

Microsoft Asks for More Device Drivers for Vista

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Assigned the job of talking about Vista a few months after it shipped to customers, Mike Nash, the corporate vice president of Windows Product Management, instead tried to fill one of the holes that the OS lacks: device drivers.

The other, when the company would release the first Service Pack for Vista, wasn't addressed.

When a consumer installs any new operating system, the software generally polls the attached devices, and attempts to match them to its list of drivers. For Windows 2000, only 350 devices were installed in the box; for Windows XP, 10,000 drivers shipped with the operating system. With Vista, 20,000 drivers came bundled with the operating system. Windows Update, the stopgap method if a driver isn't found, included 2,000 additional drivers at Windows XP's launch, and 13,000 drivers at the launch of Vista, Nash said.

"The difference here is that we had a new driver model, and yet we had new drivers," Nash said.

At Vista's release to manufacturing in last year, 1.5 million devices were natively supported by Windows Vista, Nash said. Now, there are 1.9 million devices, he said.

On the software side, partners like Cisco and Nortel worked hard to get VPN applications up and running on Vista, he said.

The quality of the drivers was not addressed; although companies like Nvidia launched their Vista drivers last year, it wasn't until recently that users considered their drivers mature and up to date.

One of the keys that a device will be found by Windows is the presence of a logo. Microsoft has two logo programs for Vista: the fully certified logo, "Certified For Windows Vista"; and "Works With Windows Vista", a secondary logo program. At the time Vista was released to manufacturing in Oct. 2006, there were 200 logo submissions, Nash said. Now, there are more than 9,000, Nash added.

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