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Rich's Ramblings

by Rich Schinnell

Well, here I am again. While working my way thru the booths at COMputer Dealers EXposition (COMDEX), I came across a product by OnTrack, who are mostly known for their product Disk Manager. Disk Manager is a hard disk formatting and partitioning software program used when we first started buying hard disks greater than 30 megabytes and using DOS before 4.0. Now OnTrack claims to be able to increase the data transfer rate for IDE (integrated Drive Electronics) hard disks of 80 megabytes or more by using their software. IDE drives are the most prevalent in 386 and above computers..

Well, I bit and took their demonstration disk called ROCKET. After getting back home, even with the American Airlines strike fouling up everyone's plans, I finally got to the bottom of my COMDEX bag of goodies. I tried the demo disk on my 486-33 at work which has a 245 Meg Seagate ST2383A hard disk. I was astounded at the performance increase it claimed that Rocket could accomplish. Supposedly, Rocket does better on 286 and 386 machines than 486's. The demo said that Rocket could increase my drive's throughput by over 162.1%. The literature said that Rocket works on IDE hard disks by enabling the IDE drive to read or write multiple sectors of data at one time instead of one sector at a time. This is known as block or multiple mode. Rocket increases the data transfer rate by reducing the number of disk interrupts.

All that sounded interesting, if a little hi techi. I flipped out the plastic and phoned in my order. Around 40 bucks and change later, I received the Drive Rocket version 1.02. I installed the program and ran some tests with Check-It, my PC diagnostic and testing program of choice. The results were as follows:

Transfer speed for drive C:

Without Rocket 507.5Kb

With Rocket 913.5Kb

That is a real, significant difference in data transfer speed. After installation, Rocket can load high (in Upper Memory Blocks) using the DEVICEHIGH in your CONFIG.SYS file. It only takes up about 3K of my upper memory area. Well worth the \$39.95 it cost.

There is a FREE drive testing program called ROCKET that will let you know whether Drive Rocket can increase your data thru-put. It is floating around on several of the DC area bulletin boards and on the Software library BBS (301-949-8848) as ROCKET.ZIP. I will have it placed on the Members Information eXchange (MIX) BBS at 301-738-9060). Right up front, Rocket told me that it would not give me any speed increase for the two Seagate ST-1144A 130 megabyte hard disks installed in my 386-33. But, it told me BEFORE I purchased the product that it would not help. I have two Western Digital Caviar 2200, 220 Megabyte hard disks on my 486-33 and it said that it would improve them by 15.8%, which is worth it.

Drive Rocket, \$39.95 +S/H from OnTrack Computer Systems, 1-800-872-2599

@H2:New Subject

I have been getting more involved with windows products, as I installed the huge WordPerfect for Windows version 6.0 on my hard disk at home. What a resource hog. Over 33 megabytes of disk space and the program keeps growing. Now they seem to have everything but the kitchen sink in it. I am glad that I still have the DOS version 5.1 and the WP for windows 5.2, they seem to do everything that I can think of that I might like in a word processor. WP60 for DOS and the WP60 for Windows are almost in the category of full-blown desktop publishing software. I have tried AMI Pro and Word for Windows, but the single advantage of WordPerfect that I like is the Reveal Codes option. I have a tendency to change fonts without realizing it, and when I screw up like this the programs seem to insert a million font changes and such into the document. With the reveal codes and its split screen, I can see these font change commands and delete them. Same with the end of line characters. Carriage Returns can be easily spotted, as I configured my WP to make it the small double left arrow symbol with the keyboard ASCII 174. it is very easy to spot where I hit the carriage return instead of letting the lines flow and wrap at the page margins.

I know of many people that still use WordPerfect version 4.2 who are more than satisfied, and I agree completely with them. Don't upgrade unless the upgrade will improve your use of the computer and has some new bells's and whistles that you absolutely and really need. This should be good advice for everyone regardless if it is a word processor or a new DOS. I upgraded to DOS 6.2 and have been very pleased with its stability. Great for 386 and 486 machines, but if your still using the old XT or AT, don't spend the money. ([Microsoft](#) won't like this, but..) The bottom line is still: If my computer will work better, faster, or easier, then I will upgrade; otherwise I will pass..

Rich Schinnell is the president of CPCUG and works as an Analyst at Vitro (a Tracor company) in Rockville, MD. He has been the SYSOP of the CPCUG Software Library BBS since 1982. He enjoys looking at all the new toys and expects to continue writing his ramblings on a sporadic basis as long as the editor needs filler. He also hopes that by the time you read this, Santa has brought him a 1.2 gigabyte hard disk for his computer.

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(301) 762-9060 (main number, 10 USR Dual Standard modems) (301) 762-9061 (if you have difficulty at 2400 bps or below)

Voice Response: (301) 762-6775

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