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Introduction

Recently I received a rather excited ICQ message from Tempest, our Windows 2000/XP nut. "I know how to get higher frames per second in Windows XP!" Of course this peaked my interest so I bit, "How's that?" To my surprise Tempest replied with, "I disabled ACPI in Windows XP and gained 14 FPS in Quake 3!"

I must admit at first I was somewhat skeptical so I decided to have both IRONCHEF and I conduct separate evaluations of Tempest's claims.

Most of you Win2k junkies out there are probably noticing right now that not a whole lot has changed. Just the fact that it boots faster, has a new user interface, and they changed the driver system again so none of your cool gadgets will work anymore.

Just like everything else seems to be in place, so are some of the minor bugs and issues. One biggie is the ACPI issue, and disabling it is done exactly the same as you probably did it when you had Win2k. Since there are a lot of you that have migrated to XP from the 9x series, let's take a more in depth look at the Windows XP ACPI situation.

So what did we discover? Let's first take a look at Windows XP, and exactly what ACPI is.

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Windows ACPI

ACPI stands for Advanced Configuration and Power Interface. In a nutshell, this allows the OS to do a few things. First off, it handles things like standby mode, hibernation, and all kinds of power saving features. It also allows Windows to turn off your computer for you when you shut the system down. These features really don't affect your system performance much, but Windows 2000 and Windows XP use the IRQ sharing capabilities of ACPI to put most of your devices on only one or two IRQs.

"Bloody hell, you're right! All of my devices are set to use IRQ 4!" Of course I'm right. Now NORMALLY, your video card is going to want to hog its own IRQ. It makes sense considering the incredible amount of stuff your video card does when you fire up Quake 3 and decide to snipe someone's head off when playing Urban Terror on Railbait. Here are the technical details straight from Windows XP;

"Advanced Configuration and Power Interface (ACPI) is an open industry specification that defines a flexible and extensible hardware interface for the system board. Software designers use this specification to integrate power management features throughout a computer system, including hardware, the operating system, and application software. This integration enables Windows to determine which applications are active and handle all of the power management resources for computer subsystems and peripherals.

ACPI enables the operating system to direct power management on a wide range of mobile, desktop and server computers, and peripherals.

ACPI is the foundation for the OnNow industry initiative that allows system manufacturers to deliver computers that start at the touch of a key on a keyboard.

ACPI design is essential to take full advantage of power management and Plug and Play in Windows. If you are not sure whether your computer is ACPI-compliant, check your manufacturer's documentation. To change power settings that take advantage of ACPI, use Power Options in Control Panel.

During Windows Setup, ACPI is installed only if all components present during Setup support power management. Some components, especially legacy components, do not support power management and can cause erratic behavior with Advanced Power Management (APM), or may prevent ACPI from being installed. Examples of such components are Industry Standard Architecture (ISA) components and an out-of-date BIOS."

So now that you know what ACPI is, and what it does, let's find out what the side effects of disabling it would be.

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Side Effects

There will definitely be some side effects by disabling ACPI, I just wanted to get that out into the open. First off, you will lose some Plug and Play functionality by disabling ACPI. When installing new computer hardware you will have to re-install the drivers to support your new hardware. Here is some cut and paste that helps give you an idea of this problem;

"Because Windows controls your computer's resources and configuration, you can install Plug and Play hardware devices without restarting the computer. Windows automatically identifies the new hardware and installs the drivers it needs.

If you are using any other type of computer, you may need to perform some setup steps manually and restart your computer when installing new hardware devices."

Another problem you will find is with a lot of your power management functions. You will probably lose most of the stand by, suspend, and hibernation modes. While some users don't normally use these power saving options, some obviously rely pretty heavily on them. Here is another warning,

"WARNING: Note that you should not attempt to change from an ACPI HAL to a standard HAL or from a standard HAL to a ACPI HAL under any circumstances. Doing so will result in your computer not starting properly or at all. This occurs because the Plug and Play device tree that would be currently loaded is for ACPI, and it does not get reconstructed or revert to a standard HAL Plug and Play device tree. Because of this (the device tree structures being drastically different), the system is unaware of any hardware changes after the computer restarts to include the location of the boot device. Microsoft does not recommend or support this procedure as it will result in data loss."

Personally I don't use any power management functions on my desktop, I leave the damn thing on 24/7. Now my notebook is another story. I am constantly using the power saving functions in order to extend my battery life while on the go. Losing some of the power saving functionality is definitely on thing I would not tolerate with my notebook.

Now that you have been thoroughly warned of the dangers and perils of disabling ACPI, let's take a look at exactly how you can go about doing it.

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Disabling ACPI

First off, BE SURE TO GET ALL OF THE DRIVERS YOU WILL NEED FOR ALL OF YOUR HARDWARE BECAUSE YOU WILL MOST LIKELY BE REINSTALLING ALL OF YOUR DRIVERS. I would STRONGLY suggest you create a restore point within System Restore or some other kind of backup program. Doing this would definitely help any attempts to roll back to your prior configuration! OK, now Right click on My Computer and select Manage (This can also be done in the "new and improved" start menu).

[Click For Larger Image!!](#)



After the MMC pops up, go to the Device Manager submenu on the left. In the right side of the MMC, open the Computer submenu and you will see something like ACPI PC. Right click on this, select Properties and go to the Driver page. Click Update Driver. When the Hardware Update Wizard opens, select Install from a list or specific location (Advanced). On the next page, tell the wizard Don't search. I will choose the driver to install. The wizard should now show you a list of devices.

