

Microsoft may have hit with new Windows 7



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several tries since they released five formal revisions of Windows 95. Windows NT also came out around then with a different kernel than ran more reliably than Windows 95.

The year 1998 brought out Windows 98 which had the new Internet browser

called Internet Explorer built right into the operating system. This "feature" brought on a federal lawsuit from the Clinton administration seeking to protect us from those evil software companies.

The end of the millennia brought Windows 2000 and later Windows Me. Windows 2000 turned out to be the very stable OS while Windows Me was the worst release ever. Just after our country was hit by Islamic terrorists in New York and Washington, D.C. in 2001, Microsoft released Windows XP in two versions with XP Home for households and XP Professional for the office.

Windows XP became the most solid and accepted OS in

2002 when Service Pack I for XP was released. In 2005 a 64-bit version of Windows XP was release to utilize 64-bit processors from AMD and later from Intel.

As the stock market was peaking around 14,000 so was Microsoft's confidence in their new release of Windows Vista in 2007. Over the next two years both the Dow Jones and the legacy of Vista took a dive.

Though after numerous service packs Vista has become stable for the most part, our 401Ks have come back with a return of ZERO compared to 10 years ago when the Dow was around 10,000.

After receiving a ferocious tail kicking over the Vista fiasco, Microsoft took its time with the development of its next operating system which just came out last week. Windows 7 has received mostly positive reviews and is currently available from retailers and already installed in new computers.

Microsoft is selling Windows 7 in seven different editions. Windows 7 Starter and Home Basic are for emerging markets

and specialized low computing configurations, neither of which we need to mess with. Windows 7 Home Premium and Professional are the two main editions that will account for the bulk of the sales.

Large companies will enter into volume licensing deals with Microsoft and they will get Windows 7 Enterprise. This leaves Windows 7 Ultimate which has all features bundled into a single super edition and it has a strong price to go along with it.

All editions of Windows 7, with the exception of Home Basic, have a 32-bit and a 64-bit version of the software for the two different hardware architectures or existing Vista installations. I ran into that just this week when I tried to install the 64-bit version of Windows 7 Home Premium on my laptop only equipped with 32-bit processor. The installed stopped letting me know I had to use the 32-bit version of Windows 7.

The new OS takes up less disk space and consumes less memory than Vista. Windows 7 also runs quicker and has a snappier version of Internet Explorer 8 to

make web surfing faster. Next week we will cover all the new features and capabilities that Windows 7 offers, but today we'll discuss the upgrade options.

If you bought a new computer after June 26 of this year or plan to buy one before Jan. 10, 2010 and it still has Windows Vista on it, you are eligible for a free upgrade to Windows 7 from Microsoft. There should have been an upgrade coupon included in your existing PC documentation.

To get information on how to get your free Windows 7 upgrade, go to the computer vendor's website and search for Windows 7 upgrade page. Most vendors like Dell, Acer and HP will want you to register your PC online to get the upgrade media and license.

Also, you will only be able to upgrade Vista Home Premium for Windows 7 Home Premium rather than jumping from Home to Professional.

After I got the right 32-bit version of Windows 7, I started the upgrade on my wife's laptop. The main choice you have

is whether or not to do an actual upgrade of Vista to Windows 7 leaving all the programs, data, and registry settings to be converted to a Windows 7 configuration. I decided to just backup all personal data to an external hard drive and select the full installation which wipes out everything on hard drive.

The Windows 7 installation took about half an hour and I had to load no drivers since it configured my video, network adapter and sound just fine with the native Windows drivers. I immediately saw a huge performance increase with the clean Windows 7 installed on my three year old laptop with just 1.5 GB of memory.

Bottom line: After a couple of decades, it appears Microsoft has a hit with the new Windows 7 operating system.

Next week's column: Windows 7 features and capabilities.

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Anybody remember Microsoft Windows 1.0 when it first came out in 1985? I was porting Fortran code for several PhDs back when they gave it to me to load on numerous large mainframes.

A couple of years later Windows 2.0

came out with MS Word and Excel integrated for word processing and spreadsheets. In 1990 both my nephews went off to fight in Desert Shield/Storm and I was installing Windows 3.0 which introduced virtual memory along with improved multi-tasking for MSDOS applications.

Microsoft really hit it big in 1992 with Windows 3.1 and that is when I really started managing Windows' based PCs on large networks like Enron's gas and electrical trading floors — still having nightmares about that project.

Windows 95 was rolled out, you guessed it, in 1995 with a strong effort to implement 32-bit processing. It took Microsoft a