

THE RHODENIZER REPORT

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THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- **Some laptops plagued by overheating and premature failures.**
- **IE8 is better than 7, but it's still no Firefox.**
- **BlackBerry Bold deals at www.wirefly.com**

HP & DELL'S SILENT RECALL

One of the most disturbing trends in the PC industry is the silent recall. That's where manufacturers will only replace defective devices after the customer calls and registers a complaint, instead of actively contacting them about it.

HP and Dell seem to be taking the same approach with some laptop PC's that were built in 2007 and early 2008 with a defective Nvidia GPU chip. This particular Graphics Processing Chip has a tendency to over-heat and burn out, requiring the entire board to be replaced.

Several online articles have documented user experiences and manufacturer replies concerning this issue, although neither Dell nor HP websites mention anything specifically about a "defective GPU".

We did find out from other sites that Dell will offer a 12-month limited warranty extension specific to this "issue": "For all customers worldwide, we plan to add 12 months of coverage for this issue to the existing limited warranty - up to 60 months from the date of purchase, for the following systems ..."

The only lists we could find were on one of the corporate

blogs. Inspiron, Latitude, Precision, Vostro, and XPS models were all listed. But, the list has now grown from 10, to 15 models affected.

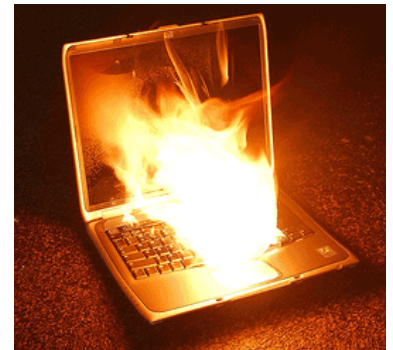
The HP website lists affected models along with instructions for possible "resolutions" (that is - alternatives to calling them).

To see a list of HP Pavilion and Presario models affected, you can search for document C01087277.

That list also may grow. One owner of a Pavilion TX1100 with the faulty Nvidia chip reported that it failed after 18 months and wasn't listed.

So, what can you do if your Dell or HP laptop seems to be overheating, or has just failed altogether? You can't rely on websites to determine if it qualifies for a free repair or replacement. Instead, you'll have to call the manufacturer with your service tag or serial number to learn whether or not yours is covered.

An additional word of advice: One of the few scenarios in which I would suggest purchasing an extended service warranty is with new laptop PC's. Repairs are more costly, and parts are harder to get, than with comparable desktop PC's.



I think \$300 to \$400 for a comprehensive 3-year extended warranty is well worth it for a laptop costing over \$1500 that you depend heavily upon.

As an alternative, you could also look into the coverage provided by your credit card company. Some provide extended warranties at no additional cost to the consumer.

One customer made use of this benefit when her HP laptop keyboard failed after 20 months. Her MasterCard World card covered the cost of replacing the keyboard, even though HP's 1-year warranty had expired.

Keep copies of all your receipts and credit card statements, don't rely upon anything told to you by phone, and get all promises and agreements in writing.
— C. R.

INTERNET EXPLORER 8: JUST WAIT

Microsoft recently released Internet Explorer 8 with claims of “improved security, compatibility, and performance...” Yeah...OK... I would still hold off on that one for a few more months, if not longer. Here's why:

Security:

It's an indisputable fact that IE has been the target of more malware attacks than any other application in software history. And, even though version 8 adds some useful security features, it still relies on the same old ActiveX foundation that has made it so vulnerable from the beginning. This weakness is one of the main reasons that many savvy users have stopped using IE altogether.

While IE8 offers better protection against attacks like “clickjacking” (a hacker technique to trick you into clicking on hidden page elements), it's not foolproof. A prime example is what ComputerWorld magazine reports happened in March at the CanSecWest security conference in Vancouver. A researcher identified as “Nils” compromised IE8 running on Windows 7 in front of an audience by taking advantage of a shortcoming he found in the software (to be fair, Windows 7 has not been released in final form yet, and “Nils” also managed to hack Safari and Firefox as well).

