

## Vista SP1 Is Important, but Less So Than SPs of the Past

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Windows client service packs are important, but not as important as they used to be. Integrate Windows Vista SP1 if possible, but don't delay plans waiting for it.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

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### Event

On 28 August 2007, Microsoft announced that Windows Vista Service Pack (SP) 1 will be available in 1Q08, and Windows XP SP3 will be available in 1H08. Vista SP1 will be mostly fixes with a few new features, including BitLocker improvements. XP SP3 will not include Internet Explorer 7, but will allow XP clients to participate in Network Access Protection (NAP).

### Analysis

Many organizations wait until the first SP ships before they test and plan deployment of a client operating system. But Microsoft has become very adept at deploying updates through services like Windows Update, Microsoft Update and Automatic Update, so SPs are now less important than they once were. Furthermore, many organizations have highly complex PC environments and would not be ready to deploy Vista before 2H08, so SP1 will not be in the critical path for them.

However, there are some advantages to skipping the release to manufacturing (RTM) version and adopting SP1. The biggest is that Microsoft will only support the prior SP for 12 to 24 months after the next SP ships (in this case, 24 months). So if SP1 ships in 1Q08, the original Vista release (which would be SP0) will only be supported (with security patches, for example) until 1Q10.

Another advantage: Users who deploy SP1 to begin with eliminate the need to test and support an extra service level. In most cases, deployments scheduled for 3Q08 or later will include SP1. Users will not be able to install SP1 on a Windows Imaging Format (WIM) image offline because SP1 updates the Vista servicing stack.

SP3 for Windows XP will likely be the last SP for that release. The support time frame is the same; 24 months after it ships, support for SP2 will end.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Organizations that expect to be running any XP in mid-2010 should plan to test and deploy SP3. It should be significantly less work than testing and deploying SP2.
- Organizations should integrate SP1 into their testing, piloting and deployment plans, but they should not significantly delay Windows Vista deployment on new PCs by waiting for SP1. If shifting a PC deployment a few weeks would allow deployment of Vista, do it, but don't bring in new PCs on Windows XP instead — it will be easier to upgrade a Vista PC to SP1 than an XP PC to Vista.
- If shifting a PC deployment a few weeks would allow deployment of SP1, do it.

### RECOMMENDED READING

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- "Windows 7 is Three Years Away, So Keep Working Toward Vista" — Enterprises should keep preparing for Vista, as Microsoft has said release of Windows 7 is not imminent. **By Michael Silver**

- "Windows XP Share Still Growing in U.S. and Europe in 2007" — Even though Windows Vista has shipped, XP continues to increase its share of the installed base in 2007. **By Annette Jump and Michael Silver**

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