a backup device. Your data is an important asset in your office. The loss of it will cost you more than time and money to replace; it can cost you lost business. And like your body, keep your computer in good health with regular cleaning and updates.

Multi-Use Memory Devices

Okay, so Palm's TIX PDA (personal digital assistant) is not really meant to be a storage device but, with the included software, it can easily be used as one.

The TIX and the latest Palm Treo phone/pda—the 700—give you access to their memory expansion slot through a regular USB connection. If you're confused here, let me explain. The TIX will accept a standard SD card to expand the memory, limited only to the size of the card (4 GB are the largest on the market today).

Through the included USB connection, the Palm device can copy files from your computer to your Palm onto the SD card. You can use the download capability to back-up files, copy photos to the TX for viewing on the device, or even download mp3s to the pda for listening. The TIX has a standard 3.5 mm headphone jack so it can do double duty as your mp3 player.



And as I said, the TIX is a multi-use device. It's your daily planner, contact list, note-taker, email unit, and a portable gaming machine.

Emails can be sent and received using the built-in wi-fi. You do need to be near a wireless network connection—most coffee shops, airports, and offices now have one—to log on, but doing so is easy and free at most locations.

The gaming part is my favourite. I must admit I'm addicted to Bejewelled. You have been warned: Getting any work done with this game around is hard to do.

Part of one of the largest user-bases in the world, the Palm TIX gives you access to thousands and thousands of Palm applications out there, loads of them available as freeware.

Combined with its storage capabilities and widespread uses, the TIX is a great office assistant. It will remind you of what you need to get done during the day and will beep for appointments. Now all you have to do is *remember* to take it with you when you leave the house in the morning! ▲

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