Windows 8.1

COURTESY: MICROSOFT

In October of last year, one week before Microsoft began shipping Windows 8.0, I shared my thoughts on Windows 8. I emphasized that there was a steep learning curve versus previous Windows versions (especially for computers that do not have a touch screen) and that any new operating system needs time to mature and time for both application developers and external device vendors to port their software.

Now that Microsoft has announced Windows 8.1 (to be generally available this fall as a free upgrade to Windows 8), it is time to revisit this operating system.

With Windows 8.1, the focus remains very strongly on touch screen devices, but much has been improved for the mouse/keyboard user. In particular, the three most significant shortcomings have been addressed:
1) The Start button has returned, although in a somewhat different, but still functional form.
2) One can arrange to boot directly to the desktop, bypassing the radically new, tiled interface.
3) Instead of just being able to view one app on the screen at a time, now up to four apps can be viewed.

Of course, many other improvements have been made and one can also expect that many bugs will have been fixed. You can read about the changes in Windows 8.1 at http://www.extremetech.com/computing/159803-windows-8-1-a-complete-list-of-changes-and-new-features and view a Microsoft created marketing video at http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-8/preview

Microsoft is completely committed to Windows 8 and it is getting harder and harder to buy a new computer without it preinstalled (unless of course you buy a Mac). Once Windows 8.1 begins generally shipping, you can have more confidence purchasing it, although there still will be a learning curve.

If you are still clinging on to your Windows XP or Vista-based computer, you would do well to bite the bullet and make the leap. Your new computer will run dramatically faster and be much more capable. Plus, your old computer will die at some point, so better to make the change when you can do it at your own pace with your old computer still functional. However be warned: your old devices and old applications may not be supported, adding to the cost and effort of changing platforms.

As always, I hope you have found this information useful. If you do not wish to receive these emails in the future, let me know.

This newsletter, as well as all past newsletters, can be found on my web site (http://steve.gimnicher.com).