Compatibility:

IE's page “rendering” has caused major headaches for Website developers for years. That means some web pages that work properly in every other web browser don't work properly in IE. Why? Because Microsoft doesn't observe the same rules for web page coding as the rest of the world. With an overwhelming majority of PC's running IE on the desktop, Microsoft has been able to dictate its own standards to web developers who have no choice but to conform if they want their websites to be seen properly by the largest audience. After much pressure from the International IT community, Microsoft makes an effort to improve IE8 with a “compatibility mode” button, but still falls short of adhering to the International standards for HTML (Hyper-Text Markup Language).

Performance:

While IE version 8 is quicker than 7, it's still much slower than other browsers. Microsoft's own documentation for IE8 states: “Ease and speed in the real world are measured in minutes, not milliseconds.” That sounds like a preemptive defense against independent testing results they knew would come.

Well, here they are: Computerworld Magazine's JavaScript-performance web

browser tests showed:

- 1). Google Chrome tested four times faster than IE8.
- 2). Firefox tested 59% faster.
- 3). Safari tested 47% faster.
- 4). Opera tested 38% faster.

IE8 may be better than IE7, but I think it's still inferior to the other alternatives.

If you must use Internet Explorer, I recommend you wait at least a few months before upgrading to version 8. More problems will surface and require new patches or updates to resolve them. We've already seen reports of odd behavior in IE8 on Windows Vista. Some IE8 installations have reverted back to IE7 after Windows patches were installed. There have also been reports of apparent conflicts with some antispyware applications that centers around IE8's “restricted-zone” lists and “SmartScreen” security functions. “SpyBot Search & Destroy” and “SpywareBlaster” are the ones I found most commonly mentioned.

There were some workarounds proposed until Microsoft fixes these problems, but the easiest one — and the one I chose for now — is to go back to Firefox, or IE7.

The bottom line is - Unless you have a compelling reason to upgrade to Internet Explorer 8, just wait. - C. R.



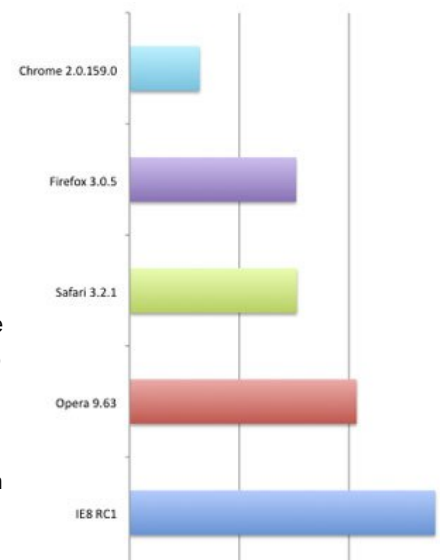
Web Browser speed test results when compared to Internet Explorer 8:

Chrome = 400% faster

Firefox = 59% faster

Safari = 47% faster

Opera = 38% faster



QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

Q- “I just read Mossberg’s column in the WSJ. He said the upgrade from Vista to Windows 7 will be easy, preserving files, programs, and settings. Not so with Windows XP, which “will be a cumbersome, multi-step process, requiring users to offload their files, wipe out the old operating system completely, and reinstall programs.” That says to me that I might want to upgrade now to Vista, since I will definitely want to upgrade to Windows 7. What say you?”

A- Why upgrade at all? To determine the best course of action, you need to first have a destination in mind.

What would you be trying to accomplish by this endeavor? How would upgrading your operating system benefit your business? Save you time or money? Make you more productive?

I would recommend against ANY Windows upgrade in this case because it will only:

- A). Cost you money.
- B). Cost you time.
- C). Give you something new to figure out before you can begin using it effectively.
- D). Increase your chances of losing or corrupting information exponentially.

I just don’t see any way that upgrading your O/S benefits you. If you want to upgrade

for reasons of personal preference, that’s a different matter altogether. But, my business advice would be: Don’t change anything unless there is a good reason to... unless the benefits outweigh the costs and the risks.

If you’re buying a NEW system, I would recommend sticking to XP Pro (I know where you can still find them), or just wait until Windows 7 is widely available.

Q- “What advantage is there to running the 64-bit version of Windows over the 32-bit version?”

A- Great question. And, the answer is the same for every version of Windows since NT.

At first, 64-bit versions of Windows were scarce. Mostly, because only high-end workstations had 64-bit hardware. And, only a few applications were written in 64-bit code. The predominate 64-bit operating system of that time was Unix. Windows was the new kid on the 64-bit block trying to find a niche.

