



CLARKE TALK

April 2008

Congratulations to Gwen D. who won the 8GB iPod Nano giveaway. This month, our giveaway is a \$75 gift certificate to Amazon.com. All you have to do is be a subscriber.

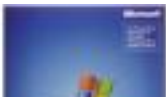
In this month's issue, we talk about the impending retirement of Windows XP and what it means for your business. We give you a preview of Windows XP Service Pack 3, which will be the last service pack for the venerable operating system. We also let you know that it time to install Vista Service Pack 1, but not to expect the incompatibilities and performance issues to get any better. And finally, we discuss how a Green IT Assessment can help you save money on electricity and HVAC (it can also help save the environment, too.)

As always, please direct any feedback to newsletter@clarkeconsulting.com

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Windows XP: End of Availability June 30



It's hard to believe, but Windows XP has been on the market for almost



seven years. Microsoft Vista came out over a year ago. While the business marketplace has responded negatively to Vista, the fact is that Microsoft is determined to move all current XP customers to Vista as soon as possible. Officially, as of June 30, 2008, Windows XP will no longer be available pre-installed on computers as the bare-metal operating system.

Clarke Consulting still recommends its customers **not** move to Windows Vista at this time. Which leaves us in a conundrum: what do we do after June 30?

What is Microsoft's Plan for Availability and Support of Windows XP?

Windows XP is still going to be around for a long time. As of June 30, you won't be able to buy a computer with Windows XP "preloaded" as an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) license. Most consumers have not been able to do so since last year. You won't be able to purchase a new retail boxed copy of XP after June 30, either.

This doesn't mean that you can't get a Windows XP machine after June 30; it just means that it gets a little more difficult.

Rest assured, however, that Microsoft will continue to support Windows XP for a long time. Mainstream support for Windows XP Service Pack 2 (the version of XP most of us are familiar with) will end April 14, 2009. This means that Microsoft will continue to supply security, bug fixes, and support for new emerging technology for XP. XP will enter "Extended Support" on April 15, 2009 until April 14, 2014. During Extended Support, Microsoft will fix security issues but not bugs or features.

So How Do We Get XP Machines after June 30?

There will still be a couple of options for getting Windows XP installed on your new laptops and desktops after June 30:

- Dell has recently announced a Vista/XP BONUS program. You buy an OEM license of Windows Vista Business or Ultimate, and Dell will actually install Windows XP Professional and give you the install disks for Vista for you to use later.
- Lenovo has not announced its plans, but it is expected to ship machines with Vista exclusively. For those machines with Vista Business or Ultimate, it will provide a system restore disk to install Windows XP.
- All copies of Vista Business or Ultimate will continue to have downgrade rights; that is, you can install Windows XP Pro on any machine that comes with Vista Business or Ultimate installed.

If you purchase your machine from ClarkeSource, we can have XP installed for free (from Dell) or for a nominal fee (for Lenovo). Otherwise, we will be charging a \$150 service fee for installing Windows XP on machines after June 30.

Windows XP Service Pack 3: Coming Soon

Coming close to the end of availability for Windows XP comes Service Pack 3, a collection of mostly bug fixes



that have been available only as separate downloads since the release of Service Pack 2 in 2004. Service Pack 3 will be available for download from Microsoft on April 29, and from Automatic Updates this summer.

Should I Apply Service Pack 3?

Service Pack 3 will not be available from Windows Update until later this summer, so in order to apply it you would have to download it manually from Microsoft and apply it. Clarke Consulting is just beginning testing on Windows XP Service Pack 3 now. We will advise our customers when to begin deploying Service Pack 3.

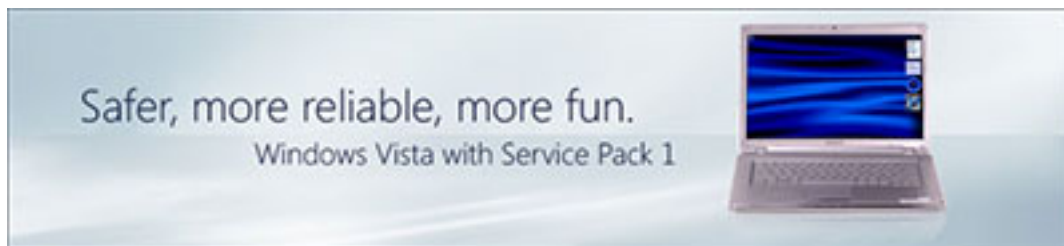
What Does Service Pack 3 Do?

Service Pack 3 is definitely not a major change like Service Pack 2 was. It does, however, contain all the bug fixes released since Service Pack 2 came out, over 1000 fixes in all. It has a few esoteric features that were backported from Windows Vista, like protection from "black hole router" attacks, a new version of Windows Installer, and the ability to be installed without requiring an activation key until registration.

Service Pack 3 also makes Windows XP machines more manageable in networks that begin to use Windows Server 2008.

Most users do not need to install Windows XP Service Pack 3 now. However, future bug fixes from Microsoft will begin to require the installation of Service Pack 3 as a prerequisite, probably beginning later this summer.

Windows Vista Service Pack 1: First Impressions



Windows Vista has been available for over a year, but Clarke Consulting, like many other IT experts, continues to recommend users stick with Windows XP. When it was released, too many programs and drivers were incompatible with Vista, Vista had some really nasty bugs that especially affect business users working on a corporate network, and machines with Vista typically ran 10-20% slower than under XP. In fact, we've probably replaced Vista with XP dozens of times over the last year for our customers.

Last month, Vista Service Pack 1 was released by Microsoft and is available through Automatic Updates. Vista Service Pack 1 is mainly a bug fix package, and it does fix the file copying bug that is of great concern to business users. File copying speeds have improved somewhat, and now that Microsoft has fixed some showstopper bugs when Service Pack 1 was installed on machines with certain drivers installed, Clarke Consulting recommends that Vista users install Service Pack 1 at this time.

However, Service Pack 1 is not a panacea for the main issues with Vista: incompatibility and overall system speed. We continue to recommend that our users stick with XP and avoid Vista where possible. Service Pack 1 does nothing to solve Vista's driver compatibility problems, stability problems, or performance problems.

We don't know about more reliable or more fun, though.

We Can Help You "Green" Your IT

With energy prices continuing to rise, most businesses are looking for ways to reduce their expenses. With Clarke Consulting's Green IT Assessment, you may be able to save hundreds of dollars a year in both electricity and cooling costs, and at the same time increase performance, enhance manageability, and decrease the space taken up by your server room. Here's how:

- Modern servers and computers are more energy efficient than those manufactured before 2005
- New "Energy Smart" servers are available which cut energy usage even further
- Policies for energy conservation can be set on your network to put monitors and computers to sleep during non-business hours
- Newer LCD monitors using LED backlights are becoming available -- they are brighter and more energy efficient than those using fluorescent backlights
- LCD monitors use far less energy than old style CRTs
- Server consolidation using blade servers and VMware virtualization allows

you to put more applications on a smaller number of servers, increase the overall utilization of your servers and disk space, and increase manageability of your network

- Server consolidation also generally decreases the physical footprint of your server room, allowing you to expand your IT without expanding the server room, and reduce your heating and cooling costs
- Disk deduplication technology from NetApp and others allows you to store more data on fewer hard drives

For a Clarke Consulting Green IT assessment, or for more tips on green computing, contact Chuck Dubuque at chuck@clarkeconsulting.com.

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