

The Bulletin

Technical Tips

By Tom Snyder Ph.D.

When Should You Upgrade to Windows Vista and Office 2007?

It's been months since Windows Vista and Office 2007 hit the market. With the hoopla behind us, and after a period of observing both products in the marketplace, it looks like Office 2007, especially in conjunction with SharePoint Server 2007, seems to have a lot of value for larger companies interested in workflow automation and electronic content management. There doesn't seem to be much advantage in upgrading to Vista anytime soon. In fact, it looks like organizations should wait at least until service Pack 1 is released in early 2008.

Issues with Vista Vista has its short comings, including missing drivers for printers and other peripheral devices. There is also a lack of application support from independent software vendors. For example, Adobe won't issue updates to Dreamweaver, InDesign and Photoshop until this summer. A number of antivirus products and VoIP technologies don't work with Vista yet either.

Vista also requires pretty beefy hardware, especially if you want to take advantage of the slick Aero Glass user interface. Even minimum system requirements are more demanding than any previous Windows operating system.

But the biggest problem with Vista is there's no compelling business case for upgrading. The previous operating system, Windows XP, works perfectly well for most organizations and will continue to be supported for another 2 years. Unlike earlier generations of Windows where upgrading a few desktops caused network disruptions, Vista seems to work well within networks of XP computers. Vista introduces some major interface changes and new ways of doing things that will take some getting used to. As a result, the costs of upgrading – such as hardware upgrades, user training and compatibility testing – aren't outweighed by new features and functionality.

Wait to Upgrade to Vista until Early 2008 It sounds like most prominent third party software vendors are shooting to issue updates by the time Service Pack 1 (SP1) arrives. In addition, it sounds like SP1 will resolve most driver issues.

Since SP1 is slated to be released in early 2008, we recommend waiting to upgrade to Windows Vista at least until then. Frankly, if you can wait longer, it makes even more sense to hold off on upgrading your operating system until you have to upgrade your computer.

Issues with Office 2007 The biggest issue with Office 2007 is the new application interface. It is quite different from Office 2003 and it typically takes several days for users to adjust to the changes. For example, it took me five minutes to discover how to save and print a Word document the first time I tried.

Office 2007 is valuable, especially in Conjunction with SharePoint Server 2007 Office 2007, especially in conjunction with SharePoint Server 2007, is making a splash in the market place. With this new release, SharePoint Server has evolved into the integration technology for portal, collaboration, work flow, Web-content and document management applications. As a result, SharePoint in conjunction with Office 2007 is providing many larger organizations with an alternative to more complex and expensive custom developed portals and work flow automation applications, as well as content management applications such as Documentum and FileNet.

The new version of Small Business Server, which bundles SharePoint, Windows, Exchange and SQL Servers into a package for small businesses, won't be available until after the release of the new Longhorn version of Windows Server, which is expected in late 2007. As a result, we won't know how SharePoint and Office 2007 applications for small business will pan out until early 2008.

So don't jump on the bandwagon just yet, especially if you are a smaller organization. You'll have an easier time and get more bang for you buck once Vista is more compatible and SharePoint is proven for small businesses.

If you have questions or concerns about your particular situation, please e-mail me at tpsnnyder@xantrion.com. I will use your input to direct future columns.

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