

What is the Microsoft Lifestyle?

By [Joe Wilcox](#) | Published August 19, 2009, 4:40 PM

VIEWPOINT

Since January, when I switched to Windows 7 (Beta and later Release Candidate), I have sought an answer to that question. To my surprise, I have yet to find a Microsoft lifestyle -- not one that fits me. So I ask Betanews readers: What is the Microsoft lifestyle? What is *your* Microsoft lifestyle? Please answer in comments.

Perhaps Microsoft's lifestyle is enterprise computing, something I don't participate in. I've never worked for a company that required SharePoint and often, because of older deployed software, neither has there been mandate to use Exchange Server. When I was an analyst, writing in Word was a must, but not before or since.

There's a gaming lifestyle around Xbox and Xbox Live, but it doesn't really touch enough other Microsoft products for there to be extensive lifestyle. There's a value lifestyle, for businesses and consumers, looking to save money. But who really wants to participate in that? "Attention, Wal-Mart shoppers." The value of value is saving money on one thing to spend it elsewhere on luxuries -- *another lifestyle*.

All successful companies sell lifestyles. For decades, PepsiCo used motto "Pepsi Generation" for a *reason*. There is a Pepsi lifestyle. Harley Davidson sells a motorcycle lifestyle that some people stereotype as Hell's Angels' types but is really something else: Graying (or balding) middle-aged men riding their hogs, usually on weekends; they feel virile, and who wouldn't riding a Harley. That's the lifestyle.

Many technology companies excel at lifestyle marketing, too. Research in Motion sells a connected business-personal lifestyle around BlackBerry and email. BlackBerry lifestyle marketing also benefits from America's hipster president being an admitted Crackberry addict.

There is increasingly a Facebook lifestyle, and it's successful without any real marketing. It's a water cooler or dress party lifestyle, where people gossip and share what's important to them with friends and even strangers.

Among technology companies, Apple is the 21st Century's lifestyle marketing leader. There's nothing new about Apple selling a Mac lifestyle, but the approach got a major makeover in the new century. I contend that next to 1984, when Apple launched Macintosh, 2001 was the most important year in the company's history. In January 2001, Apple unveiled iTunes music software. In March, Apple launched troubled Mac OS X 10.0 and essentially relaunched as 10.1 in September. In May, the company opened Apple Store, in two locations -- California and Virginia. In October, the first iPod debuted. Apple Store, iPod, iTunes and Mac OS X seemed innocuous launches at the time, but they would later be the four pillars raising the Apple brand from obscurity to mass popularity.

All four products -- later supported by marketing, starting in June 2002 with the "Switch" campaign -- laid the foundation for the Apple lifestyle of the new century. There had been a Mac lifestyle, but Apple Store, iPod, iTunes and Mac OS X extended it to the larger company brand. All the other successful Apple products that followed came from these four 2001 launches:

- If not iTunes and Mac OS X, no iLife
- If not iTunes and iPod, no iTunes Music Store
- If not iPod, iTunes and Mac OS X, no iPhone
- If not Apple Store, none of the above

Apple Store provides a focal point for the Apple lifestyle, around digital activities like listening to music and watching, making or sharing videos. The iPhone adds a mobile lifestyle component, extending from the others but more connected through the applications and the Web. Apple's lifestyle is dimensional, with different facets.

In the 1990s, there was a clearly identifiable Windows lifestyle, but it lost definition coming into the new century. Today, Windows is more a utility, like the kitchen stove or refrigerator. There are no defining applications, outside businesses. What? Is there a SharePoint or Windows Server lifestyle that people aspire to? Or Outlook?

As I look back to Apple and 2001, I wonder about Microsoft and 2007. Can Azure, advertising campaigns like "Laptop Hunters," Bing, Microsoft retail stores, Windows Mobile 6.5, Windows 7 and Zune HD be the foundational launches for a new Microsoft lifestyle? Microsoft has lifestyle vision, even without great execution, around three screens -- PC, TV and mobile device. But can all that lead to a tangible Microsoft lifestyle? You tell me.

My questions for readers to answer and debate in comments: Is there a Microsoft lifestyle? Do you live a Microsoft lifestyle, and, if so, what is it? What do you want Microsoft's future lifestyle to be?