

MCE2005 Upgrade Oddity, maybe will help someone

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My upgrade went horribly, mostly due to Pinnacle Instant CD/DVD, that during the upgrade wouldn't uninstall the driver vobid.sys, and would crash Windows, causing an infinite reboot loop (I couldn't even go into safe mode as it said "you are in setup mode", but I could reboot telling Windows not to reboot on fatal error, and that told me what the driver problem was).

With much work and a handy Windows PE bootable CD, I got through the install by renaming the offending driver. Things mostly worked OK, but I ran into a video stuttering problem with Live TV (saw many other postings on this in various forums). By the way, if you don't have a bootable recovery CD, do a search on BartPE -- a great tool to make a very powerful recovery CD.

Before the upgrade, I was using an external firewire drive for recorded TV, and the upgrade defaulted back to the C drive. I changed it to the firewire drive, and Live TV was way better. Odd. I had both Intervidia and NVDVD decoders, and the checkup program that let me make either the default, with no difference in the stuttering.

Then, I also had problems capturing external video with MovieMill/Maui TV (I have an emuzed card) -- stuttering, stalling. I noticed CPU usage was pegged. Then, when I captured video to the firewire drive, not the C drive, it was way better, CPU wasn't pegged as much (but still not perfect).

So, I tried Arcsoft to capture, and it fired off Sonic MyDVD, and it mentioned "One of your recording devices has DMA disabled." I went to hardware manager, checked the DMA settings for the IDE controller (Primary and secondary), and even though the primary controller was set

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to automatically use DMA, when I reselected it and said OK, the PC said, "reboot to make hardware changes take effect".

For good measure, when I rebooted, I went into the BIOS and had it rescan the primary and secondary IDE devices (I also wanted to make sure it had no options to manage DMA in the bios, which it didn't).

In any event, after the reboot, all was healed. Somehow, the upgrade turned off DMA to my C drive! My experiences may be unique (I have a theory, will mention it in a minute), but just passing this along.

Also, I had never added more memory to my old HP MCE PC (only had 512 megs when it shipped). Took a couple minutes to fire up the media center application. This is a duh, but I finally opened my wallet and bought another 512 megs, and the experience is WAY better (but I still had the DMA problem when I first did the memory upgrade).

If anybody has any of these old media center PCs, 512 megs is just too marginal, and 1 gig of RAM is the minimum I'd recommend.

Possibly, one reason this went wrong is before the upgrade I had installed Intel Application Accelerator. It installs new drivers for various intel based chips (including IDE controllers), and after the upgrade, this application was broken. I'm not really sure how much this thing really helps, but I ended up re-installing it as well, and it maybe seemed to make CPU usage for disk access even lower-- but not sure. I did this shortly after re-enabling DMA. Don't know if it really helped anything, but didn't hurt.

Maybe this will help a few people with upgrade problems. 99% of media center problems are due to stuff people install after getting the computer. That's why I understand vendors like HP just tell people to do a system restore before the upgrade, and then re-install stuff one by one. A problem with having an "open system", and in the media center case, aggravated by the fact that Windows does not come with a DVD player/MPEG2 decoder, so every program includes their own, leading to codec hell.

Dave