



Windows 7 is Vista “done right”

It's no secret that Windows Vista was a disappointment to most users. The general opinion of Vista might be summed up in one word: unfinished. Very few people disagreed with two of the major design goals that Microsoft espoused for Vista: Greater security and increased functionality. But when it came to actually using Vista, there were problems. Initially, many users who upgraded to Vista were shocked to find out that many of the devices attached to their computer wouldn't work because there were no device drivers for them. Beyond that, users of Vista complained that it just didn't feel like Microsoft spent any time giving it a consistent “feel”. It was as if Vista was rushed into final release.

Apparently, Microsoft took the criticism of Vista seriously. While some reviewers have enumerated changes that they would like to see incorporated into Windows 7, most feel that Microsoft actually listened to the critics and responded with solid improvements.

First of all, when reviewers describe Windows 7 as “Vista done right”, they are very close to the truth. Vista was a fundamental re-think of the way an operating system should operate. In Vista, Microsoft radically changed the way an operating system worked internally, but they never got around to improving the “user experience”. Vista is probably more secure than previous operating systems, and it does have the capability to handle tasks requiring the latest hardware and software technolo-

gies, but for users, it is pretty clunky.

Microsoft 7 is very different: Except for a little tweaking, the internal operation of Windows 7 and Vista is the same. The big changes are the way that Windows 7 interacts with the user.

What are the changes in Windows 7?

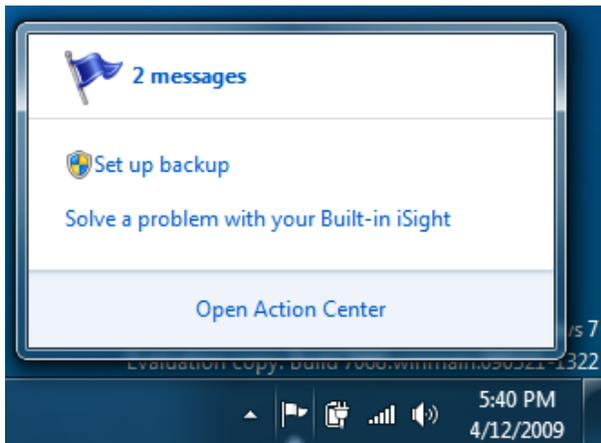
Boot time: Windows 7 takes less time to boot up. According to Microsoft, several changes were made to accomplish this. First, many operating system services are started up in parallel instead of one at a time. But more importantly, fewer services are started at boot-up (Translation: unneeded services are not started).

Overall performance: Most reviewers feel that Windows 7 is “probably” faster than Vista. Since Vista and Windows 7 are very similar internally, no one expected any dramatic performance improvements, but several minor changes to the way resources are allocated should help performance. In Windows 7, many services won't start up until they are actually needed. This will reduce the load on the CPU and memory, freeing up processor time and memory for tasks that need to be performed. Additionally, Windows 7 does a better job of figuring out how much memory to allocate. This should reduce the percentage of wasted memory.

Windows Action Center: Maintenance, Security, and Notification functions have been combined into a single feature called the Windows Action Center. Included in this new set of screens is a reworked version of the User Account



Control (UAC). In Vista, when the UAC was turned on, it was probably the single most annoying feature with its incessant repetition of the same question: Are you sure that you really want to do this? Windows 7 doesn't eliminate this feature, but it makes it significantly more tolerable. Instead of UAC on or off, there are four possible settings, allowing users more flexibility in choosing an acceptable level of operating system paranoia.



The Action Center will also have the ability to “fix” corrupted applications. According to published reports, if an application crashes twice, an attempt will be made to apply a correction to that application. Details are a little sketchy on how this works, but it appears that application developers will be able to include correction procedures in the installation procedures for their product (s). The correction procedures are linked into the Action Center when the application is installed. If Windows 7 detects an application crash, the correction procedure gets invoked. While this could turn out to be a very useful feature, it is going to take time for

Microsoft and application developers to work out the kinks. Don't expect that this feature will be that useful on day one.

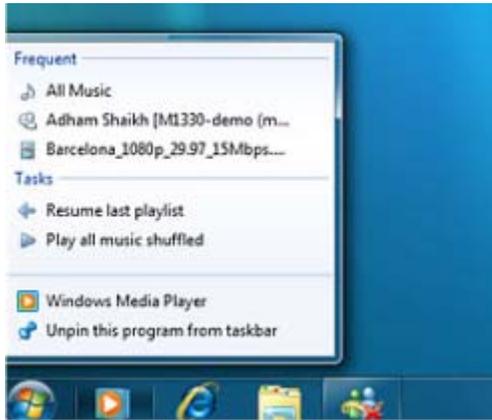
Taskbar: In previous operating systems, the taskbar at the bottom of the screen could be used to launch specific programs and switch between programs once they were running. In Windows 7, an “enhanced” toolbar is loaded with visual cues and functions to manage and switch between applications.



