Popular Threads on Solosez

SHOULD I UPGRADE THIS PC?

Query for the tech gurus:

Current pc is Dell Optiplex 755. Core 2 duo 2.33 ghz, 3 gb ram. I commonly run TimeMatters 7, Outlook, Word and Internet Explorer with 6 or 7 open pages, all at the same time. I am going to upgrade TM to version 10 as soon as I get around to it.

Can anyone give me an opinion as to whether there would be a noticable performance improvement if I went to a new (quad core?) machine with a faster processor and more RAM?

Yes. Or, you could also replace your 1024 DIMM with another 2048 for 4GBs of total ram in your existing machine...although I don't think 32 bit processors can actually use more than 3GB. Or, install Ubuntu and run windows virtually. Your machine will be screaming fast.

Jake C. Eisenstein, Colorado

To be honest with you I suspect you WON'T see a big difference just from a CPU/RAM upgrade but it depends a bit upon your current actual usage.

What operating system are you running? What performance problems are you seeing? (Slow opening of messages, slow switching windows? Etc.)

If you open Task Manager (CTRL+SHIFT+ESC) what does your processor and memory usage look like?

What anti-virus software are you using?

Disclaimer: I wasn't a lawyer at the start of the NY Marathon. I wasn't a lawyer at mile 6 of the NY Marathon. At mile 17 there was a little doubt but by the end it was confirmed...definitely not a lawyer. Arguably a runner.

Ben M. Schorr, Hawaii

That depends on your definition of "noticeable." That system doesn't sound so bad and i doubt I would bother upgrading the whole machine just for speed.

Of course, you can always upgrade the machine itself. If you have a spare RAM slot it's worth adding a gig. If you have a spare HDD slot and if you're only running off a single hard disk, you can always install a second one: splitting data files and system files often adds speed, as does placing

the page file in the right place.

So you could get
$20: extra 1G RAM
$45: 250g HDD

that's $65 well spent. It'd be $85 if you needed a 2G chip (for example, if you needed to replace an existing 1G chip with a 2G, instead of adding another 1G alone.)

You can also add a graphics card if you don't have one. Even a $35 card will be a whole sight better than an integrated card when it comes to graphics performance.

Given that a new system will cost you over $500 plus many hours of time, investing $100 to improve your existing one is a good idea IMO.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

I'm surprised there haven't been more responses. Maybe all the tech gurus are doing legal work.

I'm not a guru and especially not a gamer, but I'm not convinced you would gain much, if anything, by going to a quad core machine w/4GB RAM.

It's my understanding that neither WinXP Pro nor Vista (32bit version) handle more than 3GB of RAM. That may have changed with Win7, if you're upgrading to that, too.

I'm still running a 1.8Ghz AMD Opteron (dual core chip) with 2GB RAM and have no issues with speed. In addition to having a backup program always running in the background (copying file changes to a second disk), I simultaneously run TM6, WP, Opera, FireFox, Thunderbird, and PaperPort. Occasionally I'll also open Quicken and Quickbooks as well as other miscellaneous programs. I have never had a problem with things being slow. The one exception is if I'm doing my weekly backup of data files to an external drive. If left alone for a while, the machine is a little sluggish letting me switch programs; best if if I backup during lunch.

I've monitored the amount of cpu and RAM usage and other than when a program is opening the cpu never gets near capacity; and I have never seen RAM stressed.

Once programs are opened (I usually open everything first thing in the morning), a faster cpu will not let you type faster, browse the net faster, upload/download files faster. It may work with a large database better, but even then, RAM and cpu capabilities can be hampered by other bottlenecks in the system, i.e. how fast the info can be accessed and shared between the little mirrors inside the box, including your hard drive speed.

I have read some tech articles that suggest that a quad core is unnecessary in the typical office situation and all that power and speed is only helpful when working with large databases or intense gaming.
Few law offices would fit either of those categories.

Then again, there is no end to the number of people who insist on driving cars that accomplish 0-60 in 4.5 seconds and have tops speeds in excess of 150mph, yet use the car for nothing more than puttering around on sunny days. Computers can be the same.

Just my 5 cents worth. YMMV

Just read Erik Hammarlund's comments and I would agree, especially with the time needed to set up a new machine yourself.

