

Intel sets sights on new Ultrabook SSD specs

14 August 2012, by Nancy Owano



(Phys.org) -- Intel reportedly plans to standardize SSD specifications for its Ultrabook platform, in line with its resolve to lead the way toward slimmer, faster laptops. Intel wants a new SSD connectivity standard because it needs to put to rest some issues with the mSATA standard. The latter stands for Mini-SATA, an interface connector. The current mSATA-specification SSDs used in Ultrabooks are limited in capacity. It is impossible to fit in more than four or six chips of NAND flash memory, and Ultrabooks would be limited to 512 GB of storage. Intel is not about to live with that limitation.

The company is to invite on board some relevant industry partners, including NAND [flash memory](#) makers [SanDisk](#), Micron, and [Samsung](#). The goal is to explore a new SSD form-factor derived from mSATA. Reports are that Intel is harnessing PC manufacturers and storage specialists to work out a new storage standard, specifically, called the Next Generation Form Factor (NGFF).

The standard mSATA SSDs set specific limits to the printed circuit board size, while the new NGFF would allow for larger printed circuit boards to be made. It is expected that the next generation of NGFF SSD for the 2013 Ultrabooks will feature the

same width and thickness but will have a longer PCB.

Intel's recruits-Micron, SanDisk and Samsung Electronics-will help Intel to make Next Generation Form Factor (NGFF) better. Five length standards under consideration by Intel for the next generation of SSDs include 20mm, 42mm, 60mm, 80mm and 120mm.

The NGFF will allow [Intel](#) to push beyond current limitations of 512 gigabytes of flash storage without changing the thickness or width of drives. According to reports, the 42mm, 60mm and 80mm are the likely sizes. Work on the specifications is expected to continue through September. The new drives will be on the market next year.

The news comes none too soon for those familiar with the designs in question. The NGFF specs will allow disparate Ultrabook manufacturers to support a single SSD physical standard and will thereby make the industry a better environment overall, according to a recent article in *The SSD Review*. "I can't imagine how many times an Ultrabook [owner](#) has cracked open their case in hopes of an upgrade, only to find that the [SSD](#) they want to swap out is in some obscure proprietary format, or worse yet, is soldered onto the motherboard. Can you say stress?"

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