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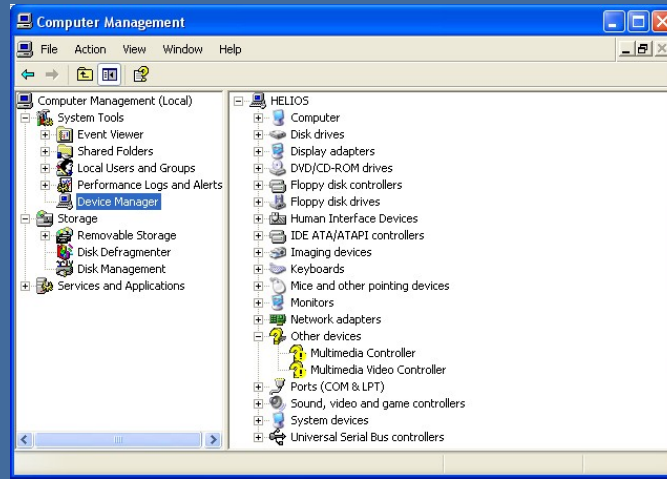
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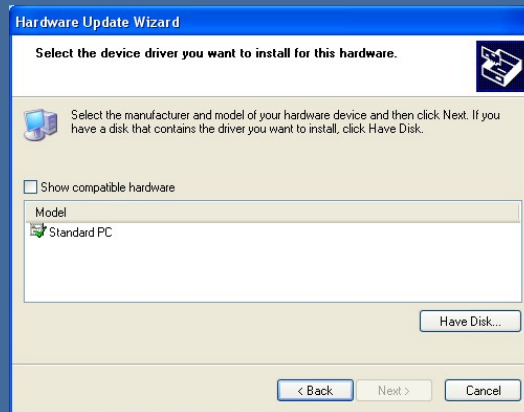
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Uncheck the Show compatible hardware box to see the whole list. Select Standard PC from the list, finish the wizard, and reboot. When your system finishes rebooting, you may have to reinstall a lot of your system drivers. It's a good thing you got them all handy when I told you to, huh?

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Next: "AMD TBird System"



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AMD TBird System

After disabling Windows ACPI on my Athlon Test System, the system rebooted normally and began installing all of my system's hardware. I did notice however that Windows XP replaced the NVIDIA 21.81 Detonators with their own cheesy WHQL version. My lame ass 56k ESS modem also required assistance in reinstalling the drivers. Other than those mentioned, everything installed nicely and without any problems.

When restarting the system I noticed that I did not have the option to anymore. It was darkened out and wouldn't allow selection. Personally I never use any of the lame suspend or hibernation functions, it's either always on, or off. Other than a few power management functions, I really didn't notice anything different. As you can see from the below benchmarks, I did gain a little bit of performance from disabling ACPI. Just how much did I gain? Let's check out the test system first.

For the benchmarks I used the following test systems...

Mid Level AMD Athlon Test System:

Soyo SY-K7VDRAGON

1.0 GHz Tbird (7.5 x 133)

Inno3D Tornado GF3

Crucial PC2100 DDR

Maxtor 20 GB ATA/100

Creative SoundBlaster Live

Software Used:

3DMark2001 (Default 16/32)

DroneZmarK (Generic GeForce Low/Medium)

VULPINE GLmark (Standard 1024 x 768 x 16/32)

Quake 3 Arena Demo (High Quality 1024 x 768/800 x 600)

Windows XP, VIA 4in1 4.34, 21.81 NVIDIA Detonator Drivers, DirectX 8.1

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AMD TBird Test System:

Soyo SY-K7VDRAGON
1.0 GHz Tbird (7.5 x 133)
Inno3D Tornado GF3
Crucial PC2100 DDR
Maxtor 20 GB ATA/100

Intel P4 Test System:

Dell Dimensions 8200
Intel P4 1.8 GHz
Intel 850 Chipset
512 MB PC800 RDRAM
NVIDIA GeForce3
60 GB ATA/100
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OK, enough stalling, let's get to the real action..

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1.0 GHz Tbird (7.5 x 133)
Inno3D Tornado GF3
Crucial PC2100 DDR
Maxtor 20 GB ATA/100**

[Intel P4 Test System:](#)

**Dell Dimensions 8200
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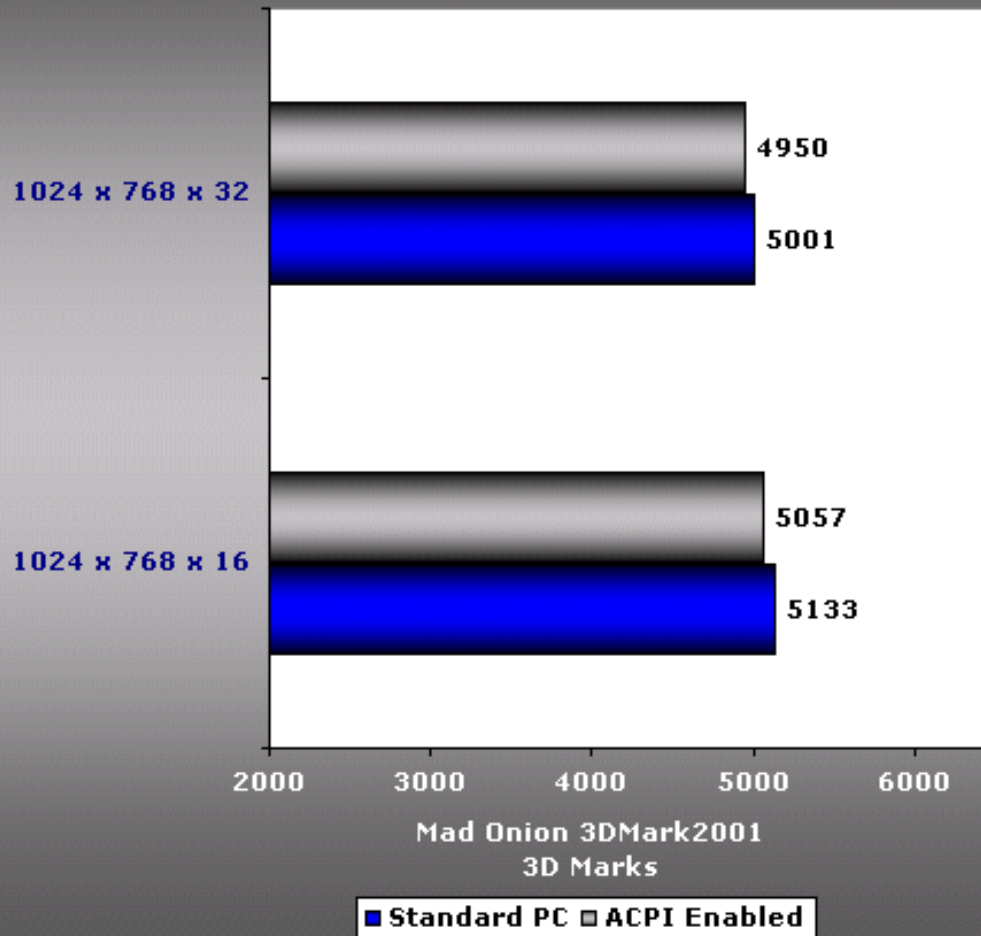
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The Tweakers Asylum Windows XP ACPI vs Standard PC



