

## Running windows XP on a Mac Pro using Parallels

With the recent release of the new Mac Pro based on the Intel chip, we needed to find out just how well windows XP will run on this new platform, as well as the assistive technology that we have all been using on the PC.

We bought a new Mac Pro, with two processors running at 2.66 GHZ (dual core Intel Xeon), 2 GB of RAM (667 MHz DDR 2), and L2 cache of 4 MB per processor, with bus speed of 1.33 GHZ. The machine came with the latest Mac OS X. 10.4.8, and we bought Parallels Desktop to emulate the Windows/PC environment.

The Parallels Desktop software allows you to emulate a computer running whatever operating system you desire within the Mac environment. This emulated computer is called a virtual machine, and you can configure each machine as you would any physical computer. For this first test I configured the virtual machine to have 1 GB of memory and a virtual hard drive of 60 GB. In addition, this virtual machine has a floppy drive and a CD-ROM drive which map directly to the Mac Pro hardware if available. In this case there is no physical floppy drive, so if I want to load a floppy drive into the virtual machine I have to import the data into a shared folder using the Parallels Tools (Parallels Tools are part of the Parallels Desktop application, and are used to format/configure hard drives and other peripherals on the virtual machine).

After configuring the virtual machine the next step is to install the operating system, in this case Windows XP. Windows XP loaded quickly, with no problems- the most difficult part was waiting for all of the updates to install. Next I loaded Microsoft Office, in order to create content to test the assistive technology with. Again there were no problems and the most difficult part was waiting for the installation to finish, which wasn't very long actually. Finally, it was time to install Dragon NaturallySpeaking, which installed without a problem.

Having created the virtual machine, and installed the operating system and initial software, things were going very well and I was pleasantly surprised at how easy everything had been. Of course, it was time for a problem, and I found one in an unexpected place. Since Dragon NaturallySpeaking was the application I was going to begin testing, the first thing I needed to do was connect a microphone. This is not difficult in itself, but I quickly discovered that the microphone wasn't working the way I was hoping it would. It turns out that the new Mac Pro requires a powered microphone, as there is no preamp on the audio-in port. Fortunately we have a powered mic in the lab that I was able to use.

At this point I found myself with a fully functioning Windows machine running on the new Mac Pro, and a fresh copy of Dragon NaturallySpeaking installed. How well did Dragon NaturallySpeaking perform in this environment? Well, with a very minimal amount of training, I am dictating all of this, and Dragon is performing as well as it performs on my Windows based computer.