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By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor



Taking the Vista Plunge
Thomas Hawk

[The Art of Blocking and Dodging Vista SP1](#)

In the wait for Windows 7

In the context of Windows XP SP2, Windows Vista RTM was easy to ignore throughout, but with the introduction of Service Pack 1, the equation of the latest Windows client has evolved. SP1 represents not only a maturity milestone for Windows Vista, but also a stage in the life of the operating system that will catalyze a boost in uptake. But at the same time, the rapidly approaching cut-off date for the availability of Windows XP and the increasing focus of the OEM market on XP's successor mean that consumers will find it increasingly hard to avoid Windows Vista. Not that adoption has been limping for Vista, according to the Redmond company over the past year. "Windows Vista has become the fastest-selling operating system in history, with more than 100 million licenses sold and counting. If you haven't seen Windows Vista yet, it's time to give the operating system a look for yourself," reads an invitation from Microsoft in the Vista SP1 Product Guide. But as with mid-2008 the market will enter into its "All Vista, All the Time" period, with nowhere for Windows XP to do but down, steering clear of the latest Windows operating system will become nothing short of an art. Sure, there are options, such as Linux, and Apple's Mac OS X, and the ubiquitous XP, soon to become XP SP3, but Vista has yet to grown into its own. And for the time being Windows 7, the next iteration of the Windows platform, scoped for three years after the delivery of Vista, but already beginning to take shape (with Chairman Bill Gates hinting that it might drop as early as 2009) offers absolutely no promise. **Blocking Is No Problem**As far as Windows is concerned there are two types of customers, those that have already made the jump to Windows Vista and those that are yet to embrace the operating system, that is if they manage to resist sudden impulse to buy Vista SP1 after viewing this [apex-of-marketing video advertisement](#). End users will most likely welcome SP1 and implement it immediately, but businesses will not be as fast to apply the service pack. This is why Microsoft permits users to tweak the registry of Vista RTM in such a manner that the operating system will block the delivery of SP1 through Windows Update or Automatic Updates. However, the [Windows Service Pack Blocker Tool](#) will not be able to do the same with the installation of the service pack via the standalone packages. "A blocking tool is available for organizations that would like to temporarily prevent installation of Windows Service Pack updates through Windows Update. This tool can be used with Windows Vista Service Pack 1 (valid for 12 months following general availability). The toolkit contains three components. All of them function primarily to set or clear a specific registry key that is used to detect and block download of Windows Service Packs from Windows Update. You only need to use the component which best serves your organization's computer management infrastructure: a Microsoft-signed executable, a script and an ADM template." **Dodging Vista SP1 with OS X and Linux**There are three clear alternatives to [Windows Vista SP1](#), involving Windows XP, but also rivals Linux and Mac OS X. Apple has made consistent inroads into the territory dominated by original equipment manufacturers, and is making headway against heavyweights such as Dell, HP and Lenovo. In this regard the increased adoption of Mac OS X, Apple's proprietary operating system, comes inherently with the growth of Apple Mac computers. Having reached approximately 8% of the operating system market, according to data made available by Net Applications, Mac OS X is without a doubt the most viable alternative to Windows Vista SP1, taking into consideration strictly Windows' rival platforms. Linux is the next best thing, although the open source community will advertise its superiority over both Windows and Mac OS X. Still, the general consumers have failed to warm up to the open source operating system, even with the user-friendly Ubuntu from Canonical. In fact, slowly but surely, Ubuntu is positioning itself as the Linux

distribution of choice for the public. This is a perspective that hard core Linux users are likely not to share, furthermore demonstrating the Achile's heel of the open source community, the fact that it is a sum of irremediably fragmented units. While Canonical is going against Windows on the desktop with Ubuntu, top Linux distributors [Red Hat and Novell have already thrown in the towel](#). Novell President and CEO Ronald Hovsepian doesn't expect SUSE Linux to become popular on the desktop in the next three to five years. At the same time Novell announced that it has no plans to offer a "traditional desktop product for the consumer market in the foreseeable future." Both companies are delivering Linux as a desktop operating system for businesses, institutions and governmental organizations, but without a large mass of users behind it, Linux will never manage to dislodge Windows' install base. **The Good, Old, Not-Even-Out-Yet Windows XP SP3**At 73.59% of the operating system market as of the end of March 2008, Windows XP has seen its share eroded by [Vista SP1](#). Still, the operating system has strong roots, and the largest momentum out of all platforms available. Service Pack 3 will indeed add to this momentum but not enough to increase the grip of the operating system beyond anything that Vista SP1 won't be able to take down. But even with Vista SP1 there will be a nucleus of users that will ride XP SP3 for all its got, at least until the next version of Windows. With XP reaching the end of OEM and retail availability (although Microsoft indicated the possibility of prolonging XP's life) as of June 30, 2008 and with Windows 7 in the distance, more and more customers will turn to the only option left outside of Mac OS X and Linux - Vista SP1. The fact of the matter is that although XP SP3 will survive on older hardware infrastructures, system upgrades are also likely to be synonymous with Vista SP1 upgrades. "Desktop operations professionals are bracing for a major operating system (OS) migration that will kick off within the next three years. Forrester has pulled together the key challenges that early adopters faced as well as the solutions they implemented as part of their successful Windows Vista rollouts. Although most of these challenges - namely hardware and software compatibility - aren't new with Windows Vista, many of the workarounds companies deployed are. Ultimately, Windows Vista won't drive forward just the traditional PC market but the virtualization market as well," stated [Benjamin Gray](#), Forrester analyst in the "Lessons Learned From Early Adopters Of Windows Vista" research paper. **The Next-in-Line Windows** If Windows Vista is a work still in progress, according to [Microsoft Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer](#), than Windows 7 is nothing more than an embryo. While Vista needs only perfecting, Windows 7 still has to grow to the level of being a standalone operating system. But rest assured that Microsoft will not repeat the mistakes it did with Vista with the new version of Windows. There will no longer be five-year gaps between releases. And with the Windows 7 apple falling far from the Windows Vista tree, Microsoft will also work to prevent software and hardware incompatibility issues, but also to bring to the table from the get go superior performance, reliability and stability. However, the early contours of Windows 7 deliver in no way an alternative to Vista SP1. Even if Gates pointed to 2009, for the first taste of Windows 7, dodging Vista SP1 entirely and going straight to the next iteration of the operating system, while a possibility up for debate, doesn't necessary fit real-life scenarios. And the waiting period is the biggest unknown. If Windows 7 will drop by the end of 2009, as a minor step forward from Windows Vista, customers are still looking at least at early 2010 installations. But if Windows 7 delivery deadline will pass the 2010 mark, this will mean 2011 deployments for corporate consumers, a time by which XP SP3 could have lived out its usability. And in this context the conclusion is simple, although there are valid alternatives to Vista SP1, the fact of the matter is that [Vista SP1](#) in itself is an alternative worth taking into consideration.