

Microsoft marketing bravado is just too funny. So now, 17 months after general availability, Microsoft will promote Windows Vista?

## Yesterday's Microsoft marketing bravado is just too funny. So now, 17 months after general availability, Microsoft will promote Windows Vista? Get a life.

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I have said again and again that Microsoft will be unable to revive the dead vista. Vista is just too stupid to be saved. Here is an article that speculates about this subject

[http://keznews.com/4637\\_Can\\_There\\_Be\\_Wow\\_in\\_Vista\\_Marketing?](http://keznews.com/4637_Can_There_Be_Wow_in_Vista_Marketing?)

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The big talk and promises came from Microsoft's Worldwide Partner Conference, in Houston, where Brad Brooks fessed up about Vista marketing mistakes and promised there would be response to Apple's "Get a Mac" ads. They say that confession is good for the corporate soul. I say that it's not good enough.

Microsoft should never have abandoned the original "Wow" Windows Vista marketing campaign. It brought new meaning to the term "marketing blitz." The campaign flashed by before anybody could blink and say, "Wow." Even if Microsoft executives loathed the ads, better to keep them than have nothing. I remain convinced that the Vista marketing campaign could have been very effective. The TV commercials were aspirational, potentially creating positive feelings about the then-mysterious Windows Vista.

Products don't sell themselves. There are good reasons why companies market their stuff. Products must be sold. The best sales pitch is life betterment. Why are people waiting a week in line to buy Apple's iPhone 3G? Because they believe the device will make better their puny little lives. Apple iPhone TV commercials run during most popular primetime programs. The marketing works.

There has been nobody out there saying how good is Windows Vista. But there are plenty of voices, including Apple's "Get a Mac" ads, shouting about how bad is the operating system. It's disgusting that Microsoft showed so little Vista marketing concern for so long. Any ad would be better than none.

Suddenly, there's bravado. Microsoft is making promises about real Vista marketing. Earth to Microsoft, it's going to be too little too late. Windows Vista is the high school outcast. It has got a bad reputation, and people won't easily forget. Marketing damage control is better than nothing, but it could have been avoided. Microsoft should never have given up on "Wow."

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Whatever Microsoft does next can't be much worse than nothing. Still, the new marketing campaign, presumably for Windows Vista plus Windows Live, has got to have punch. The marketing must be creative, funny and aspirational—why your life will be better for buying a Windows Vista PC. Microsoft has to make people want Vista.

I grew up in Northern Maine about 16 kilometers from the Canadian border. The local CBC TV station, out of Saint John, New Brunswick, ran these crazy shampoo commercials. The theme: An American would try to smuggle the shampoo into the United States, only to be repeatedly caught by Canadian Customs. The shampoo was only sold in Canada, but was so good Americans would risk going to jail for smuggling out the hair contraband. The ads tapped into feelings about Canadian pride, American disdain and the product's value. You wanted to buy that shampoo.

To repeat: Microsoft marketing has to make people want to buy Windows Vista. The marketing will fail if it's about features or appeals to the intellect. Most purchasing decisions are emotional. Featuring people in ads is one of the most effective ways of generating good feelings about products. After all, people can connect to other human beings—there is common base—and people use the products. Apple's "Get a Mac" ads are effective because of how well they use people as metaphors for conveying typically complicated technological gobbledegook.

This afternoon, I drank some coffee to fire up the synapses, pondering what kind of commercials could be effective. I humbly offer up a couple, starting with response to "Get a Mac" anti-Vista propaganda. Microsoft shouldn't directly attack Apple. Better: Parody the "Get a Mac" ads, making a subtle but important point about Windows PCs. For this one, viral video would be better than commercial broadcast.

Here's what I'd do: The video opens with two guys standing against a white background, just like Apple's commercials. The viewer hears the familiar "Hello, I'm a Mac." "And I'm a PC." Then another guy appears, "And I'm a PC." Another and another and another appears, with popping sounds, each saying, "And I'm a PC." This goes on for about 10 seconds, with hundreds of PC people from different races and cultural attire popping up to overlapping choruses of "And I'm a PC." Then there is silence. The Mac guy looks at the thousands of PC people and mutters, "Wow." Across the screen flashes text: "You can be alone. Or you can have friends." The Windows Vista logo flashes. Video ends.

Everybody knows that there are more Windows PCs than Macs, right? The commercial would play on connotations of safety in numbers, community and fear of being alone. Human beings are social creatures, after all.

Here's another idea, and the last one. I'm not an advertising expert. These concepts are tough for me to think up: The scene opens on a park playground, with a woman facing us; she taps on a notebook resting in her lap. The camera zooms in as her friend walks up pushing a baby carriage. The woman immediately closes the lid, and her friend reacts with surprise. "Jane, what was that for? What are you hiding?" There is short silence, and the woman flips the lid to show the Vista desktop. "It's Windows Vista. I've heard so many bad things, I'm a little embarrassed about using it. But I really like Windows Vista. It's simply amazing." The friend shakes her head and smiles. She reaches into her tote bag, pulls out a laptop and flips the lid. It's Windows Vista. Both women laugh.

There are lots of ways Microsoft could wrap up the commercial; I'm more anxious to blog this post than make suggestions. I can't imagine Microsoft ever airing such a concept, though. But Microsoft needs something this aggressive—that hits hard at the Vista negativity and appeals to people that like the operating system. The commercial could easily feature two teens instead of mothers. Kids understand about being ostracized, as do many parents of middle or high school students.

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How will Microsoft really market Windows Vista? We may soon find out.

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