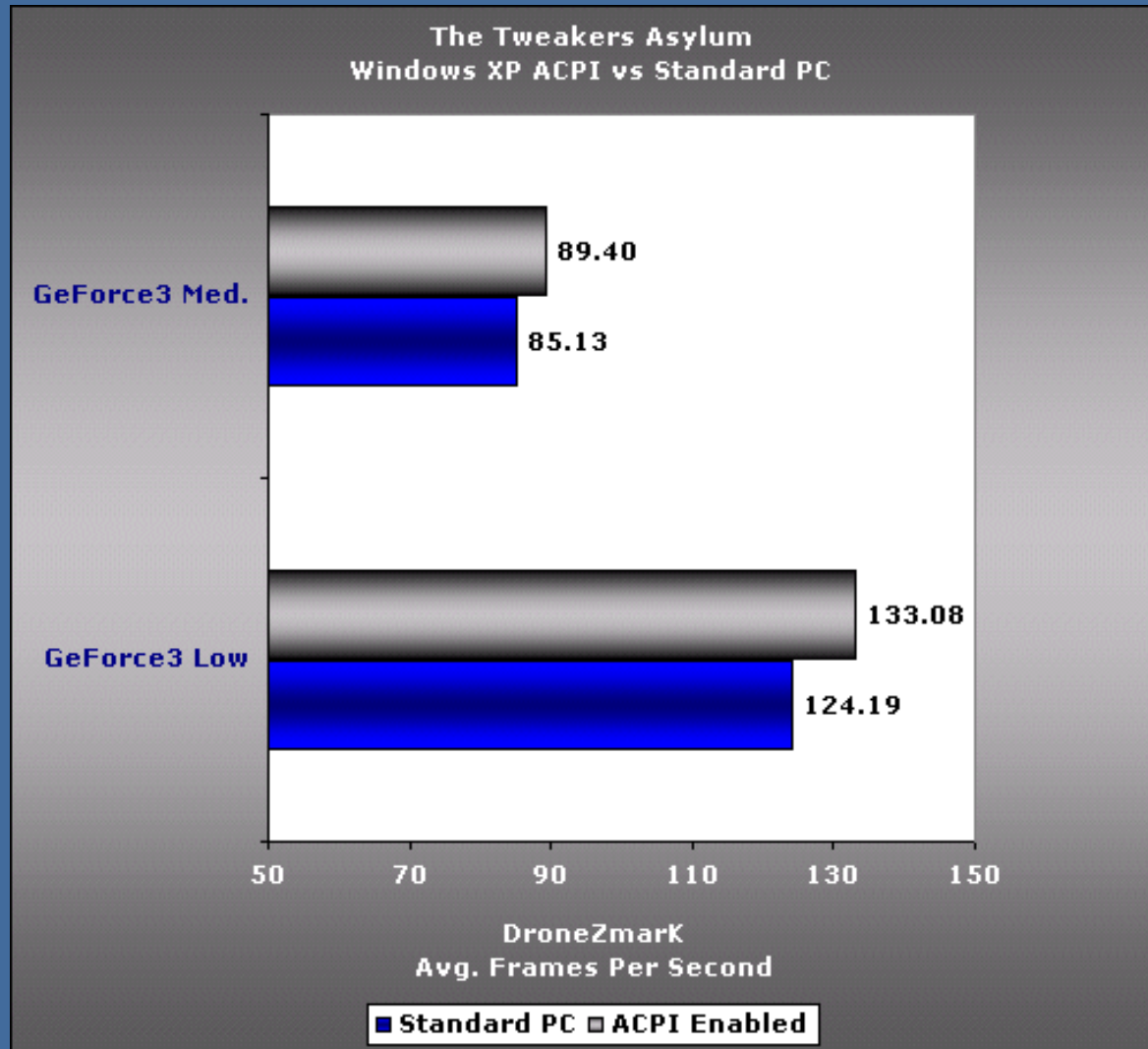
As you can see I got an average of about 51 to 76 3DMarks when ACPI was disabled. While that increase doesn't seem like much, it's actually not that bad...

