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MICROSOFT OFFICE 2010 ARTICLE

OFFICE 14 = OFFICE 2010, SO WHAT?

Various outlets are hot with the 'news' that the next version of Office will be called 'Office 2010'. Hardly surprising since the upcoming Microsoft Office will be released in 2010. It wasn't going to be called 'Office 7' (to match Windows 7) and any other name would have confused people even more.

There was a lot more interest in early screen shots of the next Office, though the shots don't tell you much.

We'll have to wait to see what Microsoft has for us both in the software and browser based versions of the next Office.

What's in Microsoft Office and how well it works is much more important than the name on the box.

When?

Microsoft is saying that Office 2010 will be released to the public in, wait for it, 2010. They aren't making the past mistake of making a release date promise only to miss that date and get pilloried (wrongly in our view) for being 'late'.

This time Microsoft is only saying Office 2010 will be unleashed in the first half of 2010 - the company should be able to meet such a wide target.

There will be a 'technical beta' in the last quarter of this year. In the past 'technical' betas have been more like widespread marketing pushes with all the features locked in place and only really large bugs fixed between that test version and the final product. An example of how long problems are allowed to remain after Microsoft Office is released can be seen in the major changes to Outlook's PST/OST data management in the upcoming Office 2007 Service Pack 2.

Who will buy it?

A better question than when Office 2010 comes out is who will buy it? It has been harder and harder for Microsoft to convince people and organizations to 'upgrade' Office and that was before the economic downturn.

Associating Office 2010 with Windows 7 might help (Office 2007 is wrongly seen as 'linked' to Windows Vista). The ribbon interface continues to baffle and annoy people, rightly or wrongly, and there'll be no stepping back from the ribbon in Office 2010.

The online version of Office (web based versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote) if integrated well with desktop Office and sold as a combination (rather than demanding more money for 'full' online access) might entice people and small companies.

OFFICE 2003 SUPPORT DECLINING

Office 2003 users have a hard choice now main support for their software is ending.

Microsoft has quietly announced that the main lines of support and updates for Office 2003 will stop on 14 April 2009.

From 14 April 2009 there will be no more updates for Office 2003 except for security patches and anti-spam definitions.

Office 2003 users now have a hard choice. Stick with Service Pack 2 but no access to future security updates. Or 'upgrade' to Service Pack 3 (SP3) and deal with the consequences of some arbitrary and Microsoft money saving 'features' imposed in that service pack.

Recommendation is to apply Service Pack 3 if you haven't done so already – but be aware of the pitfalls. Not a week goes by without a pleading message from an Office 2003 user who can't open an old document – Service Pack 3 is to blame.

Access users should ensure they have applied the patch that reverses the 'improvements' in SP3.

Extended Support for Office 2003 will end after five years – on 14 April 2014.

