

# tools of the trade



Sony Vaio X505 Notebook

## They Just Get Slimmer and Lighter

The Vaio VGN-X505ZP from Sony is described as an ultra portable. That's because it weighs about 1.8 pounds and is only  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick. See how it compares to a more traditional writing instrument to the left. Yet it still has a 10.4-inch screen and

a full keyboard and pointing stick. The processor is a low-voltage 1.1-GHz Intel Pentium M, and the system features 512MB RAM, a 20GB hard drive, one FireWire, and two USB ports. The lithium-ion battery will run up to four hours on a charge, and the weight is kept to a minimum with a carbon nickel casing. The X505 notebook was made

The VAIO X505's slim profile next to a pencil

available last month, and more information is online at [www.sonymstyle.com](http://www.sonymstyle.com).

Fisher Multimedia has produced a pocket CameraCorder™ it describes as the world's lightest high-resolution MPEG-4 camcorder. It's also a digital camera, and both systems record on SD Memory Cards instead of tape. The video quality is VGA 640 × 480, full-motion 30 frames per second, and the sound is CD-quality stereo. The digital stills have an impressive 3.2 megapixel resolution. The camera is 2.7 × 4.3 × 1.3 inches, easily pocket-size, and it weighs only 5.4 ounces. A multifunction docking station connects the camera to your computer via a fast USB 2.0 cable. Included is a PC kit of high-performance movie-making software, which has: Motion Director image stabilizing software that detects and eliminates



Fisher Pocket CameraCorder

shakiness; Ulead Video Studio 7 SE DVD for editing and assembling MPEG-4 video files and translating files for burning DVDs, VCDs, or SVCDs; Ulead Photo Explorer 8.0 for viewing and trimming video and still files; and Quick Time 6.3 for video playback. The still camera has three-mode flash, three-mode auto focus, a 10X digital zoom, and adjustable LCD brightness control. The CameraCorder has a lithium batter and can run on AC. [www.fisherav.com](http://www.fisherav.com)

The Iomega REV™ 35GB/90GB USB 2.0 External

Drive offers an alternative to traditional backup systems for small to midsize businesses. The REV drive creates removable storage with hard disk performance that works up to eight times faster than tape. The 35GB disks can hold up to 90GB of compressed data. The drive shows up on your PC as a standard drive letter, and you retrieve files using a drag-and-drop technique as with other disk drives. The data is password protected, and you can encrypt your backups. The REV System Software lets you format, write, and access your data. Iomega Automatic Backup Pro Software lets you back up files on a continuous or scheduled basis, and Norton Ghost™ software is included to create a full system backup in case of a disaster. The transfer rate averages 20MB/second. The connection is the faster USB 2.0, but the drive is also compatible

## The 10 Best ◆ Michael Castelluccio, Editor

■ MAYBE IT'S A MEASURE of how we've all been conditioned to be competitive, but, whatever the reason, Americans love top-10 lists. There are the best-seller booklists in the weekend papers; TV shows and candidates are constantly monitored by pollsters; and there's the *Forbes* "swimsuit" issue that lists the richest among us. We've made *number one* a national *raison d'être*, as we pin ribbons on pigs, award Oscars to actors, and insist on repeating Vince Lombardi's mantra to any youngster who will listen: "If winning isn't everything, why do they keep score?"

Each year *Wired* magazine puts together its own top 40

list of companies that the editors believe "are masters of innovation, technology, and strategic vision." The *Wired* 40 isn't just a weighted list of bottom lines. The criteria for inclusion haven't changed since 1998 and are explained in the June 2004 issue by Kevin Kelleher: "These 40 leaders have demonstrated an uncommon mastery of technology, innovation, globalism, networked communication, and strategic vision—skills essential to thriving in the information age."

The list is dynamic—you might even call it fickle. Of the 40 that made the list this year, 25% did not appear on last year's list. Even more surprising, 40% of the top 10,

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Iomega REV™ Drive

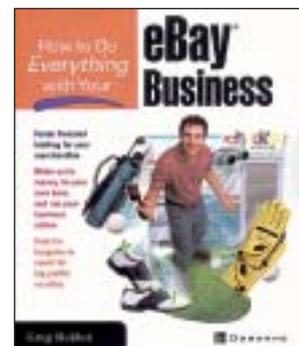
with the older, and slower, USB 1.1. The average file access time is 13 ms, and the shelf-life of the Iomega REV disks is 30 years—both qualities making it a logical replacement for tape. The drive itself has zero maintenance with heads that are self-cleaning. More information is available at [www.iomega.com/na/landing.jsp](http://www.iomega.com/na/landing.jsp) with additional reviews and an online demo.

