



MICROSOFT VISTA – IS IT A SYSTEM FOR SORE EYES?

Windows Vista is the long-awaited successor to Windows XP, coming five years after the launch of its predecessor. The operating system contains hundreds of new features. David Hurley, managing director of Anglia Business Solutions, explains how Anglia employees have dealt with the system for the last three months

THE FIRST noticeable feature of Windows Vista is its crisp, clear graphical interface. This shows a marked improvement over Windows XP. It includes a feature called Windows AERO, which includes new transparencies, live thumbnails, live icons and animations. Feedback from one of the most frequent Vista users described the experience of working with the software as the best yet, for the following reasons.

Firstly, the networking environment offers vast improvements over the previous communication environment. This is particularly useful for those with multiple network requirements, for example an office with public and private wireless network plus an additional home use facility. Moving machines between these networks has become very straightforward. The network centre within Vista allows users to simply configure connectivity and the software allows the machine to be quickly connected to the various environments.

This is particularly valuable taking the machine from the office to home. The VPN setup is simple and the ability to quickly log the machine on and commence working has saved hours within the Anglia internal environment. This visual environment allows tracing of connection issues together with diagnostic support for problems, and is strong in the wireless environment.

The search feature is one of Vista's strongest, and will play well with the users. It provides a complete index on all data areas on the machine. This will

revolutionise working practices, as it will enable users to retrieve files not only by file name but also by file content. This feature is also carried through into the Office applications. This carries a real business payback, given the amount of time knowledge workers spend searching for information.

Internet Explorer 7 (IE7) is standard within Vista and, even if not moving platforms, is worthwhile considering downloading the upgrade for its anti-phishing security features. The improved printing from the browser window is also worth mentioning. In the past, printing web pages has been a hit and miss affair, whereas with IE7 less paper is wasted in getting the desired result.

Again, these are tools that are really only of use to laptop users, but what an improvement. The ability to launch either of these modes and get instantaneous results makes leaving the office in the evenings a quick task, and then once home the rapid return of the system from hibernation make this another big plus from a user perspective.

Overall, Vista performs well, providing that it is installed on suitable hardware. Since the first Betas of the

product were released, the system has been tested on a range of hardware internally at Anglia. It has to be said that suitable memory, a fast disk and a good processor all ensure that the final presentation and user experience are satisfactory.

However, laptop users may find that battery life is reduced

compared with the XP version in the current Vista release. A useful tip is that reverting to the manufacturers' drivers for screen, audio and disk has restored the battery life to being on a par with XP.

There is probably no pressing business reason to rush out

and upgrade your entire PC &

Server operating systems immediately. However, as new computer systems are introduced, they will invariably be built with Vista installed. If upgrading existing equipment, caution is advised as there are still a few minor niggling problems. These are quickly being ironed out and the new environment is beginning to show real tangible benefits over the older operating system. The general impression is that Microsoft's \$10 billion investment in a new operating environment is money well spent. ○

