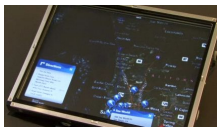
28 August 2008

By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor



Windows 7
Microsoft

Windows 7 Will Not Ship Until Performance Is Through the Roof

Promises Steven Sinofsky

Service Pack 1 was nothing short of a panacea for Windows Vista, and in this context it now falls on Windows 7 to wash away all the sins of the current version of Windows. Vista RTM managed to hit a consistent amount of speed-bumps from software and hardware incompatibility to lack of support and to poor performance. Microsoft has already indicated that Windows 7 would play nice by default with the ecosystem of solutions designed to integrate with Vista. The new promise from one of the Windows bosses, Steven Sinofsky, Senior Vice President, Windows and Windows Live Engineering Group, is that Windows 7 will not ship until it reaches a certain standard of performance.

"We have criteria that we apply at the end of our milestones and before we go to beta and we won't ship without broadly meeting these criteria," Sinofsky stated. "Sometimes these criteria are micro-benchmarks (page faults, processor utilization, working set, gamer frame rates) and other times they are more scenario based and measure time to complete a task (clock time, mouse clicks). We do these measurements on a variety of hardware platforms (32-bit or 64-bit; 1, 2, 4GB of RAM; 5400 to 7200 RPM or solid-state disks; a variety of processors, etc.) Because of the inherent tradeoffs in some architectural approaches, we often introduce conditional code that depends on the type of hardware on which Windows is running."

According to Sinofsky, Microsoft is taking into consideration a a broad set of areas and scenarios when it comes down to evaluating Windows 7 performance. From RAM usage to CPU utilization, to Disk I/O, Boot, Shutdown, Standby/Resume, to Base system and to Disk footprint, the Redmond company is tweaking Windows 7 to fly... performance-wise. The main problems with Windows Vista's performance were highlighted through the inherent comparisons to its predecessor Windows XP. To end users it mattered little that XP, a 2001 operating system, was running on 2007 hardware with as much as eight times of RAM on top of the recommended hardware configuration. This is a very important lesson for Microsoft, one that the company had to learn because of the gap between XP and Vista, as the Windows operating system failed to keep up with the evolution of the hardware.

"Performance is made up of many different elements. We could be talking about response time to a specific request. It might mean how much RAM is 'typical' or what CPU customers need. We could be talking about the clock time to launch a program. It could mean boot or standby/resume. It could mean watching CPU activity or disk I/O activity (or lack disk activity). It could mean battery life. It might even mean something as mundane as typical disk footprint after installation. All of these are measures of performance. All of these are systematically tracked during the course of development," Sinofsky stated.