

## 'Windows 7' Is Three Years Away, So Keep Working Toward Vista

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Microsoft is not sharing much information about Windows 7, except to say that it's about three years away. Enterprises should resist the temptation to await its debut and instead focus on moving forward with Vista.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

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### Event

On 20 July 2007, CNET News, citing unnamed sources, reported that Microsoft held a recent sales meeting at which it indicated that the next version of the Microsoft Windows operating system (OS), "Windows 7," is about three years away. When asked to confirm this, Microsoft stated to Gartner that it "is scoping Windows 7 development to a three-year time frame, and then the specific release date will ultimately be determined by meeting the quality bar."

### Analysis

In its disclosure, Microsoft offered little information — just a rough estimate of the expected timeline, an indication that there would be both 32- and 64-bit versions, and the assurance that Windows 7 will be a full release. This dearth of information indicates two things:

- At this time, Microsoft either does not really know what Windows 7 will comprise or does not want to commit publicly to what it will comprise. This makes sense, given that product delivery is three years away.
- Windows 7 will be a date-driven release that will ship about three years after Windows Vista.

Enterprises should not use this announcement as a reason to forgo a Windows Vista deployment. Instead, they should continue with plans for Vista. Many enterprises will start bringing in Vista between 4Q07 and 2Q08. Those trying to bring it in through attrition over a three-to-four-year period as they buy new PCs should know that the latest they can begin to bring Vista in on new PCs will be early 2009.

Enterprises should also realize that they will be able to include Vista Service Pack 1, due in late 2007 or early 2008, in most mainstream deployments. And, they should remember that if they target Windows 7 as their next OS instead of Vista, they will likely be waiting until mid-2011 — 12 to 18 months after Windows 7 ships — before they will be able to begin replacing Windows XP. This would be around the time independent software vendors (ISVs) will likely drop support for Windows XP on new applications and it would leave less than three years before support for Windows XP ends.

Microsoft's track record for delivery-to-schedule is poor. If the release date slips, enterprises will find it difficult to fully eliminate Windows XP before ISV and Microsoft support ends. There are multiple major architectural changes expected in future versions of Windows, and Microsoft will eventually need to be specific about these.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Enterprise customers:

- Continue testing and piloting Windows Vista, and stick with plans to deploy it, at least on new PCs, when ready.
- In the coming year, press Microsoft for a realistic detailed road map.

## RECOMMENDED READING

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- "Preparing for Windows Vista" — Enterprises should thoroughly prepare for Windows Vista before beginning migration. **By Stephen Kleynhans and Michael Silver**
- "Toolkit: Clients Plan Early, but Move Slowly to Windows Vista" — Enterprises tend to move to Vista by attrition more than they have for previously released OSs. **By Michael Silver and Annette Jump**

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