

## The Big Picture – My voyage around Windows 7

By Clive Longbottom, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd

So, Windows 7 Beta 1 has been out there a while now, to general good reviews from people who have played with it. This blog entry describes the various different attempts I had to install and use it and what Quocirca believes the likely benefits of upgrading are going to be.

Firstly, there were the problems with actually downloading the code - Microsoft, as usual, seemed to be caught unawares, and struggled to cope with the number of hits. However, this level of interest must be promising to Microsoft, as it shows that not only die-hards are interested, but that there is a high level of general interest as well.

Having managed to download the beta, the first thing was to decide where to install it. The first attempt

was on a virtual machine on a tablet PC running Sun's VirtualBox. The installation went smoothly, rapidly and with little intervention. However, although the bare essentials of Windows 7 were then available, the constraints of VirtualBox meant that some of the visual aspects and other functions were not.

So, take two - an installation on a physical partition on my the tablet PC. This had a lot of problems, but not all of these can be laid at Microsoft's door. Firstly, Lenovo has made changes to how it deals with the disks on laptops, and this meant that the Windows

CHKDSK and all the third party partitioning software available did not work. A search of the internet provided a workaround, and eventually a usable partition was created.

The installation of Windows 7 was, again, relatively trouble free. However, following the install there was no fingerprint recognition, no sound, no tablet capabilities.

Others with non-Lenovo tablet PCs had just run updates against the tablet PC vendor's site and everything worked. Trying the same, and after a download of around half a gigabyte of updates, Lenovo's software promptly came back with a message saying that the operating system was unsupported. Great - little point in continuing with looking at Windows 7 if much of the functionality of the tablet PC is killed.

Take three - and an update of an old laptop running Vista. When Vista came out, I did the same, and had all sorts of problems that I wrote about at the time ([Another Vista upgrade story](#)). You would have thought that Microsoft would have sorted this out, as although I got flamed last time with the technophiles stating that it was obvious that only clean installs should be done, the vast majority of users will have little capability to back up all their data, reformat a drive, carry out a clean install and then re-install all their existing applications and replace the data. To many, upgrading is a core need.

This update did not go well. At one stage, the machine would not boot at all - so I had to boot via safe mode and uninstall several items before a half stable machine state was reached. OK - this is beta code, but for Windows 7 to get the press Microsoft wants, a clean upgrade capability from XP and Vista will be required.

Back to the tablet. On the Lenovo site, there were a whole new set of updates, so another try seemed worthwhile. A further automated download of nearly 1 gigabyte of software still didn't seem to do much, but eventually, after manually applying the tablet software update, the tablet functionality was recognised. A few hours later, after much fiddling and removing drivers and reinstalling, there was sound. Still no fingerprint recognition, but survival was just possible without that.

So, having battled against the best intents of Lenovo to stop me, what of Windows 7 itself? Other than a few minor tweaks, anyone who has used Vista will find Windows 7 very recognisable. Advantages are that it does seem more responsive (presumably this will only get better as Microsoft moves towards final code and debug code is removed) and major improvements have been made in terms of time to recovery from standby and hibernate modes.

Other nice things include Microsoft's take on the Apple Ribbon: seeing what open applications are up to is far easier. The task bar is far more flexible than previously - users can choose how icons are shown, so that only a minimal number of icons take up space at any time, and yet alerts will still be shown. The clock can show multiple different time zones at the same time -

simple, but massively useful for anyone needing to work around the globe.

All told, Windows 7 looks like what Vista should have been. But, will it be accepted by prospective users? In discussions with Microsoft, one of the major pluses that has been put forward is that Windows 7 will be fully compatible with any application that runs under Vista. This seems like an own goal. The major reasons for many for not going down the Vista route has been the lack of compatibility with existing applications, and it doesn't look like Windows 7 is trying to address these issues. Further, if the financial climate continues as it is, many will feel that with XP continuing to do what they really need, Windows 7 could be an expensive upgrade that offers very little.

Microsoft needs Windows 7 to be a success. It has reduced the number of stock-keeping units (SKUs - the different versions that will be available for purchase by the general user), to try and minimise the confusion there has been with the seemingly endless Vista SKUs. There will be a few specialised SKUs aimed at emerging markets, very-low capability machines and for the Software Assurance and dedicated gamer/technophile markets, but general availability will focus on two main SKUs.

Microsoft has made Windows 7 scalable up and down the line so that it doesn't need a brand new PC to run on. There is also acknowledgement of the current success of the netbook, and Microsoft knows that it has to be able to play solidly here. It accepts that many small organisations struggle with networking issues, and has simplified how a basic shared

environment can be put in place. It has provided a means of simplifying mobile access to central servers, without the complexity of dealing with full virtual private networks (VPNs). It is fast, it is "prettier". It looks like it is altogether a pretty good operating system.

But, is it what the global consumer, SMBs and larger organisations want? It will be difficult to judge this until it gets closer to the launch. If the financial environment stays as it is, Microsoft is going to need to pull out all the stops and come up with far more compelling business reasons as to why Windows 7 should be considered.

It will also need to do more to ensure that upgrades can be carried out without so many issues, and that it provides some means of supporting applications that will not easily run on Vista/Windows 7. Whether this is done through providing some easy form of Virtual PC and a copy of XP that can then run within the Windows 7 environment, or by using the likes of a cloud-based version of ChangeBase AOK to "cleanse" an application's installation routine to make it compatible with Windows 7, something needs to be done to make it harder for an organisation to choose not to migrate.

## About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

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