

Do your homework before buying that new pc

Continuing with my penance for being out of touch for the last few months, here are some thoughts on selecting a personal computer.

First, having advised you in my last column upon the selection of a place to buy the PC, I feel that I should issue a warning. Just because the salesperson tells you that you need something doesn't make it so.

There's a joke about the difference between a used car salesperson and a computer salesperson: The used car seller knows he/she is lying. While that may be a bit harsh, the fact is that in computers, as in used cars, the buyer must beware of wolves in salesmen's clothing. So, start out by doing a bit of homework before you enter your first computer store.

Head for your local newstand and pick up a copy of Computer Buyers Guide and Handbook, or if you can find it, the Computer Shopper. C&G is a better bet for most of you because it's more easily available and it includes well-written entry-level information on buying a PC.

It also includes listings of "street prices" for popular PCs, printers and software. These are prices that

2 county residents named to state council

Two Oakland County residents are among 21 people appointed by Gov. John Engler to the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council.

The council uses money collected by the federal government for programs to help developmentally disabled people. Area appointees are:

- Marion McDonnell of Birmingham, past president and a committee chairwoman of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Metropolitan Detroit Inc. She is on the board of Housing Alternatives Inc. and chairs the Oakland-Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee for Developmental Disabilities. Her term runs to Sept. 17, 1992.
- Michael Peterson of Lathrup Village. He is director of Wayne State University's Developmental Disabilities Institute and is a certified rehabilitation counselor and certified vocational evaluation specialist. He will represent university faculty. His term runs to Sept. 17, 1992. Peterson earned a Ph.D. from North Texas State University.

Seven panel members represent state departments such as Education, Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health and the Office of the Aging. Others represent physically handicapped people and people with developmental disabilities.

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are typical as opposed to manufacturer's list prices. You can often save 20-30 percent if you know a little about street prices before you shop.

ONCE YOU ARE ready to start shopping, remember that you should start out knowing what you're going to use the PC for. If it's home use only, you can get away with a bit less computer. If you want to do graphics, you might take a close look at Apple. Remember, Apple software won't run on IBM and compatible PCs. So if you want to carry your work home from the office PC, you

the computer insider

Peter Stephenson

must have the same type of computer (IBM or Apple) at home.

Kids do well on Apples, too. There are a lot of Apple computers in our local schools. If you are going for a business computer, you'll probably need a bit more horsepower than

you'll want for a home computer.

Most businesses are buying the "386" PCs. These are high-powered PCs that you can use for business programs, desktop publishing, word processing and the like. They cost a little more, but they're worth it in

terms of future expendability, reliability and completeness for business applications.

WILL YOU NEED color displays, fancy printers and other accessories? Again, it depends upon how you plan to use the PC.

I prefer color screens because they are easier on the eyes. But I spend 10 or more hours a day in front of the screen, so that's important to me. If your use is more casual, you may not need the color screen.

For home use, if there are kids around, there will, eventually, be games on the computer. That de-

mands a color screen. Color is, usually, a good thing to have in any case.

Choosing a new PC requires attention to detail and a rational decision-making process. It's not like buying the first TV that looks good to you.

Pick your supplier, be sure you know what you plan to use the PC for and do your homework in advance. You'll not go too far wrong. And that's the inside story.

Peter Stephenson is a computer consultant, lecturer, nationally published columnist and author who lives in Rochester Hills.

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