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Dell Drops Floppy Drives in New PCs

Future Dimension 8250 desktops will offer floppy drives as an option--alongside thumb drives.

Tom Mainelli, PCWorld.com

Wednesday, February 05, 2003

It's time to say goodbye to the floppy drive.

We've all [heard that before](#), but this time Dell means it. The company will stop listing the floppy drive as a default entry on its top-end consumer desktop, the Dimension 8250, starting later in February. To get one, you'll have to ask for it.

"We want to introduce them [customers] to the alternatives and let them choose," says Shannon Baxley, manager for Dimension product marketing. Dell thinks that most customers, forced to choose, will go with something more useful--specifically, thumb drives.

Alongside its floppy drive option, the company plans to offer at least two Dell-branded thumb drives, including one carrying the same price as a floppy drive. [Thumb drives](#) plug into a standard USB port, use flash memory, offer faster transfer speeds, and have greater capacity than a floppy disk.

Dell hasn't set the pricing on its floppy drive option yet, and Baxley won't estimate late-February pricing for the company's 16MB or 64MB thumb drives. Currently Dell sells the 16MB thumb drive for \$17 and the 64MB model for \$30.

Evolution in Action

The floppy drive has been functionally obsolete for some time; most of the files people share are simply too large to fit on its meager 1.44MB capacity.

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"Most people can't recall the last time they used their floppy. Customers were telling us they don't use it," says John New, senior manager for Dimension product planning. Most people are, however, afraid not to have one. "It's mostly just a comfort factor, he says. "They think, 'I might need it.'"

Once customers understand that there are better options--from thumb drives to CD-RW drives--the lack of a floppy drive will cease to be an issue, he says.

In the meantime, floppy drives are optional only on Dell's Dimension 8250--it remains standard on other systems. But Dell will extend the policy across its line as acceptance grows.

Dell representatives say that the company is cutting floppies first from its top-of-the-line Dimension 8250 because that's the PC the most-experienced PC users buy. "Tech-savvy people are of the opinion that this is five years overdue," New says.

Following Apple's Lead

Apple dropped the floppy from the systems in its product lineup nearly five years ago. It was a bold move that--over the years--relatively few PC vendors have tried to emulate.

Most [floppy-less PCs](#), however, weren't successful. Evidently, PC buyers weren't quite ready to say goodbye.

Now, Dell is prepared to usher the technology out the door for good.

"Somebody with the influence of a Dell or other tier-one participant has to take the first step," New says. "We felt it was time to do that." And this time, the company doesn't expect much resistance, he says.

"We don't expect this to be an issue," New says. "When you give the customer the flexibility to choose, they'll be happy."

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