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Switching to Vista

When planning to purchase a new PC, customers are asking should they switch to Vista. Our recommendation at this point is to stay with XP Pro. Why? XP has become fairly stable and reliable. XP has lower hardware requirements, resulting in lower cost machines. Current versions of software applications work with XP and may not work with Vista. Vista still has many bugs that need to be worked out and manufacturers are still working on compatibility issues. In addition Vista actually runs slower than XP.

When do you switch?

By late summer, new machines with XP will be harder to find. According to Microsoft's Life-Cycle Policy Web page, Microsoft plans to discontinue shipments of XP to OEMs and retail licenses on January 31, 2008. Hopefully most of the problems with Vista will be cured by then. Vista was originally released in January 2007, so this gives manufacturers one year to address and fix any issues.

Several manufacturers are not happy with Microsoft's decision and are trying to convince Microsoft to extend the deadline. This is due to the reluctance of the business community in accepting Vista. *Don't count on this happening.*

When the actual deadline ar-

rives, new machines will only be available with Vista and will require heftier configurations to run the new operating system at the same speed as XP. The learning curve for users should be minor.

Michael Cherry of Microsoft states...

Windows Vista is safer, easier to use, better connected, and more entertaining than any operating system we've ever released, and we're encouraged by the positive customer response we've seen to date. *Based on the information I have read, this is not a 100% accurate statement.*

There are pluses and minuses to upgrading. Security features, such as BitLocker Drive Encryption, are driving upgrades. However, hardware issues have been a problem.

The major factor I think that's putting a damper on it is people being uncomfortable with what the hardware requirements are. Questions have arisen about configuration matters such as the circuitry of graphics cards. Lawsuits have even arisen about what it means to be Vista-capable.

He did not have specific estimates on Vista shipments but, Vista appears to have not affected PC sales rates, either upward or downward.

Microsoft has reported that more than 40 million copies of Vista shipped since January 30. A Harris survey of home-based users in March, however, found that only 12 percent of the 2,223 respondents planned to upgrade.

Analyst Brett Waldman of IDC states...

Vista shipments have been about as expected. There have been acknowledged equipment issues with the new platform. To run Vista's Aero interfaces requires an advanced graphics card. A lot of low-end PCs do not have that. Otherwise, upgrading a PC to 1GB of memory should make it Vista-capable. Business customers, however, are putting Vista upgrades on hold. They're waiting 12 to 18 months to evaluate it.

Should you upgrade XP to Vista?

At this point we do not see any need to upgrade current XP machines to Vista. There is no major benefit to do so, so why spend the time and money. We recommend only considering Vista when buying a new PC and not now but in the future.

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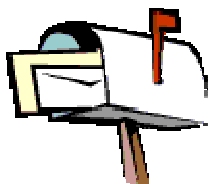
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Email Backup

Back in the 70's and 80's, before Email became so popular, backing up Email was not an important issue.

Today, most of us would be lost if our Email disappeared. Therefore it is important to know how and where backups for your companies Email is being done.

Do you know?

Web Site Don'ts

Avoid Visual and Audio overkill

This can show up as a dizziness-inducing Flash home page or pictures of everything. This comes off as little more than a pointless exercise of technical muscle, potentially unprofessional and distracts from the business at hand. Overly flashy intros with music can take forever to load and cause users to flee. Having a highly technical site is a good thing for some Web sites, but the technology needs to be there for a reason, not just to impress people.

Avoid confusing menu options

You want to offer visitors a variety of pages and features, but you should keep your site structure simple so that users are not bewildered by too many possibilities. Don't have a menu of 20 options to choose from. People can hold between five and nine pieces of information in their memory at once. Don't exceed this limit or they're going to get overwhelmed and leave your site.

Avoid privacy or security breaches

It is imperative that you review your Web site content for any material that may lead to security or privacy snafus, as hackers and spammers are constantly scanning for Web sites that reveal personal information and the underlying technologies used on a site. On a simple level, that may mean keeping employee photos, e-mail addresses and personal details about them off the site. Even in publishing product information, Web experts urge you to confine details to what is absolutely needed to attract and entice customers into buying, and to not give away the company store.

Don't tip off competitors

People responsible for programming company information on Web sites should think like thieves. That way, they are less likely to program information that competitors might steal or use in their own intelligence gathering. Certain bits of information might seem innocuous on their own, but when pieced together could reveal more than you want about your business practices, strategic partners, corporate clients, and your internal organization.

