Microsoft Vista – The Big Jump
Purchasing and Installing Microsoft Vista
By Ron Mettler, April 28, 2007

After careful consideration for close to 10 minutes, I decided to make the jump to Vista on my existing computer. In October of 2006, I became one of the first people to place a pre-order for Vista from Amazon.com. I committed my order for Vista Premium Upgrade based on a comparison of features that had been shown by Jamie Leben at a CUGG meeting in 2006. A brief comparison of features may also be found on the Microsoft web site at:
http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/editions/choose.mspx?wt_svl=10033VHa2&mg_id=10033VHb2

The plan was to install Vista on my existing Gateway 700XL computer in order to learn the new features and perhaps to get a little jump on those that are hesitant to be in the first group of users of a new operating system. I had used the Microsoft Vista Upgrade Advisor program to determine if my system was capable of handling Vista. The program flagged my Video card and my Sound card as not capable of handling the new Vista features. So I expected to have to purchase two new cards. The Vista Upgrade Advisor program can be found at
http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/buyorupgrade/upgradeadvisor.mspx?wt_svl=10008VHa1&mg_id=10008VHb1

My new software was shipped from Amazon.com the first week in February, but I waited to try it out on my computer until April 14. In the interim, I discovered that upgrading to Vista is different than with prior versions of Windows. It appeared that it was not possible to upgrade from Windows XP to Vista using a clean install. Vista does not allow you to use a CD from a prior version of Windows as proof of ownership of XP. Vista Upgrade looks on the hard drive for XP before starting the install. I certainly wanted to do a clean install as I had hacked my system registry a number of times. I also wanted to rid my system of many of the old programs that I had been using. Fortunately, a Brian Livingston article in a Windows Secrets newsletter outlined a solution to the problem. He detailed how a Vista Upgrade package can be installed as a "clean install". Based on his article, I have outlined the procedure that I used to perform a clean install further down in this article.

My Computer Hardware:
Gateway 700 XL, Pentium 4 - 2.2 GHz processor, 1 GB of RDRAM, Sound Blaster Live Sound Card, ATI Radeon video card with 32 MB of RAM, Sony internal DVD/CD/R/RW drive and a CD/RW/R drive. The monitor is an 18" LCD analog/digital monitor which was connected to the digital output of the ATI video card. The system was purchased January 30, 2002 so it is over 5 years old.
The fact that my system RAM is RDRAM may provide some extra horsepower that standard SDRAM would not, although I am not sure if that is true. The Sony DVD writer was added to my system a couple of years ago.

Before I started the install, I purchased an ATI Radeon 9550 256MB AGP video card from Newegg.com for $69.63 including shipping. I installed and configured the Video card before I started the Vista upgrade. After the install, I purchased an Auzentech XMYSTIQUE7.1 RT sound card from Newegg.com for $63.68 with shipping.

Vista Pricing as of January 31, 2007 as shown at Shopping.com:

Edition	Full version	Upgrade version
Vista Home Basic	$192	$100 ($92 less)
Vista Home Premium	$228	$156 ($72 less)
Vista Business	$285	$192 ($93 less)
Vista Ultimate	$380	$225 ($155 less)

Performing a Clean Install of a Vista Upgrade Product:

If you do legitimately own and have a copy of Windows XP installed on a computer, a clean upgrade can be performed as follows:

1. Before starting the upgrade, backup your data files (My Documents), your Favorites, and your e-mail, contacts and other pertinent data.
2. Insert the Vista Upgrade DVD in your DVD drive and boot the computer from the DVD. You may have to configure your BIOS to allow for a boot from the DVD drive prior to a hard drive boot.
3. Select the "Install Now" option, leave the Product Key fields blank, and turn off the "Automatically activate Windows when I'm Online" check box. In the next dialog screen, confirm that you really want to install Vista without entering a Product Key.
4. Select the correct version of Vista that you purchased and are installing.
5. In the next window, select "Custom (Advanced)" install, not the "Upgrade" install.
6. Vista will copy files and reboot several times in the process of doing the install. After Vista boots for the last time into the new install, do not activate Vista. Remember the username and password that you entered during the login process as you will need to use the same ones in step 10 below. What you have accomplished at this point is an install without a Product Key. What you will need to do next is to install the upgrade again from the DVD setup.exe program. If you eject the Vista DVD and then reinsert the DVD, the setup.exe program should start. If it does not, click on start then type d:\setup.exe and press return in the "start search" field. Substitute the correct letter for your DVD drive if is not d:. Click on "Install Now" and select "Do not get the latest updates for installation". The updates can be installed later.
7. This time, enter the Product Key and again turn off "Automatically Activate when I'm online".
8. Select "Upgrade" not "Custom (Advanced)". The second installation of Vista with this option selected is an upgrade to the first install.
9. The installation will proceed with several reboots without user intervention. Do not interfere with any of the pop-up DOS like windows.

