

READY NET GO ... NEWS

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Tip of the Month

Are you ready???

Microsoft is releasing a new Windows OS called **Vista** the end of 2006.

Here are some of the key features:

- 1) Vista has a built-in diagnostic tool that will detect problems like hard drive failures, memory failures, too many active resources running, and networking problems before a crash occurs.
- 2) Recover prior versions of saved files without accessing an external backup tape or CD (previously only available for Windows Server 2003 users).
- 3) Better memory management makes the OS more responsive – opening windows and files is noticeably faster than XP.
- 4) Improved network access protection prevents computers from connecting to the network until security criteria are met.
- 5) IE will have tabbed browsing (similar to Firefox) – You can have one link for IE open in the taskbar but have several webpages open simultaneously.
- 6) Scalable thumbnails of documents and files so you can easily see what the file is without opening it.

Many other features help to round out this new OS. With improved security, organizational features, reliability measures and attention to sharing information across many platforms, Microsoft seems to be listening to consumer feedback. To find out more, visit:
www.microsoft.com/windowsvista

Wi-Fi, VOIP, WPA, ... *Tech Terms in Plain English*

Just when you think you've got everything under control, you overhear people talking about tech stuff and wonder "Have I been living under a rock?" This month's newsletter will tackle some of these important terms and while it isn't an exhaustive list, it may just help you around the company water cooler.

Wireless

Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity) – pronounced with a long I as in "why-fye". Wi-Fi refers to a type of wireless standard that enables you to connect to the Internet and other devices without cables. **802.11b** devices can handle up to 11mbps. **802.11a** and **802.11g** devices can transmit data up to 54mbps. **802.11g** enhanced (soon to be **802.11i**) transmits data up to 108 mbps. (NOTE: Real world throughput will be less than these figures).

A common phrase right now is **Wi-Fi hotspot** which refers to a place, like an Internet café, library, airport or hotel that offers Internet access (free in many places). All you have to do is be in range of the Wi-Fi access point and open up a wireless connection on your computer to start browsing (*Note: you may need a password or pay a fee to connect*).

WEP/WPA – **Wired Equivalent Privacy/ Wi-Fi Protected Access**. These terms refer to two types of security you can use when connecting wirelessly with Wi-Fi. WPA and WPA2 offer stronger protection than WEP for authenticating and encrypting wireless transmissions. An alternative to WEP and WPA is to use a **VPN** (Virtual Private Network – a secure tunnel for transmitting data over the Internet).

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

1. www.travelrights.com – Airline, hotel and car rental policies. Good listing of various travel links like airport codes, maps, a currency converter and more.
2. www.auto.consumerguide.com – Prices, ratings and reviews of new and used cars. Also includes articles and advice on maintaining your vehicle.
3. www.wififreespot.com – Want to find out where the closest Wi-Fi hotspot is? Check this site

MIMO – Multiple In, Multiple Out; multiple smart antennas on the **MIMO router** increase effective range and speed. Data can travel up to 400 feet without considerable loss in speed. MIMO can be used most effectively where there are **interference issues** or for **long range application needs** (over 100 feet) rather than short (less than 10 feet) or mid-range distances (less than 100 feet).

Bluetooth – another type of wireless standard that is used to connect devices without the use of cables. It is used as a supplement to and not a replacement for Wi-Fi. Data is transmitted via radio waves at a maximum distance of 32 feet. Common Bluetooth enabled devices are cordless phones, baby monitors, PDA's, printers, wireless PC cards and coming soon, household appliances.

iPod – currently sweeping the nation, this music player is the descendent of the portable cassette player and portable CD player. No tapes or CD's are needed this time around though because the **iPod is like a mini hard drive** with earphones. Simply transfer your music files from your computer to the iPod, hit play and you're set to go. No more tapes ... Ever!

Security

Spyware/Malware – programs that transmit information to and from your computer that you did not authorize. Spyware includes **cookies** that track your online activities, **Keyloggers** that track your keystrokes, and programs that are installed on your computer that transmit your personal information when you go online. Spyware activities run in the background – most people don't know that they are being tracked until their system starts getting slow or stops functioning properly. Two very good programs that will help detect and remove spyware from your computer are **LavaSoft's AdAware** and **Spybot Search and Destroy** (see our Dec 2004 newsletter for more information).

Virus / Trojan Horse / Worm – now that corporations have taken a proactive stance on security, viruses have taken a back seat to SPAM and Spyware for disrupting our workflow. Viruses, and the like, can wreak widespread disturbances though so it's important to remain vigilant. **Run your anti-virus software regularly** and **download the latest definitions** as they come out (no longer than once a week). Don't open email attachments unless you've requested the information and if you're not sure what the file contains, save the attachment and scan it with your anti-virus software before you open it.

"Phishing" – term used to describe individuals who send out **mass emails with a deceptive web link in the body of the message** hoping someone will click on it. "Phishing" started out as SPAM (mostly advertising such as Viagra, mortgage applications, etc) but is now on the rise for spreading viruses and other Malware (such as key loggers). Common "Phishing" attacks include **email greeting cards, Instant Messenger messages**, and **account center confirmation emails** (ex: eBay and PayPal). When you click on a link in an email, either a malicious program is downloaded to your computer that will locate and transmit your personal info or your personal info will be tracked as you type on your keyboard (with a keylogger program). **Solution:** don't open any suspicious emails and don't click on a link in an email. If you're interested in a topic, do a search on Google and click on a link as part of the search results.

Networking

VOIP / IP Telephony – VOIP stands for **Voice Over Internet Protocol** - You've seen the ads for Vonage - - - Talk all you want for \$25 / month including long distance. VOIP or IP Telephony is a **new use** for the **same cables** you're probably already using. If you have a broadband connection (i.e., DSL, cable modem, T1 line), then you have the capability of transmitting voice data over the same lines that you use to surf the web and download your email. Just plug your current telephone into a device called a **phone adapter** which you then attach to your **router**. As long as your router is on and you have a connection to the Internet, you can pick up your phone, dial and talk to anyone you want around the world. Some providers even offer the same features that your phone company offers (such as call waiting and call forwarding) as well as web access to view calls placed and received.