



Is Dell OptiPlex GX620 Worth buying!!

Who says business PCs must be dull? Not Dell: it's taken advantage of the Intel 945 chipset to create a line of stylish PCs that are both quiet and perfectly tuned for business. The smallest chassis - the USFF - is a particular gem.

July 13, 2009 - [PRLog](#) -- Finally, we have the big brother of the family: the MT (Mini-tower). It has a conventional layout, so the drive bays are positioned horizontally across the width of the chassis; in all the other models, the drives are vertical when a case is standing on its side. It's practical, but less inspiring to look at.

However, it's also got the widest and simplest range of expansion possibilities. The larger size creates enough space inside for two 5.25in external bays plus a 3.5in one, in addition to the hardware for mounting two hard disks (there are four SATA ports). There's also a clear path for air to flow from the massive heatsink and intake fan to the rear grille. However, our MT hummed noticeably, so we'd want it tucked away under a desk.

Like the DT and SF motherboards, the MT has a PCI Express 16x slot for an optional graphics card, but there's room for a full-height card without having to resort to a riser. It also has two full-height PCI slots and is the only machine in the range with a PCI Express 1x slot.

The other key area where it wins is price: the MT costs at least £50 less than the other chassis, despite having essentially the same specification.

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GX620 SERIES OVERVIEW

One size fits all isn't a mantra an IT department can live by. Different sections within your organisation, even different individuals, have their own requirements when it comes to PCs, yet choosing several different models rapidly increases support costs.

Until now, it hasn't been possible to satisfy an entire organisation's needs with one hard-disk image, but thanks to Intel's 945 chipset that's all about to change. Dell is the first manufacturer to rise to the challenge, with its OptiPlex GX620 range designed to satisfy diversity by offering different chassis and specifications, but with a common architecture and hard-disk image that will work across all models.

Here we review the entire GX620 series, so you can see how they stack up against each other. We also mention the OptiPlex GX520 range. No samples were available for review, but it forms part of the same family and the two ranges have many similarities.

In fact, the three cases that make up the GX520 range - Small Form Factor (SF), Desktop (DT) and Mini-tower (MT) - are also used in the GX620 range, but the GX620 gets a pint-sized fourth member too called the Ultra Small Form Factor (USFF).

Combining both series gives you four chassis and seven basic models to choose from, with image and BIOS compatibility throughout. The GX620 devices, with their bigger designation number, are the high achievers of the family. The difference, says Dell, is that the GX520s are for deployment as mainstream PCs, with perhaps a three-year lifespan before disposal, whereas the GX620s, with more complex motherboards higher specifications and better upgrade possibilities, are destined for more demanding environments and longer deployment.

Security-conscious businesses should also note that only the GX620 includes a TPM (Trusted Platform Module). This device helps to block hackers by providing hardware network authentication. The key element that ties all the models together is the Intel 945 Express chipset. Besides performance advantages and new features, its newness makes it a good choice for longevity across a progressive rollout. Dell says it will offer the platforms for about 15 months.
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SPECIFICATIONS

Processor

choice is varied, with Celeron D and Pentium 4 options being supplemented by dual-core Pentium D chips in the GX620 range. The GX520 range and the smallest GX620 are limited to 2GB of 533MHz (PC4300) DDR2 SDRAM across two DIMM sockets, but the three larger GX620s have four sockets for up to 4GB. All units share Intel's GMA 950 integrated graphics core, offering solid performance for most business users. Those who want more 3D punch can opt for a 128MB ATi Radeon X600 SE in a GX620, with the exception of the USFF. Like the three GX520 models, it lacks a PCI Express 16x slot. But the GX620 USFF has an intriguing zero footprint option, whereby it can be bolted onto the back of Dell's 17in 1706FP AIO TFT. This is also available with the next size up - the SF - which can utilise the 19in 1906FP AIO display as well. The USFF's discreet design makes it a particularly appealing option.
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SUPPORT

All the OptiPlex GX PCs come with a three-year on-site, next-business-day warranty, with lifetime telephone support for troubleshooting during business hours. If you perform in-house maintenance, you'll be delighted by how easy the new chassis are to open - although you can, of course, lock them, and there are chassis-intrusion detectors too - with Dell having wisely abandoned its previous clamshell design. The new chassis also have a simple but practical set of diagnostic lights called DirectDetect. Labelled 1, 2, 3 and 4, these LEDs show one of 16 patterns that identify which component is at fault, including BIOS, CPU, memory, PCI device, storage device, video subsystem, USB subsystem and motherboard. The USFF is the only one that doesn't have them on the front panel; instead, you'll have to look round the back.
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FEATURES

All systems have microphone and headphone jacks at the front - handily placed for VoIP - along with two USB 2 ports. These are much easier to access than in previous Dell designs, and generous spacing between the ports means you can easily fit two flash drives, for instance, at the same time. The three smallest cases are designed to stand upright like the MT if you choose, allowing more freedom in desk layout. However, in a bizarre omission, Dell hasn't added rubber feet for vertical orientation. You can feel some vibration through a desk, and our SF case hummed faintly because of this. To accompany these PCs, Dell supplied us with two of its TFTs: a 17in UltraSharp 1704FPT and a 19in UltraSharp 1905FP, costing £219 and £299 respectively (exc VAT). As well as benefiting from VGA and DVI inputs, the flexible stands have tilt, swivel and height adjustment, and portrait rotation. Other attractions include a USB hub, with two ports at the back and two on the left behind the bezel, plus clips for optional Dell Soundbar speakers. The pick of the two is undoubtedly the 1905FP: it's an above-average TFT, with good viewing angles and vivid colours. The 1704FPT screen was less impressive: it's brighter at default settings, but that washes out highlights, and turning down the brightness starts turning white into blue-grey. It also lacks crispness over the analog input.
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CONCLUSION

Dell's new OptiPlex GX620 range represents a stride forward in business PC design. Our pick is the USFF, but the DT also offers a very good compromise between size and value.

Across the whole range, it's hard to fault the designs. They're quiet, attractive and - aside from the MT - compact, with up-to-the-minute technology, including the 945G Express chipset and dual-core CPU options. When you combine the support savings due to the common disk image, none of the previous business PCs we've seen - including the NEC PowerMate ML7, which has been on our A List for the last five months - can match them.

The OptiPlex GX620 range also flouts the rule that business PCs must look plain. If it's time to refresh your PCs, and you want a range of powerful options, the GX620 is the new leader.

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