

Vendors Roll Out New Centrino Notebooks

HP, Lenovo and Gateway upgrade their laptops with Intel's latest mobile platform. Dell says it will wait.

It did not take long for PC vendors to jump on Intel's Centrino Pro and Duo bandwagon.

Starting May 9, several top-tier OEMs announced new notebooks or updates of older models that will include the new mobile platform. Several vendors also announced that they would include most, if not all, of the features contained in Intel's vPro technology, which is now available for enterprise-class laptops for the first time.

According to Intel, about 200 companies are already using vPro technology - a series of management and security features built into the platform - to manage and monitor desktops PCs.

Nearly all the major vendors are offering the new Centrino Pro platform. Dell is the lone holdout, although the company did announce that it will offer a new Latitude notebook based on the platform later this year. In addition, Dell executives said several new Latitude notebooks unveiled May 9 would use Intel's new processors as well as a feature called TurboMemory - a NAND-based flash memory.

Within the Centrino Pro platform, Intel's new dual-core, 64-bit Core 2 Duo processors - the T7300, T7500, T7700 - will offer clock speeds ranging from 1.8GHz to 2.4GHz and have an 800MHz FSB (front side bus), an improvement from the previous generation, which offered a 667MHz FSB. Most of the chips will have 4MB of Level 2 cache, although one of the processors - the T7100 - will only have 2MB of L2 cache.

Of the six new Core 2 Duo processors, four will have 35-watt TDP (thermal design power) - an Intel term that refers to how much heat a chip has to dissipate - while the company will also offer two other chips with a TDP of only 17 watts. These two low-watt processors - the Core 2 Duo L7300 and L7500 - will have clock speeds of 1.4GHz and 1.6GHz respectively.

Hewlett-Packard jumped ahead of its competitors by announcing late on May 8 that five of its Compaq business notebooks, including a new tablet, would be built with the Centrino Pro platform. HP executives said all five of these notebooks will use the full range of security and manageability features found in Intel's vPro technology.

Also within the enterprise space, Lenovo is launching two new versions of its popular ThinkPad laptops that will be based on the Centrino Pro platform.

Starting May 9, Lenovo will offer two ThinkPad models with 14-inch displays - the T61 and the R61. This is also the first time the PC vendor is offering a model from its ThinkPad R series with a widescreen display.

In addition to manufacturing these two new ThinkPads with the Centrino Pro platform, Lenovo is also offering a new roll cage feature for the display called Top Cover Roll.

Lenovo is also offering a notebook that uses the consumer Centrino Duo platform. The N200, which is part of Lenovo's 3000 series, offers a 15-inch-wide display as well as wireless LAN draft 802.11n technology.

The ThinkPad T61 starts at \$1,399, the R61 starts at \$1,249, and the N200 starts at \$1,099. All three laptops will be available in May.

Fujitsu will also offer three notebooks and one tablet based on the new Centrino Pro platform. The LifeBook E8410, the A6030, the E8310 notebooks and the T4220 tablet will be available starting in the

second quarter of this year.

The one new notebook from Fujitsu, the E8410, will offer all three of the Core 2 Duo processors that come with the platform - the T7100, T7300 and the T7500 - along with 4GB of DDR2 (double data rate 2) RAM, a SATA (Serial ATA) hard drive with up to 120GB of memory and a 15.4-inch display.

Finally, Gateway will roll out two brand-new enterprise notebooks that come equipped with the Centrino Pro platform. The Gateway E-475M and the E265M each offer 4GB of DDR2 RAM, a SATA hard drive with up to 120GB of memory, four USB 2.0 ports and a DVD/CD-RW combo. The E-475 offers a 15.4-inch display, while the E-265M has a 14.1-inch display.

Both Gateway notebooks are available now and each has a \$1,299 starting price.

In addition to name brand vendors, Intel has plans to get the new Centrino platforms into the hands of smaller system builders and Asian ODMs (Original Design Manufacturers) by offering two motherboards designed for the mobile platform.

The two new motherboards, the MGM965TW for enterprise customers and the MGM965JB for consumers, will start appearing in systems designed by companies such as Mitac - a Taiwan-based computer maker - by June.

At Intel's New York City show on Wednesday, Bill Davidson, a mobile marketing manager who works with the company's channel partners, said these smaller system builders can take advantage of some of the new features in the two new Centrino platforms to custom design PCs for specific vertical customers and small businesses.

For example, Davidson said system building can take advantage of the Centrino's TurboMemory technology - a NAND-based flash memory feature that can be configured for either 512MB or 1GB - by writing one application that stays resident in the memory, which allows the application to boot faster.

"We really believe that Centrino is the biggest opportunity for our channel in a long time," Davidson said.

Intel officials and vendors also have an eye on 2008, when the Centrino platform will be refreshed with new family of microprocessors called "Penryn," which will be manufactured on a 45-nanometer process.

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