10. A "Thank You" dialog box will appear where you will need to click on "Start". When the Vista login screen appears, enter the username and password that you used in the first install. Vista should be up and running at this point.
11. Activating Windows at this point can be done from the Welcome Center box that displays during each boot. You can run Vista for 30 days without activating or if you eliminated the Welcome Center by un-checking it during boot, go to Start, Control Panel, System and Maintenance to activate.
12. I did have to install Vista drivers for my new sound card that I downloaded from the Auzentech web site. The new Radeon Video card was recognized by Vista and Vista drivers were automatically installed. I upgraded the Vista installed drivers using the ATI CD. The DVD/R/RW and CD/R/RW drives worked from the start. My HP 4670 scanner worked using the Vista drivers but HP has not updated the other programs that came with the scanner. I have found that the programs are not needed. I can scan to PDF or JPG files direct from Adobe Acrobat 7, from Photoshop 5 and other programs. Be sure to get all of the applicable Windows updates soon after Vista is up and running.

I have also found that several programs that I routinely use will work on Vista, contrary to the manufacturer's information on their Web sites. One important program for me is Adobe Acrobat 7. Adobe says I need to upgrade to Version 8, but what I have found is Version 7 works almost 100% for me. In Internet 7, the option for creating a PDF of a web page only appears in one tab when multiple tabs are open. For making a PDF from a Web page, I just make sure that I only open one tab. I have attached an appendix that lists the programs that I am currently using with Vista.

A clean install as the above procedure outlines will leave some traces of the prior installation in folders that you may delete at this point. Be sure to not delete your data files that should still exist on the hard drive. Microsoft has included the option of doing a clean install with an upgrade version of Vista. A business may consider the procedure a violation of the end user agreement. Since Microsoft has made the option available, I feel that it is a valid option to use for a home user. I do not base my opinion on a legal point.

Microsoft Vista is not for everyone, especially those Apple Mac users that love to bash Microsoft. I like Vista very much and appreciate the many new features. My computer performs well and is snappier than with XP. This may be partly due to having a new clean install of Vista. I like the Aero video features in Vista as well as the automatic backup routines and many other new features. Installing Vista on my existing computer will allow me to defer purchasing a new computer for at least 6 more months than I had originally planned. I will purchase Vista Ultimate for my next new computer. A careful review of the features of Premium versus Ultimate should be a part of anyone's plans before upgrading to a new system. One big advantage that comes with the Vista Ultimate Full version is the option of purchasing two additional copies of Vista Premium at $50 each. The Microsoft Web site details the option. A small home network may be an ideal application for that combination. Total upgrade costs for me were Vista Premium at $156, Video card at $70, sound card for $64 for a grand total of $290.

Appendix
Programs that I use on My Vista Premium System

Adobe Acrobat 7
Adobe Reader 8
Adobe Photoshop Elements 5
Apple iTunes and Quick Time
AVG 7.5
Avisys Version 5 for birders
Canon camera Photostitch Utility
Comcast Rhapsody
Garmin GPS Mapsource
Google Earth
Microsoft Office 2003 (I have added the Microsoft support for Office 2007 XML documents from a free download on the Microsoft web site)
Microsoft Streets and Trips 2005
Mozilla Firefox
Network Magic
Pando
Picassa2
VuePrint Pro

I do not need the Winzip program that I used to use as the functions are a part of Vista. A number of old programs that I not longer require were not installed in Vista, so there may be more that would work in Vista. I no longer need Nero for using my DVD and CD writers. The Nero site indicates that Version 6 will not work in Vista but for $80 I can get Version 7. I do not need all of the bloated features of Nero 7 or for that matter, the bloated features of Nero6. I was using Quicken 2004 but I did not try to install it as the Quicken site indicates it will not work in Vista. I intend to purchase 2007 Quicken Basic anyway.