

THE RHODENIZER REPORT

AUGUST 2007

www.rhodenizer.com

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THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- Shop for PC-related deals August 2-5.
- Dell Vostro line of PC's are "crapware" free.
- Blu-Ray appears to be winning over HD-DVD
- Copy Office to your PC before installing it.

NO SALES TAX ON COMPUTERS AUG 2-5

Georgia House Bill 128 has declared August 2 - 5, 2007 as a "sales tax holiday" for certain items including personal computers and related accessories.

A single purchase of \$1,500 or less of personal computers and/or related accessories will be exempt from sales tax (both state and local). If, however, the purchase exceeds \$1,500, the entire transaction is taxable. A single purchase is considered the total of all sales made to a customer in one visit to a store (no mention was made of how many times you can "visit" any given store).

The exemption does not require the purchase of a "personal computer base unit" this year, and extends to include periph-

eral devices such as keyboards, monitors, printers, scanners, UPS battery backups, surge protectors, PDA's, and "non-recreational" software. Qualified accessories do not include furniture, cell phones, anything intended primarily for recreational use, intended to be used in a trade or business, or items leased or rented.

The exemptions are apparently intended for an individual's personal or educational use. How the government can determine the primary use of your purchased items after you've taken them home remains to be seen.

Exemptions also do not apply to anything sold at theme parks, entertainment complexes, ho-



tels, restaurants, and airports.

Details of all the pertinent rules and regulations, as well as an Excel spreadsheet list of exempt accessories, are provided on the Georgia Department of Revenue [website](http://www.etax.dor.ga.gov/salestax/holiday/index.shtml) (<http://www.etax.dor.ga.gov/salestax/holiday/index.shtml>). —C. R.

DELL RESPONDS TO "CRAPWARE" COMPLAINTS

You spoke. Michael Dell listened. He's re-taken the reins of the company's operations after numerous complaints from angry customers regarding poor service and new PC's with "crapware" (the name given to those unwanted trial versions of programs pre-installed on most new PC's). In a move risky to

their bottom line profits, Dell is no longer accepting payoffs from those software companies and will only send you the software you want on your new PC. This brave step is good news to all in the IT community who've had to spend time cleaning off undesirable programs from new PC's before setting them up for

our clients.

Dell has also launched a new suite of products, services, and sales expertise focused on the small business market (1-25 employees) named Vostro. Dell claims the new Vostro line of notebooks, desktops, and services are designed (cont. P. 2)

DELL RESPONDS TO COMPLAINTS (CONTINUED)

(cont. from P.1) exclusively for small businesses with simple, or no networking, and limited or no in-house IT support. They also offer a 30 day Money-Back guarantee with no restocking or return shipping fees.

The Vostro notebooks feature Magnesium-alloy chassis and Mylar sealed keyboards to help protect internal components from spilled liquids. Available options include HyperConnect, the integrated

wireless feature combining dual band 802.11-n Wi-Fi and built-in broadband mobile wireless capability for continuous Internet access virtually anywhere.

Dell has also resisted pressure from Microsoft to ship PC's with only the new Windows Vista operating system. A large majority of customers surveyed indicated no interest in upgrading to Vista just yet. Siding with the best interests of the consumer, Dell is

extending the option to order with Vista or Windows XP on select models for the time being.

Can Michael Dell regain lost customer loyalty by making this new pledge to do more for small businesses? He seems to be making all the right moves so far.

For the latest in small business deals from Dell, go to the "Cliff's Pick's" page at www.rhodenizer.com.



Dell Vostro™ 1700

HI-DEF DVD WARS: HERE WE GO AGAIN

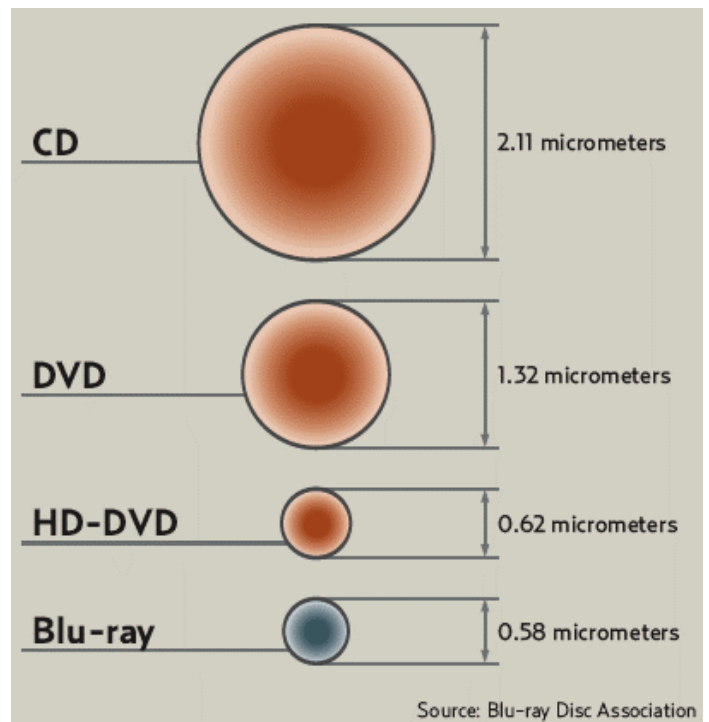
I remember renting movies at the video store in the early 1980's. One wall had VCR tapes in the Sony BetaMax format. The other wall had the same movies in Panasonic's VHS format. While BetaMax was known for better quality sound and picture, the players were expensive. Panasonic dropped licensing fees for VHS which caused cheap VCR's to soon flood the market. Demand for VHS movies rose and BetaMax soon became obsolete.