OFFICE 14 - THE NEXT MICROSOFT OFFICE

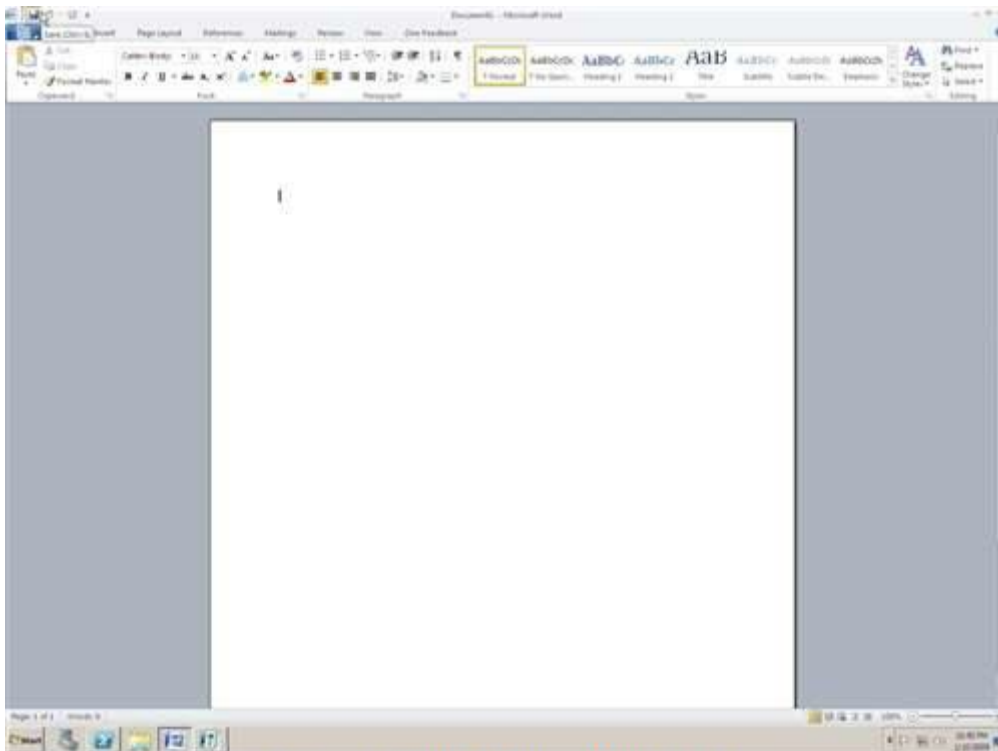
A Russian web site wzor.net has leaked images from the alpha (early) tests of Office 14 - the next release of Microsoft Office.

With a alpha test version out to a limited group now, that puts a beta test in the middle of the year and a final release later in 2009 or early 2010.

The rumour mill says the final product will be called 'Office 2009' or 'Microsoft Office System 2009'. However if the year branding of Office continues then it's more likely to be called 'Office 2010' following a late 2009/early 2010 release (Office 2007 was released in late 2006).

A final decision on naming hasn't been made yet. Various in-house PPT slides from Microsoft with the Office 2009 but those are just interim names not a final decision.

It's only a small glimpse into Office 14 - one thing is certain, people who despise the ribbon interface appear to have been ignored by Microsoft. Outlook 14 is getting the ribbon. The Office button has been shrunk.

