

NTRLS IT: Real Stories
Dell Optiplex GX520 Won't Power On

Issue / Problem:

Dell Optiplex won't power on but shows a yellow blinking power light over and over

Background Information you should know about:

Power buttons are used to power on a computer or shut them or into a suspended state for later use.

Resolution / How we solved the problem:

I had a issue where a library called me about one of their computers not powering on, but just showing a blinking yellow light on the power button, that was blinking over and over and nothing more. This particular computer was a Dell Optiplex GX520 Desktop model (sits flat so you can set your monitor on top). Fortunately the library had two more of these types of computers so I could swap parts out from them to do some troubleshooting. These are the steps I took to find out what was wrong:

1. The first thing I did was change out the power supply from another computer to this one. Still received the blinking light issue.
2. Swapped out RAM, still received the blinking light issue.
3. Swapped out the CPU and still I got nothing but a blinking light and no power on. I started to suspect the motherboard had gone bad.
4. I examined the computer more closely this time and noticed the front power switch panel. It had the power button where the blinking light was, headphones jack, microphone jack and two USB ports. This panel was removable. Then I noticed that one of the USB ports had been broken and the metal tabs were all curled up and touching the sides of the USB port.
5. I swapped the panel with another from one of the other computers and found this to be the problem. The computer powered up correctly. Until the library was able to order and replace the part, I used a small flat head screwdriver and some needle nose pliers to straighten the metal tabs to prevent them from touching the sides of the port which was causing the short in the power button. We then covered the broken USB port with several layers of tape and paper to prevent any patrons from using it.

The computer is now back in working order. After the library got the new panel in from Dell it's working as intended.

If you have any questions or comments on this issue, please email me at abeatty@ntrls.org.