Clarence Behrend, Wisconsin

Did a poll of the hardware geeks here about your upgrade an
Hi... Did a poll of the hardware geeks here about your upgrade and here's what they said: 2 gig processor should be more than fast enough. You can't run more than 3 gigs of Ram in Windows, unless you are using a 64 bit version of Windows. There are 64 bit versions of XP, Vista or Win 7. The 32 bit versions simply don't recognize more than 3 gigs worth of memory even if it's there so it's kind of pointless to add more ram without the 64 bit version. > >and this... > >Only way to tell [if your performance is not optimum] is review performance monitor to see if there is a resource bottleneck. (To do this, Ctrl+Alt+Del to get to the task manager and look at the Processes tab). Unless they have a 64 bit version of Windows the computer won't see anymore than 3gb. > >Memory is probably fine but I think a faster processor may help. Just look at performance monitor or even task manager would tell you if the processor is lagging. I'm really a software trainer but have hardware geeks close by. LOL

Anita Evans (not a lawyer)

Actually, a 32-bit OS can address up to 4G of RAM because that's the number of addresses (0 to 4,294,967,265) that are available to a 32-bit OS. That said many modern computers cut corners by using video cards and other components that no longer have their own memory so some of that memory gets borrowed from the OS, meaning that the actual RAM available to the OS is often somewhat less than the full 4GB.

I'm actually oversimplifying somewhat, but since I doubt that many of you (other than Jim Tyre perhaps) really care to get into a discussion of user-mode vs kernel-mode virtual address spaces and paged pools and such I think the simplification serves our purposes o.k.

64-bit Vista or Windows XP supports up to 128GB of physical memory (in the Business, Professional, Enterprise or Ultimate editions) while Windows 7 64-bit supports up to 192GB. (in the Professional, Enterprise or Ultimate editions). The "Home" or "Starter" editions are somewhat more limited.

Disclaimer: I could use a memory upgrade myself. But I do remember that I'm not an attorney.

Ben M. Schorr

Technically, yes. For what it's worth, my 32 bit Windows XP Home system
only shows 3.25 GB of the 4 GB of RAM which is installed on my system. It does not have any memory allocated to video; the GeForce 7200 GS has its own.

Michael A. Koenecke, Texas

That just means that some other component(s) of your system is taking some of your RAM. These days it's rare that a workstation gets to use all of the RAM installed, even if it's less than 4GB. I see machines with 2GB installed that only appear to have 1.8GB of RAM available to them, etc.

Disclaimer: I don't seem to have access to all of the memory installed in me either. For example, where are my car keys? If I recall correctly I'm not a lawyer though. Pretty sure I saw something about that.

Ben M. Schorr

WinXP 32 uses a bit over 3 gigs of RAM, generally 3.5G. Of that, you don't get to use it all. Because RAM is so checp and because it doesn't usually get installed in 0.5G increments, most people put in 4G.

If you have 3G and have an extra memory slot, it can be worth spending the (literally!) $20 for another 1G chip. If you have 1G or 2G it is almost certainly worth an upgrade.

If you are running Win7, however, and if you plan to use XP Mode, you should be aware that the virtualization eats up a fair bit of RAM. You'll want 4G as a minimum and it's not clear to me that it won't run even better with more. Besides, isn't one of the great things about a 64 bit OS the fact that you won't need to ever use a page file? If I had a win7 system I'd look for a motherboard with 4 slots so I could cheaply use 8G of RAM and never page again.

Regarding resource bottlenecks it's a bit harder to track. As per my post yesterday there are at least a few programs which will completely peg your processor, at which point you will obviously see an improvement based solely on processor speed. But much of he stuff you run will do its best (as controlled by some kernel or other) NOT to peg out your processor, thus saving some available load for other things. Even though it's not pegged, you'll still see speed effects from improving it.

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Erik Hammarlund

My laptop, which has dedicated video ram, recognizes all 4GB of ram on 64bit Vista, when I tried putting 32bit xp on this computer, it only recognized about 3GB ram. Updating xp resulted in the computer correctly recognizing it has 4gb of ram, but it still did not actually utilize that much ram, and everything I read on the topic seems to confirm this.

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan