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Vista - First Impressions

Is Vista more than just a Windows XP facelift? Find out here.

The Facelift

Vista sports a new 'Aero' interface - that's code for a Mac like interface. You'll notice the sharper looking lines, larger and more refined icons and the Gadget area shown here on the right.

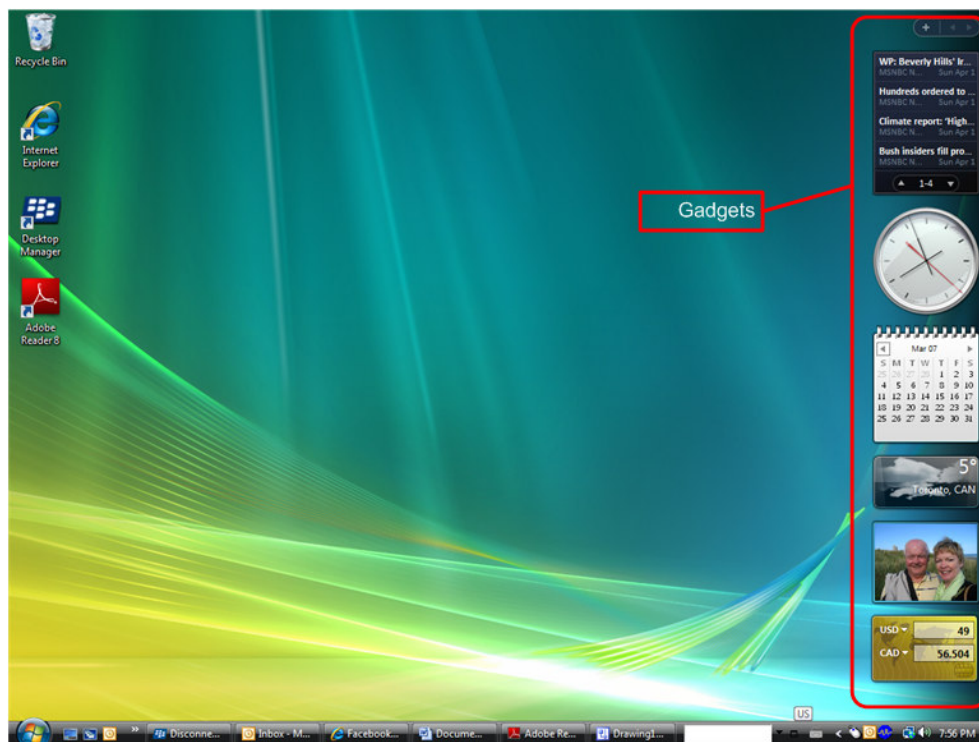


Figure 1 - The Windows Vista for Business Desktop

Gadgets

You can pick and choose from a host of gadgets which provide different types of information. In this example, there is a news feed showing 4 items, an analog clock, a calendar, the weather for Toronto, a slide show of photos on the computer (you might recognize two life time members here!) and a currency converter. You can go on-line and download a host of other gadgets. Each gadget is customizable to some degree and more are being added all the time.

Anti-malware Software

One of the annoyances with Vista is that it is not easy to find an out of the box solution for virus and spyware protection, although this is getting better week by week. Trend Client/Server Messaging Security, our standard antimalware software, only released a patch for Vista two weeks ago.

Better for Novices

New users to computers will appreciate - the chattier, friendlier nature of Vista's error messages and tips. For example, when remote access was enabled on the computer, a message popped up saying that the Power Savings options would interfere with the ability to use Remote Access. In the same message was a link to the Power Savings options - quite useful in terms of predicting where problems might occur. But, this feature is not complete.

A new unformatted USB hard disk was inserted into the computer and Vista, like Windows XP, recognized that a USB device was plugged in, but it could not be used. Vista did not present a helpful message indicating how to format the drive.

Not so Great for Experts

Many of the common features in Windows have been moved to different locations, including the location for Documents and Settings. Right from the Start menu, things are different. See Figure 2.

Most notable is the All Programs menu. When you select All Programs, the existing menu is replaced with the next level of menus. You choose the Back button to go back to the prior menu. If there are a lot of programs, then you will need to scroll to find the one you want. This is a bit annoying at first. The menu in grey on the right always remains.

Some items have been renamed to remove the "My" designation so popular in Windows XP. Others have been relocated to other parts of the Start menu as indicated and some are brand new.

It is a matter of opinion as to whether these changes are better or worse than with Windows XP - we leave that for you to decide.

Should I Upgrade to Vista?

