

# Making the Move

## When Should You Care About Migrating to Windows Vista?

It's been the biggest buzz for more than two years, and it's still more than a year away, but the next version of Windows is said to be "where it's at." With promises of better organization, lower IT costs and improved performance, Microsoft is strongly hinting about the benefits of Windows Vista, scheduled to launch in December 2006.

Without a doubt many of us are wondering about the corporate advantages of Windows Vista when most of us are now only recognizing Windows XP as a viable alternative to Windows 95, 98 and 2000. Does corporate America really need another desktop operating system? At the moment, the jury is out on that question. A recent study from AssetMetrix Research labs shows Windows 2000 is still the leading OS in mid-sized to large corporations.

But the question of adoption may be quickly settled. If Windows Vista offers better security and manageability, then it may worth its sticker price many times over. And anybody considering buying PCs in 2007 or resigning a Microsoft Volume License Agreement will be buying licenses for Vista whether they want it or not.

The reality is you will most likely be encouraged (i.e. have no choice) to manage a multi-Windows environment, much as you are doing now. Today many corporations are managing Windows 98, 2000, NT and XP simultaneously with "office productivity" applications that are transparent to the OS (with the exception of Office 2003, which only works on XP).

Thus, as a forward-thinking IT professional pondering the move toward Windows XP, begin planning the deployment of Windows Vista on your own terms and timelines.

### BE PREPARED

Your introduction to Windows Vista will happen in the first few months of 2007, when certain employees purchase laptops on their own. You can be certain that Microsoft's OEM arrangements with the PC manufacturers will no longer have Windows XP available. Those with volume license agreements (even OpenLicense) will have the right to downgrade that PC to Windows XP (or even 2000), but nothing except the most stringent, draconian asset management processes will stop Windows Vista from appearing in the environment.

Your IT department will be the first to start to use it, especially those who have MSDN licenses. At first it will be for testing purposes only, but soon you'll see certain VPs and managers with it on their desktop. Eventually, the sales VP will require it for "enhanced productivity" for the sales force. And let's not forget the boss' new laptop.

Sound familiar? This is how Windows XP insinuated itself into corporate America, and Windows Vista will most likely retrace that path into your budget.

But if you are thinking, *Windows XP wasn't a big issue at our company, so Vista won't be either*, think again. Many companies can thank the 2002 recession for the lack of Windows XP (and the domination of Windows 2000) in their corporation. The year was a wake-up call for the PC industry—it was the first time PC sales went negative. Companies weren't buying new PCs, and Windows XP sales slumped as a result. If it weren't for the 2002 recession, Windows XP would have a much stronger position in corporate America than it does now. At this point, you're now probably dealing with the old PCs you were told to keep running in 2002, but they need to be replaced soon.

### MAKE A PLAN

**Use your PC replacement strategy to manage Vista.** It's highly unlikely that you will deploy Windows Vista the moment it arrives. Windows XP has its own issues (application compatibility, Service Pack 1 & 2, GDI buffer overruns) that caused significant concerns for most of us. But soon after, Windows Vista will be reviewed and used in your corporation.

**Spot the departmental guinea pig.** Departments tend to purchase PCs at the same time based upon departmental budgets. You can use this "budget-law" to find a department whose budget will allow new PCs in 2007. Those new PCs will have Windows Vista preloaded on them. Let them keep Vista on their PCs and use that department to measure productivity and management benefits and costs. For every other department, use your imaging rights of your VLA to maintain a Windows 2000 and/or XP environment (which may be easier said than done).

**Determine your 50 percent PC turnover rate after 2007.** Assuming you and Vista get along, you can continue to use this department-budget concept and allow successive ones to minimize via PC replacements. Eventually, you'll hit the 50 percent inflection point (probably between mid 2008 and early 2009), where it may be less work (and better manageability) to mass-migrate your existing 2000 and XP OSs to Windows Vista—with or without new PCs. By that time, you've most likely re-negotiated a Microsoft VLA, allowing across-the-board upgrades.

### SUMMARY

Like XP, Windows Vista will most likely dominate our corporate PCs, giving us better productivity, security and manageability. The real issue will be how and when to introduce Vista into your infrastructure, and doing so in a controllable and cost-effective manner. Your PC replacement budget may be the key to the strategy that will save you money—and grief.

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