

In this issue...

*GPS; RSS/NetVibes; StumbleUpon
Plasmas; Solid State Drives
Batteries/Cars; Price Watch and Iteon News*

Time to Get a GPS?

Nerds started buying GPS (Global Positioning System devices) for their cars a few years ago, but they were either big or had limited functionality. Next-generation GPS units came in nicer cars, although they were pricey and sometimes didn't work well. The third generation of GPS fits in your pocket, costs less than \$300, gives you voice directions, and works out of the box. The time is now.



A few things you'll want to know: First, avoid off-brands (the two main players in the sub-\$300 space are Garmin and TomTom). Second, decide if you need or want any of the high-end features (most of which you probably won't use; some don't work so well). Third, find the right price--a good deal on a GPS can save you 40-50% (sale prices are below).

The consensus at Iteon was that the Garmin Nuvi 200 and the Garmin c340 are best in value, features, and ease of use.

Garmin nuvi200	~\$260	It is the smallest, but you don't get street name prompts ("turn left in 100 feet" instead)
Garmin c340	~\$260	About 2x the weight/thickness of the Nuvi 200, but this one has verbal street name prompts ("turn left on Elm")
TomTom One	~\$240	Not bad, but maps take longer to load—just not as much for the money
Magellan 2200T	~\$330	Higher price gets you topo and other "high-end" features

Here's what to look for. At \$200-\$275, all of these should be a given (if it is less, figure out why): spoken directions, touchscreen, pre-installed maps, Li-Ion battery, pocket-sized (about the size and thickness of a man's wallet), good and easy-to-read screen. If you don't mind paying a little more (\$300-\$325), you can also get all 50 states (Hawaii, too), spoken directions including the name of the street (not just "turn left"), SD card slot, longer lasting-battery, and even an mp3 player and bluetooth for your phone.

RSS/NetVibes

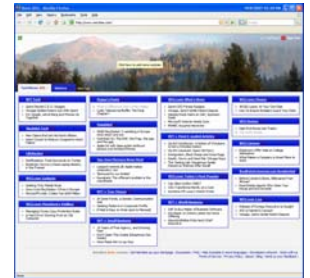
RSS is a news aggregator service like myYahoo! or Google News that you can configure to have just your news (and other types of updates). It updates as news headlines hit for any given site you've chosen.

A few months ago, we published an article describing RSS, and we recommended Yahoo! as the best out there. There is something new now, NetVibes. It is based on RSS

technology, but it is a clear step up, and really worth switching to. You choose the feeds and can arrange them in any order or on any tab (e.g. Work, Kids, Steve Stuff, etc.).

The page itself is highly configurable, and you move things by drag-and-drop. It is extremely intuitive, and just works. Also, it opens news items you select in a new tab.

You can get there by going to www.netvibes.com



StumbleUpon and Video

We haven't written an article on YouTube and the other video services out there. Likewise, we haven't written an article on MySpace or Facebook. While they are interesting sites (for business reasons), the high school/college crowd is a little more into them than the CEO/Partner crowd.

Everyone has probably gotten a few YouTube links, tried them out, but found that content can be difficult to find, unless you know just what you are looking for. Likewise, readers of this newsletter are probably not too interested in MySpace or Facebook, unless they have kids that use them.

Here's how you get ahead of the curve again, without going back to your early 20s: Go to www.StumbleUpon.com. It uses complex algorithms to figure out what you'll want to see. It shows you some popular videos (or websites or pictures) based on voting, then watches how you vote on things. Within 10-15 minutes, it has really started to fit you in with others who have similar tastes. But you really you have to try it out to understand just how good this is. It uses a lot of the buzzwords floating around the VC conference rooms these days (Internet 2.0, online community, video/content, intelligent search), but you should just try it. We watched more of this than TV for a couple of weeks.

Expect this to be talked about quite a bit (you'll be the one talking about it once you try it).

Plasmas

1080p--is it that important? How much is the 'p' worth? How much are plasmas right now? Plasma or LCD?

The newest big screen TVs have a new moniker--1080p. This means that it is compatible (without conversion) with the highest quality HD broadcasts/formats. Right now, there are tons of 1080p plasmas, and the prices have dropped. Although, Steve couldn't tell the difference between 1080p and 1080i, but Steve could easily see quality differences

between different sets, both in color and clarity, regardless of whether they were 1080i or 1080p (p=progressive, i=interlaced; p at any given refresh rate is, in theory, better).

