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### Column: The Future of Flash Drives

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Samsung and BitMicro have recently showcased their latest lines of flash storage solutions. While Samsung flaunted its 16GB flash memory chip, BitMicro went one step ahead and launched a whopping 155GB flash drive.

Whether we look at the 32GB drive from Samsung or the 155GB products from BitMicro, it's clear that the lack of adequate memory, which was the only major problem with flash based memory, has – at least in concept – been overcome.

Needless to say, using flash memory instead of a hard disk is going to be immensely useful for pretty much all computer users.

Imagine you have a notebook with a flash hard drive... The first thing you'll conserve is power, the

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second thing you'll save is space and the third thing you will achieve is durability, as you'll no longer have to worry about a hard disk crash. And of course, your notebook will be somewhat lighter.

A similar concept can be applied to desktop PCs as well. If you have a flash based hard drive, you can make much more compact PCs, which will help a lot of businesses in saving space. Continuing in a similar vein, if you could stick this into a server, can you even begin to imagine the amount of space that will save in those dingy dreary server rooms that companies have.

Now here's an interesting thought, if we can somehow increase the data transfer speeds for flash based hard drives to something comparable to our RAM chips, our systems could do away with RAM altogether. Then your 155GB hard disk drive will work as your RAM and your main storage device at the same time. Taking this line of thought further, we could eventually see Flash drives embedded into the motherboard itself (there are already some boards that come with processors in-built) and that would make the cabinets even slimmer. Possibly slim enough to slide it inside a thin slit in the table and do away with the bulky cabinet concept altogether. Of course, that can only happen if you don't have much use for CD and DVD ROM drives, as they could hamper this slimming a fair bit but looking at some of the drives that come bundled with laptops, this concern may not be all that valid.

Moving on from PCs to players, think of Apple's iPod Nano. If it had 155GB of space instead of the measly 4GB that it now has, you could have your flash drive as a removable drive and carry it along with you when you go shopping, come back, stick into the port and boot up your PC or notebook with it. All your data stays in one place and you can carry it around wherever you want by putting it inside your tiny jeans pocket. If this happens, it will cause nightmares to companies fighting piracy (Microsoft, RIAA and MPAA), but to us, as users, it'll allow unparalleled freedom.

The more I think about it, the more engrossing and interesting the possibilities seem to be. Then again, Microsoft, MPAA and RIAA would never let that happen, would they?

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