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Hasta La Vista, Longhorn

SALT turns Windows XP into Windows Vista for Microsoft

July 27, 2005 — For the last several years, millions of Microsoft users have been waiting for the next release of Windows, (codenamed Longhorn) to arrive. That day has finally come, as Microsoft announced the Beta version of Windows Vista, complete with the new name created by SALT Branding. This initial version of the product (the consumer version is expected 2006) is aimed at developers and I.T. Professionals and will include new functionality around automation, easier administration and greater productivity - but very little of the new U.I. which influenced the naming.

Microsoft's vision for Windows Vista is that in an age of information overload, its' core Operating System needs to help bring clarity to the world, so that you can cut through the clutter and focus on what's important to you. Confidence, clarity and connectivity are key to the focus of the brand and the values of today's digital user.

"Windows is one of the worlds most recognized brands with a distinctive personality of its own." said Michael Dix, brand manager for Windows. "So creating a name for our next major release demanded a concept that positively reflects Windows equities, as well as one that will infuse the brand with the new benefits that we'll be delivering. Windows Vista simply and clearly will do just that – globally."

This was the mantra taken up by SALT as they worked with the team at Microsoft to explore just what the new name should communicate. In 2001, when Microsoft moved away from using numerical dates (e.g. Windows 98) and announced XP, it was met with positive feedback from consumers looking for a more personal experience with their PC. This same approach was part of the process for naming Vista. Microsoft needed name that would not only evoke positive, more personal associations but be appropriate and available as a TM globally.

"Although we explored an incredible range of naming options in our early stages," said David Neugebauer, Principal, SALT Branding "it became clear that the more we spoke to consumers and business professionals around the world, the more they wanted a name that was simple and suggestive – a name with some humanity in it"

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As part of the naming process led by SALT, input was sought from diverse audiences both within the company and from the many customer segments the brand must serve.

“The naming process is like a funnel,” said Neugebauer. “You start very broad. You define the strategic positioning and naming architecture objectives and step-by-step, the list gets narrower and narrower until only a few candidates that really fit the strategy are left. In this case, Vista was on the list from very early on, but became stronger and stronger candidate as the process unfolded. In the end, Windows Vista was the clear winner.

SALT believes that names are a strategic asset to a business and that they must help articulate the brand strategy. You may or may not like a name personally, but if it communicates the right values to the right audiences then that is really all that matters. SALT is continuing to work on naming SKU's and a set of key new features for Windows Vista.

For more information on Windows Vista, please visit the website

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/default.msp>

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