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software in this column, and with the significant number of new releases of the vendor's various products slated for 2007, there will be no shortage of material. I've had a couple of things on my mind, however, and I wanted to get them off my chest as we move ahead in the New Year. Some of the things that have been on my mind relate to my world as you might expect and, consequently, will still mention new software releases from Microsoft and the use of accounting and tax applications.

First, a little background:

It's no secret that 2007 will be a banner year for new versions from Microsoft. By the time you read this, the long-awaited public release of Windows Vista and Office System 2007 will have been officially launched with fanfare in New York City. Following, will be new versions of Exchange server, a new web-based development package named Expressions, Groove, SharePoint, Media Player, Internet Explorer (already released), Flight Simulator, Internet Security and Acceleration Server ... well, you get the idea.

Second, a little more background:

Yesterday, I spent the day helping my son's law office install a real server. This relatively small professional firm of 10 including lawyers, paralegals and support staff was still operating in a peer-to-peer network, and most of the professionals were using legacy (ancient) hardware with the exception of one desktop machine. This new hardware — specifically a dual core Pentium processor and sufficient memory — significantly improved the computing experience. I watched with interest as these users loaded up an application designed for the legal industry to keep track of their cases, time and billing. On the new hardware, the application loaded in less than five seconds. On the legacy machines, most took around two

minutes or longer to load. I had to shake my head in dismay as these professionals

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Thomson), only Thomson Creative Solutions software would run on Vista this tax season. CCH wrote its users (I have the correspondence) to explain that 'development cycles' wouldn't allow for a version of ProSystem fx tax compatible with Vista until Quarter 2 of 2007. When attempting to load the software, a message was displayed that indicated non-support and installation was not allowed.

Intuit had a large warning on its website as follows:

"As a valued Lacerte customer, we are committed to ensuring that you have a successful 2006 tax season. As you may be aware, Microsoft is planning to release its next-generation operating system, Windows Vista, in early 2007. With the upcoming tax season just ahead, we believe now is not the best time to upgrade to Vista because of potential reliability issues often associated with the initial release of operating systems and the subsequent impact it could have on your 2006 tax season. We have identified, just like with any new operating system upgrades, some compatibility issues with our software during initial testing. To help ensure you have a great tax season, we recommend that you don't upgrade to Vista until after the season is complete. We plan to fully support Vista with all our 2007 tax software offerings and will keep you up to date on our progress going forward. We value and thank you for your business."

Thomson Creative Solutions took a different approach on its website:

"As a certified Microsoft partner, Creative Solutions is committed to supporting Microsoft's next-generation operating system, Windows Vista, which is scheduled for release in early 2007. We understand that the beginning of the year is not the best time to update your hardware. Therefore, if you plan to upgrade to Vista, we encourage you to do so later in the year—after the rush of tax season is behind you. In the meantime, be assured that Creative Solutions will

continue to test Windows Vista to ensure compatibility with all Creative Solutions

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here — but did they load and test Vista? Vista comes out of the box with more support for hardware devices than XP did at launch. In my testing, it's MORE RELIABLE than XP — so that argument doesn't work for me. Do professionals need new hardware to run Vista? YES. But just like the attorneys, saving a little on hardware purchases at the expense of efficiency and productivity doesn't make good sense.

Having loaded and tested all of the Vista betas, release candidates and now the final code, I know first hand that the software has gone through a lot of change. The early betas were AWFUL, but the final code is BETTER than XP. So if I want to take advantage of Vista, why don't my software vendors have the foresight to support me? Kudos to Thompson Creative Solutions, whose software runs well on Vista. Shame on the other two for not getting to their development earlier. Of all the applications I use regularly and depend on, there are only a handful that don't run on Vista. I'm disappointed in the companies behind those applications.

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