

Re: 386sx/25mhz compatibility

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Lasse Jensen (fafler@linuxmail.org) writes:

> *Nitro wrote:*

>

>> *I have 2 (very) old Dell PCs and I was wondering if it was possible to
>> install linux on them in a home network. I have looked at the
>> compatibility charts of several distributions, but couldn't find all
>> the info.*

>>

>> *Here is a link to the motherboard (specs):*

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>> <http://www.thegreenhouse.us/th99/m/C-D/31331.htm>

>>

>>

>> *The machines are Dell Dimension 386sx/25mhz computers. Both computers
>> came with 4MB of ram, and I need to look into whether they can be
>> upgraded to 16MB as that seemed to be the minimum system requirements
>> to install any linux OS. I'd need to add hard drives also, since the
>> current drives are both very small (20MB).*

>

> *Max. out the RAM. Consider getting a SCSI controller, like the Adaptec
> AHA-1542. Strip everything of whichever distro you choose.*

>

But at that point, the better but not much more complicated answer is to strip them down, and get the metal casing into recycling. Then dig a better computer out of the garbage.

About six years back, I had a Mac and wanted to run Linux. The level of computer that was appearing in the garbage and cheap at garage sales were at the 386 or lower level. But the moment I bought a used 200MHz Pentium, mid-2001, suddenly better computers started appearing. A week later, I got a 50MHz 486 with 16megs of memory, for ten dollars. I'm now finding Pentiums in the garbage, sometimes even complete, with memory and hard drives.

If one can't get something better cheap, then of course one makes do with what there is. But the moment better things drop to the ten dollar level, or the scrap heap, then it makes little sense to use something older.

One problem I had six years ago was that I wasn't finding much loose memory or bigger hard drives. That still holds rather true, if someone is selling them used they tend to keep a higher price (since people want them to upgrade older computers that they are still using). One often is luckier with complete systems, from garage sales or the garbage heap. They aren't always intact, but if they are they often are cheaper than buying memory or hard drives used. I put 64megs more memory in that 200MHz Pentium a year after I bought it, because I hauled home a ten dollar early Powermac for ten dollars. I've pulled ram out of various computers I've found in the garbage, they were incomplete or else I would have brought the whole thing home.

Of course, this only applies in rich nations where people can afford to toss out computers.

Michael