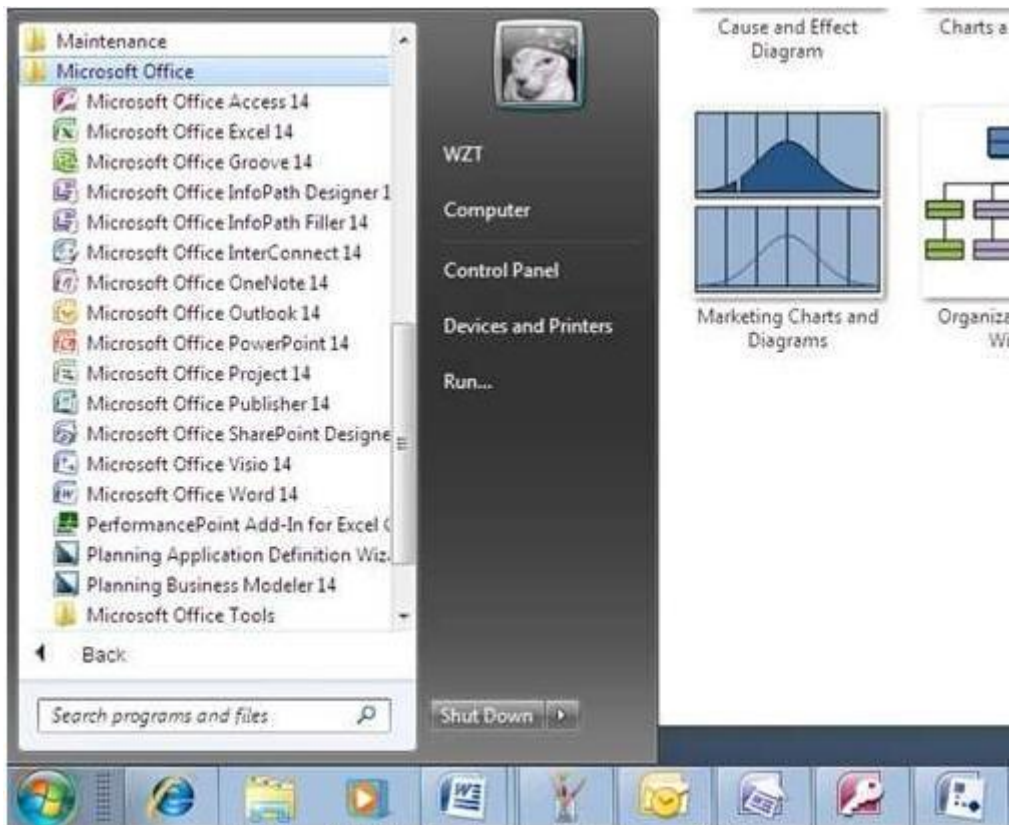


Office 14 Alpha shots - Word 14.jpg

No substantial changes from Word 2007 are apparent.

Note that the large round menu button ('Office button') on top left has been replaced with a smaller button inline with the ribbon tabs. With that change the Quick Access Toolbar moves to the left edge. WordPad 7 (included in the Windows 7 beta) has the same design.

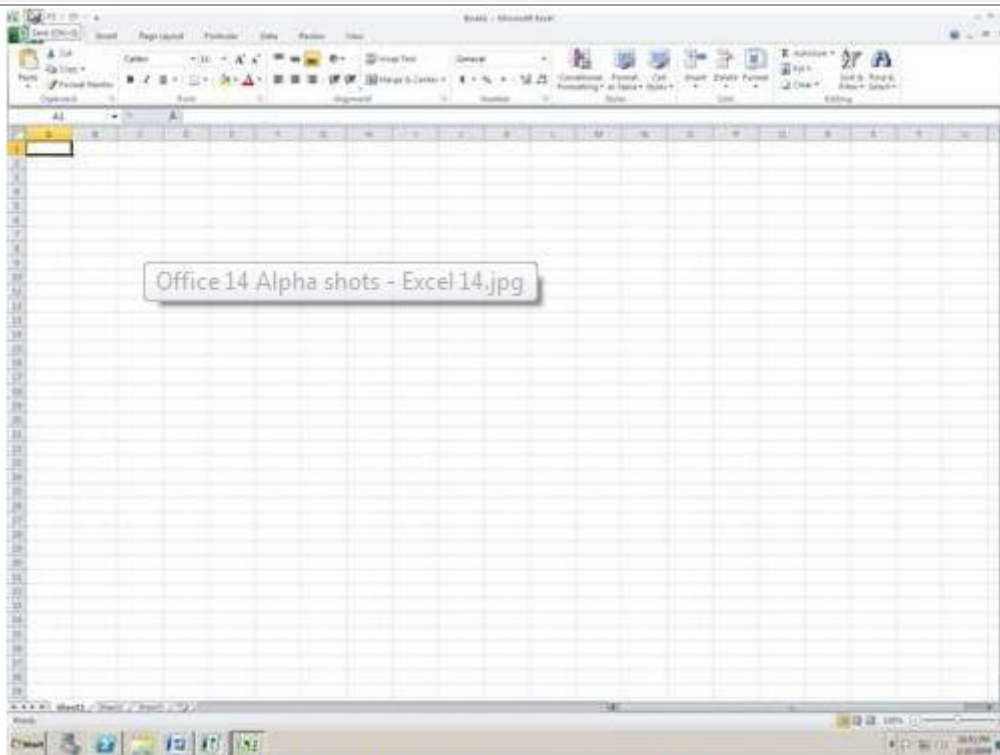
Overall that might reduce the height of the ribbon slightly.



