

10 reasons why Windows 7 could fail

By Aron Smetana

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The reviews of Windows 7 have thus far been favorable - so why does Jack Wallen think the new OS may tank? Here's his take on the impending release.

October 22nd is the big day for the official release of the latest iteration of the Windows operating system. Many have dubbed it the savior that will bring the glory days back to Redmond. Many have said that it will pretty much wipe clean the foul stench left behind by Windows Vista. I, and a few others, think that Windows 7 will not be the success most pundits are proclaiming. How can I say that? I will give you 10 reasons why Windows 7 could easily fail.

1: It's too much like Vista

I have yet to run into a PC user who actually likes Vista. Oh, there maybe a few scattered fanboys out there who have decided that Aero is the prettiest of all interfaces and that the User Access Control is the be-all-end-all of security. The truth of the matter is, Vista is a horrible operating system. And what's going to surprise the public is that Windows 7 is a lot like Vista. Oh sure, Microsoft has made a lot of changes under the hood. But average users won't know that. They will see the Aero interface and the UAC and turn their noses up at the latest offering. And why not? Microsoft should have made a complete 180 from Vista. Instead of improving on Vista, it should have picked up XP (the best of the Microsoft OSes) and given it a boost to hardware recognition and maybe added a prettier interface. Unfortunately, Windows 7 is going to suffer simply because it looks and acts too much like Vista.

2: It will cost too much

People are going to be turned off by the cost of the operating system itself, as well as the cost of the minimum hardware requirements. Yes, if your hardware can run Vista, it can run 7. But most people are still running XP, and that hardware won't cut it with Windows 7. Last I checked, we're still in an economy that has people cutting back. Having to drop extra scratch on both an operating system and a new machine is going to be at the bottom of the list for most people. And [most businesses are still clinging to XP](#).

3: XP is still too popular

Picking up where #2 left off... Windows XP is still the king of Microsoft operating systems. According to a survey done in February 2009, more than 71% of all business machines are still running XP. A Forrester survey had suggested that Windows Vista would overthrow XP as the business operating system of choice. That never happened. And the only way Microsoft will pull XP off of business machines around the world is when it reaches its end of life for support. But did that actually stop users from using Windows 2000 altogether? No. In fact, some people are still clinging to that version of Windows. But overall, XP is still the keeper of the crown for Windows operating systems.

4: The editions are too confusing

Which version of Windows 7 do you want? Oh, you thought Professional sounded like the best, only to find it doesn't have features you need... so maybe it's on to Ultimate. And Starter sounds like it would be a good version to *start* with — as in 'new to Windows' or 'cheapest version.' But no, Starter is for netbooks. So you have to look at it like this:

- Starter is for netbooks.
- Premium is for those who want next to nothing.
- Professional is for those who need to work from home and office.
- Ultimate is what Windows *should* sell and nothing less.

I remember when Vista came out. Trying to get the version that included my name nearly required the creation of a matrix or a spreadsheet, and still many people came out with the wrong version.

5: No upgrades are available for XP (and Europe)

Hello XP users, you can't upgrade. Only a clean install for you. Which, of course, is smart anyway — but that means you have to pay full price. And guess what, European countries: Because you won a suit against Microsoft that prevents it from shipping Internet Explorer with Windows, you get no upgrade version for Windows 7. Yes Microsoft is going to offer EU the full version for the upgrade price, but that price will still wind up being close to the full version price, if history repeats itself.

6: It's no good for netbooks

The Starter version of Windows 7 is a joke. Yes, Microsoft did remove the 'three apps at a time' restriction. But there are other limitations (beyond the hefty hardware requirements) that make it a poor candidate for netbooks:

- No streaming media
- No desktop customizations
- No legacy app support

The first point is the real killer. Because most users don't want to clog up their limited drive space with multimedia, not being able to stream media means they won't be enjoying their tunes while they work. Too bad, Windows 7 users!

7: Single sign-on apps will fail

As it stands now, applications using biometric, smart card authentication and/or VPN authentication will fail unless they're upgraded. This could be a bad problem if the applications were created in house, or if they aren't upgradeable. The real problem is that many of the companies that create applications that use (or depend upon) single sign-on have not made the leap to Windows 7 support. So if a business depends upon single sign on, Windows 7 is going to be a big problem.

8: There are better alternatives

You knew this was coming. Both OS X and Linux have made strong headway in the market. With modern releases of Linux getting better and ever-more user friendly, the

race is on to see what's going to happen. And every time Microsoft makes a misstep, it's another gain for the competition. Windows Vista was a huge misstep, and it's going to take more than a rework of that disaster to keep the competition at bay. As more and more people become disillusioned with Windows, they're going to look for alternatives. I have good news for you disillusioned Windows users: Ubuntu 9.04 is one of the most user-friendly Linux releases to date. And with OS X Snow Leopard's addition of Exchange support, Microsoft should really be concerned.

9: XP Mode may not help you

If you want to run applications that ran on Windows XP but not on Vista, you will have one solution — virtualization. Here's the problem: If you want to do this, you need a machine with *at least* 2 Gigs of RAM and a processor that supports on-chip virtualization. XP Mode consists of two pieces: Virtualization software and a fully licensed version of Windows XP. Windows XP does not ship with Windows 7. You will be able to download it for free if you have a licensed version of Windows 7 Professional, Ultimate, or Enterprise. The big issue is the on-chip virtualization. Scott Woodgate, director of Windows enterprise and virtualization strategy, said this about which chips include virtualization support: 'Some PCs have it and some don't... It's not as clear as it should be relative to which PCs have support and which don't.'

10: You'll have to contend with DRM

Yes, DRM is the bane of users' existence, and Windows 7 includes it. One little bit of DRM is a piece of code whose purpose is to ensure that no 'prohibited device' is connected to the machine. By 'prohibited device,' I mean a device that could be used to record the output. Digital outputs are polled every 30ms, and analog outputs are polled every 150ms. Other 'features' also use or require DRM, and most of these are in place in case Hollywood needs them. In other words, Microsoft is giving the recording industry a bit of leverage against the user, should they need it. This will not sit well with the user base, should it show its ugly head.

Your turn

Read enough to make you think twice about migrating to Windows 7? Perhaps not. But with the Windows 7 pitfalls, one of these issues might bite you — making you wonder why you bothered to 'upgrade.'

What's your take on Windows 7? Join the discussion and share your thoughts.