

Is Your Home or Small-Business Network Ready for Microsoft Windows Vista?

It appears that in addition to computer operating issues that have been encountered with the release of Microsoft's new operating system, many peripherals just will not work when the computers they are attached to are upgraded to Microsoft Windows Vista. Netopia is diligently testing all devices and software products for Vista compatibility. Our goal is to provide a smooth transition to Vista for our customers.

Industry press discussions about installed base support for Microsoft Windows Vista have been lively. Editors and analysts alike have reported that while Vista offers numerous improvements, the operating requirements are onerous and there are many existing peripherals in the markets that have difficulty operating correctly under Vista.

"Windows Vista includes an extensive reworking of core OS elements in order to provide content protection for "premium content," typically high-definition data from Blu-Ray and HD-DVD sources. Providing this protection incurs considerable costs in terms of system performance, system stability, technical support overhead, and hardware and software costs. These issues affect not only users of Vista but the entire PC industry, since the effects of the protection measures extend to all hardware and software that will ever come into contact with Vista—simply put, anything that is loaded onto or connects to the PC". (3)

"Among the major requirements of Vista, as compared with Windows XP or 2000, is a graphics card that supports Vista's user-interface and visual enhancements, which include translucent window frames and task bars, real-time thumbnail previews and task switching, enhanced transitional effects, and animations." (2)

"According to one analyst, if you want to purchase and use Windows Vista when it comes out, you probably should be thinking about new hardware. It is estimated that about half of all corporate PCs aren't powerful enough to run the forthcoming operating system. Computers will need at least 1GB of RAM to run Vista, and an additional 512MB to use PC virtualization while running an older OS and Vista simultaneously. Just upgrading RAM on a PC costs from \$100 to \$200 per machine." (2)

An article from IDG News Services (January 3, 2007) observes that application compatibility is another problem for Vista. Virtual private network (VPN) and anti-virus software are among the applications at the top of the list that must work with Vista. Right now the major anti-virus vendors Symantec and McAfee are working with Microsoft on a way to deliver protection to customers.

“The list of applications that still aren't compatible with Vista includes: IBM Corp.'s Lotus Notes e-mail and collaboration suite; VPN clients from Cisco Systems Inc. and Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.; Intuit Corp.'s accounting software QuickBooks 2006 and earlier versions; and anti-virus software from Trend Micro Inc.” (2) Of course, since this is such a rapidly developing industry, you should always check with your software or peripheral vendor to get the latest updates on Vista compatibility.

Some vendors have developed strategies to ensure that critical business applications are available to their customers during the migration. “In mid-December Intuit advised QuickBooks users that they should hold off on upgrading to Vista until after the U.S. tax season ends in April, citing compatibility with older versions of its software and "potential reliability issues" with Vista. Even some of Microsoft's own products still don't run on Vista. SQL Server 2005, the latest version of Microsoft's database, won't be available for Vista until after the consumer release.” (1)

Issues with peripherals and drivers can be disastrous. In an effort to make your operating system more secure, Vista will deny service via “driver revocation” if it detects a weakness in a particular device or driver connected to the PC. “Once a weakness is found, the driver will have its signature revoked by Microsoft. Revoking the signature for a device or driver means that it will cease to function. Actual details on this are a bit vague; presumably some minimum functionality like generic 640x480 VGA support will still be available in order for the system to boot. However, one thing is certain: a report of a compromise on a particular driver or device will cause all support for that device to be turned off until a fix can be found.” (3)

The fact of the matter is that most legacy peripherals are not compatible or compliant with Vista. “If it's an older device for which the vendor isn't interested in rewriting the driver (and in the fast-moving hardware market most devices enter "legacy" status a year or two after their replacement model becomes available), all devices of that type worldwide become permanently unusable.” (3) Again, as operating systems are by nature complex, compatibility testing is evolving rapidly and it is always best to check with your peripheral vendor before assuming any device is not supported.

Netopia and Microsoft Windows Vista

Netopia has made it a priority to assure that our gateways, adapters, and software products and services are Vista compatible.



Our devices that utilize USB connectivity have been tested with Vista and there has been no degradation of performance or service incidents. Netopia's self-installing pocket modem was designed and tested with Vista prior to introduction.

Vista certification testing has begun with our standard generic embedded software in our gateways and routers. Netopia's standard embedded software provides state-of-the-art security, management and configuration, bridging and routing, quality-of-service, authentication, and wireless capabilities. While testing is in the early stages, very few issues have been encountered to date.

Additionally, our management user interfaces work properly under Internet Explorer with Vista.

Timbuktu® Pro version 8.6.0 has been tested with Vista and some issues have been detected including certain constraints for incoming access. However remote control, file transfer, and Skype features work normally.

All of which are particularly important. Not only is a device subject to potential issues if Vista detects a compatibility or interoperability problem, but this could cause the PC to experience a performance issue as well.

Simply put, we are working diligently to be ready for Microsoft Windows Vista!

Sources:

1) [Microsoft Vista slow to take off](#), Robert McMillan and Elizabeth Montalbano, IDG News Service (San Francisco Bureau) (03 Jan 2007)

2) [Gartner: Half Of Corporate PCs Can't Run Vista](#), Antone Gonsalves, TechWeb [TechWeb](#) Apr 10, 2006

3) [A cost analysis of Windows Vista Content Protection](#), Peter Gutman December 28, 2006 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>