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Subject: Re: IDL and Dual Processor PC's  
Posted by [Peter Mason](#) on Fri, 04 Jun 1999 07:00:00 GMT  
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"Tanya Lancaster" <[lancaste@morph.ebme.cwru.edu](mailto:lancaste@morph.ebme.cwru.edu)> wrote:  
> We are looking into purchasing a dual processor pc. I was wondering  
> if there would be a notable increase in speed for running IDL  
> programs.  
> Right now we handle large medical image data sets and operations on  
> the data sets take up to several hours on a PII -400, 256 mb memory.

We have a dual PII/300 running WinNT4. As has been noted by other posters, the whole IDL environment is single-threaded and as such will not run on more than 1 CPU at a time. However, the second CPU does provide a varying amount of benefit - operating-system calls (such as I/O) can involve it. At times you can see an overall CPU usage of up to 70% or so while doing flat-out processing in ENVI, although this is unusual and the typical figure is of course 50%.

Unless you are going to be writing multithreaded routines for accessing via IDL's `call_external` (or similar), or doing some sort of concurrent work like the Linux poster, I'd say that dual CPU is something of a luxury and the money's better spent on more memory or hardware RAID. (If you're routinely crunching through large datasets then it is likely that a good I/O subsystem will be your best investment by **\*\*F\*A\*R\*\***.)

Peter Mason

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