

# Radio Days – 2011-04-02

## ***Tip of the Week – Firefox Update***

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During the week Mozilla released a new version – version 4 – of its Firefox web browser. For some time I had been recommending Firefox because it was so much better than Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Then along came some more competition from Google's Chrome, Opera and Apple's Safari. Now that Mozilla has released this new version of Firefox I am beginning to think that Firefox will become my favourite browser.

It has both borrowed some of the best features from Chrome, Opera and Safari and kept most of its unique advantages so is in a strong position to become the best web browser again.

## ***Which computer processor?***

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There are questions to be answered when buying a new computer. This is a demoralising time for many people who feel overwhelmed by the choice available in a large computer store. For many people the best option is to buy the cheapest computer which has all the features that they need. There is the temptation to listen to the salesperson, but often this results in buying a program which does not do the needed job. It may be cheaper to pay for some advice from somebody who has no financial stake in what you purchase.

For other people the choice of which processor is crucial. I was recently asked which processor was better for serious number crunching. I asked if that meant using a spreadsheet and looking at how the numbers change with changes in some parameters. The answer was no: he wanted to do some genetic research and needed a powerful processor for that reason.

This changed my answer completely. I asked him if the program which he intended to use was written so that it could perform a number of tasks at the same time. This is called *multi-threading* and sometimes writing these programs is a black art. Multi-threading is a very useful programming tool and works well with processors (CPUs) with more than one core. More cores can perform more simultaneous tasks so they run either more programs or more threads of a single program more responsively. It all depends on how you use your computer.

If you, like so many people, use just one program at a time then a processor with two cores (one for Windows and one for your program) will be more than adequate. This, for Intel, is the i3. If you use more programs at once, or programs with multi-threading, then a processor with more cores will help your computer be as responsive as you want it to be. At the moment AMD makes the processors with the most cores, so this will be your best option if you want the most responsive computer that you can get for running multi-threaded programs.

As with so many other things in life you have two basic options:

- Just take what the salesman offers
- Work out what you need then buy that product

Computers have now become so complex that, for most people, the best choice is to buy the cheapest computer which will run the programs which they need to use.

## ***Further Information***

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Mozilla Firefox	<a href="http://www.mozilla.com">www.mozilla.com</a>
Chrome	<a href="http://www.google.com/chrome">www.google.com/chrome</a>
Firefox	<a href="http://www.mozilla.com">www.mozilla.com</a>
Opera	<a href="http://www.opera.com">www.opera.com</a>
Safari	<a href="http://www.apple.com/safari">www.apple.com/safari</a>
AMD	<a href="http://www.amd.com">www.amd.com</a>