Twenty years later, a new war rages. Sony's Blu-Ray format is backed by Pioneer, Panasonic, and Walt Disney as the next standard for high definition DVD while Microsoft, Toshiba, and GE are backing HD-DVD as the new standard.

So what's the difference? In short, HD-DVD uses the same red laser as your DVD player, but with a smaller size beam. This increases capacity from 4.7GB, to 15GB per side. The Blu-Ray player uses a blue-violet laser with an even smaller beam that allows up to 25GB of data per side. Both players claim to be backward compatible with your current DVD discs.

Which side will win this time? Blockbuster and Target have thrown their support to Blu-Ray while European markets indicate a preference for HD-DVD. Players are coming out with support for both formats but at prices over \$2000.

I'll be watching Blu-Ray players closely as Christmas approaches this year.—C. R.



Laser beam diameters for optical disk players.

QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

Q– Should I buy the extended warranty with my new PC?

A– It depends upon 1). The terms offered, and 2). The type of computer.

Some extended warranties provide for NBD (next business day) on-site service. Others require you to ship it, or take it, to a service center (commonly referred to as “depot” service). In my opinion, if you can afford to be without your PC for several days, you don’t need it badly enough to justify an extended warranty. For me, it’s NBD on-site service or nothing at all.

Since desktops and mini-tower PC’s can be repaired much faster and easier than laptops/notebooks, and with inexpensive parts available locally, an extended warranty is usually not worth the expense for these.

However, laptops generally have higher failure rates (due to constant human handling), and often require parts unique to their brand and model. These can be expensive and are usually shipped over-night when needed. It also takes more time and delicate care to work with.

Since laptops are not only more likely to need repairs at some point, and those repairs will be more expensive, I recommend the extended warranty with NBD on-site service as long as it doesn’t cost you more than 30-40%

of the purchase price for a 3 year term of coverage.

Q–I just upgraded to Office 2007 and now I can’t find the macro options in Excel !

A– In Excel 2007, the macro options are found on the “Developer” tab which is hidden by default. To make this tab visible, click the Office button, then click the “Excel Options” button. In the “Popular” section, check the box next to “Show developer tab in the ribbon” then click “OK”. The Developer tab will then be visible on the top ribbon and you’ll see the macro options within.

Q– I have the opportunity to buy a used Windows 2000 server from an ebay seller for only about \$200. How much more would it cost to have you set it up for me?

A– Have you ever heard the old saying... “there’s no such thing as a free puppy”?

What it costs now is not nearly as significant as what it will cost you in the months ahead if you don’t think this through first. You need to understand the implications of making this transition. Then, prepare a plan that addresses concerns and ensures a more successful outcome. If this server is being sold “as is”, no warranty, that’s fine for lab test-

ing but not for business operations. If it fails, how quickly can we find parts for it? You have to plan for these things now, not wait until it happens. You could buy 2 of them in case you need to salvage one for parts later, but that cost only solves the problem of parts availability.

There’s also the cost of lost productivity. If you can’t afford to have your PC out of commission for one day, imagine the productivity loss of an office full of people who can’t work because the server containing all their files is down. If you want to put all your eggs in one basket, you had better be sure it’s a darn good basket.

Before you start down this path, let’s determine:

- 1). What business problems are you trying to solve?
- 2). Is this server the right solution to these problems?
- 3). Will the benefits outweigh the total costs involved?

I would much rather have a long term relationship with a client than to take quick money for a one-time job. If we take some time to put together a plan first (at no extra charge to you), you will be much happier with the final results... and with me!

Send your questions to:
questions@rhodenizer.com



“If you want to put all your eggs in one basket, you had better be sure it’s a darn good basket.”



TIME-SAVING MICROSOFT OFFICE TIP

Have you ever clicked on something in one of the Microsoft Office applications that began to respond, but then prompted you to insert the original CD in your CD-ROM drive? Remember digging around frantically trying to find that CD so you could get on with what you were trying to do? Here's a tip that will prevent you from ever having to go through that again.

First, create a new folder on your PC named "OfficeCD". Then, copy the entire contents of your Office CD to that folder. Remember to first

change the view settings in Windows Explorer so that all system files are revealed and nothing is hidden.

Next, create a simple text document using Notepad and name it "LicenseKey.txt". Type into this document the license key printed on the back of your Office CD, then save it to the "OfficeCD" folder you created. You can now remove the CD and store it in a safe place.

Next, install Office from the new folder you created by double-clicking "setup.exe". This will launch the installation program and configure

your Office applications to refer back to this folder if they need anything in the future. You will no longer be prompted to insert the CD ever again. When the setup program asks you for the license key, just copy and paste the numbers from your "LicenseKey" file. This also solves the problem of having to insert the CD for verification whenever you visit the Microsoft Updates website.

You can download all the latest updates for Office and other Microsoft programs by going to the website address: "www.update.microsoft.com".



ABOUT RHODENIZER IT

Rhodenizer IT is a different kind of IT service provider for the north Metro Atlanta area.

We sell no hardware or software. We have no quotas or markups. We provide consulting services that include finding the best deals on what you need... and passing the savings along to you.

We also provide complete IT service for the needs of small businesses. Our mission is

not just fixing computers. It's providing the right solution for your needs, and for your budget.

We also help small businesses create strategic plans for reducing IT costs and increasing the security and protection of their most important asset: Information.

A well organized IT operation will save your business time and money in the long run.

Call to schedule your **free initial consultation with no obligation**. Tell us about your IT problems and concerns. Let us recommend a course of action.

It costs nothing to find out if we have the answers and the expertise you need.

"I don't want my clients to be satisfied. That's just not good enough. I won't rest till they're impressed!" - C.R.

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