

# Databyte Brief

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## Windows 7: What Vista Should Have Been

Written by Matthew Cochrane

With the release of Windows Vista, many experts felt that Microsoft delivered an under developed product. Public perception will drive the obvious question of "Why upgrade when Windows XP does everything I need it to do?". While Vista did bring many advancements to the Windows Operating System there were far too many instances of compatibility problems, along with high system requirements making it feel sluggish. Over two years and three service packs later, many users are comfortable with using Windows Vista for home computers. However, businesses are still holding onto XP for the speed and compatibility it offers. Microsoft has been listening these last two years.



Windows 7 has many new features to ensure that compatibility is enhanced, security strengthened and an improved user experience. Compatibility is addressed in two key ways that separate itself from Vista. Many of the operating systems core components were re-designed with lessons learned from Windows Vista. As a consequence the drivers are now mature and compatibility quirks have been greatly reduced. Windows 7 Professional and Ultimate users will also have access to *Windows XP Mode*, at no additional cost. This *new* feature has been in use in enterprise environments for some time, but has recently been optimized for use by individual users. Effectively, it consists of a virtual Windows XP environment which may be run within Windows 7. This will allow software that will not operate properly in Windows Vista to function as if they are running on a Windows XP computer. This is not the standard virtualization that some users may have had experience with in enterprise environments, this mode of virtualization has been designed to function during day-to-day operations without the user even being aware of its use.

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## Legal Music Downloads

Written by Vale Trujillo



One of the questions I am often asked, both on and off the job, is where to find the best place to legally download music. Before the huge increase in popularity of portable MP3 players, this was a difficult question to answer. The biggest problem with legal download services in their early days was the DRM (Digital Rights Management) encoding that came along with the music. DRM allows the publisher of music to limit what can and cannot be done with the purchased music. If you are anything like me then you like to be able to do whatever you want with your media, digital or not. Being limited to specific music players, or not being able to burn music to a CD can be a big disappointment. Luckily, things have changed and most digital music retailers offer DRM free music in the standard MP3 format. This combination allows you to use your purchased music on just about any player or medium you choose. Here are some quick details about a couple of the biggest names in the online music world.

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# Recognizing and Avoiding Spyware and Viruses

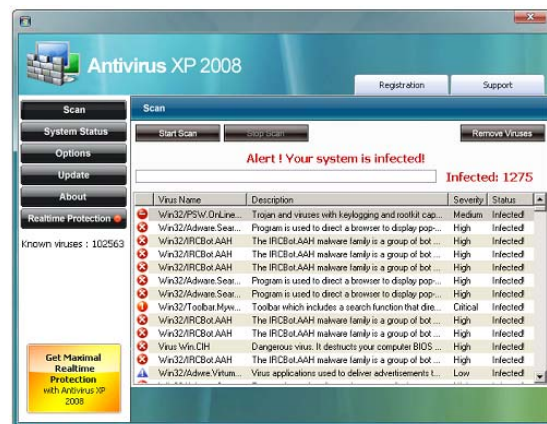
Written by Stephanie Longoria

*“Spyware  
and Viruses  
evolve just  
as their  
biological  
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do”*

Anyone using the internet should know how to recognize and avoid Spyware and Viruses and keep them from invading your computer. While no single solution will be one hundred percent effective, you can follow some basic guidelines to safeguard your PC and prevent possible infection. Spyware and Viruses are malicious software that can interfere with normal computer functions and/or transmit the user's personal data over the internet without the user's permission or knowledge. Common sources of infectious software are through peer-to-peer file sharing, email links and attachments, instant messaging, social networking communities, and free software portals.

Some signs that your system may be infected with Spyware or Viruses are:

- Change in web browser home page
- Changes in web browser settings
- Random system pop-ups
- Erratic system operation
- Degraded system performance
- Unfamiliar icons appearing on your desktop
- System lockups



Example of a fake Pop-up.

Spyware and Viruses evolve just as their biological equivalents do. The common user now has an increasingly difficult time distinguishing legitimate anti-virus software from malicious software. The best tool to prevent malicious software intrusion is common sense. If something is not familiar, stop and ask yourself, "Is this a legitimate alert?". The answer may be the difference between a clean system and an expensive repair bill. There are many preventative steps that a user can perform to minimize the possibility of infection:

- Windows updates – most systems will automatically download current updates from the Microsoft web site. You can manually update your system by going to [update.microsoft.com](http://update.microsoft.com) in your Internet Explorer web browser.
- Anti-virus software – update regularly and often by using the "update" button within your anti-virus program. Pop-ups asking you to update should not be used.
- Spyware software – use the same method as you would to update your anti-virus software.

Internet Explorer, by virtue of market share, is the most common web browser that Virus writers seek to infect. There are many alternate web browsers that may be used in lieu of Internet Explorer for a safer web browsing experience. Comparable web browsers are Firefox ([www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com)), Opera ([www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com)) or Google Chrome ([www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome)).

