

TITLE – Windows 7: Should You Upgrade?
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Windows 7: should you upgrade? Windows 7 is the newly released pc operating system by Microsoft. It was released on October 22nd, 2009 with a lot of fanfare and hoopla. Microsoft's last attempt at a new operating system was in January, 2007 when Microsoft released Windows Vista. Windows Vista had many incompatibility issues with hardware drivers and software. Microsoft had failed to release early beta versions of Windows Vista operating system to hardware and software manufacturers so that they could get their software and hardware drivers ready for the new operating system. This was a major problem for Microsoft, who typically stops all sales of the previous operating system shortly after the new one is released; therefore, consumers are forced to purchase the new operating system on their new pc's or as an upgrade. Since Vista consumers had hardware and software issues and could not use their pc's reliably, they were outraged. Microsoft received bad press and the public outcry was heard. Shortly thereafter, Microsoft made the decision to continue to sell Microsoft Windows XP operating system until the release of their next operating system, Windows 7.

Although Microsoft's new operating system has a new name, is it really new? Windows 7 is an improved version of Windows Vista. Microsoft has spent the past two and a half years working on their operating system and has made major changes to fix the issues and make enhancements. Hardware and software manufacturers have also had two and a half years to work on their software and hardware drivers to make them compatible with Windows Vista and Windows 7. Today, 98% of hardware and software manufacturers have compatible versions of software and hardware drivers for Windows 7, compared to only 60% that had compatible versions when Windows Vista was released in 2007.

Microsoft has made many performance improvements along with other enhancements to Windows 7:

- faster startup and shutdown times;
- easier transition between opened software applications with taskbar previews;
- ability to quickly view two open windows side by side;
- XP compatibility mode for older software applications;
- faster sleep and resume modes;
- allows you to join domains easily;
- advanced backup and restore features;
- location aware printing capability;
- encrypted file system;
- and much more.

There are three versions of Windows 7: Home Premium, Professional, and Ultimate. Windows 7 Home Premium version is for home users and should not be used for a business or when there is a network. Home Premium does not include features like XP compatibility mode, domain join to join the pc to a network, and advanced system backup/restore. Windows 7 Professional is for business use and is the version that small businesses should use on their pc's. The Windows 7 Ultimate version is for Corporations and includes a multi-lingual feature.

Microsoft has announced that it will stop selling Windows XP as of June 2010, but will continue to support it and provide critical patches until April, 2014. Windows XP was originally released in October 2001 and is now an eight year old operating system. When Windows XP is retired, it will be a thirteen year old operating system. The Microsoft operating system situation with the faulty release of Vista has caused an interesting affect in the industry with new pc purchases and upgrades. It is more like a pc time warp at many offices because they have not replaced pc's and are using five, six, seven year old pc's. But, there was not an impetus to replace with the same operating system for the past eight years. Now when comparing a five year old pc running Windows XP Professional to a new pc with Windows 7, a new pc runs 297% faster and uses 55% less electricity than a five year old pc.

For pc users that have a Windows Vista pc, the upgrade to Windows 7 is fairly painless. When installing the Windows 7 Upgrade (purchase price \$119), programs and settings will be saved and migrated to the new operating system automatically. However, for pc users attempting a Windows 7 Upgrade to a Windows XP pc, a clean start is needed. All data and settings have to be saved to an external backup or hard drive before installing the Windows 7 Upgrade. All software must be reinstalled after the upgrade installation and the data and settings that were copied to an external hard drive copied back. If the pc or notebook is within two years old, then you can consider a Windows 7 Upgrade purchase and installation. If a pc is older than two years, you should wait to replace the pc to go to Windows 7. Also, when planning to purchase a new pc with Windows 7 or upgrade an existing pc to Windows 7, make sure that the software you use is a Windows 7 compatible version. If not, then you should upgrade your software applications to a Windows 7 compatible version.

When Windows Vista was released, I did not recommend that any of my clients purchase pc's with Vista. All of my clients remained in Windows XP. Since the release of Windows 7, I have been very pleased with its software and hardware compatibility and the performance. My firm has performed Windows XP to Windows 7 upgrades on pc's, Vista to Windows 7 upgrades on pc's, and several new pc installations with Windows 7. All have gone extremely well and I will advise my clients to migrate to new pc's with Windows 7 without any hesitation.

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