Over time, the PC hardware industry has gone almost entirely to the 64-bit standard. However, most application developers still write programs in 32-bit code. Even Microsoft continues to write most of their applications (including Office 2007) in 32-bit version only. Thus,

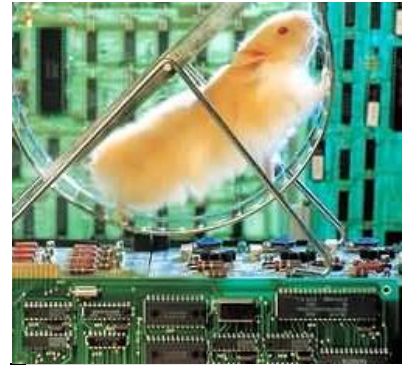
the awkward movement from 32 to 64-bit is taking much longer than the previous transition from 16 to 32-bit.

Why? Because application developers couldn’t wait to leave lock-ups and crashes of the 16-bit world behind and lead the charge to 32-bit. Now, complacency has set in and motivation to keep up with advances of the past 15 years seems lacking in most software companies. That is, all except for games. Gaming is one of the few applications where the awesome potential of a pure 64-bit system can be fully realized.

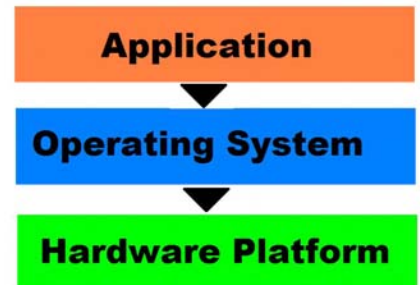
“Backward-compatibility” enables you to run 32-bit Windows on your 64-bit hardware. And, most 32-bit applications will run on either 32 or 64-bit Windows. But, the answer to your question is:

There is no advantage unless you have 64-bit applications to run in your 64-bit version of Windows, running on your 64-bit hardware.

Even so, I encourage you to embrace the new technology and don’t be afraid to make the leap to 64-bit as long as it doesn’t cost you any more to do so. 64-bit applications will eventually become the norm when enough of the market share shows interest.



“To determine the best course of action, you need to first have a destination in mind.”



E-mail your questions to:
questions@rhodenizer.com

BLACKBERRY BOLD FOR \$175

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Especially if you've been watching the AT&T Wireless website, waiting for the price on this latest and greatest BlackBerry with a "real" keyboard to drop.

The best deal I found there for the BlackBerry Bold 9000 with a new account would be \$399 with a \$100 mail-in rebate, plus a \$20 online discount. No activation fee, free shipping. The deal requires a 2 year commitment, but the bottom line for the device is \$279 plus tax, and you have to mail in a rebate form.

Next, I checked out WireFly's (www.wirefly.com) price on the same BlackBerry Bold 9000. Same prices on the AT&T voice and data plans there, but the device is only \$174.99. A 2 year commitment is still required, and there is a \$36 activation fee, but no rebate form to mail in and no sales tax. Shipping is also free.

Scouring through the fine print, I could find no other catch, gimmicks, or gotchas. It appears to be exactly the same BlackBerry with the same choice of AT&T wireless service plans, for a bottom

line price of \$210.99.

That's a total savings of around \$87, plus no rebate form to mail in.

By the time you read this, I should have mine in my new leather swivel holster, loaded up with my Outlook data and third party applications. I'll share my first-hand impressions with kudos and criticisms soon in an upcoming edition of The Rhodenizer Report.

If you're in the market for a new cell phone or PDA, start by checking out the deals at www.wirefly.com.



WIREFLY
www.wirefly.com

ABOUT RHODENIZER IT

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Our mission is to help small businesses reduce expenses, increase productivity, and safeguard private information.

It's about more than just fixing computers. We also

provide IT consulting and services that include finding the best solutions to your business problems.

We work with clients to prepare disaster recovery plans that ensure their critical data remains safe, yet easily accessible. Additional benefits include money-saving ideas for managing your computer resources and planning for future business expansion.

We have the training, experience, and know-how to provide the right solutions for your needs, and your budget.

Just call to schedule your **free initial consultation with no risk, and no obligation.**

Tell me about your computer needs or IT issues. I'll recommend a course of action that makes sense for your situation at no cost to you. What have you got to lose?

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