

Cherished 'Start' button returning to Windows software (Update)

May 30 2013, by Glenn Chapman



The new Microsoft Surface tablet on display in New York on October 25, 2012. Microsoft on Thursday unveiled an update to its latest Windows operating system that included a return of a "Start" button that had been missed by longtime users of the computer software.

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The tweaked version of the operating system, nicknamed Windows Blue, will be previewed on June 26 and will be a free update for users of Windows 8.1, according to the Redmond, Washington-based technology titan.

"It's Windows 8 even better," Windows program management corporate vice president Antoine Leblond said in a blog post.

"Windows 8.1 will deliver improvements and enhancements in key areas like personalization, search, the built-in apps, Windows Store experience and cloud connectivity."

Microsoft returned a well-known Windows logo to the lower left corner of computer screens in what was seen as a resurrection of a banished "Start" button missed by users.

"Not only will Windows 8.1 respond to customer feedback, but it will add new features and functionality that advance the touch experience and mobile computing's potential," Leblond said.

Windows upgrades include Bing-powered searches that expand Internet queries to include searching apps and files on computers along with data stored in Microsoft's online SkyDrive service.

The update comes amid a lukewarm reception for Windows 8, an operating system released last year to help the software giant transition from personal computers to tablets and other mobile devices.

It remained unclear whether the return of the "Start" button would placate Windows users who saw the icon as a simple way to get to tools or tasks laid out on desktop screens.

"All I know is that something is back, but until I get my hands on Windows 8.1, I won't know exactly what," said analyst Michael Cherry of Directions On Microsoft, which specializes in tracking the software colossus.

"I think the real problem is that there are no Windows 8 apps that are worth using, so everyone really just wants to get to the desktop first."

Cherry took advantage of the option of customizing Windows 8 on his computer and thus opposes the return of the Start button.

Microsoft's Brandon LeBlanc said a public preview of Windows 8.1 will be available starting on June 26, timed with the Microsoft developer conference in San Francisco.

Microsoft said recently it had sold than 100 million licenses for Windows 8 but that the update was planned after listening to customers.

Some analysts say Microsoft was forced to act because of slow adoption of Windows 8, which made some radical changes to the design of the desktop.

With Windows 8, Microsoft was trying to create a system that could be used on mobile touch screen devices while also serving the users of traditional PCs.

Microsoft launched Windows 8 last October, revamping its flagship system in an effort to make inroads in the fast-growing mobile segment. At the same time, it launched its Surface tablet computer.

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