Plasmas are on sale. A name brand 50" plasma might cost anywhere from \$2k-\$5k and drop 20-40%; many good models are below \$3k. Expect quite a bit of volatility (markdowns) over the next 6-8 weeks as the holidays approach.



Plasma or LCD? In short, if you are going for something 50" and up, choose a plasma. LCDs are good in smaller models (37" and below) or if you need to hook them to a computer, but they get expensive and loose quality as they get into the bigger sizes.

If you want a very large screen, but the plasma prices are still too high, check out Ultra-Thin DLPs (6"-9" deep). They aren't for everyone, but may be just what you need.

If you are buying a Plasma, be sure to do three things: (1) go look at different models (even if you buy online), (2) Make sure the TV has 3+ HDMI ports for your DVD, Tivo, etc., and (3) consider size, placement and mounting.

Solid State Drives

In July, Toshiba claimed that their R500 laptop would have a solid state drive--unfortunately it was vaporware.

Flash is coming, though. It is better than the hard drives in the little (ultra-portable) laptops—many were just using iPod hard drives. It is significantly faster than a hard drive (the current bottleneck in most laptops). Although flash is more expensive, prices are dropping. Flash is also much easier on the battery. There will be many new laptops built on this same technology in 2008, and as prices for flash drop, we will likely see lighter laptops with longer battery lives.

Li-Ion Batteries and Cars

I hate to say this, but that Prius that you just paid \$30k for--well in a few years, it will look like a gas guzzler. Lithium Ion is the newest in car technology. There are three new ideas that will likely spark the next wave in fuel economy.

First is the Tesla. It is a \$100k sports car that is faster than most Porches. There should be a few out in the next 6 months, although the first year will likely see very slow production as they work out glitches. It will charge in your garage, but it only has a range of about 100 miles.

Second is actually a hack. For about \$25k, you can add a bunch of Li-Ion batteries and a battery management system to your Prius. It charges from a 110v plug, and goes ~40 miles without using any gas. A few companies have done the modifications using batteries from a company called a123. This is actually in use now, but the waitlist is long.

Finally, GM's prototype is the Chevy Volt. Like the mod'ed Prius, it will have an engine and focus on getting 40 miles

without using it. While GM is proudly displaying the Volt as their next generation, it is very likely that both Honda and Toyota (neither of whom have announced similar cars) will beat GM to production. GM has hinted at a \$20k price range, but most people think that GM is on crack, and that the car will really retail closer to \$34k.

These are great steps, but we're not to electric nirvana yet. The large number of Li-Ion batteries needed to power the car are overheating. This problem can likely be worked out, but it may be a couple of years before it is truly solved.

Also, the power still has to come from someplace. Electric power on the West Coast comes largely from hydro-electric dams, and much of the charging of cars would occur at night (power that would be under-utilized in many cases). Cars on the East Coast, though, use energy from coal-fired plants. Coal is marginally better for the environment than gas, but it is a high CO₂ and particulate emitting form of power.

While electricity is much less expensive than gas per mile (and cars are more efficient when using electricity), even if gas were \$8/gallon, it would take 10 years to recoup the cost of the Prius mods. While most people who buy battery-powered cars won't be primarily driven by economic factors, this technology will definitely have to come down in price if it is going to be a viable solution for our dependence on oil.

Price Watch

Watch for the new Palm Treo Centro, at \$99 with a 2-yr agreement. Nathaniel gave it rave reviews.

Prices are still high on brand-name laptops and desktops, but there have been markdowns as vendors are exploring price elasticity. Expect prices to fall during late Oct and Nov, with lower end models on sale in early Dec. Prices will see a bottom when Vista SP1 is released, likely in late Jan. Prices will climb quickly if SP1 fixes lots of issues.

Server prices are volatile right now. Expect them to dip slightly in Oct/ Nov, but climb again in Dec, staying high into early 2008. Custom computer prices (PC and server) are low now, and will remain low until Q2. Vista has caused people to hold off purchases of all hardware, pushing down component prices. If you need hard drive capacity, now is the time to buy; most PC and laptop RAM is inexpensive.

Iteon News

As always, thanks for your continued support. Things at Iteon are good. Some of you will likely be seeing our newest addition, Nilo Gonzalez. Nilo did his undergraduate work at the University of New Mexico, and for the last 3 years, has been working for a company called Einstein's.

Also, Iteon is looking for a Senior Engineer. If you know anyone who is great with people and a great engineer, please have them contact Steve Walker.