



A second chance

All good things come to an end and, however much you love your PC, after a few years you'll start to hanker after a new model. Chances are your faithful servant will simply be banished to a corner or left out for the dustmen. Susan Gilligan outlines some more useful alternatives

It seems to be ingrained in human nature that we're never satisfied. We hanker after higher salaries, grander homes, faster cars and dinkier devices. Technology only encourages this, with manufacturers producing ever speedier processors and coming up with reason after reason for us to believe we need to get our hands on them. Number-crunch to your heart's content, edit video footage, reign supreme at the latest game - all these tasks require something better than the PC you were more than happy to use a blink of an eye ago.

So it's little wonder that, sooner or later, when something that does a bit more than your existing piece of kit comes along, you buy in to the hype and get a brand-new PC. But how do you - and, more importantly, should you - divest yourself of your existing machine to make room for the new pretender?

Recycle it

The most obvious thing to do when your PC starts showing its age is to replace it. If that's your plan, fine. But what are you going to do

with the one you've declared obsolete? Put it out for the dustmen? Take it to the rubbish dump? You could but even if it's carried away by the council's refuse collectors that would simply be passing on the problem to someone else.

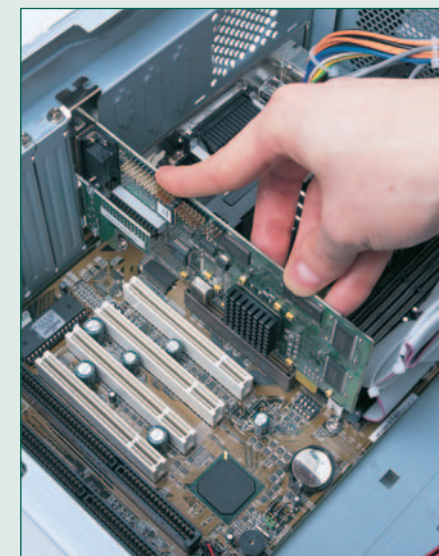
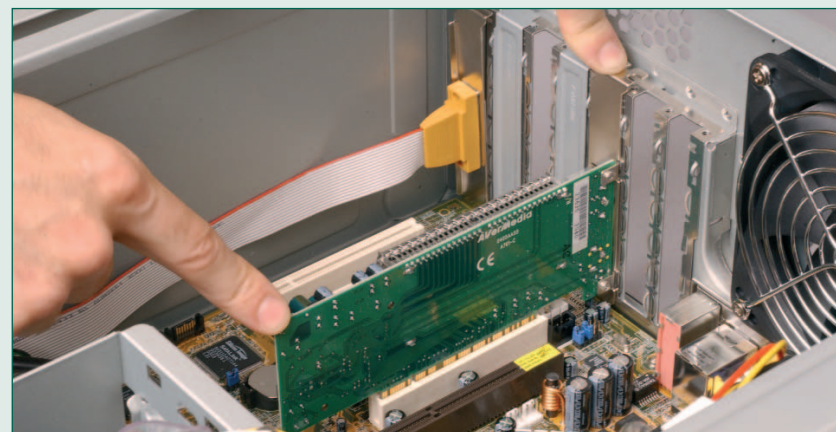
Chances are your conscience will be pricked by the knowledge that non-biodegradable goods are already clogging up our landfill sites, along with leaking fridges and other consumer electrical products that we no longer have a use for but can't easily consign to history. There's another reason why this isn't the best approach - environmental legislation in the guise of the WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) directive, which became EU law in February last year. Although this places the responsibility for recycling such goods with their manufacturers, it also has implications for customers. WEEE legislation demands at least 4kg of each household's annual domestic waste is recovered by 2006.

One of the aims of the WEEE directive is that EU member states take steps to reduce the amount of electrical and electronic goods that consumers discard as unsorted municipal waste.

Adding or removing multimedia cards

Even if you've never opened your PC's case before to add or replace components, you'll have little trouble installing a new multimedia card. It also makes sense to harvest any cards you want to retain from an old machine before passing it on to a new owner. Alternatively, you can swap sound and graphics cards for newer ones in order to extend the PC's useful life.

