

September 23, 2005

Dear Continuing and VMG Clients:

Just a word of warning to anyone considering a significant technology change in the near future: Microsoft has recently announced and has distributed BETA versions of its most currently developed and yet-to-be-released operating system called VISTA. VISTA – formerly dubbed Longhorn – will replace XP as the operating system. The anticipated date of release of VISTA is the fall of 2006. For this reason, if you are considering a major rework of your computer system and have a decision to make as to whether you will want to replace the entire operating system and computers now or later, my best advice is to wait. VISTA has with it a graphic use interface that appears to be a significant upgrade in terms of file accessibility and usability.

The XP operating system has been patched beyond its normal useful life. Usually when you buy a new computer, you acquire an operating system. Some people think that the operating system can then be easily upgraded to the new operating system without difficulty. **Nothing could be further from the truth!**

Anyone who has ever migrated from Windows 3.0 to Windows 95 to Windows 98 to Windows ME understands that, at each level, there is massive disruption of interoperability of software. The current thinking is that if you have to change the operating system, acquire a whole new computer since the computer is configured with hardware to utilize with the operating system that has been sold with it. For this reason, I believe we should attempt to make do with the operating and computer systems that are presently in place as long as possible until the time Windows VISTA has arrived. Of course, this recommendation has similar applicability to file server software since Windows File Server 2003 has been the last full-blown release of a new file server operating system.

If you must replace equipment between now and the first half of 2007, try to be as minimalist as possible. Attempt to only upgrade those computers that you absolutely have to. Some of you may have extra computers that have been purchased for layaway in the event of a problem with a computer that presently exists. Use all of your backup, redundant computer systems before buying new systems. Some of you may also have computers that merely need parts. The hard disk is usually the first thing to go and the most inexpensive to replace. Consider replacing a hard disk as opposed to buying a whole new operating system.

Part of our responsibility to our continuing clients is to keep you apprised of technological changes. VISTA will be such a significant change in the operating system that you will soon want to migrate towards it and away from the older XP system. However, beware; in an effort to get VISTA to market more quickly, Microsoft has cut out a number of highly-anticipated features in VISTA that were too unstable to be released. Most, if not all, of these features will likely be incorporated into VISTA by way of large Service Pack updates in the distant future. Why not wait until you can buy *en masse*. Save your electronic data processing dollars as much as possible between now and the first half of 2007. We do not recommend that you adopt any sort of system until some of the bugs are worked out.

We anticipate that VISTA will be available for purchase on or near late 2006. Give the system at least a few months to operate in the hands of others so that some of the patches for that system can be available for download at the Microsoft website.

If any of you have further information about VISTA, its release date, or other tips relating to new technology that you wish to share with others, please let us know so we can make this information available.

On another front, look at the availability of buying GPS software. Instead of acquiring vehicles with large GPS screens in them, consider buying the smaller, less expensive, portable systems such as the Garmin line or the TomTom line. Our firm recently purchased a TomTom 700 GO and find it to be extraordinarily useful. This device can be distributed to any member who is traveling. The system is easy to set up with clear directions and multitudes of languages to choose from. Occasionally, I flip on the French to brush up on my high school language of languish.

For your technological dollar and your own personal safety, the TomTom 700 can also double as a hands-free wireless telephone if you have an integrated Blue Tooth device available on your mobile phone.

We also tried the less expensive add-on device to a Dell X-50V and found it to be totally unsatisfactory. The device works well with multiple people in the car and one individual being available to review directions. For just one person, the device is totally unsuitable. On the other hand, the TomTom 700 was easy to view with directions that were not only audible and clear but anticipatory so that very little effort must be followed in driving and watching, whereas, you can listen for directions rather easily.

Again, if any of you have experiences with GPS devices, please let us know. Ambulatory large animal practices may have specific experience with these devices. We would be grateful to hear your views.

Take care.

Sincerely,

OWEN E. McCAFFERTY, CPA, INC.



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