First Windows Vista Beta Could Ship Wednesday

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Microsoft is poised to ship an early beta version of its newly re-christened Vista operating system to its key developers as early as Wednesday, according to reports circulating throughout the industry.

Microsoft spokesmen reached by TechWeb declined to confirm or deny the reports.

Last Friday, when Microsoft publicly announced "Vista" as the official name for the OS which had previously been code-named "Longhorn," it said it would ship its first beta release to developers by August 3.

There's speculation that Microsoft may have edged that date forward to capitalize on attention focused on a meeting for financial analysts the company is holding at its Redmond, Wash., headquarters on Thursday.

"Microsoft is having its financial analysts meeting on Thursday and it's always good to show Wall Street some progress," said Joe Wilcox, a senior analyst at Jupiter Research, who added he has no advance knowledge of the company's plans. "It would be very advantageous for Microsoft to be able to release the beta for the Thursday meeting."

Initial reports about the prospective July 27 beta release first surfaced last Friday on ActiveWin.com, a Windows-enthusiast Web site.

Whether the Vista beta is unveiled on Wednesday or seven days later on August 3 won't much change the perception that the operating system will come to market later than Microsoft had originally hoped. "If you start the clock today, it seems like they're on track; if you go back three or four years, they're way behind what they were hoping to do" said Dwight Davis, an analyst at market researchers Summit Strategies in Seattle. Davis added that he didn't have any knowledge about the timing of the beta release. "I don't think the market has been up in arms over the delay. I don't think there's been any drumbeat of demand for Vista and, in fact, Microsoft still has a fairly uphill battle in marketing this and making the case that it's worth the upgrade."

By Alexander Wolfe
TechWeb News

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