

Keep Testing, Expect Changes as Vista and Office 2007 Launch

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Microsoft's Business Value Launch signals the official coming-out party for Windows Vista and Office 2007. For most organizations, significant planning and testing will be needed — start now.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 30 November 2006, Microsoft officially launched Windows Vista, Microsoft Exchange 2007 and the Office 2007 system. Both Windows Vista and the Office 2007 system products released to manufacturing earlier in the month and are now available to volume licensees. They will not be available preloaded from original equipment manufacturers, or to consumers, until 30 January 2007. Exchange Server 2007 will release to manufacturing in the first two weeks of December.

Analysis

For most organizations, we believe 12 to 18 months of testing, planning and piloting will be required before mainstream Vista and Office 2007 deployment begins. Organizations need to understand their software inventory, do internal testing, and work with independent software vendors (ISVs) to understand their support policies and timelines. If you haven't started this process yet, consider starting now. The sooner you want to begin deploying Windows Vista and Office 2007, the sooner you need to begin testing. Organizations that run Windows 2000 and are trying to skip Windows XP should have already begun. Organizations that want to deploy in early 2008 need to start shortly.

Windows Vista will continue to have fixes and driver support provided via Windows Update. Microsoft surprised much of the Windows ecosystem by meeting its goal of releasing Windows Vista to manufacturing in 2006; therefore, much of the ecosystem in terms of drivers and applications isn't yet ready to support Vista. Furthermore, Microsoft has gotten very good at deploying fixes through Microsoft Update. Gartner expects significant fixes and additional drivers to be available before the consumer launch at the end of January 2007 and to continue to come through Microsoft Update. Thus, expect to see continued change as Vista matures. Microsoft Update also means that service packs are less critical; since the more important fixes do not have to wait for a service pack to be released, most critical fixes will be available well before Service Pack 1 (SP1). Because of that, and because most organizations will need more than a year to prepare for mainstream deployment anyway, SP1 is significantly less important than it used to be as a bellwether for deployment.

Office migration efforts should not be underestimated, either. A new user interface and new document format mean that organizations will need to plan training and policies, and understand how various versions of Office — whether they are used internally or by business partners and customers — will interact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you have not started, begin taking inventory and working with ISVs to understand implications of Vista and Office 2007 implementation.
- Monitor Microsoft Update and expect changes as the products mature.
- Develop an internal IT communication plan to address possible internal end user inquiries about your organization's plan to migrate to these products.
- If you are a Software Assurance customer, look at your contract to understand if you have rights to these new products and understand what training vouchers and Desktop Deployment Planning Services you may be entitled to.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Vista Coupons: Midsize and Large Organizations Need Not Apply" — Microsoft's Express Upgrade to Windows Vista program provides low-cost upgrades to the new Windows version, but a limit of five per buyer excludes all but the smallest businesses.
By Michael Silver
- "Deploy Windows Vista and Office 2007 Together, If It's Convenient" — By deploying Windows Vista and Office 2007 together, you have to alter each PC only once instead of twice. **By Michael Silver**

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