

Microsoft Hopes For Fresh Start With Windows 7

Jessica Mintz, AP

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer celebrated the arrival of Windows 7 in New York yesterday with a few hundred people who had helped test early versions of the software. One of them, technology consultant, Jonathan Kay, flew from Toronto to attend.

“Windows 7 will redeem Windows,” said Kay.

Some retailers had opened at midnight to give customers an early shot at buying a new PC or a disc that they could use to put Windows 7 on their existing computers. Such upgrade discs start at \$120.

Kaelin Jacobson, a 20-year-old Web programmer, said he came to give Microsoft “one last shot,” adding that he's had a lot of problems with the company's Vista platform. Microsoft hopes people like Windows 7 much more than Vista, which was slow and didn't work well with existing programs and devices. Microsoft fixed many of Vista's flaws, but it was too late to repair perceptions. Many businesses avoided Vista altogether, preferring to keep using Windows XP, an operating system that is now 8 years old.

Windows 7 promises to boot up faster and reduce the clicks needed to get common tasks done. Microsoft has also cut some redundant ways to start programs and added flourishes that can help users keep track of their open windows. It promises to put computers into sleep mode and wake them faster, too.

Windows 7 is also meant to be “quieter” — with fewer pop-up boxes, notifications, warnings and “are you sure ...” messages. Instead, many of those messages get stashed in a single place for the user to address when it's convenient.

While the recession has led businesses to delay spending on PCs and other technologies, computer makers have said they expect that to begin to change in 2010. However, in a recent interview, Microsoft's Ballmer acknowledged that companies figure to remain careful. Information-technology budgets, he said, “aren't going to rise just because we shipped a new (operating system).”

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