

WINDOWS 8 NEWS

Microsoft is already promoting Windows 8 even though there is no firm release date yet. The best guess would be an early 2013 launch which would be approximately 3½ years after Windows 7's late 2009 release. Do we need a new version of Windows when Windows 7 seems to still be quite workable? Microsoft seems to think so, so who are we to argue.

Actually, business users have given Microsoft the most trouble over the years with many still using Windows XP. They have the most to lose when changes in Windows cause incompatibilities with older software. Still, Windows 7, combined with XP-Mode, did a reasonable job supporting older software. Even DOS based software like Libra ran quite happily under Windows 7 - 32 bit edition.

Windows 8 will be marketed in both a 32 bit and 64 bit edition as well so that is good news. I understand that Windows XP-Mode may also be supported but that is yet to be confirmed. In either case other products like VM Ware and such will do the job if Microsoft doesn't.

The biggest difference with Windows 8 will be its look and feel. If you've seen a Windows Phone with its large square touch screen icons then you've seen a sample of what Windows 8 will look like out of the box. It relies heavily on touch screen technology which almost no one has in a computer screen yet. As Windows 8 computers start to ship these will become much more commonplace.

For those that do not like the new look there will be ways to convert to Windows Classic Mode, if you prefer. Whether this will look just like Windows 7 is hard to say at this point. Microsoft has announced several promotions to allow users to transition to Windows 8 when it comes out and they will give you a copy for only \$10. if you buy a computer between now and January 2013.

COMPUTER PERFORMANCE THRESHOLD

In spite of what manufacturers would like you to think, computers have made only modest improvements in the last 3-4 years. I recently ran some performance tests to compare a 3 year old Core 2 Quad computer to a new Core i-7 machine with the following results:

Processor Performance: 7.2 vs 7.4

Memory Performance: 7.2 vs 7.2

Video Performance: 6.2 vs 6.5

Hard Drive Performance: 5.9 vs 5.9

So the latest and greatest computer was only marginally better than the 3 year old machine. Technology is beginning to reach something of a performance threshold so that means that computers will not become obsolete quite as quickly as they once did and that's good.

Even marketing has gotten a little deceiving as Intel's current line of processors now contains the Core i-3, Core i-5 and Core i-7. If you were to compare the numbers you would think that the upper end processors were 2 and 3 times as fast. A better analogy would be to say they are 103, 105 and 107 horsepower. That is how close they are in performance. 64 bit and increased Ram can also give you a further boost with some specific types of software.

Hard Disk Performance is one element that has not changed in a considerable length of time. It has rung in at 5.9 for years now. Over the next month, I am hoping to install a new SSD (Solid State Drive) which will hopefully push this performance up into the 7.0 range.

I will use a smaller (120 gb) SSD drive for the Windows Operating System and Programs and place all of my data files on my old SATA drive. I'll let you know how well this works out as soon as the transition is complete.