



B2C Technology Story

Web Summary:

Home Desktop PC

by Leon A. Enriquez

Reading Time:

7 minutes

Reader Benefit:

- ◆ Just how do you decide what desktop PC will suit your needs and budget;
- ◆ Simple selection criteria for your home desktop PC;
- ◆ What can you do on a self-help basis? Tips to help you with this important personal investment.

Today, a person does not have to think twice when deciding whether or not to invest in a desktop PC for the home. Connectivity is the new mantra of the Internet-savvy human being.

Still, the idea of buying a desktop PC for your home use – for both serious home work and games you play – boils down to economics. So, before you fork out your hard-earned money on a multimedia-rich home desktop PC, decide what you need and what you really want, and then take some time to consider the real buying issues.



Home Desktop PC

by Leon A. Enriquez

The digital world has become mainstream. Did you notice that the lines between your work space and home space are blurring? Not surprisingly, our unfinished work often follows us home – simply because the virtual world makes us increasingly flexible and mobile.

Observe also that for the vast majority of workers in the knowledge era, the space occupied by the desktop PC has changed forever. It is now a creative necessity, and no longer a mere option, as we struggle to live by the dictates of the digital lifestyle.

Today, a person does not have to think twice when deciding whether or not to invest in a desktop PC for the home. Connectivity is the new mantra of the Internet-savvy human being. Still, the idea of buying a desktop PC for your home use – for both serious home work and games you play – boils down to economics.

So, before you fork out your hard-earned money on a multimedia-rich home desktop PC, the real buying issues are:

1. What's your budget, and how much can you afford?
2. What do you desire or need in a desktop PC?
3. What PC configuration will satisfy your needs?

Prominent IT market analysts (e.g., IDC, GartnerGroup, Ovum, etc.) observe that one of the significant trends – that is making an impact on the PC computing landscape – is about user-customisation. The user experience and usage patterns today favour broad-based product and feature diversity. This is to address the sad stigma of the commodity PC market.

Rather than have a standard PC configuration, vendors are sensitive to meeting the needs of the individual customer. Contrast this to the mass-market syndrome of just a few years ago characterised by the cryptic saying: 'You can have any colour as long as it is black!'



Mere mention of the home desktop PC transports us mostly to the Microsoft Windows-based and Intel chip-empowered world (or Wintel). Some people might argue with great aplomb that Apple's Mac-based PCs are definitely the 'better thing'. Via ubiquity alone, Windows has garnered a phenomenal market share of 85 percent of the world's desktops. That's that.

So, what's the emerging selection criteria for a desktop PC system that will satisfy not just the first-time owner, but the well-informed individual? In short, what constitutes a good desktop PC for the home? (*See Box Story on Selection Criteria for Home Desktop PC.*)

How you choose a desktop PC depends mainly on what you intend to do with your system. The idea is to buy a machine with all the essential components to handle your type of work or memory-hogging computer games.

Most vendors will configure a system to your specifications. This flexibility enables you to add or delete the options to fit your computing needs, as well as your pocket. Vendors like Acer, Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard, IBM and NEC – who have specific desktop PC offerings – generally agree with giving the customer choice and variety. As a consumer, you can opt to buy either a pre-configured system to suit your needs, or wherever appropriate, ask for a system configuration that best suit your home usage requirements.

The ideal home system doesn't necessarily need the latest processor. All things considered, the PC should be a well-rounded one that can do the following:

1. Run the latest educational, entertainment, and home office software;
2. Load graphics-intensive Web pages; and
3. On-site technical support should come as part of the package.

Ease-of-use is a major concern to the home user who will probably not have the expert technical know-how to resolve or fix complex PC problems. Furthermore, the home user will not have the benefit of the technical support resources that a company or organisation may enjoy.

When you are selecting a desktop PC for your home, consider the other systems used outside of the home. For instance, many schools are equipped with Apple desktop PCs. So, you may want to explore owning an iMac or Power Mac G4, depending on your processing-power requirements. Or perhaps, your working environment is mostly Windows-based machines in which case, it may be advantageous to you to go with the same platform.