Windows 7 adds the ability of a user to “pin” any program into the “quick launch” area of the taskbar so that it can be started with a single click. For those programs that are running but minimized, hovering over their icon will display thumbnails of windows that open in that program. If the user hovers over the thumbnail, a full-screen preview of the window will be displayed.

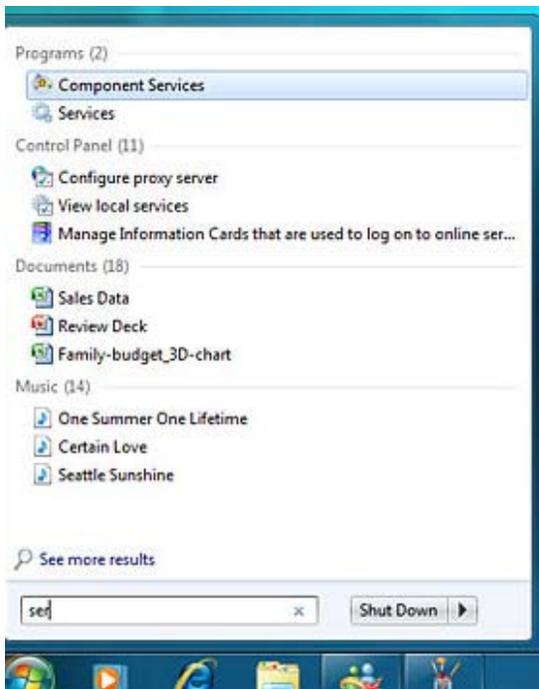
Jump Lists:

Once the high-use applications have been placed in the taskbar, it becomes very easy to get to frequently used items. By right-clicking on icons in the taskbar, lists of items associated with icon will be displayed. For instance, if an icon for Word is placed in the taskbar, right-clicking on it will display a list of documents that were recently accessed by Word.



If Windows Media Player is contained in the task bar, right-clicking on it would give a user the option of playing all music, or resuming from the last play list. Frequently accessed files can also be "pinned" into the Jump List to make them readily available.

Windows Search: All of us are familiar with the multitude of search engines available on the web. Wouldn't it be nice if it were possible to search through our computers as easily?



Windows Search will help users to find anything on a user's computer, but more importantly, it will organize the search results and display them in a unified fashion.

Device Management: In Windows 7, a single "Devices and Printers" screen replaces the multiple screens that were required to manage different types of hardware devices in previous operating systems. Within this single screen, users will be able to connect, manage, and use whatever printers, phones or other devices that they wish to operate from their computer.



As part of the new device management methodology, Windows 7 includes a new feature called "Device Stage". This feature allows users to interact with any compatible device connected to the computer, providing device status and the ability to run some functions from a single window. Manufacturers can take advantage of this feature by creating custom versions of Device Stage for their devices, giving users even more device functionality from this screen.



View Available Network:

Access to all available networks comes through a single screen. Users can choose which network to connect to from the choices displayed on the screen.



This is a useful feature for laptops when the user may have multiple locations from which to use the laptop computer. Once the laptop is powered up, the user clicks on the "Available Network" screen and chooses the appropriate network.

Windows XP Mode: When Vista arrived on the scene in 2007, many large corporate users were hit with a number of unexpected incompatibility issues. In order to calm the fears of those large users, Microsoft will make an add-on

available (via free download) to run legacy programs in a "virtual XP environment". It is unlikely that most users will need this feature. It will only be available in the versions of Windows 7 created for business use.

Pricing and Features

Windows 7 will be offered in 5 different versions: Starter, Home Premium, Professional, Enterprise, and Ultimate. Microsoft has not released any details about which features would be included in the various versions of Windows 7, nor have they published any pricing information. According to most IT gurus, Windows 7 will probably cost more than Vista.

Should you upgrade to Windows 7?

Even with all of our warm and fuzzy feelings about it, we would not be in any hurry to upgrade any workstations to Windows 7 when it becomes available. Unless we absolutely needed it to survive, we would not consider upgrading to Windows 7 or buying new computers with Windows 7 installed on them until after the first service pack for Windows 7 is released.

On day one, no one knows how many undiscovered issues exist. Let somebody else discover them. Beyond that, there is no meaningful body of knowledge to call upon to answer user questions. Give the tech support people some time to develop solutions to common user problems. There are no awards for being of the first to implement Windows 7. Be patient. It will be worth the wait.



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Total Hits.....415,449
 Number of Pages Viewed.....157,180
 Total Visitors.....57,869
 Average Hits/Day.....12,982
 Average Pages /Day.....4,911
 Top Web Browsers Used:
 Internet Explorer 7.x.....37%
 Internet Explorer 6.x.....21%
 Firefox.....11%
 Safari.....<1%

Top 5 Operating Systems Used:
 Windows XP.....54%
 Windows Vista.....13%
 Windows 2000.....3%
 Mac OS.....1%
 Windows 98.....<1%



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