

Windows 7 for Real Estate Agents!

WINDOWS 7 SERIES ARTICLES, EDITION #1

First, I would like to start by saying that we now have a series of articles (around 18!) on Windows 7 including: navigating, customizing, simple troubleshooting to save time and money, and many others. If the response to these articles is high, we will consider the feasibility of holding Windows 7 classes for our real estate agents right here at CCAR in our training facilities. Please look for other articles in the series to follow.

- **What new in Windows 7?**

- *Microsoft excels on this one!*

Introduction:

First, I would like to say that when someone asks me what my impressions are of a specific operating system version, I usually tell them I have two opinions; one is based on home-office environments, the other, specialized business environments.

I think Vista is great for most home and home-office environments with the occasional issue of printing drivers not functioning correctly, etc. The complaints I have heard have come primarily from appraisers.

There have been issues with specialized business applications outside the real estate landscape with an array of unique software applications that cannot run on Vista and for this reason many organizations have elected to stay with XP because Vista was not compatible with all their needs.

But, Real estate agents seem to peacefully co-exist for the most part with Vista. Having said that, I believe there are enough improvements coupled with low prices of new systems with Windows 7 that make it a great choice for real estate professionals and beyond. Of the 50 or so Windows 7 systems that I have configured for those agents, the experiences have been positive. It works very well with paragon too!

Even though it appears that Windows 7 looks on the surface a bit like Vista, it is quite different. There are a number of important improvements that I think make this a wonderful operating system for home/office/business environments. Here is just a small list of the myriad of improvements that Windows 7 has:

The big things.....

- **A Leaner, meaner fighting....I meant computing machine!**

Unlike previous versions Windows operating systems, Windows 7 is designed to run those resource intensive background services only when you actually need them. As an example, let's say you are not currently using a Bluetooth device, well instead of the process running in the background, the service stays off until you use the device. There are many services so you can imagine without all of those running behind the scenes, your system will be more efficient.

On top of this, when you consider that Windows 7 by default is typically shipped with 64-bit duo-core processors, performance is even more increased. A 64-bit computer for the most part can process twice the information as a 32-bit computer and can hold more memory (RAM), up to 8 Gigabytes, instead of 4 for 32-bit systems. If you bought a computer prior to 2009, most likely you purchased a computer with a 32-bit processor.

And thus far, Windows 7 has shown to be more stable than Vista and that's a good beginning since its release in October 2009.

- **The task-less bar!**

No, this is not some low-lit place where robots serve you mixed drinks. It is the new Windows 7 taskbar with less effort needed to navigate your programs, etc. You can now "pin" favorite programs anywhere on the taskbar, rearrange programs in any way you like by clicking and dragging and that ain't no drag. You can point to a taskbar icon to see a thumbnail preview of the open files or programs. And just move your mouse over a thumbnail to preview the window full screen. Much simpler to navigate your little computer world now that you can use Jump Lists! In the class, we cover Jump Lists.

- **Home is where the heart...I mean group is**

Windows 7 HomeGroup in simple terms is designed to make the procedure of sharing files, music, videos, pictures, and printers on a home network much easier than in the past. Getting started is easy: Click the word 'Homegroup' in Windows Explorer or from the Start menu and indicate which items you'd like to make available to others. Once your Homegroup is created, others at your home can gain access to your resources simply by clicking the word 'Homegroup' just as you did. HomeGroup is only available on Windows 7 computers, and only on home networks.

- **User Account Control (UAC) and the KGB**

Okay, so it may not be exactly like having the KGB controlling your actions but for many folks, it is more than a little annoying having your computer ask you a bunch of questions when you perform an action. In Windows 7, there is a slider bar with 4 settings that will control what you would like or would not like to be prompted on and the result is less pop-ups if you lower the slider bar.

The little things matter too!

- **Sleep, wake, and reconnect with the world**

Windows 7 allows your system to go into to sleep, resume, and then reconnect to your wireless network more quickly, quite a nifty time saver to be sure.

- **In search of**

When you find yourself searching for some files or folders, what you need are answers, not long delays that leave you twirling your thumbs. In Windows 7, the search results pop up much faster. Sorting and grouping of your search results is also much quicker than in previous Windows releases.

- **USB devices, their speed and your happiness**

When you plug in a portable flash drive or other USB device for the first time, Windows 7 installs it in a matter of seconds. If you plug in a USB device you have already plugged in before on your new system, the wait is even shorter.

- **A sticky proposition**

So you are multitasking yourself to death and your computer monitor frame is looking more like a test to see how many posted notes you can pin to it before it becomes one big yellow blur. What to do? Reminders like pick up cereal tonight.....dentist appointment tomorrow.....reminder that Friday the alarm clock gets to swim downstream, you know, things of this nature.....well now thanks to a new Windows 7 applet called 'Sticky Notes', you can toss out the posted notes in your drawer and go virtual with your notes organized on your desktop. And they don't have to be yellow anymore!

- **The joys of defragmenting**

Since Windows Vista, Disk Defragmenter already included an option to automatically run at scheduled times using Task Scheduler and is the same in Windows 7. But Disk Defragmenter now uses a lower CPU priority which means that it can continue to defragment using reduced resources (less CPU and disk activity) when the computer is in use. Cool!

- **Gadgets and your visual space**

If you already have a new Windows 7 computer, by now you have discovered (that, is if you had Vista before) that the Sidebar on the right has been eliminated and Gadgets can be placed anywhere your heart desires, on your desktop. New Gadgets have more functionality as we will discover in our class.

NOTE: Keep in mind that this is just a very small list of the improvements and additions in Windows 7. For more information, visit microsoft.com and search for “Windows 7 features” or “what’s new in Windows 7” to learn more about Windows 7.