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By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Windows
Microsoft

[Windows 7 - Between Vista SP2 and Windows 8, Close to What SP2 Was to XP](#)

Microsoft always said that XP SP2 was an entirely new operating system

Undoubtedly, the recent events focused on the next iteration of the Windows platform qualify these past days as the week of [Windows 7](#). Make no mistake about it, even though the Redmond company started communicating Windows 7, it failed to diverge in any way from its official policy of keeping the world in the dark when it comes down to the successor of Windows Vista. Arguments that the communication strategy imposed by [Steven Sinofsky](#), Senior Vice President, Windows and Windows Live Engineering Group is building frustration among both consumers and partners, have fallen on deaf ears. The Redmond giant did the exact opposite with Windows Vista, and the resulting experience did not justify the transparent tactics of Jim Allchin, (Former) Co-President, Platforms & Services Division. "Former" since his no. 1 software pet, Vista, hit the shelves on January 30, 2008. **"Yes, We Are Working on a New Version of Windows - It's Called Windows 7"** "Yes, we are working on a new version of Windows. As you likely know, it's called [Windows 7](#)," explained [Christopher Flores](#), Director Windows Communications admitting that it was traditional of Microsoft to start talking Windows Next immediately after a new release of the operating system. However, almost a year and a half since the launch of Windows Vista, and 150 million licenses later, Microsoft has barely said a few words about what's coming next in the platform. And this is valid not only for the Windows 7 client. Things are even worse for [Windows 7 Server](#), as Windows Server 2008 shipped just three months ago, at the end of February. "We are always looking for new ways to deliver great experiences for our customers," Flores added. "This is especially true of Windows - where we're constantly examining trends in hardware, software and services to ensure that we continue to drive the innovation that has both made Windows the world's most popular operating system and has provided a foundation on which our partners built great products and businesses. When we shipped Windows 2000, we were already working on Windows XP and we started working on [Windows Vista](#) even before we released Windows XP. So naturally, we've been thinking about the investments we made in Windows Vista and how we can build on these for the next version of Windows." Neither Sinofsky, nor Flores, and not even Chairman Bill Gates, or Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer offered anything specific on Windows 7. Microsoft's official position regarding the next version of Windows is that it's not yet ready to talk features, functionality, capabilities, Betas or a final delivery deadline. While Windows Vista was still in development, and referred to as Longhorn, the Redmond company was little shy of chattering of its plans for the platform. Windows Vista ended up a defaced Longhorn, de-featured, and stripped down of the vast majority of items Microsoft had promised in order to make an early 2007 launch. "With Windows 7, we're trying to more carefully plan how we share information with our customers and partners. This means sharing the right level of information at the right time depending on the needs of the audience. For instance, several months ago we began privately sharing our preliminary plans for Windows 7 with software and hardware partners who build on the Windows platform. This gave them an opportunity to give us feedback and gave us the opportunity to incorporate their input into our plans. As the product becomes more complete, we will have the opportunity to share our plans more broadly," Flores explained. In the end, Microsoft managed to confirm three things for Windows 7 the past week. The integration of new multi-touch and gesture technology, an availability date ahead of the end of 2009, and the lack of a new kernel. Touch computing is the only sure thing about Windows 7 at this point in time. More details, including specifics, will be shared at the 2008 Professional Developers

Conference in October 2008. But until then, Flores noted that "we know that this is a change in our approach, but we are confident that it will help us not only to build even better products, but also to be more predictable in the delivery of our products. We also know that this change has led to some confusion, so we would like to share information today that will hopefully clear up some of this." **Windows Vista R2/Windows Vista SP2** If Windows Vista is the ash, than Windows 7 is it's Phoenix bird. That much is clear. Expect Windows 7 to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. One thing it's not is a rewrite of Windows. Sinofsky pointed to Vista as the Foundation for 7. The [graphics](#), audio and storage subsystems will be the same, so will the [hardware requirements](#), all of Vista's applications, devices and drivers will be compatible with Windows 7. In this regard, the next version of Windows seems nothing more than a Windows Vista R2, or a Windows Vista SP2. Microsoft however is insisting that Windows 7 is a major, mammoth, monolithic release of the Windows client operating system just as Vista. But the new development strategy is evident with the release of Windows Server 2008. Sinofsky pointed out that Windows Server 2008 is also an evolution of Vista, and on par with Vista SP1, at least in terms of the code base and the service pack label. Windows 7 will also build on top of what Vista and Windows Server 2008 brought to the table. And the Redmond company had already indicated that Windows 7 would contain features which will act as the [foundation for Windows 8](#). Still, Windows 7 is bound not to be an equivalent of Windows Vista Service Pack 2. In this regard, if Vista SP1 provides any clues, SP2 for Vista will also be nothing more than a standard service pack. SP1, with insignificant exceptions, did not add any new features to Windows Vista RTM. Such a scenario successfully dismisses any connections between Vista SP2 and Windows 7. Even if Windows Vista will act as the foundation, Windows 7 will deliver a plethora of new features that are not available, and will not be available in Vista, SP2 or no SP2. But what about Windows 7 being a second version of Windows Vista? This possibility is supported by the close proximity of the 2007 and 2009 release dates, which seems unusual compared to the five year gap which separated Windows XP and Vista; but also by the lack of a new kernel. In all fairness, Microsoft never stated that Windows 7 will sport a new kernel. MinWin is actually related to the company's efforts to carve out the core of the operating system as a standalone Windows version, and not to overhaul the kernel. MinWin is by no means a new kernel, as it is not even a kernel per se. It's the actual core of Windows 7, which contains the kernel. The continuous play with speculation related to the MinWin anorexic kernel had a strong potential to hurt Microsoft, as the entire ecosystem of software and hardware solutions would be impacted by such a move. **Get Ready for XP SP2 Part II** Microsoft's official position, expressed by top executives such as Jim Allchin, is that Windows XP SP2, which was built by diverging resources away from Longhorn, should have been considered a new Windows client and not just a service pack. But in this context SP2 for XP provides a precedent, which in its turn gives an indication to where Microsoft is actually heading with Windows 7. By offering an evolution from what Vista is today, the Redmond company is essentially looking to repeat Service Pack 2 for Windows XP, but this time around marketing the new version as a fresh major release. SP2 more than anything else put XP on the map, and ensured its continuous dominance over the operating system market. Still, it did this not from the perspective of a service pack, because [SP3 for XP](#) failed to even come close, but from that of a major overhaul, or a major evolution, specifically what Windows 7 will be to Windows Vista. Of course with the level of details provided by Microsoft, this is nothing more than speculation at this point in time. Chances are that as SP2 was a stepping stone between XP and Vista, one treated as a service pack, Windows 7 will be a similar release on the road to Windows 8. From 2010 onward, provided that the plans for Windows 8 are at least in embryonic phase, Microsoft has a very good chance to put the Windows 7 evolution behind it, and actually provide something truly revolutionary. For the time being underpromising [Windows 7](#) is Microsoft's new strategy with a focus on overachieving the next iteration of Windows. Rather easy to do as the company continues to really promise nothing at all.