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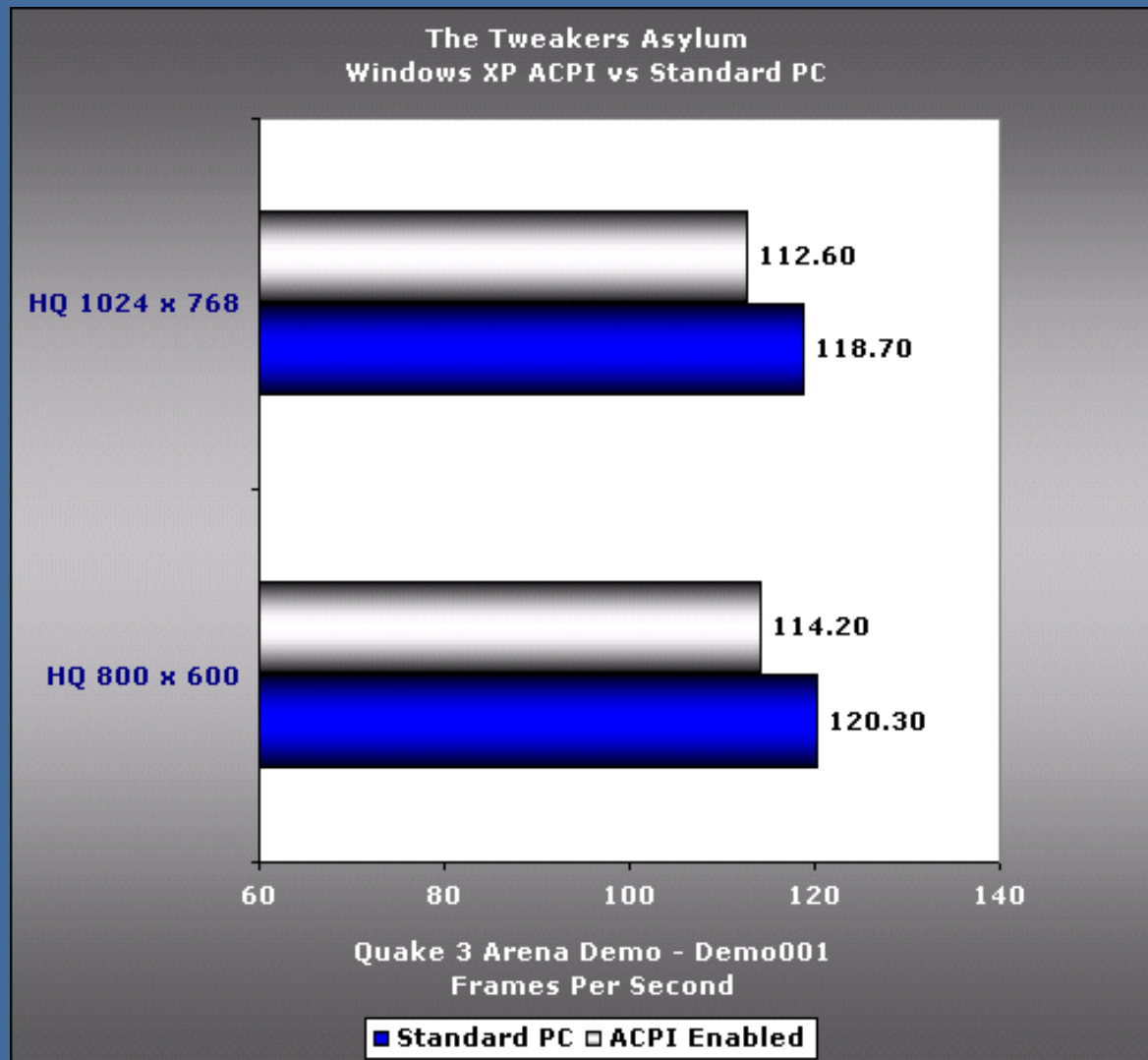
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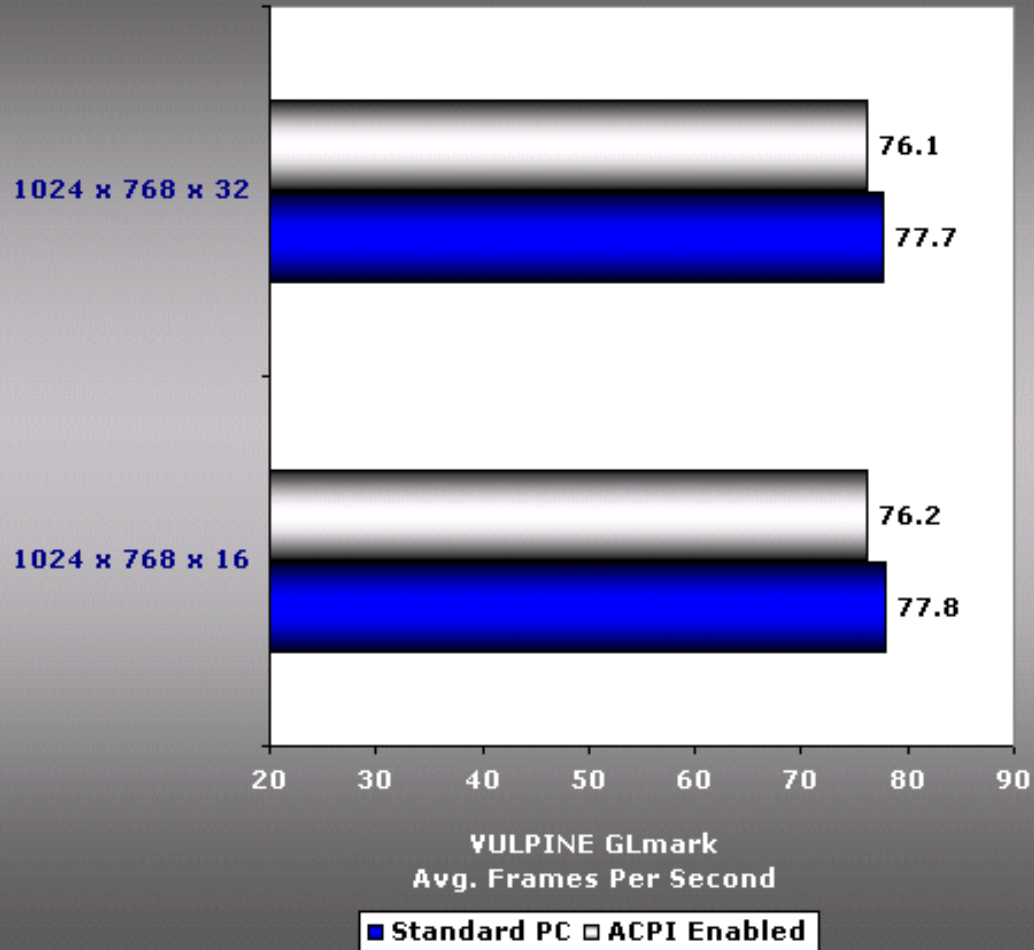


