

Tips, Tricks and Advice from your local “IT Guru”

This month I want to talk to you about Windows 7. By the time you are reading this Microsoft will have released the latest version of Windows and I've been asked a lot if it's worth buying or upgrading. The answer is, as always, it depends. Let me try and clarify that.

If you are buying a new Windows PC, then yes, absolutely make sure you are getting Windows 7; it's miles better than Vista and quite a bit better than XP. Even if you are buying one of those Netbooks we talked about a little while ago I would try and get one with Windows 7 on it as it handles low powered machines much better than the older versions. Microsoft has toned down a lot of the more annoying features of Vista, improved its looks, speeded it up, added a lot of nice usability features and made it much more secure, so most of the reservations I had about Vista have gone away. Also, Windows 7 plays far better on a network of mixed computers, so bringing one into an office or home with other computers is not as bad as it was with Vista. But remember, it's still got all the core components of Vista underneath, so any really old hardware or software you use might not work with it.

As far as upgrading an existing system goes, the case is not so clear. Microsoft offers an upgrade package at a lower price than the full version from both Vista and XP, however for XP it's not an “in place” upgrade. You can't just stick the DVD in and let it do its stuff, you have to save all your data, wipe the computer clean and install from scratch, then reload all your data and programs. So here's my advice for different scenarios:

- If you already have a PC with Vista on it and its running fine then leave it well alone.
- If you have a new PC with Vista that came with an upgrade voucher for Windows 7, go ahead and install the upgrade, you haven't accumulated enough bloat to cause any problems yet.
- If you have an older Vista system that seems to struggle a bit or you just don't like Vista, then by all means upgrade, but do the whole wipe and reinstall thing. It's a pain, but otherwise you just carry across all the accumulated bloat from the previous version.
- If you have a modern XP system that's running fine, then leave it well alone.
- If you have an old XP system (2-3 years) then an upgrade to Windows 7 could breathe new life into it, but you will need to wipe everything (after saving all your data) and start from scratch.
- If you have a very old XP system, chances are it won't work with Windows 7 anyway, so it's probably best not to try.

In all of this, remember, it's only an operating system, its job should really be to get out of the way as quickly as possible and let you get on with using a program that can get some work done, so don't get too hung up on having the latest and greatest.

If you have any questions or anything you would like me to cover in this column, email me at look@4-11consultants.co.uk

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