

18 October 2008

By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Windows
Microsoft

[Vista SP2 and Windows 7 by the End of June 2009](#)

Ballmer indicates new client operating system releases by July of next year

 The evolution of the Windows client, involving both Windows Vista (now with Service Pack 1) and [Windows 7](#), appears to be closer than Microsoft is ready to acknowledge officially. Of course, Windows XP, even with Service Pack 3, is the past, with the exception of customers abandoning Windows Vista by exercising their downgrade rights. Windows Vista, even with SP1, is a present that makes the future seem to not get here fast enough. And [Vista SP2](#) along with Windows 7 and Windows Cloud (Strata) are the future. But at the same time, both Vista SP2 and Windows 7 are nothing more than the evolution of Vista, to a lesser, and respectively a larger degree.

Come the end of October 2008, and the start of November, Microsoft will deliver a rather consistent taste of where it is heading with Windows, not only Windows 7, but also Windows 7 Server and Windows Strata (the label continues to be unconfirmed by the company). Events such as the Professional Developer Conference 2008, Windows Hardware Conference 2008 and TechEd EMEA will be focused on Windows 7 and Windows Cloud, although less on Windows Vista.

While at TechEd Brasil, at the start of this week, Microsoft Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer indicated that the company planned to unveil a range of new products by July 2009. Microsoft's CEO mentioned that, by the end of June 2009, the software giant would offer "client operating system releases." Microsoft is, of course, already cooking Windows Vista SP2 and Windows 7.

[Ballmer](#) stated that "Microsoft technologies: Windows, Windows Server, .NET, Visual Studio, Silverlight, SharePoint, Office (...) over the course of the 12 month period that ends June of next year, [are] just a subset of all of the exciting new innovations Microsoft will bring to market: client operating system releases, information management tools, security, gaming products and systems. The range of new technologies in some senses is growing and growing quickly." (emphasis added)

Windows Vista Service Pack 2 (SP2)

Microsoft released Windows Vista RTM at the end of January 2007, not counting the business launch of the operating system in November 2006. Vista SP1 was released to manufacturing on February 4, 2008 concomitantly with Windows Server 2008, but was only made available for download starting March 18. Now the Redmond company has already moved onward to Service Pack 2.

In fact Vista SP2 invites to the Beta program have already started to be sent out, according to Neowin. It is not Windows Vista SP2 that Microsoft is cooking, but also Windows Server 2008 SP2, Beta invites for which have also been sent out. Microsoft has yet to confirm anything officially, but the first Beta bits for Windows Vista SP2 and Windows Server 2008 SP2 are reportedly going to testers in just four weeks.

Still, while Service Pack 1 was the catalyst that took Vista RTM out of coma, making the operating system worthy of a long forgotten and discarded Wow label, SP2 is bound to be

nothing more than a standard service pack release. At best, SP2 will take Vista forward just as much as SP1.

The equation is rather simple for Microsoft. The company will end up with a repeat of the Windows XP SP2 - Windows Vista scenario in which both operating systems are available at the same time on the market, although this situation would involve Vista SP2 and Windows 7 RTM. The last thing that Microsoft needs is to evolve Vista with SP2 sufficiently enough that it will be capable to rival Windows 7. In this context, the answer is rather simple. The Redmond giant needs to keep Vista at a relative stand-still even with SP2, and focus all innovation on Windows 7.

Windows 7, or Windows 6.1, or Windows Vista R2, or Windows Vista but "a lot better"

The seventh major version of Windows, but only according to [Microsoft's math](#), comes with no differentiation between the codename and the brand. However, Windows 7 will, for the sake of perpetuating the existing level of Vista software compatibility, be in fact [Windows 6.1](#). At the same time, according to Ballmer, [Windows 7 will be Vista, but "a lot better."](#) This makes Windows 7 an excellent candidate for the Windows Vista R2 label, just as Windows 7 Server is in fact Windows Server 2008 R2. Still, the early feedback on the Windows 7 moniker indicates that the management of the Windows 7 project made the right choice.

"There you have it, Windows 7 now has a name. It's called - Windows 7," revealed [Steve Clayton](#), Microsoft's UK Partner Group CTO. "To be honest I was quite surprised but also pretty pleased. The naming decision as Mike Nash says is about simplicity. It'll certainly save us from all having to unlearn the name we've all had for it to date. I expect this naming decision will be debated to death on all the usual sites, but me, I'm just happy we settled on a name. Now let's get to the PDC and get the bits!"

"Win7 to officially be called . . . Win7" said [Robert Hensing](#), Microsoft security software engineer. "I actually for once - LOVE that we are keeping the name of the OS simple and leaving it at Win7. I will admit - I was somewhat disappointed when XP's name was announced internally (internally it was known as Whistler) and I was downright horrified when we decided to call Longhorn "Vista" (my friends call it "Veesta"). Longhorn sounds cool . . . manly . . . Vista is pretty much the exact opposite in my mind . . . it sounds serene and 'pretty'."

"Steve Ballmer was at Gartner's Symposium/ITxpo conference today, talking about a number of issues. The big question was about Vista deployments and what should companies do. He answered by saying that the adoption rate for Vista, is two times that of where XP was after the same period," stated [Neil Hutson](#), Microsoft evangelist. "Then in Jedi style, Neil MacDonald from Gartner said that 61% of respondents are thinking of skipping Vista. To that, Ballmer said that Microsoft would be ready for that outcome, but if he was the audience, he would not wait. I think that this is a good call. Vista SP1 is really stable and the big question is whether companies are going to wait for the first SP of Windows 7 before they deploy? That will leave them with a lot of very outdated machines and OS software that will take them a lot longer to replace."

Windows Cloud - To Strata or not to Strata?

At PDC2008 Microsoft plans to unveil the first Beta of Windows Cloud, which could be labeled Windows Strata, although the company has yet to confirm this aspect. Windows

Strata goes beyond the Windows client and server operating systems, and is a new platform tailored to the Redmond giant's Software plus Services business model.

"We have our Professional Developers Conference in Los Angeles in a couple of weeks, we're going to roll out new technologies and a new platform for this software plus services world. The new platform has a lot of work to do. First, it requires a new platform in the cloud. In the Microsoft kind of way of thinking every new major trend requires a new version of our operating system. So, we did Windows, then we did Windows Server, then we did Windows CE and Mobile. And you'll see us bring Windows technologies in a new form to the cloud," Ballmer explained.

Microsoft is essentially looking to keep up with the changes associated with the development paradigm. But what the company is doing is transition the Windows style of development to the cloud and make it available in the browser. Silverlight, .NET, Windows Presentation Foundation and Visual Studio will all contribute to enabling developers to build web-based solutions running on Microsoft's new Internet platform. In this regard, the software giant is working to ensure that services will "be available as a system construct in Windows Server, in Windows desktop and in Windows in the cloud," Ballmer stated, adding that "with this evolution to a new world of distributed computing, we Microsoft will introduce a new cloud platform, some new cloud services around Web 2.0, some advances to our development tools and development runtimes, as well as tools and technologies that really support new business models."