First Technology Group

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Price Increases

DRAM and Chipset shortages here to stay for 2026

What do these price increases mean?

The price increases are massive - and getting worse, and it appears they are here to stay for some time.

This is evidenced by Micron's announcement that it is exiting its Crucial SSD and memory-branded business to reallocate production capacity to higher-margin enterprise accounts. You can read more about this announcement here.

Because of this, it means we cannot just "wait out" the price increase, we have to actively try to mitigate this by being a lot more clever about how we deploy Windows 11 images, as we may be forced to accept 16 Gig in our machines rather than the recommended 32 GB for a new machine to still be affordable.

HOWEVER, you need to still make EVERY possible effort to buy new machines with AT LEAST 32gig of RAM.

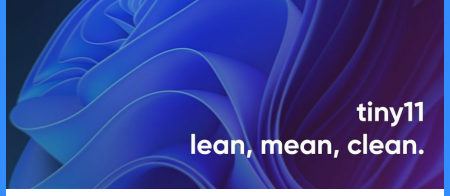
Of course, this works both ways - you need to find a way to get better performance out of your existing fleet of hardware with 16Gig RAM WITHOUT upgrading them, while trying to get more out of new machines with 16Gig instead of the more ideal 32Gig configuration.

Right now it looks like by Q1 2026, you will see hardware prices increasing 10-20% across the board, and this along with a Microsoft price increase in July (for those that are renewing) will add up to a VERY expensive 2026!

16GB survival plan..... serious debloating required!

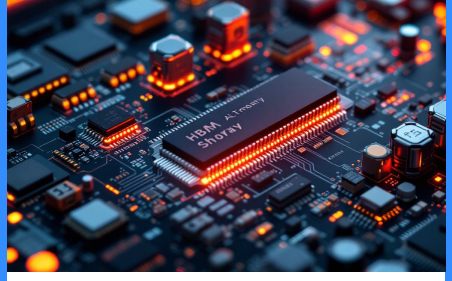
You need TWO plans, one to sweat the hardware you already have running a lot better and the other, if you are left with no choice, to get new hardware with 16Gig RAM instead of 32Gig. Below are some points to consider when working on an optimal build.....

- **Remove OEM trialware** and unused apps..... keep the installed base tight.
- OR... build a new image with TINY11 (below).
- **Strip startup apps**..... fewer background agents launching at sign-in.
- **Stop non-essential Store apps** running in the background..... set to Never where appropriate.
- **Put browser tabs to sleep aggressively** ..... it is usually the biggest “silent” RAM tax in the real world.
- **Standardise a lean corporate image**..... limit add-ons..... reduce overlap between security agents where policy allows..... keep vendor utilities off by default



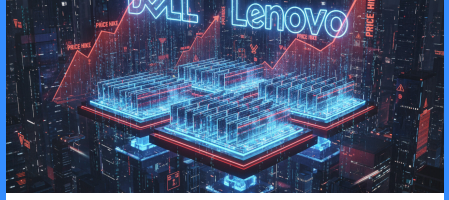
TINY11 - lean, mean Windows 11
ZDNET has published a script that allows you to build a leaner Windows 11 from the official Microsoft ISO downloads, not just for those that can't upgrade to Windows 11 because of system requirements.
There is a YouTube video here to help.
Remember this is NOT sanctioned by Microsoft - use at your own risk.

TINY11



DRAM Prices Triple
The AI data centre boom is diverting memory manufacturers away from commodity DRAM and towards high bandwidth memory for AI accelerators, creating a global squeeze on standard RAM and potentially NAND too..... with some consumer RAM pricing described as having tripled in recent months, impacting PC upgrades, enterprise server rollouts, smartphones and even automotive supply chains..... and with industry voices in the piece warning the imbalance could persist until 2027 or later because new fabs take years to ramp and hyperscalers are locking in supply ahead of everyone else.

