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[Is Windows Vista Living Up to the Dream?](#)

One year and beyond

Windows Vista
Microsoft

A Happy Birthday Is in Order... November 8 is the official release to manufacturing date of Microsoft's latest operating system. A year ago Jim Allchin, the former Co-President, Platform and Services Division, who divorced from Microsoft on the same day Vista hit the shelves, being replaced by Steven Sinofsky with the role of Senior Vice President, Windows and Windows Live Engineering Group, as the head of the Windows project, announced the Vista RTM saying just: "It's time!" This of course is a mere prefiguration of "the Wow is now" slogan designed to push the operating system to general consumers. At that time Windows Vista was running on in excess of 60,000 machines over in Redmond and on a few million computers worldwide thanks to the testing milestone releases. According to statistics from Net Applications, Vista has a share of just 0.11% of the operating system market.

Microsoft's five year journey from Windows XP in 2001 had finally delivered Vista. "And just what is this so-called RTM? It's the major milestone where we can confidently say that Microsoft is done with Windows Vista and will be handing it off to our industry partners: PC makers, ISVs and IHVs. They in turn will continue to ramp-up in earnest now that the target is locked -- for example, by refining hardware drivers -- in order to complete the cycle and make Windows Vista available via retail channels on 30 January 2007. On that date Windows Vista and the 2007 Microsoft Office system will be available to customers around the world", revealed at the time Nick White, Product Manager at Microsoft working on the Windows Vista launch team.

Reduced Piracy Mode Just days after the Vista code went gold, the first pirated versions of the operating system began emerging. Microsoft has high hopes for Vista in its constant face-off with Windows pirates. The operating system featured Volume Activation 2.0, and a revamped activation infrastructure intimately connected with the Windows Genuine Advantage antipiracy mechanism. But the Redmond company's mitigations were taken down and Vista suffered the same faith as its predecessor Windows XP. One of the most notable releases that accompanied the operating system's RTM was

[Vista BillGates pirate edition](#). Still, Microsoft's official position is that the WGA mechanism in combination with the Reduced Functionality Mode triggered into pirated copies of the operating system had worked wonders. At an apex of the piracy phenomenon focused on Vista, Alex Kochis, Senior Product Manager for Windows Genuine Advantage, promised an update to tackle the 'timer crack' or '2099 crack', a workaround designed to bypass the operating system's activation mechanism, extending the grace period until 2099. **Did You**

Get Your Trigger Finger Ready? Windows Vista is synonymous with the exclusive availability of DirectX 10. Microsoft did evolve the graphics infrastructure of its latest operating system in comparison with XP, but did nothing to backport DirectX 10. Before the business launch of the platform, at the end of November, the company was introducing the first games tailored on Vista: [Halo 2 and Shadowrun](#). Both titles were designed to take full advantage of the advances in the DirectX suite of multimedia application programming interfaces. DirectX 10 in Vista is one of the most criticized Microsoft moves with the development of its Windows client. The company has been under a barrage of fire from both the gaming industry and community for succeeding to narrow down the the main platform for games down to a niche and for forcing upgrades to its latest operating system. Criticism only grew in intensity with a variety of compatibility issues between graphics hardware and the new operating system. A year after RTM, Halo 2 and Shadowrun did not prove the start of a consistent trend, and Windows XP with DirectX 9.x is still the main gaming platform worldwide. Meanwhile Microsoft is focusing increasingly on the delivery of DirectX 10.1 together with Windows Vista Service Pack 1 next year. **The First Viruses for**

VistaCharacterizing Vista at one point, Jim Allchin stated that the operating system was neither foolproof nor perfect. And security company [Sophos](#) came to support this view by revealing that Vista could still fall victim to legacy malware. W32/Stratio-Zip, W32/Netsky-P and W32/MyDoom-O were enumerated among the pieces of malware capable of compromising Vista. "There has been much speculation about whether Vista would render existing malware extinct, and the news is now in - it won't," commented Carole Theriault, senior security consultant at Sophos at that time. "While Microsoft should be commended for the huge security improvements it has made in Vista, running separate security software is still essential to eliminate the risk of infection. On top of this, cyber criminals will already be looking at creating Vista-specific malware. Users need to think carefully about whether their current solution is going to offer sufficient protection against such emerging threats, given that some vendors continue to experience problems adapting their software for the Vista operating environment."

