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Businesses Still in No Rush to Upgrade to Windows Vista

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By Peter Galli

As the one-year anniversary of the business availability of Windows Vista approaches, many corporations are still holding off on upgrading to the new operating system.

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The most commonly cited reasons are the cost of replacing the new hardware required to run Vista optimally, some of the software used by those businesses is still not compatible with Vista, Vista's new and increased functionality and security features are more trouble than they are worth, and Windows XP still meets their current needs.

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"It appears that many organizations view Vista as fine for new hardware, but not for upgrades to existing hardware. I am recommending that businesses wait for Vista until they do a hardware refresh and then get it preinstalled," said Michael Cherry, an analyst at Directions on Microsoft.

That's the case for George Podolak, IT director for Pei Cobb Freed and Partners, an architectural firm in New York. While the company's newest laptops were bought with Vista preinstalled, Podolak is happy with Windows XP.

The business launch of Vista, Office 2007 and Exchange 2007 was the biggest in Microsoft's history. [Click here to read more.](#)

"We are so used to working with Windows XP SP2 and it is so stable that it's hard to think about doing massive swaps for no real apparent gain in functionality. There are also so many other things that I'm interested in, like desktop virtualization," Podolak said.

Even Michael Burk, a senior product manager with Microsoft's Windows client team, acknowledges that Vista is still in the early phase of business adoption.

"It took years for Windows XP to become the prevailing operating system used by businesses, and it will take time for Vista to supplant XP. That said, there are some good indicators that we may be nearing an inflection point for Windows Vista to start to be adopted by the mainstream of businesses," he said.

More than [85 million copies of Vista have been sold so far](#), compared with 45 million during the same period for Windows XP following its launch, Chris Liddell, Microsoft's chief financial officer, said recently.

But not all customers are able to upgrade to Vista. Bob Williamson, the sole IT staffer for Eisenhower & Carlson, a law firm with 65 users in Tacoma and Seattle, Wash., uses DesktopStandard's Policymaker extensions for group policies.

Microsoft bought DesktopStandard last year, and it appears that product development stopped at that point. "The last version does not support Vista. This is unfortunate, and, as a result, we have to buy laptops and desktops without Vista installed," he said.

[Read more here about Microsoft's acquisition of DesktopStandard.](#)

But Greg Schumacher, IT director for Riddles Group, a jewelry manufacturing and retail company with 250 employee machines, is in no hurry to upgrade to Vista after trying it out on his own desktop and laptop.

In fact, Schumacher was having so many issues with Vista and his experience with it was so bad that he actually [downgraded his machines](#) back to Windows XP Professional.

"We are holding out against Vista as long as possible as it will require new hardware, and a lot of the software that we use is not compatible with it at this time," he told eWEEK. "Also, from an IT maintenance standpoint, you pretty much have to turn off most of the security to be able to keep the machine up to date. So we are going to continue to buy machines with XP Pro as long as we can."

In response to complaints from business users such as Schumacher, Microsoft has already allowed its OEM and retail partners to continue selling Windows XP for an additional five months, until June 30, 2008.

[Microsoft's partners want to keep Windows XP in play. Read more here.](#)

That move followed the decision by a number of OEMs and PC makers to let customers downgrade their new Vista machines to Windows XP.

But the news is not all bad. Directions on Microsoft's Cherry said that a good number of organizations are starting to evaluate Vista, especially as the first service pack is on the horizon and these evaluations can be based on that.

Microsoft has said it expects to release Vista SP1 to manufacturing in the first quarter of 2008.

"I do expect evaluations to pick up based on SP1, and if organizations find that there is value, deployments may increase," Cherry said.

[To read more about Windows Vista SP1, click here.](#)

Rob Enderle, an analyst with the Enderle Group, said that while some enterprises have reported problems with the initial version of Vista, early reports on SP1 indicate that many of their issues have been addressed. "Corporate adoption should start to pick up in 2008 if SP1 continues to perform well in tests," he said.

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