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## [The Only Way for Windows XP SP3 Is Down](#)

*SP3 will do nothing for XP, but still more than what SP1 will do for Vista*

The [third and final service pack for Windows XP](#) will do little to nothing for the operating system, but will manage to deliver a superior boost to the platform's momentum in comparison to Service Pack 1 for Windows Vista. Via SP1, Vista has indeed grown into its own, but the latest operating system has to carry around the ballast from the failed Wow, and the variety of problems that plagued it through the first year on the market. [Service Pack 1](#) will need time to turn the public perception of Vista by 180 degrees, if it will ever manage to perform the task, and give migration and upgrading scenarios to the latest Windows operating system a feeling of inevitability. Unlike SP2, XP SP3 is just a standard service pack, so standard in fact that end users will barely notice any differences. It will certainly not even reach the same level of evolution SP1 is bringing to Vista. Still, the focus comes not on changes but on the strict perception of an update. The perspective, erroneous as it may be, that XP SP2 is superior to Vista RTM, has already become generalized among consumers, and SP3 is only going to accentuate it. Vista SP1, available since mid-March 2008, combined with price reductions for the most popular editions of the platform, will without a doubt contribute to fueling adoption through the retail and OEM channels. At the end of 2007, Vista RTM went over the 100 million sold licenses milestone, and is right on track to hit 150 million earlier than mid-2008, which would mean that uptake is accelerating. At the same time, XP has lost market share throughout 2007, and the trend will only continue to accentuate this year. And what it comes down to in the end is that the critical aspect of Vista SP1 vs. XP SP3 is intimately connected with the audience of each operating system. The install base drives the ecosystem of third-party developers to focus on the platforms, and in its turn, the focus of the ecosystem of software and hardware solutions fuels an increase in the adoption of the operating system. Vista is not an exception to this rule. Neither is [Vista SP1](#). **Statistics Don't Lie, the Only Way for XP Is Down** With or without SP3, the only way for Windows XP is down. Statistics don't lie in this regard, and with Vista commercially available since January 2007, XP debuted on a path of slow decline in terms of market share. The end of the road for the operating system made available in 2001 will be June 2008, when the operating system will no longer be offered for sale as retail boxes, or pre-loaded on new OEM machines. With the exception of the computers delivered by system builders, which will be available until mid-2009, and on ultra low cost PCs, that will live to see [Windows 7](#). In this context, emerging markets will offer the most consistent growth for [XP SP3](#), but still not sufficient. Yet, XP is not going anywhere by any measure. Michael Dix, General Manager of Windows Client Product Management, revealed that there is "no impact on our technical support plans [for XP] - mainstream technical support will continue to be available until April 2009 and extended support will continue until April 2014." And judging by the examples of Windows 2000 and Windows 98, XP SP3 will live well beyond its support kill-off deadline in 2014, only that it will do so with an eroded market share. Data provided by [W3Counter](#) reveals that the usage of XP has dropped from 84.48% in May 2007 to just 78.78% in March 2008. In the same period of time, Vista has grown from 1.91% to 6.93%. The perspective offered by W3Counter involves analyzing visitor data from approximately 8,500 websites, and while it may not accurately reflect the install base of the two Windows platforms, it does indicate that Vista is eating away at XP. Internet metrics company [OneStat](#) has seen Vista's global usage jump from 3.23% in July 2007 all the way to 13.24% at the end of March 2008. And while Vista increased its share of the market by 10.01%, Windows XP lost 8.43%, and is down to 78.93% at the start of April 2008 from 87.36% in July 2007. Overall, OneStat claims that Microsoft has lost a little of its grip on the operating system market with Windows' share down to 95.94% in April 2008 compared to 96.72% in July of the past year. This is of course correlated with the increase in popularity of both Mac OS X and Linux rival operating systems. Statistics delivered by [Net Applications](#) has Vista at 14.02% at the end of March 2008, jumping from 3.75% in May 2007. In contrast, XP's share was eroded from the apex of over 85% in December 2007, to just 73.59% at the beginning of this month. The current growth rate of Vista is not enough to take its share of the operating system market over that of XP by 2010. At the pace it had in 2007, Vista will add a share of 20% to 30% to its audience, but XP, with SP3, will continue to be the most prevalent Windows product as Microsoft will start

serving Windows 7. **But Don't Count Vista SP1 Out Just Yet**The only way for XP is down, but if Vista SP1 continues to underperform in the same manner as Vista RTM, XP will still be top dog in the next couple of years. However, you also have to take into consideration the factor of global PC shipments. OEM computers are estimated to approach [300 million](#) sold items worldwide in 2008, and the vast majority of them will be pre-loaded with Windows Vista SP1 and not XP SP3. Such a scenario will only contribute to XP's already eroding market share, and to the acceleration, even if artificial of Vista SP1's adoption. For the most part, Service Pack 3 will only contribute to end users riding Windows XP for all it's got until Windows 7 hits, but not to taking the operating system out its downward spiral.