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Solid State Disk – a glimpse at the future of storage

With the demands on battery life and performance of notebooks rising substantially year-on-year, many hardware vendors have begun investigating the benefits of replacing the conventional magnetic hard disks in their systems with flash-based storage solutions.

“That’s because,” says Hilton Haefele, Imation product manager at Ingram Micro South Africa, “solid state drive (SSD) technology is extremely power-efficient and substantially outperforms conventional hard disk technology.”

Unfortunately, this technology’s high-price and the current stock shortages vendors are experiencing with bringing SSD-based products to market has rendered flash hard disks as an option that’s only attractive to the real enthusiasts and power users in the market.

“As demand begins to scale however, we’re anticipating a dramatic reduction in the average price a consumer will have to pay for an SSD-equipped storage device,” he says.

“It may be a couple of years before SSD rivals the cost efficiency of conventional hard disk, but that day is definitely approaching,” Haefele adds. “In the next five years, SSD drive technology will become commonplace elements in notebook computers.

“Furthermore,” he says, “if one considers the growing trend towards power efficiency across all streams of computing, SSDs will almost certainly begin making their way in the desktop and server space.”

As an illustration of how close SSD technology is to prime time, Haefele says that Imation already has more than one range of flash-based disk available through Ingram Micro South Africa.

“Available in a range of capacities, form factors and interfaces, Imation has designed a separate series of SSD for the conventional high-performance desktop, notebook market and datacentre-based server markets,” he explains.

INGRAM MICRO (PTY) LTD
(Reg. No.: 2007/000032/07
32 Milky Way Avenue •
Linbro Business Park •
Frankenwald •
Johannesburg
P O Box 3452 • Randburg •
2125 • South Africa
TEL. +27 11 553-2600
FAX. +27 11 553-2700

Directors:

LC Baxter; NDJ Carroll (alternate to LC Baxter); KVH Everaet (Belgian); JH Fourie;
GR Fullerton; A Maquet (French); JAA Vandenbussche (Belgian)

“The Mobi 3000 Series is designed for conventional high-performance desktop and notebook applications and is predisposed to these markets because of its 100MB/second sustained read speed, 80MB/second sustained write speed and ability to maintain 78 000 sequential I/O operations per second,” he says.

“The Pro 7500 Series is on the other hand designed for compute intensive datacentre environment and as such boasts with a 130MB/second sustained read speed, 120MB/second sustained write speed and ability to maintain 83 000 sequential I/O operations per second,” he says.

In line with their usage models the drive series are also differentiated by their warranty periods. “Commensurate with the status quo in the desktop and notebook market, the Mobi 3500 Series comes with a 3 year limited warranty. The Pro 7500 Series on the other hand features a 5 year limited warranty.”

It’s unlikely that users will have to take Imation up on its warranty offer however. Haefele says that both drives Series claim a 1 million hour mean time before failure rating, meaning they’re likely to outlast their warranty period by some way.

“While we do feel that the pricing of SSD technology is not yet in line with what the market would like, we’ve already seen good interest in Imation’s SSD products for certain applications, where customers are able to justify their investment.

“We’re confident that opportunities will continue to grow as the technology becomes more prolific and the price plummets. “It’s foreseeable that in the next five years most computers, except of course those that are extremely budget orientated, will be using SSD en masse,” he concludes.

ENDS

About Ingram Micro South Africa

Ingram Micro South Africa is a joint venture between Ingram Micro Europe, a division of Ingram Micro Inc, (NYSE: IM) and MB Technologies, established to market and distribute components and other technology products to VARs, system builders and integrators, and manufacturers throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

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Contacts:

Sharon Leu Shing
Ingram Micro
Tel: +27 11 553 2600
Email: Sharon.LeuShing@ingrammicro.co.za

Issued by:

Deborah O'Connell
puruma business communications
Tel: + 27 11 781 0097
email: IM@puruma.com