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## Windows 8, MS Office 365, Win Patrol 2012 in the news

By Art Snyder

When Microsoft says Jump!, the world jumps. News from the Seattle-area company affects the whole computing world, and their crystallizing developments about Windows 8 and their latest Office software suite demand attention. And, the latest version of the award-winning WinPatrol security software has been released. All this, below.

### Windows 8

Microsoft is setting the stage for a bit of excitement — and perhaps some confusion — as the busy digital fall season shapes up. Several elements make this so, and they're inextricably related: Windows 8 and its companion software, Office 2013/Office 365, as well as SkyDrive, which is Microsoft's name for its "cloud" (online) storage service. Overall, this move on several fronts by Microsoft represents a major strategic change, and it requires a lot of consideration of the pros and cons for the skating community.

Windows 8 is the newest Windows operating system, and it's set for official release in early October (computer manufacturers already have shifted to Windows 8, consigning Windows 7 desktops and laptops to retailer clearance racks). Is Windows 8 right for rinks? Not really. More on that in a minute. If you need a new computer, however, you'll make the smart, economically sound move by getting a sharply discounted computer with the Windows 7 operating system. It has all the "oomph" you'll need to last several years, and since its release in October 2009, it has established itself as a worthy successor to the mighty Windows XP system, which was introduced in August 2001 (I still use a Win XP computer as my main computer, and have used it for more than 10 years; it works great, and I'm at my computer hours on end, every day). In fact, if you have a Win XP computer that is only three or four years old, you very likely can continue with it as long as it does all the tasks you need it to do for your rink. In short, feel good about saving money this year with your capital budget.

Windows 8 is not a major developmental leap with the Windows operating system. It's more of a tweaking of Windows 7 so that it works as a

touch-enabled operating system, where you literally touch sections of your computer monitor — or the monitor of laptops, tablets, mobile platforms and the like, where Microsoft believes the future of computing lies — to navigate around to various features of whatever software you're using at the moment, from email to Web browsers to word-processing programs. (The company calls this updated Windows 8 functionality Metro, to lend "nowness" to its aura.) If you are not a keyboarder or typist, the touch-screen aspect of Windows 8 might be attractive. Most users who can keyboard will find the keyboard-and-mouse style of navigation on a friendly 20- or 22-inch monitor much faster. This approach also keeps the monitor clean and clear, for comfortable viewing, a draw that's usually discretely avoided by most reviewers.

Other things to consider with Windows 8: SkyDrive is a key feature built into Windows 8, and this cloud-based feature has you storing all your documents, employee records, tax information, fliers, photographs and anything else you do, manage or create with your computer in the cloud. That is, not simply on your own computer's hard drive. Microsoft wants you to view your relationship with the company by thinking of it as a service that you lease by the month, rather than software you periodically buy, as with Word, Office or the latest Windows operating system. This shift is like the pricing that cell phone companies, cable TV and other services offer. The strategy guarantees a steady revenue stream, and it's one that the service provider can increase almost anytime.

Similar to Dropbox, Google Drive and other big-name online storage providers, SkyDrive is undoubtedly convenient, and anything stored on the cloud — whether the cloud service belongs to Microsoft, Amazon, Google or any of dozens of others — can be accessed by you at any time on any computer, as long as you can get online, remember your account password and be up to date with your installment plan. If you have a computer that crashes, you'll like knowing you still can access everything you've saved to the cloud, even with a brand-new computer. But as Twitter and Amazon, among others, have seen, cloud hosts can go down, and when that happens, you can only hope the cloud service is back online in

a day or two. Ouch.

Pricing, though, is Microsoft's biggest draw with Windows 8 and the new Office software suite. The company hopes to price Windows 8 upgrades for Windows 7 at perhaps \$40. That's a sure lure.

One other consideration with Windows 8: It's designed to run on only Windows 7 or later platforms. You cannot upgrade Win XP or Vista (its successor) to Windows 8, despite the fact that Win XP still runs 45 percent of all U.S. computers. You have to buy at least a Windows 7 computer to be able to upgrade, but Microsoft prefers that you start fresh with a new Windows 8 operating system in a new desktop, laptop, tablet or other device. Put the past — and your current profitability — behind you, so to speak.

### Microsoft Office 365 and Office 2013

Microsoft Office 365 is the cloud-based version of the company's familiar Office suite of programs, and the 365 designation means this version of Office is an update of the current Office 2012. This fall, the business community will be able to use Office 365 as a leased product, where the software is online all the time. With your leasing fee, you can go online, enter your password to

access your account, and use Office 365. Think of the software as being on someone else's computer, which you access for a monthly fee wherever you are where you can get online. An upside to Office 365 is that it's always current. Any fixes, updates, glitches and the like are addressed behind the scene, at no added expense or computer knowhow on your part. Such updating cost is bundled into your monthly leasing costs. For now, it is unclear if Microsoft will offer a consumer version of Office 365 or if the company will devise a leasing or subscription fee for consumers to use SkyDrive and Office 365 bundled together. The proverbial handwriting is on the wall with Microsoft's goal of moving both the business and consumer worlds to the company's new service-based business model.

Office 2013 is the latest version of the Office suite from Microsoft, and it's configured to be sold to consumers as in the past, as a suite of programs to be downloaded or bought as a boxed retail product. As with Office 2012 and the new Office 365, Office 2013 includes Access, Excel, OneNote, Outlook, PowerPoint, Publisher and Word. But note: Office 2013 will not work with Win XP or Vista. You must have Windows 7 or 8 to enjoy the features of Office 2013. Frankly, though, how many of the new



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