

So What's New? (Part 2)

Last week I talked about the new Dual Core Intel Processor. This week I want to take a look at AMD's consumer grade 64-bit processor. Just in case you missed Part 1 of "So what's New?" here is the disclaimer. Please keep in mind that I am not promoting the idea that everyone needs to run right out and buy a computer with these new technologies. I'm writing this article for the folks that live and die by the amount of time it takes their PC to perform a task. Many of you that primarily use their computer for simple Word Processing, E-mailing, and Internet use probably do not need this technology.

AMD, short for Advanced Micro Devices has been following Intel's lead for years. This year however, AMD set the bar by introducing the first 64-bit consumer grade processor, the AMD Athlon64. A 64-bit processor has very few advantages over the more common 32 bit processors. Currently the main reason to upgrade to a 64-bit processor has to do with an increase of usable ram. While most current computers have 512 Meg or 1.0 gig of ram the original 32 bit processors will only work with 4 gigs of ram, hardly a small amount. However, big business users may find the 16 terabytes of available ram roomier.

In order to reap the speed benefits of a 64-bit processor the computer system will also need to contain two other elements. The computers will need a 64-bit operating system and applications optimized for a 64-bit computer. Although no one has yet to develop 64 bit applications, Microsoft has developed a 64 operating system, Windows XP Professional x64 Edition.

This operating system is still in the testing phase, in fact you can test the operating system out yourself by downloading a free version from Microsoft website. After registering as a tester Microsoft will e-mail you a registration number that will work for 120 days. Don't rush out to Microsoft's website just yet to download this trial version. Although the 64 bit version of Windows XP will work with most 32 bit application, many low level 32 bit applications such as virus and firewall software are not compatible with this 64 bit operating system.

Like most processor upgrades the consumer will be required to upgrade more than just the processor. AMD however has made the upgrade path to 64-bit technology a little easier. AMD offers several 64-bit price options, the lowest processor priced competitively with the 32 bit processors, about \$100. Also most of the 64 bit motherboards are competitively priced between \$100-\$200.

Although the benefits of 64-bit technology have not been completely developed, the price of 64 bit computer systems are priced low enough that you should consider this technology during your next computer purchase. If you have any questions concerning your next computer purchase don't hesitate to call the English speaking Computer Depot crew. Call Thomas, Roger, or Scott at 947-0749 to take the mystery out of your next computer purchase.