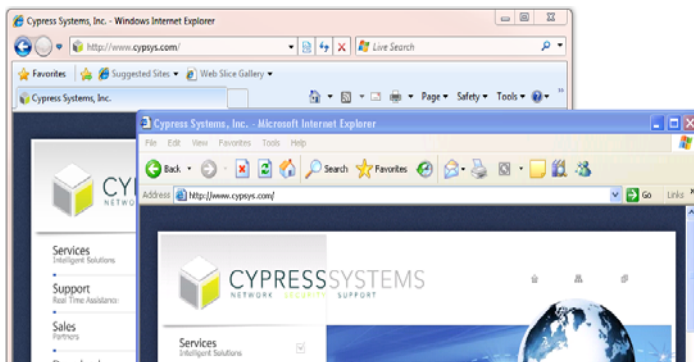
These basic tips can help you remain safe. If you are experiencing any of the strange behavior as described above, it's a good idea to treat your PC as if it might be infected. For more information on how to keep your computer running smoothly contact the support department at 775-284-4888.

## Windows 7: What Vista Should Have Been

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This functionality must be seen to be truly appreciated and it showcases Microsoft's commitment to ensure that businesses can run legacy industry specific applications without issue in Windows 7. "Will running Windows XP in the background make Windows 7 even slower than Windows Vista?" Thankfully, Microsoft has gone back to the drawing board with Windows 7 and has optimized the operating system from the ground up. Design changes have reduced the memory footprint, and lowered utilization making performance comparable to Windows XP. Benchmark tests were conducted by Cypress Systems, Inc. on both current and legacy systems which have shown that Windows 7 natively runs on par to Windows XP from a performance standpoint. This has also been verified by independent testers using pre-production (beta) code. *Windows XP mode* only runs when required, software written within the last three years will most likely not require the new virtualization feature.

A key feature that was heralded in Windows Vista was its User Account Control (UAC). This new feature in Windows Vista was supposed to make the system more secure but in reality made it cumbersome to perform even basic operations as simple as adding a printer. Windows 7 has been redesigned to be more seamless with fewer interruptions while still preventing most harmful programs from automatically installing themselves on your system. The benefits of Windows 7's new security enhancements become even more evident when used with a Windows 2008 Server product.



According to manufacturers, new computers with Windows 7 should be available in the fourth quarter of 2009. Feel free to contact us if you would like to see an onsite demonstration of what Windows 7 can do for your business.

Here Internet Explorer 8 and Internet Explorer 6 are running simultaneously, with Internet Explorer 6 running in Windows XP Mode.

*"Will running Windows XP in the background make Windows 7 even slower than Windows Vista?"*

## Legal Music Downloads

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With the ubiquity of Apple's iPod, and to a lesser extent the iPhone, iTunes ([www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com)) is pretty much the biggest name in digital music downloads. Many people are familiar with the iTunes software and the built in ability to purchase songs directly from Apple's music store. Apple is now offering DRM free tracks and is offering some of their library in MP3 format. You can also pay \$0.30 to upgrade your already purchased music to a DRM free version. If you have a large iTunes collection, this will get you some more flexibility on how you listen to your tunes.

While I am a big fan of the iPod and iTunes, my personal favorite music seller is Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). Many people associate Amazon with books, but this giant online retailer sells just about everything you could imagine, including MP3s. All of Amazon's tracks are DRM free MP3s, which means you can do anything with the purchased music. Amazon's site is extremely easy to use and I am often able to find those oddball tracks without any difficulty. While being web based, Amazon does require you to install a small application if you are going to be downloading whole albums. Of course, discussion of music downloads inevitably leads to one of the many places that music can still be had for "free". However, the potential dangers of these downloads is often not worth the risk. Peer to peer networks and their ilk are often very convenient avenues for the distribution of malware and viruses. The cost of a "free" download can turn out to be very high if that downloaded track carries more than music and your computer becomes infected. So while convenient, and cheap, it pays to take advantage of the new distribution methods retailers have begun offering beyond that of a conventional compact disc.





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### Services:

- \* Network Implementations
- \* Security Hardening
- \* Full Service Web Hosting
- \* Online Remote Assistance
- \* Maintenance/Service Plans
- \* Dental Practice Management
- \* Legal Practice Management
- \* Property Management Applications

## The *Green* Scene: The New Beige is *Green*

Written by Matthew Cochrane

Whether you're trying to help keep the environment *green* or keep your wallet full of *green*, a new more energy efficient computer may be just the ticket. PC's are getting greener with new manufacturing processes and technology that are designed to reduce energy use. Dell's newest generation of Optiplex computers are up to 43% more power efficient than older Pentium 4 based systems. As a consequence less heat is generated by the computer thereby reducing the burden on your Air Conditioning systems. Power efficiency becomes more beneficial as energy costs rise. A new computer produced with modern manufacturing methods creates less environmental impact with the additional benefit of reducing ongoing operational costs.

In light of a depressed global economy everyone is looking for ways to stretch their financial resources. Making the change to green can be a key component in this process.



### In the Next Issue

The *Green* Scene: *E-waste*

Q&A with Ken Roesler

WolframAlpha the *new* search engine

Junk E-mail cluttering your inbox?