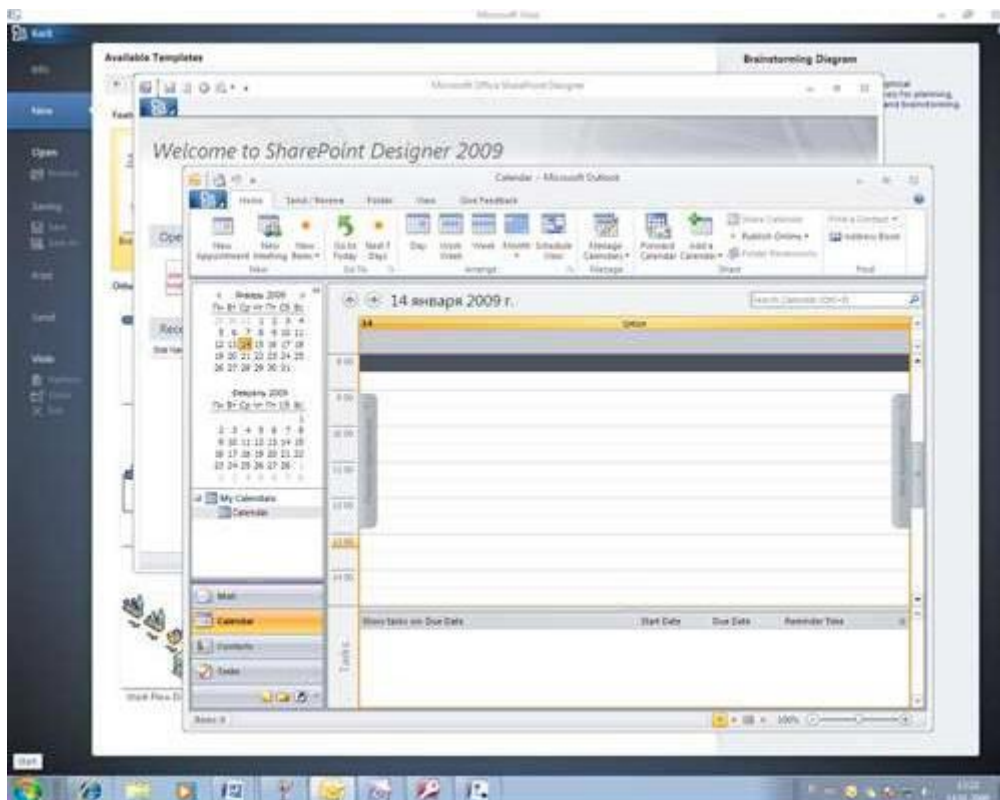
Office 14 Alpha shots - Program list.jpg

This is a list of the Office 14 programs. InfoPath 14 is split into 'Designer' and 'Filler'.

InterConnect 14 isn't a new program - it's a part of MS Office that's included in Japanese releases only.

