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Microsoft employee Don Lionetti tries out an early version of Windows Vista, the next-generation operating system. Atlanta, July 22, 2005. Microsoft

[Vista: the Gender Challenged OS, After the Longhorn Sex Change](#)

Wow-less, and more...

Windows Vista is a Microsoft gender-challenged operating system, after it has survived the Longhorn sex change. Just bear with me, it will all make sense in the end, I promise. The short story on Windows Vista is bound not to produce any Wow reactions. At least not in the range Microsoft was aiming for with the \$500-million Wow campaign for its latest Windows client. Released to business users in November 2006 and to consumers in January 2007, Vista went over the 100 million sold licenses milestone as of the end of the past year, according to Microsoft Chairman, Bill Gates. And yes, this actually means that Vista underperformed, as Microsoft initially estimated that it would push double the number of licenses Windows XP sold.

But at the same time, there is a more subtle alternative perspective over Vista and its evolution. And this is where the gender-challenged aspect comes into play. Just take Vista and try to place it among all the other Windows platforms which preceded it in the history of Microsoft. I know you're thinking it, so I'm going to come out and say it straight. Vista is simply... gender challenged, and a tad feminine... A little too much for its own good! And in this context, quite incapable of fully satisfying the needs of Windows users, accustomed to a different approach to the technology of the Windows platforms and the Microsoft building process.

Windows Yin (Feminine) and Windows Yang (Masculine)

Is it a question of yin vs. yang? Of feminine vs. masculine? Even when Windows is concerned? Well, we do have Windows-boys on one side and a couple of Windows-girls on the other. Look, all you have to do is go back to the beginning of Windows. Not all the way to the early stages, but Windows 3.1x would do for a starting point, as anything before that are examples of prepubescent Windows.

Windows 3.1x (the young buck) - Signaling the maturity stage of the Windows platform, was code-named Janus, after a god in the Roman mythology. If I tell you that Janus is associated with both beginnings and endings, then you might get an idea of why I choose this version in order to begin. Released in 1992, Windows 3.1x was nothing short of spectacular, and the users that had been struggling around in DOS finally had a graphical user interface and a memory manager at their disposal. Windows 3.1x is the boy that grew up to be Windows 95.

Windows 95 (all grown up and ready for the world) – Codenamed Chicago, Windows 95 was a young Windows man, setting the roots for the modern graphical user interface available in XP and Vista. It was still lingering between 16-bit and 32-bit, still relying heavily on DOS. But at the same time, Windows 95 was nothing short of a success story for Microsoft, and a success not only for the Redmond company, but also in terms of all the operating systems ever produced.

Windows 98 (still a little rugged, but with great potential for domestication) - Codenamed Memphis, Windows 98 was simply a better man than Windows 95 ever could have been. And Second Edition ensured that Windows 98 survived well after the release of Windows XP. Dropped in 1998, with SE available the next year, in 1999, Windows 98

claimed consistent resources including at least 486DX-2/66 MHz processors and a recommended 24MB of RAM. But it also delivered.

Windows 2000 (if it had been an actual man, it would have been quite a catch for the ladies) – Windows 2000 had no codename, but it was initially labeled as Windows NT 5.0. Look to Windows 2000 as the perfect Windows man. Even as early as 2000, this version of Windows was capable of addressing no less than 4 GB of RAM. The quality of this Windows release is exemplified by the fact that it has managed to survive even after Windows Vista.

Windows XP (the Alpha male) – Windows XP (codename Whistler), together with Windows XP SP2 (codename Springboard) need no introduction. XP is the apex of Windows masculinity. It has not only survived well into Vista's first year on the market, but it is also not giving up any of its territory without a bitter fight. As far as Windows is concerned, Windows XP is the Alpha male!

Windows Server 2003 (made not to be pretty) – this is a different breed of Windows man, a working specimen, designed for heavy server workloads. Released in 2003, Windows Server 2003 was by no means easy on the eyes, but this was not its purpose in the first place. It was designed as an upgrade from Windows 2000 and, in this respect, it delivered.

And Now the Windows Girls

In the enumeration above you have undoubtedly identified at least one missing item. Windows ME, or Windows Millennium Edition, has a reputation which precedes it. A pit stop between Windows 98 and Windows XP, Windows ME is without a doubt the absolute worse, piss-poor Windows version to this day. Buggy, instable and unreliable do not even begin to describe the disappointment that was Windows ME. Suffice it to say that this Windows girl failed to live for very long, and that XP knocked it out completely just a year after ME's launch.

And we come down to the inevitable Windows Vista. In a long line of strong and powerful Windows men under the Windows NT umbrella, including Windows 2000, Windows XP, and Windows Server 2003, Windows Vista is a dissonant presence. It not only proved to be Wow-less, but it also lacks the "juice" to take on Windows XP. This is why there are users perceiving Vista as ME2 and a transitional operating system.

The Longhorn Castration

And it's all because the Longhorn castration. The truth of the matter is that Vista started along as one of the guys, under the codename Longhorn, and designed to be an intermediate release between Whistler and Blackcomb. Longhorn was it was promised to Windows users, and not Windows Vista. But on August 27, 2004, Microsoft introduced the Longhorn Reset, which diverged away from Windows XP and went with the Windows Server 2003 codebase.

The Redmond company also cut Longhorn Castle, the Windows File System (WinFS), Location Awareness, the Next-Generation Secure Computing Base technology and additional features and capabilities from the initial Longhorn project, performing a veritable castration. On July 22, 2005, Microsoft unveiled Windows Vista with the first beta coming out on August 3, 2005. But Vista, because of its Windows Server 2003 legacy fails to be one of the girls. It is simply an emasculated Windows version, gender challenged, that still

needs to find its way.

Strapping on the Service Pack and the Next Windows Man

On March 18, Microsoft released [the gold version of Windows Vista SP1](#) to the general public. Strapping on SP1 means for Vista regaining some testosterone, to compensate for the estrogen generated with the Longhorn castration. At the same time, the synchronization with Windows Server 2008, and getting back in the Windows NT line of men is nothing but food news for the latest Windows client.

Still, users have already got a taste of the next Windows version. Windows 7, with Steven Sinofsky, Senior Vice President, Windows and Windows Live Engineering Group, at the lead needs to turn out a real Windows man. More than Windows 2000 and Windows XP SP2 combined.