

Motor Oil Isn't Motor Oil...And A Drive Isn't A Drive

By Grant Dahlke, NewerTech Marketing Manager

With the growing proliferation and file size of digital media, storage is a HOT sales opportunity for technology resellers. Based on my conversations with resellers from a variety of industry niches, I get the feeling that some resellers discount the importance of vendor selection and view external drives like an older and very funny Quaker State commercial...

Car traveling down road driven by older, curmudgeonly man. Young man in rear seat asks drive why he uses cheap oil as the car is belching smoke. Older man replies, "because motor oil is motor oil." Later in the commercial, the engine dies.

The ad was very successful for Quaker State as it illustrated that motor oil isn't as much a no-brainer lowest price commodity item as perceived and that ultimately, quality does makes a difference.

The same thing can be said about external drives. There are quite a few differences and you really have to be very careful when selecting a brand to offer to your customers. For instance, Brand "R" advertises a "Triple Interface" drive. One would expect that to be three separate interfaces such as USB 2.0, Firewire 800, and Firewire 400. On closer examination, the drive has one USB 2.0 port and two Firewire 400 ports...dual interface by most learned definitions. When one reseller finally realized that the \$5 in lower cost he kept challenging me with was for a far less-featured external drive, he gladly ordered (and continues to!) more NewerTech miniStack drives.

What is scary to think though is a less knowledgeable customer who read in a review or was told by someone that they should get a triple interface drive bought a "Brand R" drive from that same reseller. Who do you think that customer will be smoking mad at when they realize that they don't have what they wanted?

If I haven't convinced you yet your business reputation is at risk with a lowest price "a drive is a drive" belief, here is perhaps the easiest way to compare external drives:

Top 10 Questions For Your External Drive Supplier

1. How long is the warranty?

A one-year warranty is the industry norm. A two-year warranty is what you and your customers want for piece of mind. That extra year isn't marketing fluff...it means the manufacturer built the product to last.

2. What brand drive is used and what is the warranty on that drive?

Generally not a good sign if the hard drive manufacturer information isn't featured prominently or given freely as that means the supplier is not using the highest quality drives. The drive used in the enclosure should come with an additional warranty from the manufacturer and it should range from 3-5 years.

3. What chipset is provided?

Next to the hard drive, the other crucial component is the chipset. It's the "gatekeeper" to making sure the built-in interfaces work properly with the drive. Again, not a good sign if this information



isn't featured prominently as that means they are not using the highest quality chipset. Oxford Semiconductor produces premier chipsets and are among the select few that should be used.

4. Is it a complete “Plug and Play” solution?

You or your customers should not have to buy anything more to get the product up and running straight from the retail box. All interface connection cables and a high quality external power supply should be included. There should also be a value-added component included like a software bundle for added drive usefulness.

5. What kinds of interfaces and how many?

To offer a wide range of flexibility, connectivity, and value appeal, there should be at least 2 different types of ports (USB 2.0 and Firewire). More advanced situations call for up to 4 different interfaces including eSATA.

6. What OS does the external drive work with?

Will the drive work with Macintosh, Windows, Linux, and other operating systems? External drives should be multi-platform compatible and this feature should be prominently mentioned on the packaging.

7. Will they sell direct to your customer?

Will the manufacturer sell to YOUR customer once they get the warranty registration or after a customer service interaction? NO is the only answer you should accept to this question.

8. Is Tech Support offered to you and your customers?

You should seek a supplier that offers free, US-based tech support so when you or your customer need it the most, that support is standing by ready to help.

9. How has the external drive been rated or reviewed?

Perhaps the most overlooked “feature”, the external drive and the manufacturer should have a solid review history from technology media.

10. What are the ordering terms?

If all you need is one or two external drives, you shouldn't have to deal with any minimum order or quota requirements.

If you haven't experienced the quality difference NewerTech can offer you and your customers, email us today sales@newertech.com and ask about our reseller evaluation price program. You get a great discount on a unit you can keep for demo use, display, and even resale. It's a no risk way to fully appreciate that all drives are not the same. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

© 2008 Grant Dahlke. All rights reserved.