

## VNUNet – Vista Upgrade Revisited

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It has been a little while since I decided to be brave and upgrade my ThinkPad laptop from Windows XP to Vista Ultimate, along with upgrading Office XP to Office 2007.

The upgrade to Vista was covered in an earlier article, but I thought that now would be the time to provide an update on my views and perceptions of Microsoft's operating system and the Office suite.

Firstly, the good news. Office 2007 is very good; the Ribbon does what it should and, although finding things can take a while to start off with, you soon get used to the new layout.

Overall I have felt that the experience is far more intuitive and is faster than the old menu system. I also find the suite faster than Office XP, and with fewer crashes on large documents.

Document fidelity in round-tripping between Office 2007 and Office XP/2003 seems to be fine, even with the number of document reviews that go on within Quocirca.

The free download of the PDF creator is faster than Adobe's and meets our basic requirements adequately.

Now to Vista itself. After having to stump up for double the memory, and after the amount of time spent in essentially rescuing a system that had hamstrung itself during upgrade, on the whole Vista is behaving itself.

The Gadget function is good, allowing me to keep an eye on the various newsfeeds and on resource usage (OK, Mac users - we know that you've had this since 1913 or whenever).

This is a fun one: rebooting the laptop shows how hard Vista is on resources, with both cores of the CPU being above 90 per cent for a couple of minutes, and memory usage being above 80 per cent.

Once everything is loaded and has calmed down a little, it trundles along at around 15 per cent

per CPU core and around 55 per cent memory (remember that this is a 2GB machine).

But there are some major problems. Installing new software really become wearing when you have to say 'Yes' to every failsafe that the developers and InstallShield have put in to the system, and then to the ones that Vista decides it had better add to the mix as well.

OK, I accept that this is a security measure to stop the uninitiated/awkward/crazy from messing up machines, but you do get to the position that even if you 'accidentally' find yourself trying to install a program called 'MajorTrojan.exe' from a site called [www.youdbeverysillytotrustthis.com](http://www.youdbeverysillytotrustthis.com), you'll probably press OK just because you always have done.

That you can't even say that you will trust certain publishers (such as Microsoft itself) seems to be overkill. This also applies when you want to run certain functions within Vista. If it thinks that this could be 'dangerous' the screen dims (as if it is just about to fall over), and you have to give the OK to run the function.

However, for me the killer is network connectivity. I run a wireless network that I hope is pretty secure.

I use MAC address filtering so that only specific devices should be able to connect. I use WPA to secure connections. And the one which seems to be the problem is that I do not broadcast my service set identifier (SSID).

Now, these three precautions are highly recommended for all wireless access points, and the approach will be in general use all over the place. But Vista deals with SSID broadcasts in a different way than Windows XP used to.

Some access point kit does not deal with Vista in the way that Vista would like, and so the problems start.

The problem manifests itself as Vista either not identifying the access point at all, identifying it as an 'unnamed network', or refusing to renew the DHCP lease from the access point.

It can also be that it does not identify the access point for a short or long period of time, and then suddenly decides that it does like it, and so connects. However, you have no idea which of these will manifest itself when bringing the laptop out of sleep.

I use the sleep function a lot. I might be part way through a piece of work and suddenly remember that I'm meant to be elsewhere in a very short period of time.

Closing the lid on the laptop means that everything is kept as it was, and I can start back on it all just by opening the lid and authenticating myself. Except that this isn't the case any longer.

I open the lid, authenticate, watch my dear little Gadget get all excited in telling me how Vista is churning away in getting back to where it was - and then sit there.

Around one in 10 attempts, I will connect to the network straight away. About three in 10, I will be able to force a connection after a few retries.

The rest of the time, I have to decide whether it is going to be more time effective to reboot the laptop and so force an association with the access point, or to fiddle in the hope that I can get something to happen.

Fiddling is not as easy under Vista as it used to be under Windows XP. Yes, you can reset the adaptor, but it's a bit arcane in how you do it, and you get no feedback as to what is happening or at what stage things go wrong.

That each time it asks you whether you really want to do this (see above) is mightily frustrating. And even if you then plug in a cable, the way that gaining an IP address through DHCP seems to be impossible just makes my day.

To reboot, I then have to save everything, and remember what I had open before I reboot. So, a resume from sleep, which should only be a matter of seconds, can, on a bad day, result in up to 20 minutes of frustration and lack of work.

It seems that Microsoft is aware of these problems, as there are a couple of entries in the knowledge base. However, the fixes seem to involve messing around with the Registry, and hoping for the best. Or, turn off IPv6, and this might solve it. Or, you can turn SSID broadcast back on, and this might do it.

That this is a security issue does not seem to matter to our friends at Redmond. That any of these might not fix the problem at all is a risk to take.

Microsoft seems to want to blame the access point manufacturers, but they all acted correctly when they created the access points. That Vista seems to deal with SSID broadcasting in a different way should not require all access point vendors to update their old hardware.

A quick search of the forums shows that such connectivity problems are common, which for an operating system developed for the mobile era shows a major lack of pre-testing in this area.

Microsoft tells me that SP1 will address issues with networking, but it looks like we will all have to wait in the meantime.

All told, I like Vista, but it is small items like these which make you want to scrub it off and start back with XP. Come on Microsoft. It shouldn't be too difficult to get rid of problems like this.

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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.

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