

# The Upgrade Cycle

The “Upgrade Cycle” is why people, in general should not be allowed to own personal computers. To begin, let’s examine what people do with a home computer.

I have found that people basically do 3 things: word processing, Internet browsing (this includes the useful aspects of the Internet, like on-line banking) and playing games. There is no need to play games, so we can immediately discount the needs of gamers as trivial. Word processing is far from a computationally expensive task. Computers have been successfully doing document processing since the 1980s. I think we can establish that a 486 class machine is more than enough power to do word processing, even with embedded figures and tables. As for the Internet, it is also not a computationally expensive task. Most of the wait for surfing the Web is going to be in the connection, not the render time. Web pages have gotten sophisticated with Java-Script and Flash animations, but, all said, that could be easily handled by a mid-range Pentium.

So, most people probably need the computational power of a Pentium 200. Yet, people are out buying computer well in excess of that. The question would be ‘why?’. Technology is constantly advancing to produce faster computers, but if people demanded computers of roughly the same power, the prices would fall off rather quickly. Obviously manufacturers would prefer to continue to sell electronics at a high price. Enter the Upgrade Cycle.

The cycle works something like this:

- A person buys a mid-range computer running a Microsoft Windows operating system.
- Due to the design of Windows, the software they install (most of it totally unnecessary) and, now, self-installing “spy-ware” from the Internet, the system becomes full of junk and slows to a crawl.
- The user becomes frustrated. Because the user does not really understand what’s going on, they assume their computer is ageing and degrading.
- The user then goes and buys a newer, faster computer.

If these machines were reset to their original software setup (or less software in the case of certain manufacturers), the user would probably be satisfied with their system for at least 6 years. The problem is the insidious game the software developers are playing. In the time it has taken for the user to buy a new system, the software manufacturers have added many “features”. These features are really bells and whistles the user either doesn’t need or claim to fix problems in the original. This little trick prevents the user from having their system wiped and getting new software on the same hardware or getting the bug fixes alone to upgrade their systems.

The build up of junk server to drive the cycle and the addition of software servers to prevent regression.