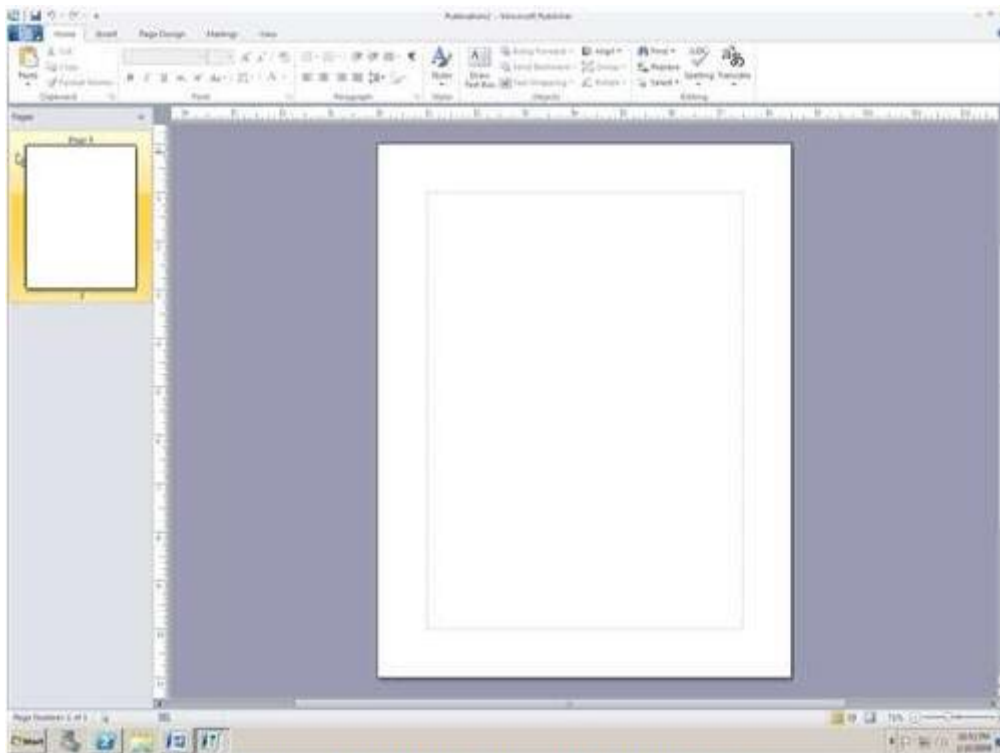


Office 14 Alpha shots - Excel 14.jpg

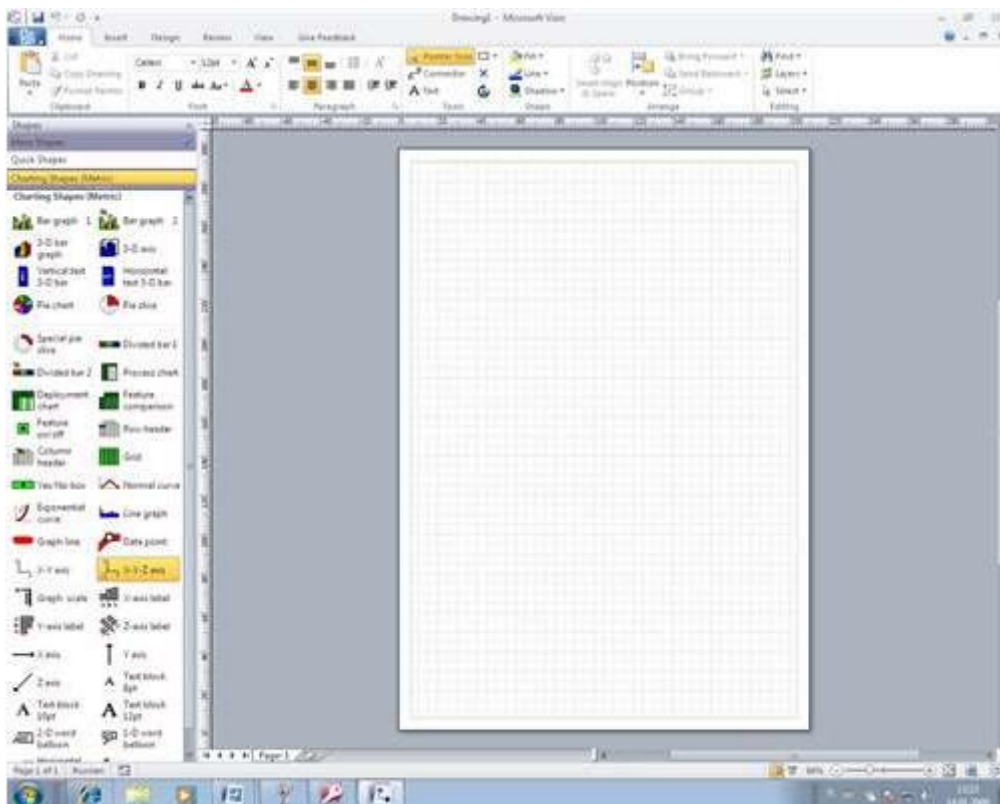


Office 14 Alpha shots - Outlook 14.jpg

Outlook 14 is in foreground, note the arrival of the full ribbon interface to Outlook.



Office 14 Alpha shots - Publisher 14.jpg



Office 14 Alpha shots - Visio 14.jpg