As end-users become more aware of product trends and become smarter and more sophisticated in the use of technology – not just as a productivity tool but as a sophisticated platform for games and a host of digital entertainment and lifestyle options – so will their expectations change with their new aspirations.

Box Story 1:

Selection Criteria for Home Desktop PC

Before investing time, effort and money on a home desktop PC, you need to answer the three basic questions:

- ◆ What's your budget, and how much can you afford?
- ◆ What do you desire or need in a desktop PC?
- ◆ What PC configuration will satisfy your needs?

Once you have seriously considered your situational answers, you are then ready to explore the various options available to you – as you seek out the best deal to satisfy your requirements.

Budget:

1. For the first-time owner or budget-conscious user the general price range will be about S\$1,500 or less. Based on this, the PC system will be a value-for-money with minimum frills.
2. For the savvy, well-informed individual or experienced user the reasonable price range will be anywhere from S\$2,000 upwards.

Home Desktop PCs

1. Value systems:

User demands for home desktop PCs include: accessing the Internet, e-mail applications, word processing software applications, collecting and storing recipes, and keeping track of the family budget.



Value systems use lower-cost processors such as those in the Intel Celeron or AMD Duron series, and come preloaded with the Windows operating system. Typical hardware configurations include 64MB of memory, and a 20GB hard drive. Value systems generally have integrated video and sound, an integrated 56K modem, and a CD-ROM drive.

Later, as the need arises, you can upgrade most value desktops by installing a more powerful processor, more memory, and larger hard drives. Note that the price will increase in tandem.

To sweeten the deal, many vendors offer e.g., free printers or digital cameras. Some offer a big discount on the desktop PC if you sign a multiyear contract for Internet service.

Many systems also come with self-diagnostic and troubleshooting tools. These tools enable you to resolve minor technical glitches, or restore your system to its original state.

2. **Multimedia systems:**

A good multimedia system need not be a high-end machine. It should have a Pentium III, AMD Athlon, or G3 processor or better, with 128MB of memory, a DVD-ROM drive for audio and video playback. An AGP 4X video card for 3-D graphics, 80GB of hard-drive capacity for storing those huge video files, and a high-quality sound system.

Also ask for systems that are preloaded with multimedia software, e.g., audio- and video-editing applications and programs for CD and DVD creation. Note that a CD-RW drive is essential for your data back-up and recording your project assignments.

3. **Gaming systems:**

If you're a hard-core gamer, you'll probably specify what you want.



Here you require the fastest machine say, Pentium 4, Athlon, or G4 processor, with the latest 4X AGP video accelerator (64MB on-board), tons of hard drive space, and the capability to compete online. For online gaming, you configure your machine with a Fast Ethernet card for broadband service-cable or ADSL.

Stay away from PC systems that use on-board video controllers when you choose your ideal gaming or multimedia desktop PC. Why? These tend to encounter problems processing the 3-D graphics used in the most popular games available today.

A quality add-on sound card will definitely enhance your gaming experience. Indulge yourself with the latest in gameware, e.g., force-feedback joystick, gamepad, etc.

Box Story 2:

Some Buying Tips

Tip #1:

Focus clearly about your expectations from your desktop PC system – what the system can do now, and what it can do in the future.

Tip #2:

Manage your budget. Avoid getting carried away with optional features as the added costs can soar.

Tip #3:

Look for bundled extras when you compare prices. For example, free software, printers, scanners, and other peripherals can add substantially to the value of your desktop package.

Tip #4:

Invest a bit more on mass storage. For instance, the price difference between a 20GB and a 40GB hard drive may cost just a small fraction more when you order your desktop. A bigger storage capacity is not a luxury for a hard drive these days.



Tip #5:

Buy your desktop from a reputable vendor with an established brand. This ensures that you get the quality and value that you pay for and expect.

Tip #6:

Consider your workspace constraints. For instance, if your desk space at home is limited, or your office work area is small, a mid-size desktop PC could leave you with little or no room to work.

Tip #7:

Make sure your desktop price includes a monitor if you have a tight budget.

About the Author

Leon A. Enriquez is managing editor and business manager of Editorial Thoughtscapes – a professional writing firm. Leon can be reached at leonenriquez@et-writer.com.

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