This time around things drop quite a bit when ACPI is disabled. Hey, you win some and you lose some..



The Quake 3 Arena Demo benchmark shows an average 6 FPS advantage by disabling ACPI. Let's see if this increase will be similar in VULPINE GLmark...

The Tweakers Asylum
Windows XP ACPI vs Standard PC



Not quite the increase we saw in some of the other benchmarks, but hey, I will take any increase I can get..

OK, let's head on over to the next page and see if IRONCHEF was able to get any kind of increase using his Intel P4 Test System...

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Intel P4 System

Under ACPI I did very well on benchmarks on a Intel Pentium 4 2.0GHz and a GeForce3. I converted my Computer over to the Standard PC setup and rebooted only to see Windows XP find every piece of hardware on my machine. I installed the Intel 800 Chipset drivers for XP and NVIDIA GeForce3 drivers. I noticed the machine seem to be a bit zippier but how would it bench? As you will see, my benches showed a pretty big improvement.

Why would this be you ask?

Well, a theory could be that Windows XP ACPI has code for P4 to take advantage of Intel's heat control options and could be lowering the power thus letting the P4 cool down. Turning this feature off disables the OS support for the cooling and runs at peak all the time improving processor performance. Anyhow, let's get to what the Intel P4 Test System consists of;

For the benchmarks I used the following test systems...

Intel P4 Test System:

Dell Dimensions 8200

Intel P4 1.8 GHz

Intel 850 Chipset

512 MB PC800 RDRAM

NVIDIA GeForce3

60 GB ATA/100

SoundBlaster Live

Software Used:

3DMark2001 (Default 16/32)

DroneZmarK (Generic GeForce Low/Medium)

VULPINE GLmark (Standard 1024 x 768 x 16/32)

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Soyo SY-K7VDRAGON
1.0 GHz Tbird (7.5 x 133)
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Crucial PC2100 DDR
Maxtor 20 GB ATA/100

Intel P4 Test System:

Dell Dimensions 8200
Intel P4 1.8 GHz
Intel 850 Chipset
512 MB PC800 RDRAM
NVIDIA GeForce3
60 GB ATA/100
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Quake 3 Arena (High Quality 1024 x 768/800 x 600)

Windows XP, Intel 800 Chipset Drivers, 21.85 NVIDIA Detonator Drivers, DirectX 8.1

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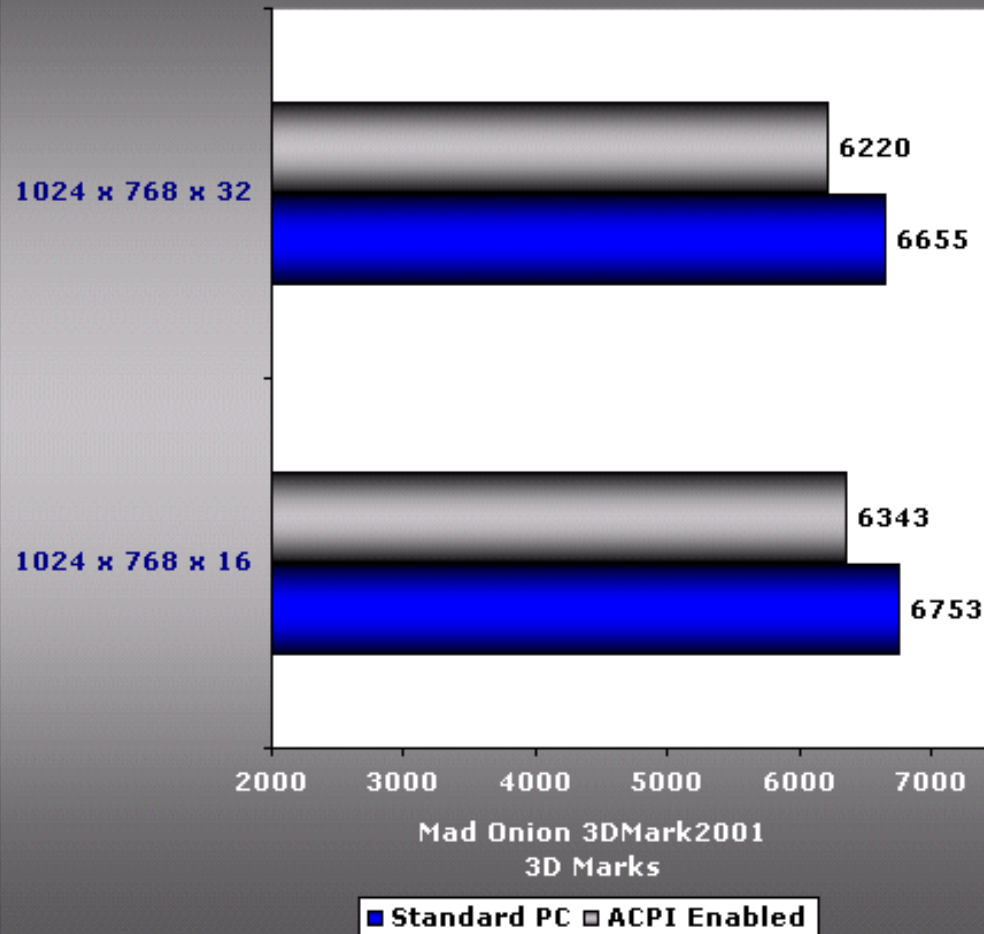
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The Tweakers Asylum Windows XP ACPI vs Standard PC



