

Windows 7 Release Will Affect Vista Deployment Plans

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Microsoft expects to ship Windows 7 in time for the 2009 holiday shopping season. Organizations with a Windows Vista project well underway should stay the course, but most others should target Windows 7.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 11 May 2009, Microsoft announced at its annual TechEd conference that it expects to ship Windows 7 in time for vendors to offer it on PCs during the 2009 holiday shopping season.

Analysis

This announcement is important but not unexpected, as the Windows 7 beta garnered good reviews from testers. For PC OEMs to have new PCs available with Windows 7 preloaded by late November, the start of the holiday season in the U.S., Microsoft needs to provide the code for release to manufacturing (RTM) by mid-September. However, we believe that the RTM will be earlier because the release candidate — the version with the potential to become the final product — was made available last week. This fact, together with the typical pace of events associated with the RTM, indicates that vendors will probably be able to obtain the code for testing in August.

Windows 7 includes new features that will attract organizations, including:

- **BranchCache**, which will reduce time users in small, often serverless locations wait to download files from remote servers, by caching previously accessed content locally in the branch network. It will require Windows 2008 Server R2 on the network.
- **AppLocker**, which will allow organizations to more effectively control what applications users may run.

Both of these will require Windows 7 Enterprise Edition, available only to organizations with Software Assurance, or Windows 7 Ultimate.

However, with more than half of organizations planning to skip Vista, most organizations will have to move to Windows 7 to maintain a supportable environment as Windows XP ages. We advise organizations to move off of Windows XP by YE12 to avoid application support problems, even though Microsoft will support Windows XP into April 2014.

Though the vast majority of applications that are compatible with Vista will run on Windows 7, organizations need to ensure that vendors will support their applications running on the new operating system. Between waiting for vendor support and testing, planning, preparing and piloting, few organizations will be able to begin large-scale production deployments until 12 to 18 months after the RTM, in late 2010 or early 2011. Consumers and small and midsize businesses are more likely to run what ships on new PCs, so they will be early adopters of Windows 7.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations that have not prepared to deploy Vista:

- Skip Vista and target Windows 7. Preparing for Vista will require the same amount of effort as preparing for Windows 7, so at this point, targeting Windows 7 would add less than six months to the schedule and would result in a plan that is more politically palatable, better for users, and results in greater longevity.

Organizations in the midst of a Vista deployment:

- Continue with Vista, but plan to switch to Windows 7 in late 2010 or early 2011, especially if you're switching to Vista through a hardware refresh.

Organizations planning for Vista:

- Consider switching to Windows 7 if it would delay deployment by six months or less. The further you are with your Vista plans, the more sense it makes to continue. Weigh alternatives and seek advice from a Gartner analyst via inquiry.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "4Q08 Client Computing Survey Shows Vista Deployment Remains Low" — Organizations are deploying Windows Vista at a slower pace than they had deployed previous Windows versions. **By Michael Silver and Annette Jump**
- "Windows 7 Won't Need SP1, but Will Still Need 12 to 18 Months Before Deployment Begins" — Organizations won't need the Windows 7 service pack (SP) to make Windows 7 run, but the SP will be available before Windows 7 arrives, so most will probably have it. **By Michael Silver**

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