

Microsoft Releases First Public Beta for 'Longhorn'

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This feature-complete, third beta brings with it the ability to simplify administration tasks via improved event logging, task scheduling, enhanced remote management and the scripting capabilities of Windows PowerShell.

Microsoft will release the feature-complete, third beta for Windows Server "Longhorn" on April 25, which is also the first public beta of the software.

The product remains on track for release to manufacturing in the second half of 2007, and the beta code can be downloaded [here](#).

Some 10,000 people in Microsoft's technical beta program have already tested the product, while thousands more downloaded or received the second beta and the Community Technology Preview that followed through their TechNet and MSDN subscriptions, Helene Love Snell, the senior product manager for Windows Server, told eWEEK.

"We will be distributing beta 3 as broadly as possible to ensure the maximum number of IT professionals, developers and partners test and evaluate the new features. Our distribution programs will offer this chance to literally hundreds of thousands of people," she said.

Windows Server "Longhorn" builds on the improved reliability and security of Windows Server 2003 R2, and brings with it the ability to simplify administration tasks via improved event logging, task

scheduling, enhanced remote management and the scripting capabilities of Windows PowerShell, she said.

Some of the new or improved features in beta 3 include a server manager console that now has additional remote administration tools to provide a more integrated management environment and Windows Firewall with Advanced Security, now on by default, to provide a persistent and more secure environment beginning at install, she said.

Also in the beta is Active Directory Federation Services improvements, which let customers implement new policies and make it easier to set up a relationship between trusted partners, and the Server Core installation option, which now comes with additional roles and enhanced functionality, such as print services and Active Directory Lightweight Services.

"The new Server Core installation option is a minimal installation of Windows Server 'Longhorn' available with the standard, enterprise and datacenter editions. All of the core kernel components and subsystems are present, such as networking, file I/O and security, but the graphical user interface and graphical utilities such as the server manager, Microsoft Management Console and Internet Explorer are not," Snell said.

This provides a reduced server footprint and potential attack surface, which should result in less maintenance and greater security and reliability, she said, adding that a Server Core installation can still be managed remotely using traditional Microsoft and third-party tools, while local administration can be done through command line utilities, she said.

Some customers, such as Juergen Otter, the senior Active Directory architect at Siemens AG, are pleased with the enhancements. "We are

very excited about beta 3. We love the new features in Active Directory and the improvements to Terminal Server," he said.

The product also includes a range of security enhancements, including reducing the server footprint and potential attack surface with the new Server Core installation option, while features like Microsoft Network Access Protection, Read-Only Domain Controllers and the Windows Firewall with Advanced Security help monitor system health.

IIS (Internet Information Services) 7.0, the newest version of Microsoft's Web server, also provides a more secure, extensible platform for efficiently managing and reliably hosting Web applications and services, Snell said.

Customers now will be able to host Web applications and .NET 3.0 Web services on Windows Server "Longhorn" beta 3 in live production environments, using the new IIS7 Go Live license.

"The IIS7 Go Live license limits the live production use of Windows Server "Longhorn" beta 3 to Web workloads only requiring IIS7, including Windows SharePoint Services. The IIS7 Go Live License lets organizations push IIS7 into their production Web serving environments, while enabling Web developers to Go Live with their Web sites and applications on free hosted offers," she said.

Five hosters, MaximumASP, DiscountASP.net, Applied Innovations, Hostmysite.com and Web Fusion, are already using the IIS7 Go Live license to offer Free IIS7 beta hosting to attract bleeding-edge developers to their sites, while another three - CrystalTech, Mosso and Affinity - plan to have offers up within the next two weeks.

Asked whether Microsoft was recommending that testers run this beta in production systems, Snell said that while there were already hundreds of

servers running Windows Server "Longhorn" in production across Microsoft's own IT department and in the data centers of its technology adoption program customers, beta 3 was not generally licensed for use in production environments.

"So customers should restrict their beta 3 deployments to test environments. But, through programs like IIS7 Go Live and our upcoming Rapid Deployment Program, we will be offering supplemental license agreements that will allow customers to deploy in production," she said.

Microsoft, which has added functionality to the beta, did not anticipate having to cut anything from the server software going forward, she said, adding that the final product name would be announced soon.

Windows Server "Longhorn" also includes simplified failover clustering, dynamic partitioning and auto-tuning networking features to automatically manage system resources and help ensure that customers have uninterrupted and optimized access to their company network, she said.

Asked about comments by analysts that features such as Network Access Protection and support for the IPv6 networking standard require users to make changes to their infrastructure, Snell said that while Windows Server "Longhorn" was a major operating system release with revolutionary, rather than evolutionary, enhancements, Microsoft had designed the product to be minimally disruptive to existing infrastructures.

"Role-based installation and management allows customers to deploy it in specific roles and scenarios, such as Read Only Domain Controller, IIS7, Terminal Services Gateway and Network Access Services, without having to upgrade their entire infrastructure. In addition, the dual-layer

IPv4 and IPv6 stack means that deploying the product in an existing environment will yield better performance between it and other IPv6-enabled systems, including Windows Vista, while offering complete compatibility and interoperability with IPv4 systems, including any previous versions of Windows," she said.

Microsoft's hardware partners have also welcomed the beta, which they describe as a next-generation operating system, and how it will take advantage of their chip sets.

"AMD encourages customers to download the beta and begin their evaluations today. As a next-generation operating system, Windows Server 'Longhorn' is designed to take advantage of the innovative features of the AMD Opteron processor, including 64-bit, multicore, virtualization and power management," said Joe Menard, the corporate vice president of software strategy at AMD.

For her part, Diane Bryant, the general manager of Intel's server platforms group, said the beta was an important next step toward the future of IT infrastructure management in data centers.

"The combination of multicore Intel Xeon processor technology and Intel Itanium2 processor technology and Windows Server 'Longhorn' will maximize control for customers over their infrastructure while providing unprecedented availability, energy efficiency, flexibility and IT productivity," she said.

The release of Windows Server 'Longhorn' later this year follows those for Windows Vista and the 2007 Office system, while the next version of Visual Studio, code-named "Orcas," and Microsoft SQL Server, code-named "Katmai," also are under development.

"These products will provide organizations with an advanced

development and Web platform as well as streamlined data management and analysis, enabling infrastructure optimization," Snell said.

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