

14 September 2007

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Windows Update
Microsoft

[Microsoft Admits Altering the Users' Vista and XP without Their Knowledge](#)

It seems that the company has been doing it for a while now

Microsoft has issued an official response to [reports](#) that it is altering files in both Windows Vista and Windows XP via the Windows Update infrastructure without providing any information to end users in this regard, and without bothering to seek authorization. The Redmond company aimed to clarify the issue related to the introduction of silent and stealthy updates to Vista and XP. A total of nine files, nine in each operating system, have been modified. The changes were intimately connected with the Windows Update (WU) itself. In this context, Microsoft revealed that although end users were just informed by third parties of the self-updating behavior of Windows Update components, for the company it has been a long, and now traditional servicing practice. "Windows Update is a service that primarily delivers updates to Windows. To ensure on-going service reliability and operation, we must also update and enhance the Windows Update service itself, including its client side software. These upgrades are important if we are to maintain the quality of the service," stated [Nate Clinton](#), Program Manager Windows Update. "Microsoft believes that users should remain in control of their computer experience. Practically, customers have told us that they want to have time to evaluate our updates before they install them. That said, and to the benefit of both customers and the IT ecosystem, most customers choose to automate the updating experience." There are no less than four options available to Windows users and designed to help with the management of incoming updates: 1) Install updates automatically, 2) Download updates but let me choose whether to install them, 3) Check for updates but let me choose whether to download and install them, and 4) Never check for updates. Essentially, Windows Update is set up to deliver and install updates for the Windows platform, keeping the systems up-to-date. Microsoft envisions scenarios where it takes the user completely out of the equation with the full automation of the service, the purpose being to have secure and up-to-date products. However, the options are available in order to give the control over to users. But the options are of little help, as Microsoft can choose to ignore them. Clinton went on to acknowledge the fact that Microsoft has been updating both Vista and XP without informing the users or looking for any type of approval. "One question we have been asked is why do we update the client code for Windows Update automatically if the customer did not opt into automatically installing updates without further notice? The answer is simple: any user who chooses to use Windows Update either expected updates to be installed or to at least be notified that updates were available. Had we failed to update the service automatically, users would not have been able to successfully check for updates and, in turn, users would not have had updates installed automatically or received expected notifications. That result would not only fail to meet customer expectations but even worse, that result would lead users to believe that they were secure even though there was no installation and/or notification of upgrades," Clinton added. Clinton explained that Microsoft has been updating WU in this manner since the service's debut. In this regard, Windows Updates is configured in such a manner that it will disregard the users' updating settings. With the sole exception of not auto-updating, when the Automatic Updates option is turned off. However, when users opt for the automatic installation of updates, or for notifications in relation to fresh releases, the company goes ahead and pushes the refreshes independent of the user. Microsoft indicated in no way that this practice will change in time. "The Windows Update client is configured to automatically check for updates anytime a system uses the WU service, independent of the selected settings for handling updates (for example, "check for updates

but let me choose whether to download or install them"). This has been the case since we introduced the automatic update feature in Windows XP. In fact, WU has auto-updated itself many times in the past," Clinton explained.