1 Shut down your PC and switch it off on the back of the unit. Detach all the cables connected to it and, after grounding yourself, unscrew the PC's case and slide off the side panel. Lay your PC on its side so that the cards protruding from the motherboard stick up. Identify the card(s) you want to remove or replace. Graphics and sound cards are generally housed in AGP card slots or, in the case of older motherboards, in white PCI slots. Unhook any cables on the card that you want to remove, taking note of how it was attached and what it was attached to. Then grasp the card firmly but gently at either end and carefully detach it from the motherboard

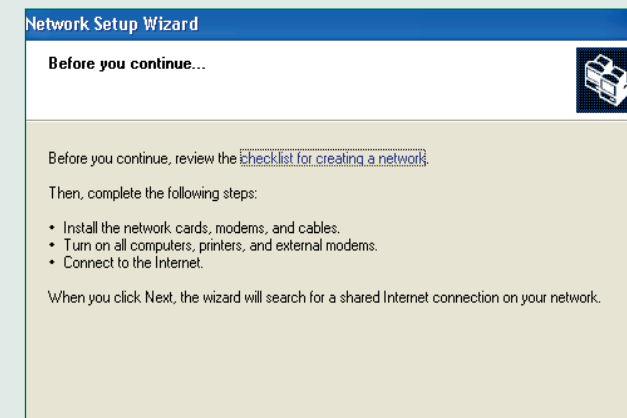
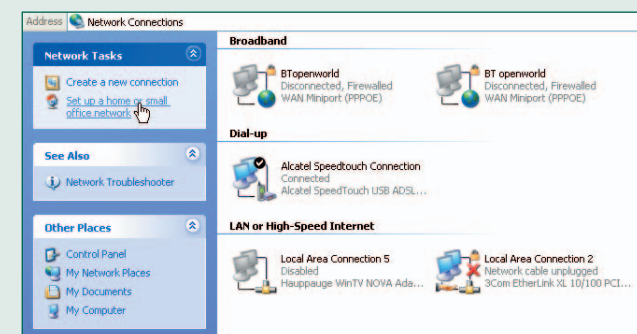


2 If you're adding a replacement card, push it firmly into place so that the copper connectors at the bottom make complete contact with the motherboard and secure it with the screw going into the PC's case. Now attach any wires as instructed by the card manufacturer. If the card you've removed is going to be re-used, ensure it's stored safely so its delicate parts don't get damaged. You could, for example, use the packaging supplied by its usurper

Network your PCs

One of the easiest and best things to do with an old PC is keep it as a spare. Connect it up to the new one and you can share resources including your broadband or dialup web connection. If you want to keep cable clutter to a minimum (especially if the networked PCs are to be in different rooms), consider a wireless network. See *PC Advisor* February 04 (page 114) for complete setup instructions.

1 Hook up the two machines using an RJ45 cable running between the LAN/ethernet ports. Windows XP provides a wizard to help you set up your network. Launch this from Control Panel, Network Connections, Set up a small or home office network



2 You'll need to let your PC know which type of network connection to use - it will identify any it can find. Specify the one you want to use if needs be then follow the prompts to identify devices on your network and give the workgroup a name. You'll also need to enable file and folder sharing rights between the PCs. You should be able to share them all with the exception of their root C drive directories. You shouldn't elect to share these as changes could accidentally be made to important Windows settings that determine how your PCs work

Although a reasonable proportion of PCs are already recycled, it's part of a wider electronics problem with as much as 915,000 tonnes of electrical and electronic waste being generated in the UK each year.

Recycling computer equipment isn't necessarily free. While legislative demands have led manufacturers and local authorities to invest in recycling and responsible dismantling schemes such as those operated by the likes of Biffa and EMR, environmentally responsible consumers are still stuck with returning outdated kit to its vendor or forking out for someone to take it away.

Firms offering such services are proliferating as Britain, like the rest of the EU, shifts up a gear in an effort to comply with the WEEE directive. Matrix Direct (www.m-d-recycle.co.uk), for example, will put you in touch with a local affiliate that can collect your old PC and take it to a recycling site. To pick up a single desktop PC with associated peripherals from our central London offices, we'd be charged £15.

