

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This article will cover computer hardware.

Now that it's back to school time and computers are specially priced, you may be looking to upgrade or add computers to the business. I thought it would be good to go over what are good business decisions when shopping for computers.

The first question I get asked is how fast of a computer do I need. I usually answer this question with a question, "What are you going to be doing with this computer?". If the computer is going to be used for engineering or design work, then a fast computer with a good video adapter and plenty of memory is needed. If it is going to be used for administrative or accounting, then speed and the video adapter are of less importance.

For new computers as well as upgrading a current computer, the most important factor is memory. Most computers today come with 128MBs of RAM (Random Access Memory). There are some that come with less but 128MBs is the minimum I would recommend. For the engineering/design computer, I would recommend at least 256MBs.

The next most important factor is either the CPU speed or the video adapter. For engineering computers, it's the video adapter. For other uses, it's the CPU speed. A good video adapter has at least 32MBs of RAM on it and can handle 3D graphics. An engineering computer's video adapter should have at least 64MBs.

I believe CPU type is more important than CPU speed. There are two major manufacturer's of CPUs, Intel and AMD (Advanced Micro Devices). Their top line CPUs, the Pentium III and IV from Intel and the Athlon from AMD, are very good and worth the money. The Celeron from Intel and the Duron from AMD are not business quality CPUs in my opinion. They can be used in a business computer but they will not perform as well.

As for the other parts of a computer, I would recommend at least a 17" monitor, a hard drive or at least 10GBs, and a basic sound adapter and speaker. The style of mouse and keyboard is a personal choice.