

28 July 2007

By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Windows Vista  
Microsoft

## [10 Reasons Why You Won't Ever Want to Go Back to XP from Vista](#)

### *Living with Windows Vista on a daily basis*

Released for businesses in November 2006, and for the general public in January 2007, Windows Vista is but a couple of days away from passing the first six months of availability milestone. The operating system's first half a year has been everything but an easy ride, with Microsoft struggling to convince on all the promises it delivered with Vista: security, usability, reliability, increased adoption rate etc. In January 2007, Windows XP became suddenly expired, and was pushed to the background. Vista only has room to grow by eroding the operating system market share currently occupied by XP, so Microsoft started drowning XP in Vista. Additionally, all other references to future releases under the Windows platform were muted under the reign of Steven Sinofsky, Senior Vice President, Windows and Windows Live Engineering Group. While XP, Linux and Mac OS X failed to draw the focus away from Vista, Sinofsky's new strategy also aims to keep Windows Vista Service Pack 1 and Windows Seven out of the limelight. This is nothing more than a move to underpromise and overachieve, a sort of Sinofsky trademark if you will. But the leitmotif can backfire on Microsoft without the marketing approach specific to, let say, Apple and Steve Jobs. So far, it looks like instead of creating an atmosphere of anticipation and mystery, Sinofsky is building nothing more than frustration, and a sentiment of paranoia. Windows Seven is planned for 2010, while Windows Vista SP1 could drop after February 2008, with the first public beta sometime in November 2007. But all news related to Vista SP1 is speculation at this point. Statistics prove that Vista has had little impact on deterring users away from Linux and Apple, in the same manner as it did not push new customers away from Windows or drive them to adopt a rival platform. According to statistics from Market Share by Net Applications Vista, the various distributions of Linux and Mac OS X are steadily, but surely on an ascendant trend. Linux accounts for 0.71% of the market, Mac OS has a share of 6% and Vista grew to 4.52% at the end of June with XP down to 81.94%. Apple is seeing strong sales of its Intel-based platform with the adjacent Mac OS X Tiger. The situation with Linux is a tad more confuse, but current market moves from U.S. computer manufacturer Dell are an indication that there is a consistent demand for Linux. And Microsoft claims that Windows Vista is selling, and how... Closing in on the first six months on the market, Kevin Turner, Microsoft Chief Operating Officer revealed at the Financial Analyst Meeting 2007, that the company shipped in excess of 60 million licenses for the operating system. Now, there are those that have been living with Windows Vista since the time the operating system was still referred to as Longhorn. No less than 50 families around the globe participated in a Microsoft experiment designed to evaluate the platform's readiness for the household. But even outside of Microsoft's small pet project, over 5 million beta testers accessed the operating system long before it hit the shelves. In total, Vista shipped over 60 million licenses, and whatever your perspective - because shipped does not by all means equal sold, and sold is not synonymous with use - the platform does account for an installed base larger than any other rival operating systems. Having installed Vista and upgraded from XP, of a previous version of Windows, would you go back? Personally, I use both Vista and XP in parallel, and occasionally Ubuntu and Tiger. Occasionally, should be read as extremely rare... And I have found that Vista has slowly become my preferred operating system. At this time, I use Vista far more frequently than I use XP. Approximately four times more often. But of course that I am one of the lucky few. My copy of Windows Vista Business never experienced any hardware or device compatibility problems, the drivers all fell into place, I never had need for hotfixes, never ran into unsolvable issues, the platform automatically identified and set up my network without

any problems. The few glitches I did run into involved applications without Vista support. But even there I managed to make my way through with a debugger. Would I ever go back to Windows XP? The issuing list of reasons should provide an accurate reason why I'm going to stick with Vista.

**1. Windows Aero**When it comes down to the default graphical user interface in Windows Vista, there is one obvious choice. Unless your system configuration has limited resources and you have to run Windows Vista Basic, Aero is for you. Yes, it will eat quite a consistent amount of your the graphics processor, and it will slow down your workflow with zero point something, but in terms of eye candy... with Aero, Microsoft was accused of working its photocopiers for Tiger's Aqua. This is an old issue that dissipated following Vista's release. Aero is simply superior to Aqua. And let's face it, transparency and glass effects aside, Vista already has an equivalent to the Cover Flow technology Apple promised for Leopard dropping in October 2007 - Flip 3D. When it comes down to small details, the quality of the operating system's surface influences directly user experience.

**2. Ubiquitous Search**From the search box integrated in the Start Menu to the default search areas across Windows Explorer, Windows Vista streamlines the process of finding data, files, emails etc. The default Windows Desktop Search mechanism in Vista is nothing short of a godsend, and one of the best overhauls implemented by Microsoft in its latest operating system. And even though the feature is planned to be revamped in order to accommodate third-party desktop solutions in Vista Service Pack 1, the general functionality will remain the same. Now don't get me wrong. Microsoft should definitely improve on the searching speeds, the indexing process and better highlight the search folders, there is always room to grow, but the ubiquitous search in Vista delivers a new standard for flexibility in the operating system, one unmatched by Windows XP's alternative. Do you remember the old search in XP that felt like it was eating all your processor? Well... no more...

**3. Navigation and Windows Explorer**The features are in no particular order, as you might have noticed. But the new Windows Explorer in Vista makes the version in XP look obsolete. Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates stressed at the Financial Analyst Meeting 2007 the need to move towards natural graphical user interfaces in the coming 10 years. Now, in all fairness, examples of natural user interfaces come from products such as Apple's iPhone and Microsoft's Surface table computer. Windows Explorer in Vista does not actually fall in the same category, as you still need the now traditional mouse and keyboard. But it is a huge leap forward from XP. Hiding the menu is a simple and comprehensive inspiration designed to save display space. And the new navigational capabilities introduced will make your life so much simpler. I have never been much of a fan of third party file organizing applications. And now with Vista's Windows Explorer there's no need to find alternative solutions. The intelligent navigation in the Folders tree, and in the address bar just feel natural and intuitive.