Give it a sense of purpose

- **Save the screen** Give your unwanted PC a new lease of life. Most elderly ones can have a useful reincarnation so there's little excuse for dumping them. And even if you're going to throw your machine away, it's worth investigating what you can salvage from it. Monitors tend to last longer than the PCs they're attached to so you could save yourself some money by buying a new computer sans screen. You probably won't need to stump up much to get a lovely flat-screen monitor as part of a PC package but do you really need it? Your trusty CRT provides a noticeably better picture.
- **Turn it into a telly** If your PC doesn't already have a TV tuner card (and many do), you could fit one for use in a spare bedroom. Installation instructions are the same as for the multimedia cards walkthrough on page 125. Some manufacturers now produce digital cards, meaning you can watch Freeview (free-to-air digital TV channels such as BBC3) rather than just the standard five domestic analogue channels.
- **Get gaming** A modern graphics card and a decent sound card will turn your PC into a machine on which you could enjoy games – albeit perhaps not the latest – and music.
- **Give it to your granny** Even if your PC is no longer up to such fancy pursuits, the core word processing functions will still operate happily so a family member primarily interested in typing text documents, writing emails and surfing the web will be amply catered for. If it has become rather sluggish, adding a bit more RAM or fitting a CD-RW could make all the difference and can cost as little as £30. Both upgrades are fairly easy. You'll find step-by-step details of how to add memory starting on page 128 of this issue, while installing a new hard drive was covered in last month's issue of PC Advisor. If you don't have a copy, you can purchase a back issue for £6 or download the workshop for £1.50 from www.pcadvisor.co.uk.
- **Share the spoils** Assuming you've enough room at home, you could network the old PC with a newer system so they can share an internet connection, printer or scanner. You can also make use of the combined storage capacity – ideal if you have a burgeoning collection of digital photos and MP3 files and are running low on hard disk space – and play multiplayer games with your friends. What's more, your kids will be able to do their homework on one computer while you get on with your PC-based pursuits on the other.



In most cases, however, you should be able to return items to where they originated and most of the companies advertising or featured in *PC Advisor* will happily take back their goods at the end of their useful life. Many, such as Evesham, have embraced recycling and waste reduction initiatives. This has a lot to do with another primary strand of the WEEE directive, which calls for a reduction in the amount of waste produced in the first place. This can include by-products of the manufacturing process, extraneous packaging that can be dispensed with, or reusing products by refilling them or replacing some of their constituent parts.

Act charitably

If you don't have family or friends who can give your cast-off PC a home, there are plenty of other who would jump at the chance. In the past, schools were a good bet. These days, many of Britain's schools are the envy of the rest of us thanks to significant cash injections from the government and its commitment to the provision of online learning and its belief in ICT (information and communications technology). However, not all schools are well-funded so it's certainly worth asking whether those local to you have sufficient machines for their purposes.

There are plenty of charities that will snap up your old kit, as typing the phrase 'computer recycling' into a web search engine will quickly attest. If you prefer to give your PC to a local organisation, try entering your location plus the word 'charity' into Google to narrow down the results. Alternatively, you'll find local charities listed in your phone directory.

Larger charities, national and international, have well-established computer recycling schemes and may take on the task of preparing

your unwanted PC for its new owners. Even so, there are a few things that are worth doing yourself.

As well as porting all your files to your shiny new system, you'll need to take adequate steps to erase them from your old one. For a start, if you want to continue using the same applications on your new PC and are handing on the old one to someone else, you'll need to sort out the copyright issues. It's illegal to have software installed on two or more machines simultaneously unless you buy additional licences allowing you to do so.

In practice, multiple licensing applies to business products that are shared across a network, whereas the software on your PC will almost certainly be of the single-user variety. This means you must remove it from the old machine before donating it to anyone.

This principle is equally true of the operating system, which is worth bearing in mind because buying a copy of Windows XP Home will set you back as much as £180. However, if you're getting rid of a PC, you're likely to be replacing it with one that has an operating system preinstalled so it may not be an issue.

