

Microsoft VISTA Compatibility Issues
DOS and Windows XP Programs
Microsoft Virtual PC - 2007

by

Edwin G. Edgley
September 2, 2008

With the introduction of Windows VISTA in a 64-bit operating system environment, many older DOS and Windows programs, which previously worked in Windows XP and earlier versions of VISTA, no longer work properly or even install at all. VISTA "help" will suggest that you try and install or run these programs in "compatibility mode" and further using the "run this program as an administrator" option. I am not sure why, but I have never been able to get any program that was not responding, either in Windows XP or VISTA, to perform any differently using the "compatibility mode," and have found this option totally useless.

Since my collection of older software programs is extensive, I found my new VISTA computer almost useless and faced the option of eliminating all of VISTA's new features by installing an older version of Windows XP over VISTA as many people have done. The danger of this is when installing an older version of Windows on a new computer, the new computer's application programs and drivers that were supplied with it are erased in the process as you have to format the computer's hard drive. This can render the computer's keyboard, mouse, sound card, touchpad and other drivers inoperable.

The second option under consideration is to "partition" the computer's hard drive into separate "hard drives" and load VISTA into one hard drive and XP into a second hard drive. This would mean that you would again have to format the existing hard drive and then reboot your computer each time you wanted to switch between operating systems.

Fortunately, Microsoft has created a software "free" download called "Microsoft Virtual PC." This program once installed, will allow you to install a virtual computer's operating system within your existing VISTA's operating system. Thus, at a click of an icon you can switch to a separate "window" running any other operating system of your choice with all of that system's compatible programs installed. The steps are simple and are as follows:

1. Download and install Microsoft Virtual PC version 2007 or later on your VISTA machine. It is a simple step-by-step process that Virtual PC will guide you through. Be sure at the time of download to select the proper program matching the processor on your new computer, 32-bit or 64 bit.
2. After Virtual PC has allocated and formatted "virtual space" on your computer you will be prompted to insert a disk with the operating system you are installing, as an example, "Windows XP." You were likely provided a copy of this diskette when you bought your older computer that came with Windows XP. If not, a system restore or recovery option may have been used to create such a diskette (note that some computer's backup and restore option not only re-creates the operating system but

also re-installs the older computer's drivers which will likely not work on your new computer). As a last resort, you may have to purchase a copy of the desired operating system you are installing. I personally have kept copies of Windows 95, 98, and XP operating system software installation disks.

3. Once step two is completed you will have a "Virtual Machine" operating within your new computer. Switching between windows will *virtually* switch you between operating environments.
4. As the new operating system's environment is a bit awkward, cursor movement slow, etc., you will want to immediately run under the "Action" menu the option for "Install or Update Virtual Machine Additions."
5. Now switch to your older computer's operating environment and re-install all of your older programs that worked on previous versions of Windows including the RDA RESERVE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE™ program.

The following additional promotional information has been downloaded from Microsoft and other sources for your review:

Virtual PC lets you create separate virtual machines on your Windows desktop, each of which virtualizes the hardware of a complete physical computer. Use virtual machines to run operating systems such as MS-DOS, Windows, and OS/2. You can run multiple operating systems at once on a single physical computer and switch between them as easily as switching applications—instantly, with a mouse click. Virtual PC is perfect for any scenario in which you need to support multiple operating systems, whether you use it for tech support, legacy application support, training, or just for consolidating physical computers.

Users switch between operating systems as easily as they switch between applications. They simply click the window containing the virtual machine. They can copy, paste, drag, and drop between guest and host. They can pause individual virtual machines so they stop using CPU cycles on the physical computer. They can also save virtual machines to disk and restore them at a later time. The restoration process normally takes a few seconds—much faster than restarting the guest operating system.

Microsoft Virtual PC 2007 system requirements:

The Virtual PC application requires an x64-based or an x86-based computer with a 400 MHz or faster (1 GHz recommended) processor, and requires approximately 35 MB of disk space. It runs on Windows Vista Business, Windows Vista Enterprise, Windows Vista Ultimate, Windows XP Professional, or Windows XP Tablet PC Edition, Windows Vista SP1 (Enterprise, Business, Ultimate), Windows XP SP3. Virtual PC can run most x86 operating systems.

Processor: AMD Athlon/Duron, Intel Celeron, Intel Pentium II, Intel Pentium III, Intel Pentium 4, Intel Core Duo, and Intel Core2 Duo