

Microsoft's Vista, patch challenges

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Hopes have been high for Microsoft's upcoming version of its blockbusting Windows system, but so far, Vista seems to be providing more headaches than praise from industry analysts and users alike. Meanwhile, current users of the company's existing Windows products, which makes up the bulk of personal computers worldwide, will likely find themselves pushed to download patches to secure their computers.

While many have been disappointed with the software giant's decision to postpone the release of the system until early next year, rather than releasing it by the end of this year as initially planned, the extended release date now seems to be the least of Vista's problems. Last week the company had made the Vista software available online free of charge. The problem, however, is that the downloadable file is so big that

loading it down in its entirety could clog up other online networks. The standard version takes up 3.5 gigabytes of memory, while the second version uses 4.4 gigabytes and takes over five hours to download even on a fast broadband connection, according to the company.

Ironically, Microsoft has proclaimed that ensuring greater access to its products and information technology in general is one of the company's biggest objectives, and indeed, Vista has been designed with ease of use even for the most basic of computer user in mind.

"By addressing the needs of people with a wide range of abilities, we gain deeper insights into the challenges that all consumers face as they interact with technology," said Rob Sinclair, director of the company's accessible technology group, adding that "as a result, Microsoft is able to create a system that is more functional for everyone."

Of course, another major problem for the Windows application is ensuring security, and Tuesday's launch of 12 patches to address them is an indication of just how the situation is getting more serious. While Microsoft issues security patches on the second Tuesday of each month, release a dozen of them on a single day demonstrates the severity of the security issue in recent months.

At the same time, hackers try to stay ahead of the company, and the time between the release of a patch and hackers actually getting through the system is getting increasingly shorter. Indeed, according to some bloggers, some hackers have already found ways to crack one of the patches even before it has been officially released.

Meanwhile, the company itself said that the patches will not necessarily fix the problems seen in the earlier versions of Windows, namely the Windows 98 and ME editions, adding in a statement that "we strongly recommend that those of you who are still running these older versions

of Windows upgrade to a newer, more secure version, such as Windows XP SP2, as soon as possible."

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