Avoid undue jargon and techno-speak

The point of most Web sites is to inform potential customers about what you do and, hopefully, have them grasp why they need to avail themselves of your product or services. That's a tough nut when much of the language on your Web site is overly technical or loaded down with industry jargon that laypeople can't come close to deciphering. Keep your copy and content straightforward and review it for clarity. Jargon or "blather" is commonplace on the Internet, but it interferes with the prospect's positive perception of your honesty, integrity and quality.

Avoid unsupervised chat boards

If you want a chat area, plan on using a moderator who approves every submission beforehand. This avoids spam, off-color comments, potential security breaches, and other headaches.

Don't have bad links and outdated material

Nothing can mislead or alienate your visitors more than information and content that's obviously outdated or long since irrelevant. Same with links that send users to error pages. Review your Web site regularly for content and links that have changed.

Care and Feeding of a UPS Battery

Battery Testing

UPS batteries only last from 3 to 5 years. The more often the battery is used, the shorter the life span of the battery. Periodically you should run a battery test on the UPS to ensure the battery is still working. Units with worn out batteries can cause the unit to not operate correctly.

Temperature and Ventilation

The room temperature where the UPS unit is located should not exceed 75 degrees. Allow 1 to 2 inches of space around the unit for proper airflow.

Runtime Calibrations

Some units can perform a runtime calibration to verify the runtime is sufficient. This test should not be run more than one or two times year. More frequent calibrations can decrease the life expectancy of the battery.

Battery Storage

You can purchase spare batteries but they should only be stored from 6 to 12 months. After 12 months the battery should not be used. It is not advisable to store batteries that have already been in use.

Capacity

You should not exceed 80% of a UPS unit's rated capacity. Exceeding this limit will cause a reduction in runtime. A UPS loaded to full capacity will quickly drain and discharge the battery and lessen the life expectancy. For a typical PC and monitor a UPS with a rating of 550VA will run for about 15 minutes. For a typical server a rating of 1000VA will provide 20 minutes of runtime. Basically the VA rating of a UPS represents 60% of the wattage that the equipment actually uses.

Laser Printers

Laser printers should never be plugged into a battery backup outlet. They can be plugged into a surge only outlet on the unit.

Internet or Email Server Down?

Don't Lose Any Email!

Most of you host your own Email on an internal server. What happens if your Email server goes down, you lose power or your Internet connection is not working? You could lose valuable Email.

We now have a backup method in place that can prevent loss of any Email. How does it work? If incoming Email can not get to your server, it automatically gets routed to our backup Email server. All of your Email is then accumulated on our server. Our server keeps checking to see if your Email server is available. As soon as it is, any Email received is forwarded to your Email server. Nothing gets lost.

This also prevents rejected Email notices from being sent back to the sender.

We only charge \$120/year for this service. If you want to ensure no loss of Email call us to set this up for you. There is no set-up cost, only the annual fee.

Use a UPS unit for all equipment!

UPS units have dropped in price and for a single PC don't cost much more than a quality surge protector.

The advantage of having a UPS unit is cleaner power, resulting in longer equipment life. If the power goes out for a short time, the PC keeps running and is not shutdown incorrectly.



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A Day in the Life of Tech Support

Support: What kind of computer do you have?

Customer: A white one.

Support: Click on the 'my computer' icon on the left of the screen.

Customer: Your left or my left?

Customer: I have problems printing in red.

Support: Do you have a color printer?

Customer: Aaaah... thank you.

Support: What's on your monitor now?

Customer: A teddy bear my boyfriend bought for me.

Customer: My keyboard is not working anymore.

Support: Are you sure it's plugged into the computer?

Customer: No. I can't get behind the computer.

Support: Pick up your keyboard and walk 10 paces back.

Customer: OK

Support: Did the keyboard come with you?

Customer: Yes

Support: That means the keyboard is not plugged in. Is there another keyboard?

Customer: Yes, there's another one here. Ah...that one does work.

Customer: I can't get on the Internet.

Support: Are you sure you used the right password?

Customer: Yes, I'm sure. I saw my colleague do it.

Support: Can you tell me what the password was?

Customer: Five stars.

A customer called with a problem with a printer.

Support: Are you running it under windows?

Customer: No, my desk is next to the door, but that is a good point. The person sitting in the cubicle next to me is under a window, and his printer is working fine.

Support: Press the control and escape keys at the same time. That brings up a task list in the middle of the screen. Now type the letter "P" to bring up the Program Manager.

Customer: I don't have a P.

Tech support: On your keyboard.

Customer: What do you mean?

Tech support: "P"... on your keyboard.

Customer: I'M NOT GOING TO DO THAT