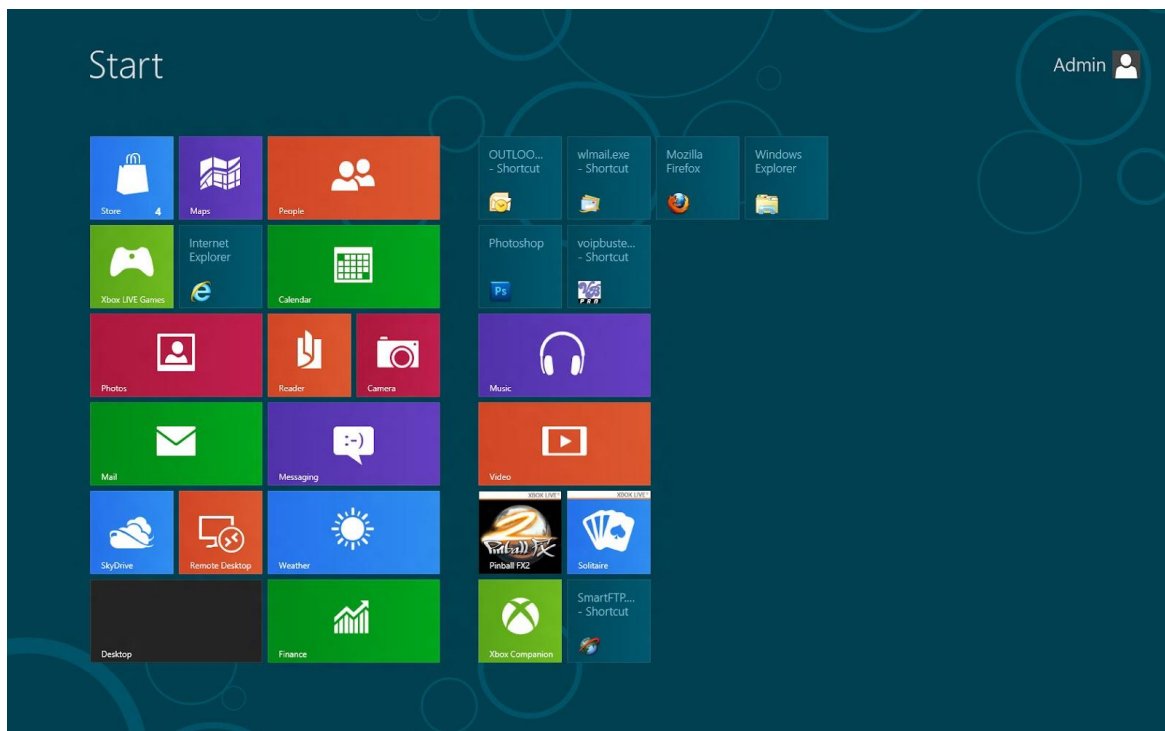


Critiquing WINDOWS 8



Unless you've been incommunicado for a few months, you know that Microsoft's new "baby" is out in full force: Windows 8 operating system is now shipping as standard on new PCs. We've used it for a month (after 2 years on Windows 7) and can give you a hands-on report with pros and cons, keeping in mind that this system was primarily designed as a **mobile-centric** operating system to be used with **tactile screens**. Let's start with changes that could be considered "cons" for many:

1. START

Accustomed to the "Start" menu on the bottom left corner of your screen? Forget it...it's gone, replaced by the "Metro" screen that uses "tiles" and "charms" to take you places. Thankfully you can sort of personalize it so it's easier to manipulate but requires a learning curve to assimilate it into the way you work. The "Metro" screen **IS** your only startup screen so get used to it...you might come to like it for its quick response.

2. "Metro" vs. traditional desktop

Since "Metro" is here to stay, the good news is you can flip back and forth to a traditional, Windows 7 style desktop by tapping on the Microsoft flag key. Then you can proceed to work with your files, docs, taskbar, etc.

3. QUICKER SPEED

Hardware notwithstanding, boot time is really quick....much faster than any other prior Windows and especially great if you leave your laptop on "Suspend" mode...it's always ready to go when you are.

4. INCONSISTENT CONFUSION

Because "Metro" and traditional desktop are 2 different interfaces, there are 2 ways to get to the Control Panel and a few other apps that can be accessed only via one of the interfaces. Stick with one method and you might be OK.

5. MEMORY and POWER

Because W8 is targeted for the mobile market, its memory management and power usage are much more efficient than its predecessor. Thus, laptops will tend to last longer and give the user improved overall performance in the long term.

6. FUNTIONALITY

There are many improvements throughout, including multi-monitor possibility, better multiple file transfers, greater ease in identifying system resources (clearer graphics, less cluttered, more direct), "Office"-style toolbars, and better storage and backup systems.

7. MICROSOFT STORE

In Apple's footsteps, Microsoft requires you to register with them in order to access and purchase Apps; as we speak, more app developers are appearing and will be available only through the store.

8. COST

Microsoft finally has reasonably priced its new operating system, and if you buy Windows 7, an upgrade to W8 for €14.99 is pretty inexpensive.

9. THE FUTURE

There is no going back so we can expect W8 to be Microsoft's platform for a few more years; more programs will be designed for this system as more users come on board. Our assessment? We think W8 to be a strange combination of Windows 7 and the iPad but it's growing on us.....have a look and draw your own conclusions.

*BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON
AND A HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS 2013!*