

What's up with Windows Vista

Vista is a pretty good Operating System right out of the box. It performs well after some fine tuning. Remember that the focus of Vista is on the visual aspects not necessarily on the speed of applications.

As I mentioned in a previous column, the first and most prevalent performance problem we encounter is related to Viruses and Spyware. Be certain that your computer is clean.

I mentioned that Norton is a poor performer. I mentioned the new Microsoft OneCare product last time as a better performer.

Now some more changes to Vista that will help.

- Keep your hardware drivers up to date. Since Vista is relatively new, most drivers are on their first few revisions. Check for updated drivers regularly. The biggest boosts come from the video drivers. We have noticed that sound card drivers also have improved performance. Recently, one of our best customers had a problem where his relatively new, very powerful computer would randomly slow down to a crawl. We figured out that the extremely fast PCI video card was causing the problem. We still don't know if it is a driver issue (we have tried several driver revisions) or a hardware problem on the card.
- Many preinstalled services in Vista are not required. Some specific examples are:
 - Computer Browser
 - Distributed Link Tracking Client
 - IKE and AuthIP IP Keying Modules
 - Offline files
 - Remote Registry
 - Tablet PC Input Service
 - Windows Error Reporting
- Other services that may be disabled depending on your use are:
 - DFS Replication
 - IP Helper
 - IPsec Policy Agent
 - KtmRm for Distributed Transaction Coordinator
 - Secondary Logon
 - Security Center (be careful with this one)
 - SSDP Discovery
 - Terminal Services
 - Windows Defender (be careful with this one)
- Check your System Icon Tray. The more stuff down there, the more stuff running and using your system resources. Stop anything that is not needed. Use MSCONFIG to help with this step. Beware of QuickTime... stopping it from appearing in the tray will not necessarily stop it from running in the background.
- Use ReadyBoost. You will need a USB Memory Stick to use this feature. It isn't like doubling your memory but it performs faster than caching to the hard drive.
- The new Graphical User Interface (GUI) in Windows Vista is named Aero. It is driven by Direct3D on your Video Card. Some tips:
 - Stop using the Transparency Mode. This takes a lot of processor.
 - Stop using the SideBar. Again, this uses horsepower.
 - Remove some of the visual effects features like animations and fades.
 - Finally, for best performance go with a non-Aero theme.

With these tweaks Vista may not look as great but it will perform much faster. Low-end computers will improve the most.

Comments? Suggestions? Questions? Please e-mail them to questions@compusurgeon.com.