

STAR Watch

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Service Pack 1 for Vista is Available

Traditionally, the announcement of the first Service Pack for any Microsoft product is the point in time when many IT professionals give serious consideration to deploying that product in their organization. Well, Vista SP1 is available, and after due consideration, many of the computer pundits have formed opinions about it. The majority opinion could be summarized as "Not Perfect".

In its many statements about Vista Service Pack1, Microsoft extols the quality of their work, explaining that SP1 "will contain changes focused on addressing specific reliability, performance, and compatibility issues; supporting new types of hardware; and adding support for several emerging standards. SP1 also will continue to make it easier for IT administrators to deploy and manage Windows Vista."

Getting there is half of the fun...

We have always felt that installing any kind of an update or bugfix should be a straightforward and mundane task.

Based on Microsoft's own statements, it would be reasonable to expect that when installing SP1. But after consulting Microsoft's own Technet web site ("Things to know before you download Windows Vista SP1"), we get a slightly different opinion. According to the web page, there are some serious issues surrounding the installation of the service pack.

- If the Windows Update function detects certain specific device drivers on the workstation, it will not download the Windows Vista SP1 update until the device drivers on the computer have been updated.



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- In an effort to improve the reliability of certain device drivers, Vista SP1 will attempt to update/reinstall them during the update process. Those hardware devices may not function properly after the SP1 update has completed. This is an issue with the way the device drivers were re-installed during the Windows Vista SP1 update process, not with the drivers themselves. Uninstalling and reinstalling the malfunctioning driver (s) should correct the problem.

In order to avoid the two issues noted above, Microsoft advises that you first visit “Windows Update” at the Microsoft Download Center and install the latest drivers. Since all device drivers would then be up-to-date, the SP1 download could take place and the SP1 update would not try to update the drivers, causing potential problems.

Experiencing Vista SP1

Once the SP1 update is installed, according to Microsoft, users will begin to experience a new level of “reliability, performance, and compatibility”. From what is being written about Service Pack 1, it will be a “new level”, but on the whole, it won’t be a “better level”.

Many users are reporting that many USB devices, especially mice and flash drives, didn’t work after the SP1 update. The problem was not resolved by reinstalling the drivers. Microsoft acknowledged the problem, but provided no additional information.

Microsoft spent a lot of time patting itself on the back over the performance improvements that SP1 made to file copying functions. The magazine PC

World investigated the claims, finding only one circumstance where SP1 made any performance improvements. In four of the five tests, SP1 slowed the computer down.

As far as performance improvements go, most benchmark programs show that SP1 does little to speed up applications. When a performance improvement was noted, it usually amounted to 2% or less. Most users would not notice the difference.

Many users have been waiting for drivers to be made available for some of the older equipment in their office, especially printers. After all of the Vista updates and SP1, many are still waiting.

Parting thoughts

For those who have Vista on their computers and are aren’t experiencing major problems, don’t be in any hurry to install Service Pack 1. Microsoft has made available a downloadable update that will selectively prevent the installation of service packs on a computer while still allowing critical updates to take place. For information about this feature, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=D7C9A07A-5267-4BD6-87D0-E2A72099EDB7&displaylang=en>. If, on the other hand, you have Vista computers with problems that seriously affect their usability, the installation of Vista SP1 is an unavoidable necessity.

Vista is still a relatively new operating system with fundamental changes to how an operating system should work. In their defense, Microsoft is working hard to correct the issues that arise, but good fixes take time to implement. Try to be patient. Vista will get better.



Replacing Your Old Computers? PCMover Can Help

Recently, we decided that it was time to bite the bullet and upgrade all of the computers in the office. It was a relatively easy task to choose the options for the new computers and shop for prices – compared to the amount of time and effort that it was going to take to reinstall all of the applications on the new computers. It became painfully clear that, unless we had an alternative, we were in for a long delay while we reinstalled the dozens of applications that we used on a regular basis – if we could find the installation media.

Windows Easy Transfer

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were a way to simplify the migration of applications from the old to the new computers? Microsoft Vista comes with "Windows Easy Transfer" (WET), a utility that is supposed to help users migrate to new computers. According to Microsoft, "Windows Easy Transfer is a wizard that

helps you transfer the data that is important to you". It allows users to transfer:

- User accounts
- Files and folders
- Program data files and settings
- E-mail messages, settings, and contacts
- Photos, music, and videos
- Windows settings
- Internet settings

But there are some significant issues with WET. It will only migrate files from computers running Windows XP. If the old computer is running Windows 95 or Windows 98, it won't work. But there is a bigger issue with WET: Applications are not transferred to the new computer. The new computer will have all of the data, but there won't be any



computer programs to run against the data. All applications must be reinstalled. Ugh.