Equally important is ensuring that no one else is privy to your files. Charities such as ComputerAid (www.computeraid.org) offer to remove data from donated PCs but you'll probably prefer to do it yourself. Get a copy of Norton Wipe Info (part of Norton Utilities)

or Orlogix Destroy-It (www.orlogix.com). Simply deleting files won't make them irretrievable if someone's really keen to access them.

Before you say farewell

When you donate a PC, you need to be sure it will be of value to the recipient and that its specifications are sufficient to be useful. Otherwise you'll merely be passing your redundant kit to someone else for whom it's no use either.

Cambridge Computer Recycling (www.cambridge-computer-recycling.co.uk) has no minimum spec and collects from businesses for free, so even the most elderly PC can be re-homed. However, most organisations want at least a first- or second-generation Pentium machine.

If you're stuck for disposal ideas, try the larger UK charities. Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk/what_you_can_do/recycle/computers.htm) raises additional funds by recycling and selling on old PCs, while ComputerAid specialises in transporting them to developing nations where they are used to assist with communications and literacy. ☒



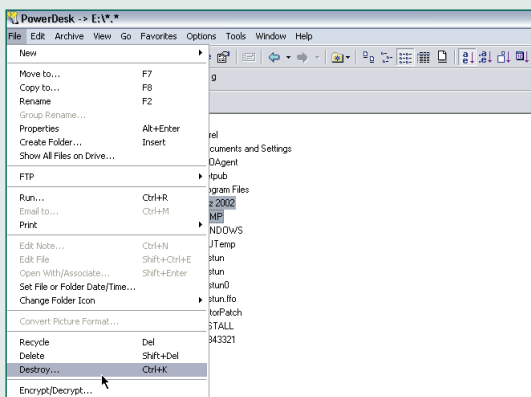
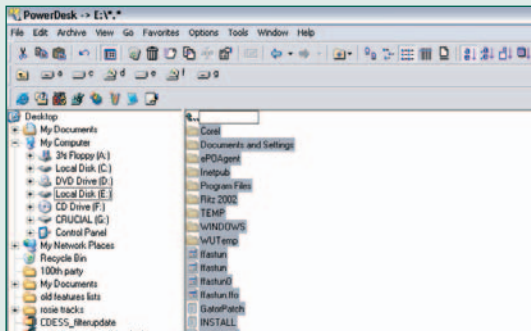
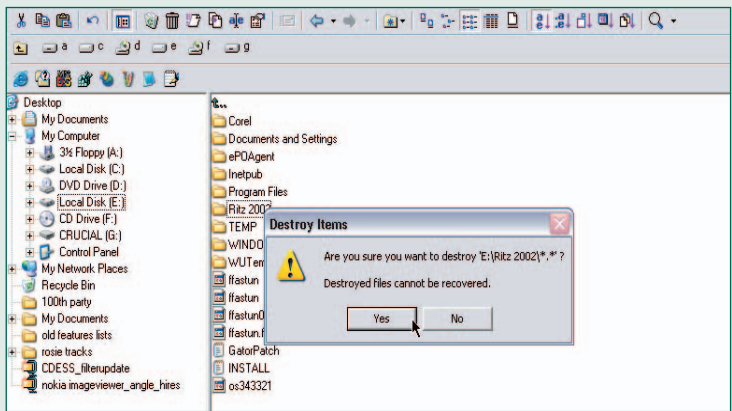
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Moving data from your old PC to your new one

If you're making the move from an old system to a new one, you'll find it pays to bring in some assistance when transferring all your applications and files, customised settings, plug-ins and so on. Orlogix Transfer My PC (£55, available from www.trisoftsolutions.co.uk) makes this as easy as pie. To delete files from your old PC, the best free method is to download VCOM's PowerDesk Express 5.0. Find demos of both these programs on this month's cover disc.

1 You'll need a means of transferring data from your old PC to the new one. This could be a CD-RW disc, Zip drive or a cable running between the two. You'll need to copy across all the files now in C:\My Documents and C:\Windows\Application Data. If you or your applications also store files somewhere else, identify them using Windows' Find/Search feature if necessary and copy those as well



2 Now you need to destroy your old files. In PowerDesk simply highlight anything to excise and choose File, Destroy