

April 2015

More About Windows10

You would think I was a bit nutty with my fascination about Windows 10, but I could not resist one more take on the improvements over past versions of Windows. This one involves icons. That's right, I am obsessing over icons. You might say "irrelevant", or perhaps "too miniscule" to be worthy of attention. You might change your mind if you continue to read this article.

Previously, I detailed the return of the "Prodigal Desktop" and Start Menu. All good stuff, but one telling and important point about the new design philosophy and attention to detail is in fact the new icons Microsoft has inserted into Windows 10.

The new icons are indeed redesigned, perhaps more intuitive, but also more importantly, **flat**. Flat as in two-dimensional: 2-D. No more three dimensional icons with shadows and special effects when you click, hover over, or move them. "Why is this so important?" you may ask. Well, despite my lame use of the rhetorical question as a writing device to draw out details, here's why: less processor and video time needed to render the icon.

Less processor time and less video time rendering icons on your screen means more time to do calculations or other more-important stuff. It also means less power used and less heat generated by the device, and in turn, if your device is portable, less battery power used up. All that adds up to a desktop, laptop, or tablet that runs faster, lasts longer on battery, and runs cooler. I can't think of any better reasons to dump special effects and "go flat".

You can read the sidebar for how a runaway focus on special effects and "glitz" got Microsoft and several big-name computer makers into trouble in the past. I won't name names, but HP, Dell, IBM, Compaq, Lenovo, ASUS, ACER, Gateway come to mind... oh heck, all of them (except Apple) were involved!

-John Becker

Icons, really?

We have to go back in time to a previous Microsoft Disaster: Windows Vista.

Windows Vista came out right after WindowsXP, and just before Windows 7. The major flaw in Windows Vista (among many) was that it had a ton of video special effects associated with the display. Icons with 3-D drop shadows, glows, and the overall transparency special effect of the desktop soaked up a ton of video power to make it all happen.

Soaking up a ton of video power is not good. But at the time, Microsoft was fully on board with the "bigger and badder is better" mindset.

As a result, Microsoft and some PC manufacturers got into a lot of hot water when computers sold as "Vista-Ready" were in fact not capable of rendering the special video effects. Many class-action lawsuits resulted, with much money being paid out. Ooops.