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Windows
Microsoft

[Windows 7: The Transparent Cracks in Codename Translucency](#)

Engineered by Jon DeVaan and Steven Sinofsky

Microsoft has been tiptoeing around Windows 7 since Windows Vista hit the market back in January 2007. Kevin Kutz, Director, Windows Client, came out back on February 13, 2007, just two weeks after Vista's general availability and stated that Microsoft was "not giving official guidance to the public yet about the next version of Windows, other than that we're working on it. When we are ready, we will provide updates". At that time, Windows development was moving away from under the leadership of Jim Allchin, (Former) Co-President, Platforms & Services Division, and under Steven Sinofsky, Senior Vice President, Windows and Windows Live Engineering Group. Over 18 months later, Microsoft continues not to be ready to talk Windows 7. But transparent cracks are starting to be engineered in the official Sinofsky-branded translucency communication policy imposed for the successor of Windows Vista. The recently-launched [Engineering Windows 7](#) initiative with the combined efforts of two senior engineering managers for the Windows 7 platform, [Steven Sinofsky and Jon DeVaan](#), Senior Vice President, Windows Core Operating System Division is an illustrative example in this case, but not the only one. In this regard, the [Windows 7 official End User License Agreement](#) webpage has been live even before Engineering Windows 7, and continues to be accessible even though the EULA is yet to be published. "Starting [on August 14, 2008], Steven Sinofsky (leading the Windows group), Jon DeVaan (leading Windows engineering) and the Windows Engineers are co-authors of a new blog that is specifically focusing on the coming wave of client technology in Windows 7. It is a treasure to get direct, 'from the horse's mouth' information about what is reality and what is vapor when discussing Windows 7," revealed [Joel Schoenberg](#), Microsoft's Windows Client Technical Specialist. **Windows Vista, or What Not to Do with Windows**

As far as Sinofsky is concerned, Windows Vista is living proof of how not to manage the Windows project, including both the development and the communication aspects. First and foremost, Vista is a product associated with Microsoft's failure to live up to its initial promises on the project. Sinofsky's solution? Promise nothing at all. Revealing no details on Windows 7 ensures that the end result won't be a sure candidate for a Vista-repeat, even though the transition from one Windows client to another is stated to be evolutionary.

Dissociating Windows 7 from Windows VistaThe Engineering Windows 7 project is a move reinstating Microsoft's commitment to dissociating the next iteration of the Windows client from the version currently available. The debut of the austere E7 hotspot was not announced via the official Windows Vista mouthpiece, but via the Internet Explorer blog. And even if the core of Vista will survive, in an evolved form into Windows 7, Microsoft is taking the next major iteration of Windows as far as possible from what is available today, even after 180 million sold licenses. The most important aspect of this strategy is to control every Windows 7 detail released to the public. In this regard, Sinofsky did touch the subject of why "Microsoft might be trying to accomplish by maintaining a little bit more control over the communication around Windows 7 (some might say that this is a significant understatement). We, as a team, definitely learned some lessons about 'disclosure' and how we can all too easily get ahead of ourselves in talking about features before our understanding of them is solid. Our intent with Windows 7 and the pre-release communication is to make sure that we have a reasonable degree of confidence in what we talk about when we do talk. Again, top of mind for us is the responsibility we feel to make sure we are not stressing priorities, churning resource allocations, or causing strategic confusion among the tens of thousands of partners and customers who care deeply and have much invested in the evolution of Windows". **"How We Are Making Windows 7,"**

SinofskyEngineering Windows 7 is ultimately, from Microsoft's perspective, a medium designed to centralize discussion about how the company is building Windows 7. Still, while the Redmond giant is opening up on the next version of Windows, the fact is that each move is calculated and planned. Microsoft has already been connected with computer manufacturers, members of the software and hardware developing environment and enterprise customers. It seems that the end users are last and least on the company's priorities for feedback... But with E7, their turn has come, under the proverbial "better late than never" moment. "Windows has all the challenges of every large scale software project - picking features, designing them, developing them, and delivering them with high quality. Windows has an added challenge of doing so for an extraordinarily diverse set of customers. As a team and as individuals on the team we continue to be humbled by this responsibility. We strongly believe that success for Windows 7 includes an open and honest, and two-way, discussion about how we balance all of these interests and deliver software on the scale of Windows," DeVaen and Sinofsky revealed via Engineering Windows 7. Still, what is important to underline at this point in time is that Microsoft has not opened the doors on Windows 7. The project will continue to remain largely translucent, with only the set-in-stone Windows 7 details being released to the public. At the start of this month, [leaked Windows 7 information](#) got through the translucent filters and was posted on MSDN. However, the info on Windows 7 Theme Files, Gallery, Packs and Wallpaper Slideshow was removed promptly, just as it made its way to the public. It is bound that this strategy will continue... even with E7. "Related to disclosure is the idea of how we make sure not to set expectations around the release that end up disappointing you - features that don't make it, claims that don't stick, or support we don't provide. Starting from the first days of developing Windows 7, we have committed as a team to 'promise and deliver'. That's our goal - share with you what we're going to get done, why we're doing it, and deliver it with high quality and on time," DeVaen and Sinofsky added. **Engineering Every Aspect of Windows 7**It is obvious that Sinofsky has stricken a cord with the group building Windows, with leaks on Windows 7 down to a minimum. The reception that Windows Vista got contributed to the new under-promise and over-achieve strategy of the next version of the Windows operating system. With Vista, back when it was Longhorn, the amputation of various features initially advertised as part of the platform managed to reverberate past the development stage, well after the product hit the shelves. The same will not happen with Windows 7. As far as Vista's successor is concerned, nobody outside of the team hammering away at the operating system knows a single feature that was cut during development. This is bound to benefit Windows 7. "It is quite understandable that media, analysts, developers, IT pros, general public and... Microsoft employees not in the engineering team are genuinely curious and interested to learn what's coming in the upcoming next version of Windows. On the other hand though, given the harsh criticism that hit the team in the past for shipping products which did not meet customers expectations or their understanding of what was about to be released (not just in Microsoft but in the whole industry), it is quite understandable that there is a strong intent to ensure we don't share details until they have reached "a certain level of concreteness," explained [Paolo Barone](#), from the Microsoft Developer & Platform Evangelism team in the UK. Still, E7 should be taken with a [grain of salt](#). In the end, it is yet another example of Microsoft controlling every aspect of the Windows 7 project. Sinofsky is indeed indicating that more and more details will be made public, and that the Redmond company is gearing up for Windows 7 releases beyond simple information. "If you ask me, I would not expect [E7] to be the place where announcements about new features and release schedule are made. What I believe this is going to be, is a sharing opportunity to discuss the complexity and challenges behind a large and complex project like the creation of the next version of Windows is," Barone stated.