

Gainesville.com

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.gainesville.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Jan 31, 2007
Jan 31, 2007

The view from Vista

The Associated Press

Consumers can finally get their hands on Microsoft Corp.'s long-delayed Windows Vista, but unlike the mad midnight rushes retailers saw with the recently released video game consoles, stores saw only a trickle of early adopters Tuesday.

Retailers around the world held special midnight events Monday or opened early Tuesday morning, as the Vista operating system and Office 2007 business software went on sale in 70 countries. Some stores, including a Best Buy in midtown Manhattan, brought in extra employees to handle pent-up demand for Vista.

At a CompUSA in San Jose, Calif., David Keller, a 40-year-old information-technology consultant from Jacksonville, Fla., was among the first in line to pick up a new Hewlett-Packard Co. laptop at midnight (3 a.m. EST).

"I've been waiting and waiting, and I've been using my personal laptop for work — it's not working well," he said. "This is a big deal for me. I'll hopefully get the better performance that I need, and I won't have to go through the trouble of upgrading later."

But at another CompUSA store in Raleigh, N.C., only about a dozen people braved frigid late-night temperatures to stake their claim on a copy of Vista.

This is the first time since 1995 that Microsoft simultaneously released new versions of Windows and Office, the software package that includes Word and Excel. Although the vast majority of people worldwide still run Windows machines and use Word to type up documents, the company faces growing competition from Linux open-source operating systems and an array of free desktop or Web-based programs for word processing and e-mail.

Microsoft said PC users will want to upgrade to Vista for its 3-D user interface and speedy desktop search function. The Redmond, Wash., software maker also touts Vista's improved security and parental controls. For Office 2007, Microsoft tossed out familiar menus and buttons and replaced them with a "ribbon" of settings that change depending on a user's



Richard Woodard smiles as he purchases several boxes of software of Microsoft's Windows Vista operating system, at a Best Buy store in San Jose, Calif., just a few minutes after midnight on Tuesday. (The Associated Press)

current task.

Consumers whose computers work fine with Windows XP, Vista's five-year-old predecessor, may not see a compelling reason to switch. Al Gillen, an analyst at technology research group IDC, estimates it will take five to seven years before the majority of systems running XP are retired.

Michael Bridges of Mabank, Texas, was the lone customer perusing the sprawling display of Vista software and computers at a Fry's Electronics store in Dallas on Tuesday morning.

Bridges, a 53-year-old who works in the highway construction business, said he was curious to see the various editions of Vista but had no immediate plans to buy a copy.

"Every time Windows comes out it has bugs," he said. "I don't want to pay for that yet. I'll probably wait a couple of months."

Kathleen Calvin echoed those concerns as she left a Best Buy in Brooklyn, Ohio, empty-handed.

"I just want to make sure it's something that's going to work well," she said.

During the past few weeks, shelves in the computer section at a Best Buy in midtown New York have been essentially bare, as consumers lost interest in laptops with XP and the retailer cleared space to sell new machines running Vista, which imposes such hardware requirements as 1 gigabyte of system memory, or RAM.

Consumers who want to upgrade a relatively new XP computer can expect to drop \$100 to \$259 for Vista alone, depending on the version (a standalone version of Vista costs up to \$399, but it is already included in the price of new PCs). While Microsoft boasts that 1.5 million devices are Vista-compatible now, analysts warn of a potentially rocky transition.

"The real proof I think is going to be in the first few weeks, where we see if all the vendors really stepped up to getting their drivers right," said Michael Silver, an analyst at Gartner, a research group. "It is definite that some things won't work, especially if you're trying to make an older PC learn new tricks."

But as in the past, most consumers will switch to Vista only when they buy new computers, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer said Monday during a launch-related event.

Microsoft shares slipped 5 cents to close at \$30.48 on the Nasdaq Stock Market.

Associated Press writers Elizabeth Dunbar in Raleigh, N.C., Matt Slagle in Dallas, Jordan Robertson in San Francisco and Thomas J. Sheeran in Brooklyn, Ohio, contributed to this report.

Microsoft officials hold mallets after breaking the lid of sake (Japanese wine) barrel in a ceremony to launch Windows Vista and 2007 Office system in Tokyo on Tuesday.
