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Trek ThumbDrive

Introduction

Its size resembles a stick of chewing gum, or the size of a typical human thumb, manufactured as a solid-state product using non-volatile Flash Memory. This idea is not totally new, as we first discovered during our visit to Comdex Fall, at the Las Vegas Convention Centre back in 1995. We discovered an add-on card which could be inserted in any ISA slot manufactured using Flash Memory and had 32Mb of storage, which was plenty back in those days, the product was not only excellent in terms of data transfer times, but was also useful for executing large spreadsheets at a blink of an eyelid. The downside? the cost of Flash Memory back in those days was astronomical - and the card was priced at \$2700.00, hence it never took off. The ThumbDrive is not entirely the cheapest portable solution around, but the features outweigh the cost limitations. The idea couldn't be simpler: No drive mechanism avoiding crashes, No power supply, No external cables, totally portable, just plug in and it acts like an extra drive when plugged into any available USB port. Currently the ThumbDrive is available in 16Mb, 32Mb, 64Mb, 128Mb and 256Mb; apparently there are plans for larger sizes that in turn are going to be dictated by the future cost of Flash Memory.

How we carried out our tests

We received a 64Mb version of the ThumbDrive and our objective was to test the performance, implementation, stability, and ease of use of the ThumbDrive.

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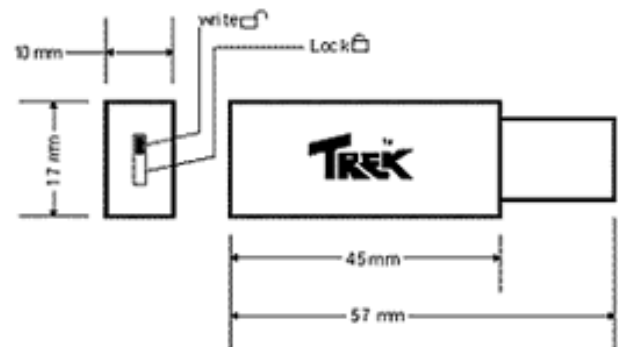
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Features Summary

The arrival of the ThumbDrive in our labs certainly turned heads, and created an instant "must have product" feeling amongst all of us. A word of warning to [Hugh Symons Group plc](#) who kindly loaned us the product and who are the official distributors of it in the UK: "Sorry Chaps your are going to earn your stripes to prise this one away from us!"

The ThumbDrive measurements are impressive: 57mm(L) x 17mm(W) x 10mm(H), comes in retail packaging, and you even get a necklace holder to carry your personal ThumbDrive around in, a sleeve that covers the USB connector to prevent any accidental damage occurring to the port, and a floppy disk containing the drivers needed for instant recognition in Windows. The attention paid to detail for the ThumbDrive is admirable.

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The ThumbDrive is feature rich, weight a mere 30 grams, plug and play via USB port, Non Moving parts, solid state manufactured using non-volatile Flash Memory with a little or no



risk of damage, Easy to use and simple to install, Excellent Capacity configuration from 8Mb, 16Mb, 32Mb, 64Mb, 128Mb, 256Mb, Compact, neat, Light and low power

consumption under active and suspend modes, USB support hence no external power supply required, Write-lock tab, supports any PC based platforms including Notebooks with USB ports, with Windows 98 and Windows 2000 support only. We also tested the product on Windows Me and encountered no compatibility issues, Windows 95 on the other hand is supported, but you will need the correct version with USB support, Windows NT on the other hand does not support USB and hence not supported. Moving and storing data could not be simpler. The downside? just a few: easy to prise away from the port no external security, we would have liked to have seen some kind of password protection in case the drive gets in to the wrong hands at least your data would be protected, comes with an LED on the face of the unit which flashes red when you are copying data but if your USB port is at the back of the unit you are unable to monitor it's activity, the only way to resolve this would have been to have software monitoring it's activity displaying the information on the screen. It is obvious to compare the product to the likes of Zip, external Orb's and CompactFlash drives, but to be totally ruthless, this is a unique product in terms of design, portability and ease of use, although the cost element does play a part, it should not be your top priority, as it has too many good features to just dismiss on grounds of cost alone.

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Performance

Before you can use the ThumbDrive one needs to run a utility called "TDSCAN" which carries out a destructive scan followed by a low-level format which can take up to 8 minutes to complete, after which the drive is ready to use. Data transfer speed is awesome, our 59Mb files took only 1 minute 41 seconds to transfer from our IBM 61.4Gb hard disk to the ThumbDrive, in comparison to the same operation performed using a Zip drive recorded a time of 1 minute 29 seconds, hardly any difference to speak about between the two peripherals. The ThumbDrive is by far the more superior product from an ergonomic point of view, and is not hampered by performance.

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Trek ThumbDrive

Our Verdict

We are certain if you have reached this stage of the review, then you may have probably ascertained our opinion on what we thought of the product. YES! It certainly gets our THUMBS UP! and has all the potential of being a front runner for our "most innovative product for 2000" award at the end of the year. The costing was only available to us in US Dollars - 16Mb (\$69), 32Mb(\$129), 64Mb(\$199), and 128Mb(\$399). The 64Mb version we tested equates to around £138.00 at today's currency rates, not at all bad for a product that you can easily transport and be operational in no time. All we can say is keep on **TREKking** ThumbDrive! you get our Excellence award for the most innovative product we have seen to date.

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Congratulations to Trek 2000 International on winning our **One2surf** Excellence Award!!



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