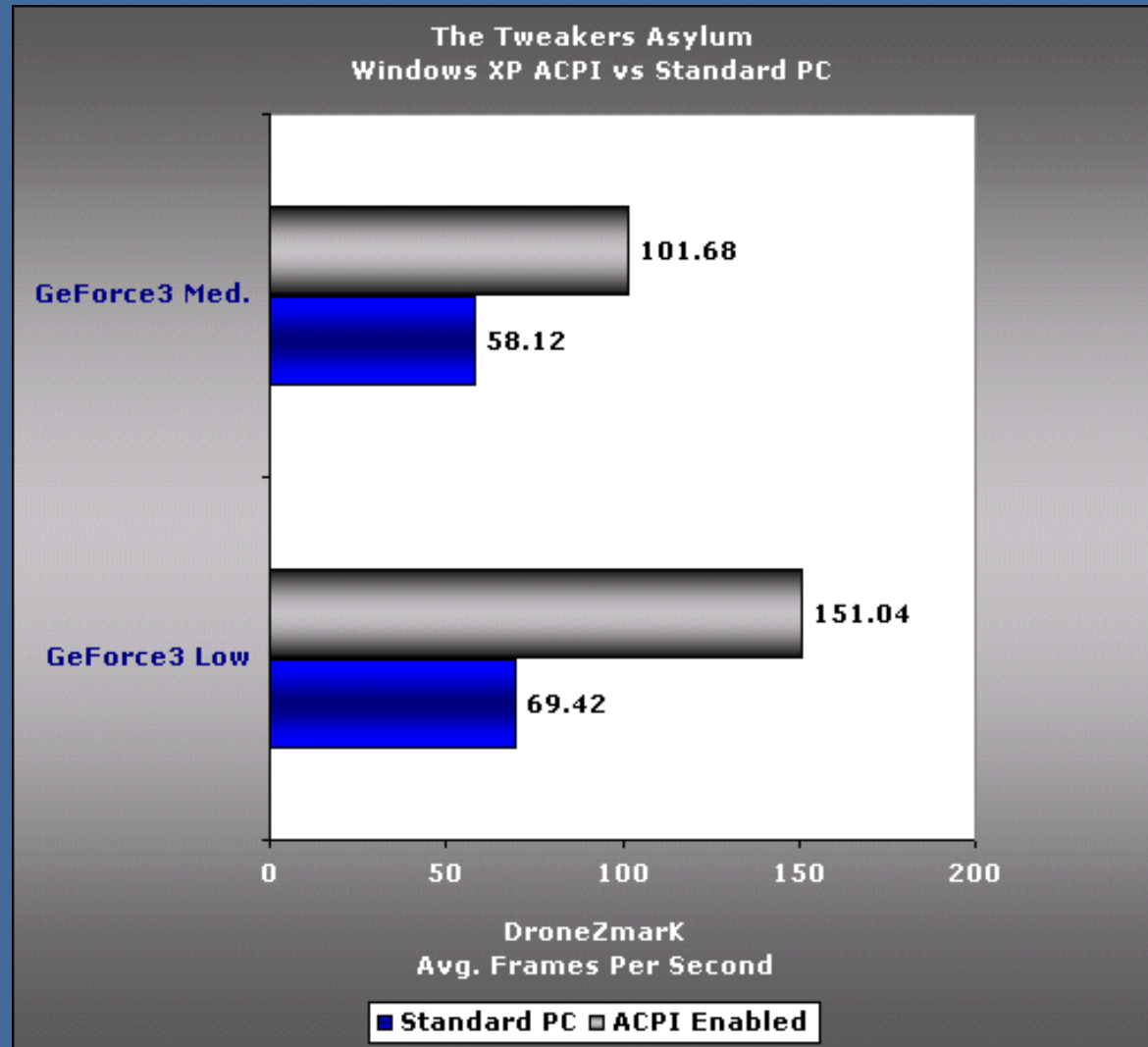
As you can see I got an average of about 420 3DMarks when ACPI was disabled. 420 3DMarks is very impressive under 3DMark2001