When you sell \$30 billion worth of goods online, from collectibles to cars, you've created a major retail outlet. When that

outlet is an international auction that has practically no limits on inventory types, you have a sociological phenomenon. Offer your auction house to individuals and businesses at near/zero overhead, and you should have a stampede. It has, and eBay continues to grow. If you go to the site ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)) and browse using its excellent search engine, you will soon start coming across businesses that are selling excess inventory or maybe living completely online, selling tools, electronics, sporting goods, videos, whatever. But are the rules the same? What sort of business plan do you need to succeed when you're posting alongside individuals from here to Australia who have learned how to make the

system work for them? What about payment systems, liabilities; can you use the chat rooms for promotion? Greg Holden, a veteran of online auctions and author of 20 books on computers and the Internet, has created a business manual for serious eBayers called ***How to Do Everything with Your eBay® Business***, published by McGraw-Hill/Osborne. Greg covers everything from the basic (how to create decent digital images that will sell your items) to the subtle (should you set up a cash-basis or accrual-basis accounting system). He compares accounting software and explains how to keep your books online. He covers copyright and trademark concerns, tax and insurance issues. As an eBay auc-

tioner, you write the copy, track the auction(s), and fill the orders. eBay charges a small amount for the listing and takes a small percentage of the final price, but the site also has its own rules and conventions. If you're serious about eBay as an outlet, or you're looking to go into business on your own, Greg Holden's book is a very good place to begin. Go to [www.osborne.com](http://www.osborne.com), and search the word "eBay" for both of Greg's books on eBay.



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almost half, are new this year. The list is also more eclectic than you might expect. Mixed in among the pure Internet and high-tech manufacturers are drug companies, car makers, banks, entertainment companies, and an agri-tech company.

#### And the Winners Are...

Odds are that you can probably guess a few of those in this year's top 10. These would be the Internet legends—companies like Amazon, Yahoo!, and eBay. And you would be right because these companies are still doing enough of the right things to keep them at the top.

**#1 Google** Not a surprise—it was number one last year. The Internet would be pretty useless without a good search engine, and Google has emerged as the best general-purpose guide for the Net's overwhelming complexity. Larry Page and Sergey Brin have managed to maintain the site's simplicity while adding refinements like Froogle (the search engine for shoppers), and Gmail (free e-mail).

**#2 Amazon.com** And the beat goes on, as an early pioneer morphs from specialized retailer (books) to the Internet's General Store.

**#3 Apple Computer** This is a surprise. New to the list this year, this is Steve Jobs's musical Apple, which has the leading iPod MP3 player and the iTunes Music Store. Some of the numbers that have lifted this Apple in a gravity-free launch: Five million iPods sold gives Apple 55% of the music player market; 60 million+ songs have been downloaded at iTunes, giving them a 70% lead in commercial downloads. Add in the rest of the Apple enterprise, and it makes for a nice-size pie.

**#4 Genentech** Genentech is a biotech company that works at a cel-

lular level, manipulating cells and genes to produce medicines. Avastin, a treatment for colon cancer, was approved by the FDA this year, and the company is working on a number of other cancer treatments as well as other therapies based on genetic manipulation. Other biotech/medical companies that made the *Wired* 40 are Pfizer (28) and Gen-Probe (33), both new this year.

**#5 eBay** Of course. The editors point out that the \$30 billion of goods that were sold on eBay last year "make the auctioneer the 81st-largest economy in the world." Besides loving a winner, Americans, apparently, will never pass up a good garage sale.

**#6 Samsung Electronics** With new consumer electronics like MP3 players and digital cameras creating a strong market for flash cards, this South Korean manufacturer positioned itself to become "a leading innovator in consumer electronics worldwide." Samsung is new to the *Wired* list this year.

**#7 Yahoo!** Dropping back four places from its number three position last year, Yahoo! is still America's portal of choice. The editors' count of Yahoo! users is 263 million.

**#8 Electronic Arts** When you think of a game maker finishing above other computer giants like IBM (13) and Intel (24), you have to remember *Wired's* criteria and its forward-looking bent. After crediting Electronic Arts with leadership in interactive entertainment (read gaming, for now), the magazine proposes that the next interactive media might well include movies, music, and painting.

**#9 Pixar** Steve Jobs again, and this time with a movie company that earned \$2.5 billion and 17 Academy Awards for its five feature films and

several shorts. You probably remember *Finding Nemo*, and so does Disney, which recalls with regret its Pixar contract that Jobs refuses to renew.

**#10 Cisco Systems** Hubs and routers—what more do you need to say? Cisco owns most of the game, and it has climbed up one more place—up from 11 last year. Not bad for pretty boring hardware.

#### Precipitous Falls

The ascending are interesting, but so are those that have, perhaps temporarily, fallen from grace. Two very big names that have lost their footing are FedEx and Microsoft. FedEx fell from 12 last year to 26 this year. The purple and orange is still delivering 5.3 million packages every day in 215 countries, but apparently for the editors some of the bloom is off the rose—or maybe more brown is back on the roads. An even bigger surprise is the Microsoft slide from eight last year to 27 this year. *Wired* offers three reasons for Redmond's rung-burns: regulators and lawsuits here and abroad; the emerging success of Linux on servers and perhaps next, desktops; the large target still flapping on the corporation's back, attracting virus writers worldwide. Some stinging advice is offered by the editors in a "To Do" item: "Given Microsoft's long string of scrapes with antitrust cops, it's time for the company to start competing on the merits of its products."

And so this year's 40 should enjoy their moment in the sun, but they shouldn't forget another reality expressed elsewhere on pages of the magazine—what's wired will eventually get tired.

You can get the entire list at [www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.06/wired40.html](http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.06/wired40.html), or check out the June 2004 issue of *Wired* at your library. ■