

IE 8 is Microsoft's champion in browser wars

August 14 2009, by Glenn Chapman



The logo for Microsoft at their office in Herndon, Virginia, USA. Microsoft is touting freshly-launched Internet Explorer 8 as its champion in the competitive Web browser arena, urging holdouts to upgrade from earlier versions of the software.

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IE 8 has been catching on since its release five months ago, but Microsoft is hoping to leave behind aging IE 6 as well as much-maligned Vista after Windows 7 [operating system](#) launches in October.

Despite being released nine years ago, IE 6 still claims 27.2 percent of the browser market, according to figures released in July by Net Applications.

"The reason to still be on IE 6 at this point is lack of awareness, or the

'good-enough' problem that people are satisfied with what they are using," said Amy Barzdukas, general manager of IE and consumer security at Microsoft.

"Particularly in this economy, it is difficult to be cavalier and just say update to IE 8."

Schools, hospitals and other cash-strapped operations could be daunted by the cost of upgrading computer systems to new software.

IE 6 also tends to be used with pirated versions of Windows XP operating system because newer software is better designed to expose illegitimate copies, according to Barzdukas.

Microsoft reports seeing more XP use in emerging economies such as Brazil and India where piracy rates are higher than in the United States.

A drawback to people sticking with IE 6 is that Microsoft's image can be maligned by software deficiencies that have been fixed in newer versions," according to Barzdukas.

"People can get frustrated with that experience and say Microsoft stinks, or IE stinks, and base that perception on technology released ten years ago," Barzdukas told AFP during a visit this week to San Francisco.

"We want them to experience the latest."

Microsoft on Thursday released NSS Labs research indicating that IE 8 excels at blocking phishing and malware attacks.

In Microsoft-sponsored testing at a Texas lab, NSS found that IE 8 and an open-source Firefox browser from [Mozilla](#) tied for first place when it came to catching "social-engineering" phishing attacks.

"[Internet Explorer 8](#) and Firefox 3 were the most consistent in the high level of protection they offered," the NSS study said.

When it came to blocking malicious software, malware, IE 8 caught 81 percent of the "live threats" as compared with the 54-percent finish by the second-place Firefox browser.

"I think our biggest area of concern in terms of competition is getting people onto a modern browser and protecting people from the bad guys," Barzdukas said.

"We don't spend a lot of time worrying about what the other browsers of doing."

Google leapt into the browser wars last year with Chrome software that industry insiders suspect will mesh with a new operating system the California Internet powerhouse plans to launch in 2010.

Apple has long challenged Microsoft with operating systems and other software customized for Macintosh computers. Mozilla's free Firefox web browsers based on open-source software have been gaining fans.

Barzdukas said her team is "juiced" by competition in the browser market.

"I think we have a great opportunity for the industry to evolve what the browser is able to do," Barzdukas said.

"IE is still the most broadly used browser in the world; we will continue to evolve. We are focused and here to play."

Microsoft this month abandoned a plan to strip IE 8 from versions of Windows 7 shipped to the European Union.

Microsoft said it will instead present customers with a "ballot" option, allowing them to choose whether to install IE or another [browser](#).

Microsoft said the option had been tentatively welcomed by the European Commission, and received positive feedback from computer makers.

The Brussels-based EU executive, which wields broad anti-trust powers, had called on Microsoft to open Windows to different Internet browsers in order to fend off litigation.

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Citation: IE 8 is Microsoft's champion in browser wars (2009, August 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-08-microsoft-champion-browser-wars.html>

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