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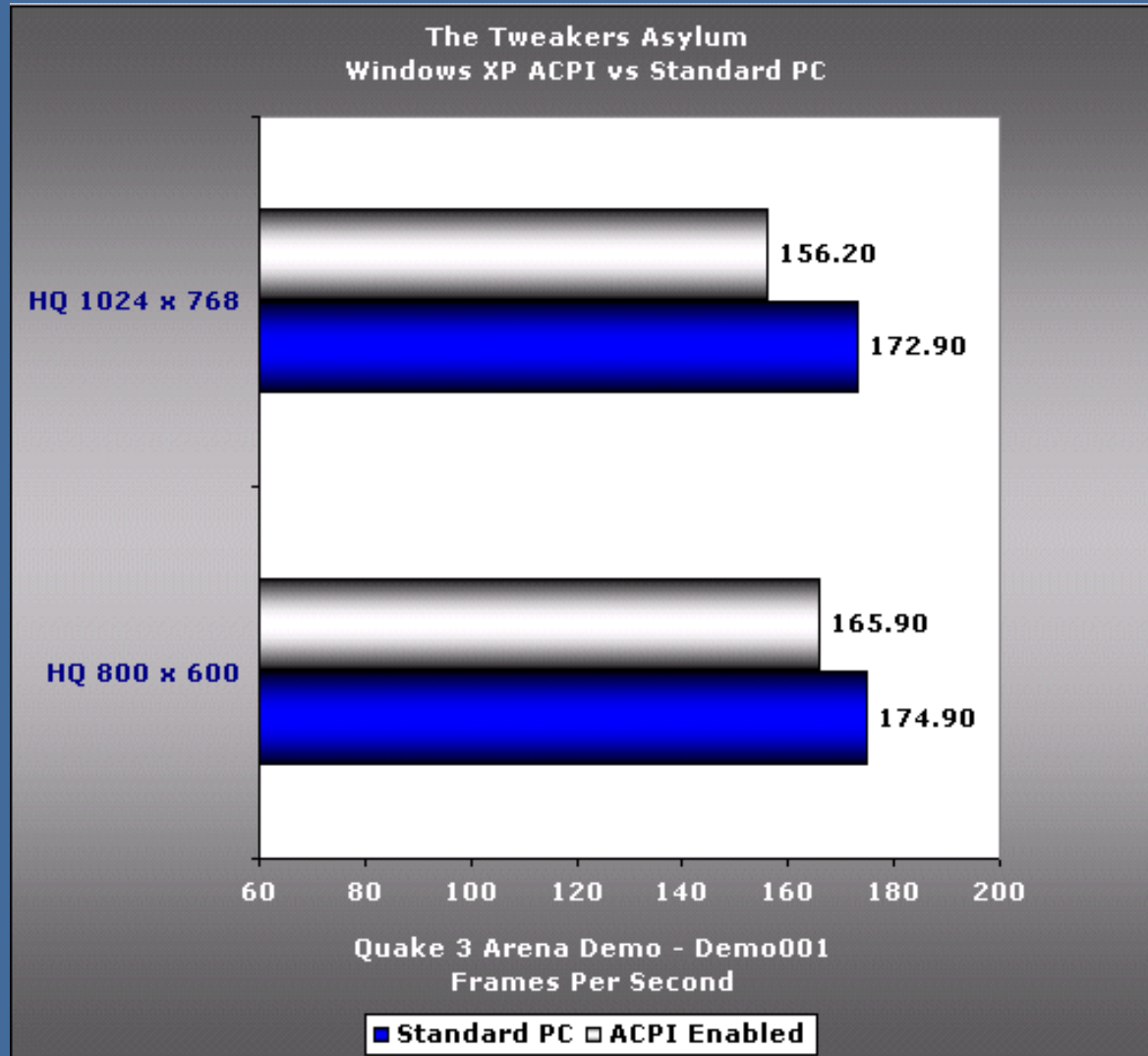
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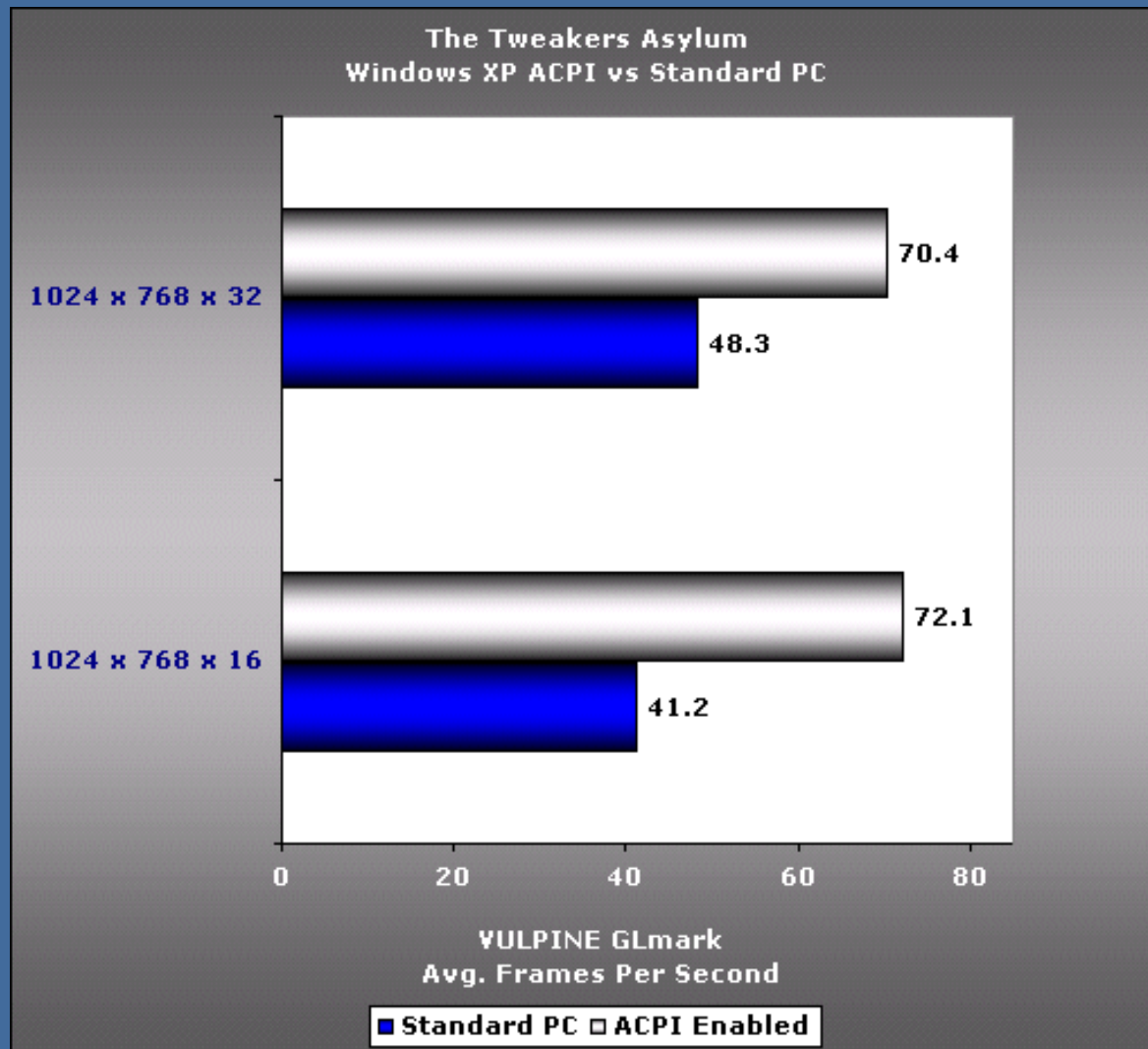
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This time around things drop quite a bit when ACPI is disabled. Hey, didn't we already hear that? Like during the Athlon DroneZmark benchmark??



