

15 February 2008

By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Vista Cracks Beyond Vista SP1

Of course...



There is a veritable Windows Vista crack fiesta that accompanied Microsoft's latest Windows client to the market. As Vista was unleashed onto the world back at the end of 2007, cracks began emerging, designed to circumvent the antipiracy mitigations set in place by Microsoft. And in contrast to Windows XP, which was nothing short of a sacrificial lamb in the hands of pirates, Vista did feature an overhauled activation architecture, an intimate connection with the Windows Genuine Advantage and the Reduced Functionality Mode kill-switch. But the antipiracy measures helped little to limit the piracy phenomenon and the luxuriant and diversified environment of cracks, key generators, activation workarounds that grew alongside with Windows Vista. The first to fall at the end of 2006 was the KMS server model for the Vista Enterprise activation process following November 2006. And then, there were the Bill and Melinda Gates cracks, the Frankenbuild version of Vista SP1, Key Gens featuring brute force attacks, OEM BIOS and the 2099 Grace Timer hacks. It has taken Microsoft well over a year to produce Windows Vista SP1 and at the same time to come with a resolve to two of the most popular and widespread Vista cracks, the OEM BIOS and 2099 Grace Timer exploits. And yet there are still illegal methods designed to bypass Vista and Vista SP1's activation mechanism that continue to function. One such example is a Vista OEM BIOS crack labeled as Vista Loader and designed to turn a pirated version of the Windows Vista operating system and turn it into a genuine platform. And with Vista SP1, pirates don't even have to worry about their systems going into Reduced Functionality Mode is non-genuine, as Microsoft has scrapped the kill-switch from Vista with the service pack. However, Microsoft is not letting its guard down and is looking for alternative solutions, such as educative methods aimed at students. "A study was released yesterday about teenagers' opinions on illegal downloading. The study indicates only 11% of teens surveyed completely understood the rules about downloading from the Internet - in fact, 49% say they aren't at all familiar with the guidelines for downloading images, music, software and other IP. Fifty-five percent of these teens said they've downloaded or shared content over the Internet; after learning the rules, 72% said they would not engage in illegal downloading. As a way to educate students about IP rights, Microsoft is sponsoring and piloting an IP rights curriculum, geared towards 8th, 9th, and 10th graders, which will be made available to teachers for free," explained Alex Kochis, Senior Product Manager for Windows Genuine Advantage.