Vista Business Launch with a Tongue TwistOn November 30th at 7.30am PST, [Microsoft Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer](#) launched Windows Vista, 2007 Microsoft Office system, and Exchange Server 2007 at the NASDAQ headquarters in New York. Microsoft's strategy was to position Vista as a business oriented product first of all. And in this context, the launch of the Enterprise SKU of the operating system for Software Assurance customers via Volume Licensing, should have sent all the right signals to catalyze a rapid adoption of Vista in the business environment. This was of course not the case, as businesses are lagging behind when it comes to migrating to Vista. The proximity of Vista SP1 is also a factor that has impacted the generalized tendency to postpone Vista upgrades for over a year since the operating system's launch. And the fact that in most of the cases, Vista also required the upgrading of the hardware infrastructure did not help either. Microsoft revealed that some 40 million computers are covered for Vista upgrades via Software Assurance, but this means little in the context in which corporations are extremely slow at embracing the platform. **It's Here... Again... Wow**On January 30 2007, Microsoft made available Vista for the general public. Windows Vista hit the shelves in four different editions: Home Basic, Home Premium, Business and Ultimate. The Redmond company also permitted users to buy upgrades to Vista via the Windows Marketplace. This is a date coinciding with the \$500 million Wow marketing campaign for the operating system, an approach dropped completely by Microsoft a year after RTM. There is no longer any reference or word on the Wow. Vista's Wow was introduced originally by Mike Sievert, Corporate Vice President, Windows Client Marketing. On January 29, Steve Ballmer was the host of a luncheon in Times Square. Ballmer was joined by Microsoft Chairman [Bill Gates](#) to celebrate the international availability of the operating system. And then on January 30, Ballmer kicked off the consumer launch of Vista also from New York. **ANI**Vista was constantly applauded as an epitome of security in comparison to all other available Windows clients. And while the operating system was a product of the Secure Development Lifecycle, the [zero-day Windows Animated Cursor Handling vulnerability](#) made headways, propagating a different perspective than that official view from Microsoft over the security of Vista. The security flaw was related to the way the platform was handling cursors, animated cursors, and icon rendering in the context of insufficient format validation. And yet, in its recent [Security Intelligence Report](#) covering January - June 2007, Microsoft is still raising Vista on a pedestal in comparison to Windows XP in terms of security. The Redmond company is in fact using Windows XP as a reference for Vista security, promising 50% less vulnerabilities with its latest operating system in comparison to the platform made available in 2001. **Counting Vistas**Following the launch of Windows Vista, Microsoft focused on delivering reports highlighting the apex of performance of the operating system on the market. Net Applications data puts Vista at almost 8% of the operating system market at the end of October 2007, and Windows XP at 79%, with an eroded share, nothing but the natural evolution synonymous with the introduction of a new client. Microsoft has shipped to its channel partners in excess of 88 million copies of Vista since the launch. And this number comes on the background of

additional statistics from the company, such as support for over 2.2 million devices, with over 2,000 applications having been labeled with the Works with Windows Vista or the Certified for Windows Vista logos. There are also in excess of 11,000 logoed hardware and devices are available to consumers. And Microsoft has also been hammering away at Vista, softening the rough edges of the operating system, and having released over 20 compatibility, support, and reliability updates. **Coming Right Up...**The next step into the evolution of Windows Vista is planned for the first quarter of 2008. Microsoft has introduced the first preview versions of Vista SP1 in mid July 2007, and moved the service pack into beta at the end of September. Because it is joined at the hip, well actually at kernel level, with Windows Server 2008, formerly codenamed Longhorn, Vista SP1 will be made available in concordance with Microsoft's last 32-bit server operating system, currently scheduled for launch at the end of February 2008. Vista SP1 will in this context, follow Windows Server 2008 to the market. At the same time the Redmond company is getting ready to drop the third and final service pack for Windows XP, by mid 2008. Windows 7, the successor of Windows Vista has been announced for 2010. **But is Windows Vista Living Up to the Dream?**On January 30 2007, David Mitchell Smith, VP and Gartner Fellow, asked "Windows Vista - (Too) Great Expectations?" The question is of course valid today, perhaps more so under the form of 'is Windows Vista living up to the dream?' I will leave the answer to you. Please feel free to comment bellow.