The Quake 3 Arena Demo benchmark shows an average 8 to 16 FPS advantage by disabling ACPI. Let's see if this increase will be similar in VULPINE GLmark...



Well unlike the Athlon VULPINE GLmark benchmarks this time we had quite a large reduction in frames per second.

OK, let's wrap this article up and head on over to the conclusion...

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Windows XP ACPI Tweak Guide

Guide Category: [Operating System](#) | Price: N/A | Author: [Saint & IRONCHEF](#)

Talk about this review in our new [forums](#)..

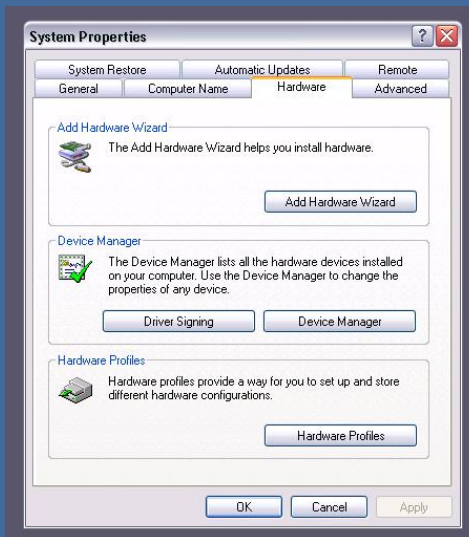
**** Warning** - If you are performing the changes in this Tweak Guide, you are doing so at YOUR OWN RISK! Disabling ACPI in Windows XP COULD cause damage and or instability to your operating system!!**

Conclusion

With most things in this world, your only going to get what you pay for. In order to get the boost in performance we have shown, you will definitely pay some kind of penalty. Now to some of you, this increase in performance will be well worth the minor functionality setbacks that you will have. This of course is all up to you and your personal preferences.

Another option you may consider is creating two separate hardware profiles, one for ACPI, and another for ACPI Disabled. The process involved with creating a new hardware profile is actually a fairly simple one. First you will need to right click on MY COMPUTER and select the PROPERTIES option. Now click on the HARDWARE tab and you should see something like this;

[Click For Larger Image!!](#)



Now click on the **HARDWARE PROFILES** button. From here you will want to highlight the only hardware profile listed and click on **RENAME**. Now think of a name for your profile such as "ACPI Enabled".

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AMD TBird Test System:

Soyo SY-K7VDRAGON
1.0 GHz Tbird (7.5 x 133)
Inno3D Tornado GF3
Crucial PC2100 DDR
Maxtor 20 GB ATA/100

Intel P4 Test System:

Dell Dimensions 8200
Intel P4 1.8 GHz
Intel 850 Chipset
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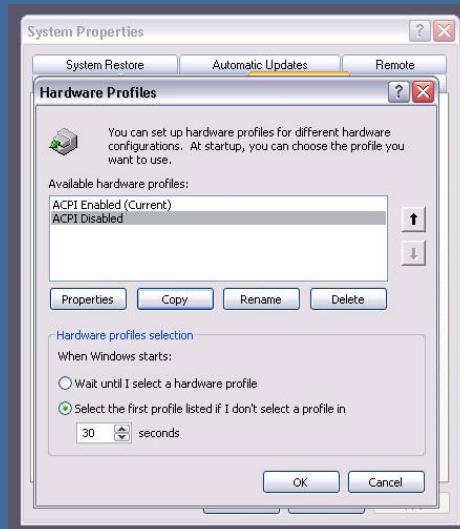
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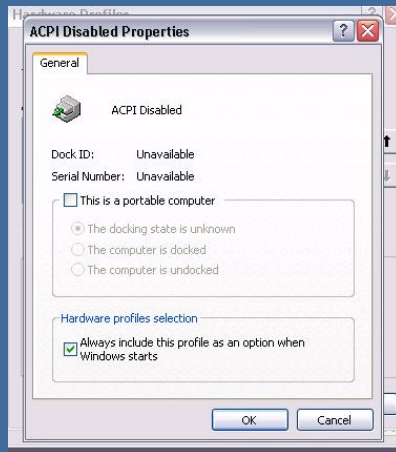
After you have renamed the profile click on OK. Now click on the COPY option, and type in a name for your new hardware profile like "ACPI Disabled". Click on OK again and you will come up with something like this;

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Now you can right click on each of the of the profiles and select PROPERTIES. Click the check box that says "Always include this profile as an option when Windows starts", and finally click on OK. Now when you return to the main HARDWARE PROFILES window select the option that says "Wait until I select a hardware profile". Now everytime Windows loads you can select which profile you want enabled.

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This would be useful if you wanted to switch back and forth between gaming and normal operation, etc. Well, that's about it. I hope you get the same kind of performance gains that we achieved. Make sure you click on the forum link at the top of the page to give us the details on your experiences with disabling ACPI.

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