There is at least one product available that claims to be able to migrate both applications and data. It also claims that it will work with Windows 95, 98, XP, and Vista. The product is PCMover from LapLink. In our research of the product, we found that the authors not only boasted about the products capabilities, but also explained the limitations of their product. It was clearly stated that...

- Migrated applications may not work on the new computer because the application might not be compatible with the operating system of the new computer.
- Music files with copyright protection may not play on the new computer until valid licenses are in place on the new computer.
- The copyright protection schemes of some computer applications may force the application to be reinstalled.
- If the new computer has a newer version of an application, the application from the old computer should not be migrated.
- PCMover will not copy over or install any device drivers on the new machine. It is the users responsibility to install all device drivers on the new computer since the drivers on the old computer may not be needed on the new machine or may not be compatible with the new machine's operating system. (This is especially true of Vista)
- A separate licensed copy of PCMover is required for each computer to be migrated (one license includes a license for the old computer and a license for the new computer).

After due consideration, all of the limitations seemed quite reasonable, so we paid our money and gave it a try.

Using PCMover...

The contents of 4 old Windows XP computers were migrated to 4 brand new computers running Vista. We read the Quick Start Guide, faithfully following the instructions and taking to heart the advice and warnings. Then, PCMover was installed on the old and new computers, the old and new computers were connected to the office data network, and PCMover was told to migrate everything. It took somewhere between 2 and 4 hours per computer for PCMover to migrate the data and applications. Now it was time to try out the new computers and determine how well the migration went.

Did PCMover migrate everything on the old computer to the new computer? Apparently. Everything we checked was where it should be.

Did every application work the the first time it ran? No. There were some issues...

- Office did not need to be reinstalled, but it did need to have some configuration settings re-entered.
- Some software demanded that the license keys be re-entered.
- PCMover migrated ActivSync to the new computer but the program is not supported on Vista (The new Vista-compatible program is called Windows Mobile). As soon as the problem was discovered, an attempt was made to uninstall ActivSync via the Add/Remove Programs function in Control Panel. The uninstall would not run because



the computer was running Vista. ActivSync had to be removed manually. Windows Mobile was installed and worked without a problem.

- Some functions of our ancient version of Quicken would not work on the new computer. After a little research, we found out that the version we had was incompatible with Vista. We upgraded to a Vista-compatible version and the problems disappeared.
- Adobe Acrobat required that the copy of itself on the old computer be deactivated before it would run on the new machine. That was done, but Adobe Acrobat still did not run because the driver that creates the PDF was not migrated (PCMover states that it will not move drivers – we forgot). Acrobat was reinstalled on the new machine and worked successfully.

Except for the issues listed above (some of which were really Vista issues), almost all applications worked the first time they were tried. It was much better than we hoped for.

Overall Impressions

Only IT staff people should use PCMover. While it may be possible for almost anyone to run PCMover and move all applications to the new machine, it will require the expertise of IT people to fix the issues that arise on the new machine. If you don't know how to install it or maintain it, you won't be able to correct the glitches that come about from migrating it.

If one considers the time it took to run PCMover and then fix the problems that

occurred on the new machines, we saved huge amounts of time. Installing the dozens of applications from scratch on the new machines would have taken several times longer than it did with PCMover. And while PCMover was busily moving data and applications from the old to new machines, staff was available to work on other things while the contents of the computers were being migrated.

In our considered opinion, PCMover is worth the money. A task that could have taken weeks to accomplish the traditional way was completed in a couple days. The machines were actually usable within hours of the migration. Only a few minor applications required additional research to solve some behavior issues.

Cost

A single-use version of PCMover has a suggested retail price of \$49.95 for a downloaded version from <http://www.laplink.com/pcmover/> (If you have to have it in a box, it will cost an extra \$10). That will allow the migration of the contents of a single computer to another machine. Substantial discounts are available for purchasing multiple copies of PCMover.





WNYLC Web Statistics For March 2008

Total Hits.....336,116
 Number of Pages Viewed.....103,880
 Total Visitors.....44,619
 Average Hits/Day.....10,842
 Average Pages /Day.....3,512
 Top Web Browsers Used:
 Internet Explorer 7.x.....45%
 Internet Explorer 6.x.....38%
 Firefox.....11%
 Safari.....1%

Top 5 Operating Systems Used:
 Windows XP.....71%
 Windows 2000.....6%
 Windows Vista.....12%
 Windows 98.....1%
 Mac OS.....1%



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