

# UnderstandIT

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A publication designed to inform and enable businesses to understand the implications, costs and advantages of using Information and Communications Technology. Distributed through Chambers of Commerce.

## WINDOWS 7

The latest, and possibly the last version of Windows (according to Microsoft), now officially named Windows 7, was released for manufacturing in July. It is due to be released for sale in October 2009

Windows 7 is the successor to Windows Vista which was billed as the next operating system of choice after Windows XP. However, due to many incompatibility issues (with existing software and hardware), many users chose not to upgrade to Vista, and are still using Windows XP.

Microsoft claims that Windows 7 will provide a smoother upgrade path to wean users away from the now ageing Windows XP. Windows 7 will run Vista-specific applications, but it is likely that in order to run XP applications on Windows 7, it will be necessary to run it in "XP mode" which effectively means running XP on top of Windows 7. One wonders what effect this will have on the performance of the PC concerned!

Windows 7 is being touted as a smooth, incremental upgrade to Vista, and is therefore not the same major re-write that Vista was. Windows 7 will also be a more "pick and mix" operating system, with many features that were incorporated in earlier versions of Windows (Windows Calendar and Mail, Windows Movie Maker and Photo Gallery) being removed and available separately in a package to be called "Windows Live Essentials suite".

So that it does not fall foul of the EU anti-trust regulations, in Europe only, Microsoft will remove Internet Explorer from the base operating system, but IE will be available separately, should the user wish.

The new operating system is said to be faster to boot (of course) and will provide greater support for multiple processors and virtual hard disks (memory based "disks"). It will also have a new visual look with major changes to the task bar. Any program icon can now be pinned to the task bar for easy access. The icons are larger and by hovering the mouse over each icon, a thumbnail image of the open application will be displayed. By hovering over the thumbnail, the full window is displayed.

A number of existing features are also renamed and placed in the Control Panel, and the concept of "Jump Lists" is introduced, whereby recently opened or frequently used files in most Windows applications are presented and can be opened quickly and easily by right-clicking the mouse.

It is reported that Windows 7 will be available in 7 editions. However, only two versions: Home Premium and Professional will be available for general retail sale in most countries.

Other versions will be targeted at specific markets e.g. developing countries and Enterprises. There will also be upgrade versions for those wishing to upgrade from Windows XP or Vista.

All editions will actually be included when installing the operating system, but only the edition purchased will be activated. This will permit users to unlock additional features using the MS Windows Anytime Upgrade feature.

For those contemplating an upgrade to the new operating system, our advice is as always to wait until it has been released for a while and the first service pack has been released. In this way, you can be more confident that many of the teething problems have been resolved by others.

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## WHICH MOBILE PHONE OPERATING SYSTEM?

As reported in early editions of Understand IT, there is significant competition developing in the Office applications area – with two major players (Microsoft and Google) producing free online versions of Office applications in order to maintain a strong user base.

Now a similar war is developing in the rush to provide Office applications functionality on mobile devices – this includes mobile phones, PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) and netbook computers.

There are already Office "look-alike" applications available for mobile phones, but Microsoft has recently surprised everyone by announcing that the ubiquitous MS Office suite will soon be available on mobile devices.

The question is - will the mobile Office applications be available on all mobiles? Unfortunately, the mobile phone operating system area is becoming chaotic. Different manufacturers of mobile phones are backing different operating systems, of which there is a growing plethora of choices.

The main contenders are Symbian, Windows mobile, Android (from Google) and the latest contender Maemo, which is a Linux based mobile operating system. You can then add Apple's Iphone operating system and of course the Blackberry.

For mobile phone manufacturers and applications developers, the scenario is becoming a nightmare.

Nokia mobile phones, amounting to around 100 million units worldwide, currently uses Symbian, but it is reported that they are hedging their bets by beginning to produce models running the Google Android operating system.

The difficulty for business users is how to ensure that there is compatibility across its workforce. With more users becoming mobile, ensuring that information can be exchanged, and that there is adequate security of information held on mobile devices, including mobile phones is making life very difficult for IT and Business managers. Unfortunately, this lack of a clear view of likely winners in this war is akin to the VHS vs Betamax and the recent Blu-Ray vs HD DVD conflicts.

All we can do is help to point out any developments in this particular conflict and hopefully help to identify a potential winner – although we fear that there may be a number of "winners"!

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## MS EXCEL HINTS & TIPS

More help for those who are relatively new to Microsoft Excel:

### *Conditional Formatting*

MS Excel allows you to format a worksheet in such a way that the data is formatted differently, depending on the values that the data assumes at any given time.

To use this feature, select the cell, cells, row(s) or column(s) to which you wish to apply the conditional formatting. Then select **CONDITIONAL FORMATTING** from the **FORMAT** menu.

The resulting dialogue box provides the ability to specify formatting for the resulting value in a cell, or on its formula. Using the cell value option, a number of logical conditions are provided in a drop-down list (equal to, not equal to, greater than or less than etc.) followed by value or values against which the value is to be tested. Then you can specify the formatting that you wish to apply if the above test is true. The formatting can include font, font size, font colour, font style, border styles and fill patterns for the cells in question.

### *Format Painter*

This feature works the same as in MS Word. By clicking once on the **FORMAT PAINTER** icon in the formatting toolbar (a paint-brush), it remembers the formatting of the currently selected cell (it displays a paint-brush at the cursor), and applies it to the next cell that you select.

### *Understanding Relative and Absolute Cell References*

You will know that in Excel, a specific cell (e.g. F1) is named or referred to with a Cell Reference, which consists of the Column letter (F) and the Row number (1).

First create a formula in cell F1 (e.g. =A1+D1). If you then enter a number in each of cells A1 and D1, the answer will appear in cell F1.

You can then copy the formula created in cell F1 by dragging the cell, placing the cursor on the bottom right hand corner of the cell until a small cross appears and dragging the highlight downwards to select a series of cells in column F. Excel will then copy the formula created to each of the cells highlighted in column F. If you then look at each of the formulas in column F, the cell references will have automatically changed to reflect the position of the cell in the column. Values entered in any cell in columns A and D will now result in the correct calculation in the cell in column F. This is called a **RELATIVE** cell reference.

On the other hand, if you wished to apply, say an exchange rate to each of the results in column F and you enter the applicable exchange rate in cell H1, the formula in cell F1 should then be =A1+D1\*\$H\$1. Notice the dollar signs before the column reference and the row number. If you now highlight cell F1 and drag it downwards to copy it to other cells in the column as above, you will see that the H1 cell reference will not have changed (but the row numbers in columns A and D will have changed as above). In other words, each formula will refer to the one cell (H1), as this is where the exchange rate is stored. This is called an **ABSOLUTE** cell reference.

### *Excel Functions*

The above example used two very simple mathematical operations (+ and \*). However, there are large number of functions built into Excel that enable you to carry out a wide range of Mathematical, Trigonometric, Financial, Date & Time, Statistical, Logical and a number of other categories of functions.

To find the function you require for a particular application, select **FUNCTION** from the **INSERT** menu. This results in a dialogue listing all functions by category. By default, it shows the most recently used functions first, but you can pick the required category from the drop-down list.

When you select the required function, it provides a textual description and a syntax example. Click **OK** and further help is provided on the entering of the arguments for the function in question. Finally, click **OK** again and the formula is entered into the highlighted cell.

We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly, PC Pro, BBC and other reputable sources..

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