We would not recommend upgrading to Windows Vista on an older machine. Our experience shows that there is a lack of driver support for many older peripherals. Even newer peripherals suffer unless the manufacturer has released new Vista compatible drivers. For example, we purchased an HP Inkjet printer for a customer with Vista support clearly written on the packaging. Yet, the software on the disk was incompatible with Vista. We had to go to the HP site to get Vista drivers. Upgrading to Vista from XP is not a recommended option at this time.

If you are purchasing a new computer and do not have a large investment in older applications, then purchasing Vista will provide you with the operating system of the future - something you likely won't have to change for some time.

Programs menu is always confined to this space, necessitating scrolling for large menus.

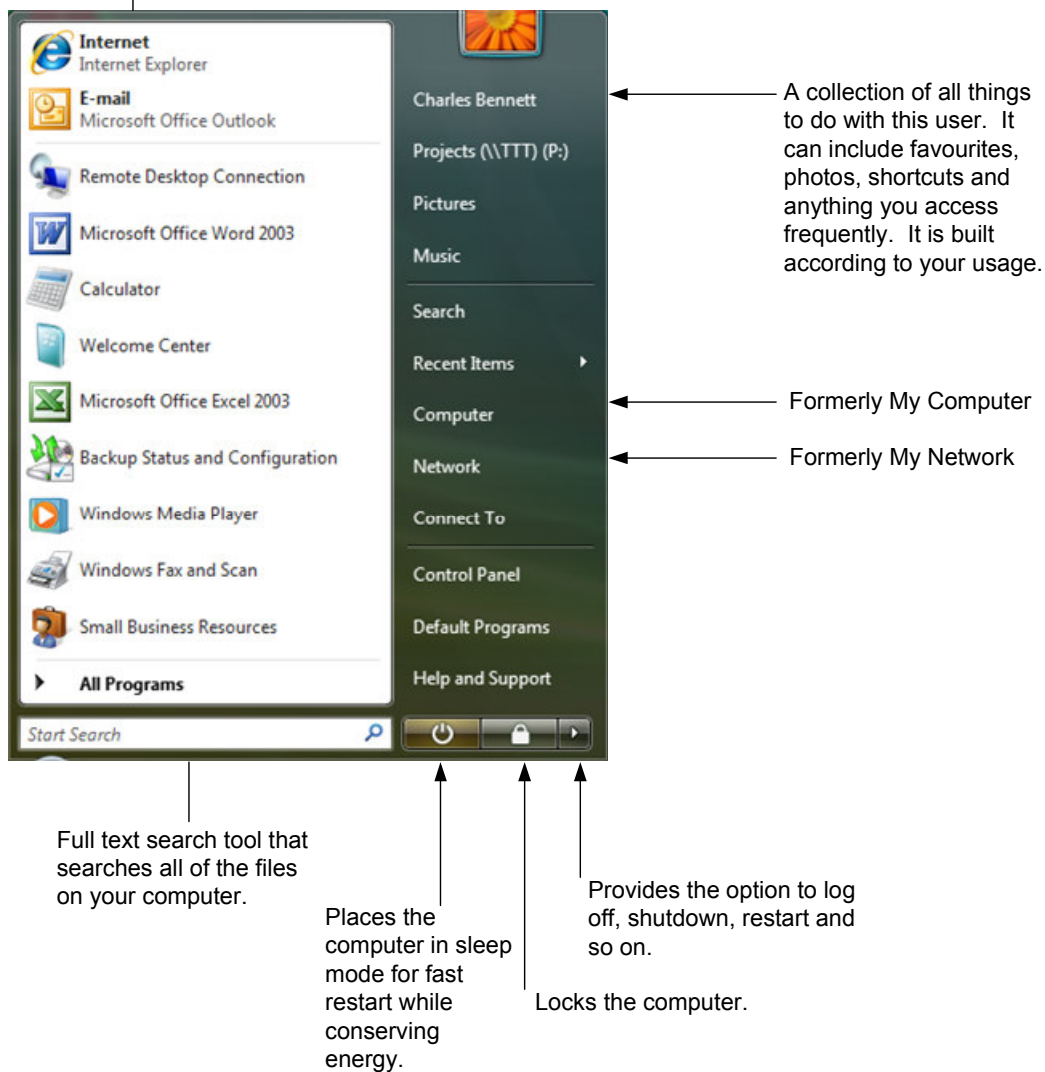


Figure 2 - The Windows Vista for Business Start Menu

Applications

Don't count on your old applications working with Vista. We attempted to install Adobe Professional version 6 and that was a non starter. Yet Office 2003 worked

well. So if you have a legacy of XP compatible software prepare to upgrade or stick with XP.

Have Questions About Vista?

We've been working with Vista for several months now. If you have specific questions that you would like answered in future articles, please send an email to vista@triella.com. We will do our best to address your questions in future articles.

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