**4. Control Panel**Well, not Control Panel all by itself, but in combination with the Instant Search box of the window. I can't even remember the times when I was hunting down an option in the XP's Control Panel, just vaguely knowing both its name and location. With Vista, this is no longer an issue. The Control Panel Search is in a league all of its own in Windows Vista. There is little doubt about that. Just try and find obscure options with the Instant search in the Start Menu. You won't be able to. But as far as Control Panel is concerned, here you can search for a specific term such as "Turn Windows Features On or Off" or for something more general like "Display" or "Resolution." All it takes is the slightest idea of what you are looking for and you will find it. If Microsoft could get all instances of Instant search across Windows Explorer, via the automated indexing service, to mimic the behavior of the Control Panel search, I am sure all objections related to the feature will be muted.

**5. Network and Sharing Center**The Windows Vista Network and Sharing Center is at the heart of all your networking activity. You will be able to easily access all the machines and devices connected to the network, to set up a new connection in addition to managing existing ones, to connect to the various networks available, to configure the Internet and Windows Firewall options and to diagnose and repair existing issues. If you want to set up a wireless or a peer-to-peer network, or if you want to try your hands at ad hoc networking

then Network and Sharing Center is the way to go. Additionally, you can perform network troubleshooting, via an automated process designed to assist users in resolving eventual problems. Are there limitations to what the Network and Sharing Center can do? Well, of course there are. One of the most frustrating issues is when Vista's Network Diagnostics Framework will stubbornly claim that there is nothing wrong when obviously this is not the case. Microsoft needs to address this caveat. **6. The Windows Vista Installation** Installing Windows Vista is nothing like deploying Windows XP. With its latest operating system, Microsoft introduced not only an [overhauled boot architecture](#), but it also revamped the user experience. In this regard, the old Windows XP text based installation is out the door. Vista features its welcoming graphical user interface from the get go enabling even average users to effortlessly deploy the operating system. Although installing Windows XP was not too much of a challenge, it did present some issues. By comparison, Vista makes users feel relaxed as they select the installation options much in the same manner as deploying a usual application. Getting Vista from the media to your machine is no longer the advanced process with XP. And by streamlining the installation, Microsoft made another step closer to making Vista extensively user friendly. **7. Security** I don't know if it's the additional mitigations introduced into the operating system or the obscurity of the market share, but Vista simply makes me feel safe. Microsoft has continually touted the operating system as the most secure Windows platform available on the market, and results, at least in terms of the volume of vulnerabilities impacting Vista, seem to speak for themselves. "Windows Vista is the most secure operating system we've ever released. In the first 180 days we've had far fewer high-severity vulnerabilities than XP. We've had 12 in Vista. We had 25 in XP. And think about the sophistication level of the people that create the vulnerabilities today versus what it was when XP released. It's a far different opportunity today than it was then. Over that same time period, I think you should also note that Windows Vista had far fewer than Apple, as well as any major desktop Linux distributor. And that's something, again, we feel very good about from a security and reliability standpoint. But we're not resting on our laurels; that is something we're going to continue to stay focused on. This is the first operating system we've ever launched with security built in on the front end from a foundation standpoint. And, again, we're going to continue to work on that and improve it as we go forward," Kevin Turner explained. **8. Extensive Personalization** Windows Vista indeed supports an extensive level of user personalization. You will be able to customize the operating system to the point where [Vista will look absurd and ridiculous](#). But such a scenario only underscores the flexibility Microsoft introduced to users with its latest operating system. There is a good reason why right-clicking on the desktop will allow you to access the Personalization option in the contextual menu displayed on the desktop. And there is little limit to the state in which you can render Windows Aero. Of course in this context, although there is a healthy line between customization and deformity, Vista allows you to easily pass to the point of making the user interface virtually unusable. **9. Tuning, Healing and Diagnostics Technologies** "When you think about reliability, Windows Vista has got the built-in tools for diagnostics, backups, self-healing capabilities. Again, it helps increase uptime and lower support costs. And one of the metrics that I wanted to share with you today around this area from a reliability standpoint is that we've had 21 percent fewer support calls per unit shipped than we've had in XP-21 percent. And that's a big improvement for us as it relates to improving that reliability," Turner added during his address at the Financial Analyst Meeting 2007. And the reasons for the improved reliability of Windows Vista are all the performance, self-healing and diagnostics technologies built in the operating system. Vista will permit you to enhance performance via a USB drive and Ready Boost, or to go back in time and recover a lost file with Shadow Copy. Additionally, users can create back ups of files, folders, entire partitions or even Vista. The Backup and Restore Center is a lifesaver, just as System Restore is. You can troubleshoot memory and [network problems](#), keep an eye on the performance metrics of your hardware and make Vista work for you to diagnose and resolve functionality problems. **10. Windows Sidebar**

**as a Preview of Windows Seven Ribbon** And last but definitely not least... Windows Sidebar. Now Windows Sidebar, complete with a pleiad of gadgets, is by no means an apex of user interface evolution for Microsoft. In fact, the concept has been around for a while and it's used by both Apple in Tiger and the Google desktop. Still, the Sidebar in Vista is just a preview of what is to come in Windows Seven in 2010. Leading the development for [the graphical user interface of Windows Seven](#) is Julie Larson-Green, Corporate Vice President, Windows Experience Program Management. Together with Sinofsky, Larson-Green is responsible with the excellent GUI redesign of the Office 2007 System. A Ribbon remake could very well be in the works for Windows Seven, Vista's successor.