

Another dead computer: My personal laptop

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I'm kind of surprised at how much people reacted to [my previous dead computer story](#). I guess there's an audience for stories about dead computers. Today's dead computer is my Sony Vaio PCG-Z505LE laptop, with a 600MHz processor and 192MB of RAM. Certainly a big step up from that 486/50 with 12MB of RAM. Laptop computers have a comparatively short lifetime. (Hardware vendors must love them.) I've learned that the best value comes from buying used laptops. You have to accept being a bit behind the curve, but the way I use my laptop, it needs to do only a small number of things:

- surf the web,
- read e-mail,
- use Remote Desktop Connection to access my desktop machine,
- download pictures from my digital camera, and
- compile the occasional program.

Only that last operation requires a hefty processor, and I do it so rarely that it doesn't bother me that it's kind of slow. (I just run the command line version of the compiler, so that at least takes the IDE overhead out of the picture.) I bought this laptop two years ago, used, and it ran just fine until a couple months ago when the internal power supply burnt out. I was ready to abandon the model line and give away the accessories I had bought, including a \$200+ double-capacity battery. Allow me to digress on laptop batteries. Observe that batteries for old-model laptops cost *almost as much as the laptops themselves*. That's because the battery is the only real consumable in a laptop computer. The other components will run practically indefinitely if you don't drop them or douse them in soda, but batteries just plain wear out. That's where the money is. This means that many ads for used laptops will mention "needs new battery" at the end. And those are the ones I sought out. Because I have a working battery! Most prospective buyers would be turned off by a dead battery, but that didn't bother me one bit. The replacement laptop arrived a few days ago, and it runs great. I wiped the drive and reinstalled Windows XP from scratch. (Challenging because the laptop doesn't come with a bootable CD-ROM drive. I had to use floppies!) I may install a handful of programs but that's all. I don't like installing software on my computer. The more programs you install, the more likely there's going to be a conflict somewhere. The old laptop has already started being scavenged for parts. A friend of mine needed a replacement laptop hard

drive, so I gave him my old one. The battery and power brick can of course be used by the new laptop. The memory from the old Vaio is no use, since the Vaio has only one memory expansion slot. The other parts of the old laptop aren't much use for anything aside from spares. Perhaps I should put the old laptop on concrete blocks on my front lawn.

Next time (if there is a next time), the story of the dead AlphaServer.

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