

Vista Annoyances...

I have now been using Vista as my secondary OS on my main computer for about a month now. It's time to make my list of gripes official. Here goes, in no particular order:

1. Very picky driver support. Due to some inner re-working with Vista, drivers for your hardware need to all be re-done. And some of the manufacturers are not issuing solid drivers quite yet. Namely, NVidia. NVidia drivers on Vista suck, last time I tried them. ATI, on the other hand, works beautifully.
2. Some software doesn't work. Some of the software I was using on Windows XP had to be upgraded because it would not work on Vista very well. So, I simply installed Vista as a dual-boot set-up side-by-side with XP so I could continue to get my work done and learn Vista when the mood strikes me.
3. Some programs don't work with Aero. Aero is the name for the eye candy interface built into Vista (not Vista Home Basic). But, some software doesn't work with it. For example, I am using Paint Shop Pro 9. It works, but every time I start it up Vista has to revert to the basic interface.
4. Annoying permissions confirmations. In order to do almost anything system related, you get bugged constantly about permissions. This is Microsoft's attempt to make the operating system more secure, when if all you need to do is click OK to get past it; it's little more than an annoying feature. Luckily, you can turn it off (which I have done).
5. Task Manager is a screen-flash away. With Windows XP, you can view the task manager by simply hitting CTRL-ALT-DEL and up it comes. With Vista, when you give it the three finger salute, your screen totally flashes blank and you have to choose "task manager" from a list of options. I don't like that.
6. Big and Beefy. Windows Vista is a computer hog. At any given point, I had about 1 full gigabyte of system memory in use on this computer. That is absolutely incredible. My computer has a variable speed fan on the processor that speeds up when the CPU is under load and quiets down when not. With Vista, that fan was spinning more loudly simply because the processor is kept so much busier. And, I mean, face it - Windows Vista comes on a DVD! If an OS needs a DVD to fit it, it's bloated. I just added more RAM to solve the problem.
7. Sometimes the screens lose their resolution settings. This may be due to #1 above, but sometimes when I reboot Vista, my screens will revert to the basic, smaller resolution. If I do another immediate reboot, then usually the screens will come back on in the resolution they should be at.
8. Windows Update freaks me out. Twice now, I've used Windows Update from Vista and had the installed driver BREAK my computer! Once, I installed a sound driver update and the sound disappeared. I just rolled the driver back and will remember not to download that driver again. Another update caused all my video driver to stop functioning and I had to rollback my video driver. This is a catch-22 situation. Vista is new and I want updates to fix some of these annoyances. However, every time I run Windows Update, I tread lightly for fear of messing up the computer - especially with the optional hardware driver updates.. And, as of

now, Vista is one of those operating systems that, once it works, you don't mess with it.

9. It's too new. Not really the fault of the OS itself, but because it is so new, I have come across instances where people don't know what the problem is and they just blame Vista. And they probably have a point.
10. The annoying UAC prompts were driving me nuts. I'm a professional computer technologist and I know what I'm doing. I just searched Google for "get rid of the annoying UAC Vista prompts". Here's the trick to turn it off:

Turning Off The UAC Prompts

Open up Control Panel, and type in user account into the search box. You'll see the link for "Turn User Account Control (UAC) on or off". Click it. Uncheck the box, and reboot your computer. You should be done with obnoxious prompts!

Now, Microsoft highly recommends that you do not do this. To make their point, after you ignore them and do it anyway, a scary little red X shield icon plants itself in your taskbar, visually screaming at you about the security risk. After the jump, find out how to rid yourself of that sucker.

In Control Panel, go to the Security Center. On the left hand side, click the "Change the way Security Center alerts me" and choose "Don't notify me and don't display the icon (not recommended)". Of course, you probably shouldn't do this to Mom and Dad's PC, but this is a must-change for anyone who doesn't need Windows holding their hand at every crosswalk.

All in all, I am not unhappy with Vista. However, it has kinks. I am hoping that Microsoft will issue some solid updates to this operating system that will make it faster, leaner and as stable as Windows XP. XP is and was tried and true. XP is a solid operating system. The thing I keep in mind is that there was a time when early adopters were complaining about XP as well, mostly with the same complaints we here now with Vista. My hope and expectation is that Vista, with time, will evolve into the solid solution that XP is today.

At least as solid as we usually expect from Microsoft.

Windows Vista Benefits...

Here are my top benefits to Windows Vista. I'll be honest here...I'm going to write this as I go and see how far I get. Here they are as I see them...

1. Eye Candy. OK, obviously one of the big selling points to Vista is it's eye candy. And, without doubt, this is a good looking operating system. Using the "Basic" interface doesn't really provide much that XP doesn't have. The Aero interface, though, gives the OS a nice, modern feel. Transparent windows, animation effects, useful previews and ALT-TAB screenshots, etc. So, I give props to Microsoft for the eye candy. At the same time, it's not really that new. Apple has

been doing it for years, and you can now make the free Ubuntu operating system make Vista look stupid using the Beryl add-on.

2. Better Start Menu. The Vista start menu now has a useful desktop search built right in. It allows you to launch programs by simply typing. The Vista start menu allows you to quickly begin typing the name of the item you need and it will pop up for you. So, for example, if I want to launch Photoshop Elements and it is buried in the folder structure of the start menu, I just start typing "Pho..." and by that time Photoshop Elements has appeared in the application list. Press Enter and it launches.
3. The File Explorer that comes with Vista is now much more intuitive. The best feature is the fact that it now uses breadcrumbs. When you navigate deeply into your file system, you have a full breadcrumb trail so you can see where you are and quickly navigate up the folder tree.
4. Image Previews. This comes from the eye candy department, but the File Explorer now allows you a quick preview of the contents of a folder by actually modifying the folder icon to show file screenshots within. Again, not all that useful, but it looks nice.
5. Windows Firewall. The firewall built into XP was a bit of a lame duck. The one in Vista is actually fairly respectable and you no longer need to disable it and install something else (as many techies recommended with XP).
6. Windows Defender. This is the spyware detection and removal application from Microsoft, born from Giant Antispyware (which Microsoft purchased of course). It isn't the perfect antispyware utility, but it still has some useful features. One of them is the Software Explorer tool which allows you to easily see and control the items that are starting automatically on your computer. This wasn't quite as easy to do for newbies on XP, and usually involved using a third-party utility.

Vista is a good operating system, but quite frankly, it has more annoyances than benefits at the moment when compared to XP. All of the above items I listed are nice, but none of them really justify moving away from Windows XP. I did it mainly to be an early adopter and be able to talk about Vista from a firsthand viewpoint. But, unless you are buying a new PC and are practically forced to use Vista, I would recommend people stay with XP for now. The only other smart option would be to dual-boot it with XP as I explained earlier.

Microsoft was overcharging for this thing big time, and a little bit of eye candy and a few convenience features weren't worth the hefty price tag that they were asking for this operating system. Prices have dropped recently so it may be the right time for some to venture a few steps with it. We'll see how it is after the Service Pack 1 debuts next month.