

Disposable PCs!!! What's Next?

“Yes Virginia, there is such a thing as a PC you can purchase, use, and toss when it breaks.” Tim Whitney, CTA.

It is no secret that the cost of purchasing a PC (desktop computer) has steadily fallen. What has not followed is the cost of the “standard” Operating System and the Applications. Few folks would spend several hundred dollars and on anything and then toss it out the WINDOW after it breaks.

However, it is now time to consider what a disposable PC really is. When a PC breaks, there are basically three key factors one needs to consider:

- 1) Is there any “data or information” that is critical and cannot be easily replaced?
- 2) Is it worth “repairing” the PC/problem?
- 3) Is it less expensive to simply buy a new one?

In the past, the common answer to Item 1 & 2 was Yes, and Item 3 was No. In today's brave new world the answers could easily be NO to Item 1 & 2 and Yes to Item 3. In my opinion, the paradigm has shifted – especially for a specific class of PC owner/user.

The new paradigm of a disposable PC (Duh-PC – CTA term) is now upon us with a \$159 desktop computer. Yes, \$159 for a PC. It does not include a monitor – however it does include everything else one will need for basic email, Web browsing, and simple documents.

OK, what's the catch? 1st, it does not come with MS Windows - but with a Linux operating system called Linspire. 2nd, you will not find your traditional office programs on this PC either. It does come with OpenOffice 1.1.3 a compatible open-source suite.

Is the Duh-PC right for you? If you want a fast computer or one to play games on, sorry. If you plan to run business applications on it, then it's not for you. Will you keep any really important files or data on it, I suggest you look elsewhere. Are you looking for a simple Web Mail & Web Browsing PC? If so, a Duh-PC will most likely meet your requirements.

Is the Duh-PC truly disposable? If you embrace the new paradigm and accept the limitations of the product you purchase, then the answer is yes. Essentially, the Duh-PC is great for doing a few simple tasks – nothing more.

Given the above limitations, cost of \$159, the extensive use of web based applications and online storage of critical data - will it be worth fixing? For the average non-computer savvy person, why bother? Simply replacing it would be much easier and faster. From my perspective – the Duh-PC meets all the requirements of being a truly disposable PC.

Now that we've crossed this major threshold – what's the next paradigm shift? Given the rapid pace of change with respect to memory, hard drives, processors, etc., I could speculate on many possibilities. Two converging possibilities that really intrigue me are:

“Pay-PC or Physical-PC” (PPC), much like a pre-paid cellular phone w/o the minutes
“Memory-PC” (MPC), bootable USB memory pen/stick drive

If my Intuition is correct, I expect in the not to distant future - both of the above features will be combined and made available to us. You'll simply go online – order the MPC of your choice with a pre-loaded “bootable” Operating System, the applications you wish to use, and additional storage space for your documents, pictures, etc. (Price - \$99.00)

Your new “customized” MPC will be shipped overnight along with your electronic bio-identity feature, passwords will become a distant memory. Your first and only “free” use will be to “activate” your new MPC, by connecting it to any PPC with Internet access. This will establish your new account, service provider, billing options, and secured identity.

Once you've fully activated your MPC, you can plug it in on any PPC – any where in the world. Each time you plug in the MPC, you'll pay for your “usage” of the PPC, the Operating System, and any Applications used. When done - simply unplug, move on, and leave the bulky old PPC right where it sits. If the PPC is broken – there is always another one nearby – just like the phone booth of yesterday.