RAM Price Triples

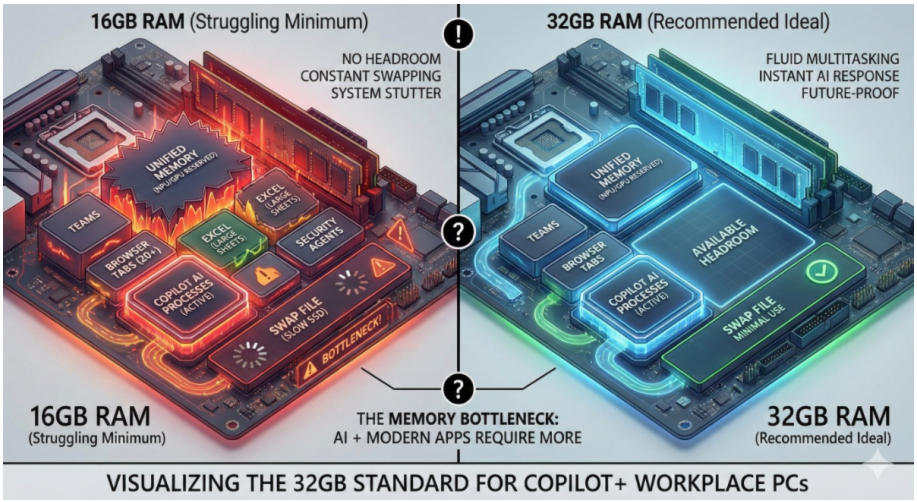


Dell & Lenovo Raise prices
Dell has announced price increases with Lenovo following in January, all other major OEMS will follow.

Dell & Lenovo prices increase

The Case for 32Gig

For a fully enabled Copilot+ machine, 16GB is the new "bare minimum" (much like 4GB or 8GB was in the past), while 32GB is the operational ideal for longevity and unhindered performance in a modern workplace.



While Microsoft's official "hard floor" for Copilot+ PCs is 16GB, technical analysis and enterprise hardware reviews suggest this floor is often

insufficient for actual productivity once local AI features are active.
This is not new, as all the way back with TOP STORIES #46 (January 2024), I have already been recommending that 32 GB is the minimum amount of RAM.

32GB: The recommended minimum

The "Unified Memory" Tax (NPU & GPU Overhead)

Unlike traditional desktops with dedicated graphics cards (VRAM), most Copilot+ PCs (especially those on Snapdragon or Intel Core Ultra) use Unified Memory Architecture (UMA).
For these machines, your system RAM is shared between the CPU, the Integrated GPU (iGPU), and the NPU (Neural Processing Unit).

If you have 16GB of RAM, the hardware may reserve 2GB–4GB strictly for graphics and NPU operations before Windows even boots. This leaves only 12GB–14GB for the operating system and your applications.

Tech reviews indicate that once you open memory-intensive workplace apps (Teams, Outlook, Edge with multiple tabs), the remaining 12GB is instantly saturated, forcing the system to "swap" to the SSD, which slows down the PC.

Local AI Models are Memory Hungry

Copilot+ introduces features like Recall (currently in preview/recallibrated release) and local Small Language Models (SLMs) that run on-device rather than in the cloud to preserve privacy and speed.

"On-device" AI means the model must reside in your RAM to function. Even a highly optimised quantised model can take up several gigabytes of active memory.

On a 16GB machine, running a local AI model alongside a browser and Excel leaves almost zero headroom. If the AI agent tries to process data in the background (e.g., indexing your screen for Recall), a 16GB machine is likely to stutter. 32GB provides the necessary "breathing room" for these background AI processes.

The "Workplace Reality" vs. Specs

For basic home users, 16GB might suffice. However, in the workplace, the definition of "basic" usage has shifted.
Standard enterprise environments now run heavy background agents (Endpoint Detection & Response, DLP software, VPNs) that all require memory to run, and additionally, Microsoft also warns that specific features, apps, and future updates can add requirements over time.

The "Teams" Factor: Modern collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams and web-based CRMs are notoriously memory-intensive.

IT hardware analysis suggests that 16GB is merely sufficient for today's OS, but Copilot+ PCs are intended to last 3–5 years. As Microsoft pushes more AI features to the "edge" (your laptop) to save their cloud costs, the local RAM requirement will only increase.
Buying 16GB now is arguably buying built-in obsolescence.

Summary of Recommendations

- **16GB (Minimum)**: Functional for single-tasking (e.g., only Word open). Likely to experience "micro-stutters" when switching apps if Copilot features are active.
- **32GB (Recommended)**: Required for a fluid experience where AI features (rewriting text, analysing data, background indexing) happen instantly without slowing down your main work (Excel, CRM, Teams).
- **64GB (Power User)**: Recommended for developers or data analysts running local heavy-duty AI models or VMs.

Treating 16GB as a "premium" spec is outdated; for Copilot+ PCs, it is the absolute entry-level floor. For a frictionless workplace experience

where the AI actually aids productivity rather than hindering system performance, 32GB is the sensible standard.

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