

Behind the scenes with Windows 7

April 19 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- To design Windows 7, Microsoft analyzed billions of pieces of data. It studied exactly what PC users do in front of their screens. It tallied hundreds of thousands of Windows surveys. It got feedback from people all over the world who tried different versions of the software.

As a result, every change or new feature in Windows 7 comes with a back story. Here is a sampling of things you'll see in the next [operating system](#) and explanations of how each came about.

- New feature: You decide the left-to-right order of icons in the task bar at the bottom of your screen.

- Back story: Microsoft's research showed Vista users commonly launching a series of programs, then closing and immediately reopening some. [Microsoft](#) realized that these people wanted their programs to appear in the same order on the task bar every time.

- New feature: Right-click on a task bar icon and get a "jump list," a menu of important or frequently used options for the program.

- Back story: Microsoft had resisted the idea of hiding a key feature behind a right click, worried people wouldn't find it. But the data showed most people right-click on icons to see what that might do.

- New feature: Drag one open window to the left side of the screen, then another to the right side to line them up so they are the same size and side by side.

- Back story: Microsoft couldn't initially figure out why people were spending so much time resizing windows and dragging them around. It turned out that users were trying to give themselves a side-by-side view of documents for easy comparison.
- New feature: Libraries, or virtual folders that have [shortcuts](#) to files that are actually stored in many different places on a [hard drive](#) or home network.
- Back story: From its Vista data, Microsoft could see people's photos, music and other files were swelling in number and stashed all over the place, not organized into the dedicated folders Microsoft had set up.
- New feature: "Shake" an open window with your mouse to make all the other ones "minimize" into the task bar.
- Back story: Microsoft's research showed that people often had six or even 10 windows open at once, which gets distracting. Shake is one of several [features](#) designed to help people tame all the open windows.
- New feature: Move your mouse to the bottom-right corner to make all your windows temporarily transparent. Then click the mouse, and all the windows minimize.
- Back story: What's notable here is what Microsoft didn't do. There's no tutorial or bubble advertising the feature, a small step toward making [Windows 7](#) quieter than Vista. "We want people to confidently explore the system," said Sam Moreau, a user experience manager.

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Citation: Behind the scenes with Windows 7 (2009, April 19) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-scenes-windows.html>

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