Why did the word Start disappear from the Start button?

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Commenter Mike Dunn would like to know why the word Start disappeared from the Start button in Windows Vista. After all, adding the word Start helped new users figure out what they should click first. I don't know but I can guess. To emphasize that these are guesses, I went back in after I wrote them and added all sorts of weasel words. It sort of saps the punch from the statements, but it's one of those things I've learned that I have to do to avoid the more egregious forms of willful misunderstanding. First of all, it might have been a leftover from one of the older designs for the Vista taskbar, one which, as I dimly recall, changed the default taskbar docking position from the bottom of the screen to the right-hand edge. (I am under the impression that this design may have been shown off at a PDC from a few years ago, but perhaps not.) Under those circumstances, we would be in the situation where the word Start disappears, so there would be no point showing a helpful piece of text when the only people it helps would be people who wouldn't know how to re-dock the taskbar anyway. Second, the design folks might have wanted to give Windows Vista a distinctive new "look", and a fancy new Start button could serve as one of those elements. Third, introducing a new element with a new design might be one of those things that lawyers like to see, because it might make a copyright claim more defensible. As I recall, during the period of Windows Vista development, there was an ongoing issue with a competing operating system which appeared to have copied many visual elements from Windows XP, and I'm guessing that lawyers like it when a new element is even more distinctive, because, in my totally uninformed, unofficial, and untrained legal opinion, doing so might help to remove the defense that the element is generic and therefore is not subject to copyright. Yes, the word *Start* was added specifically to address a usability concern, but it may have been the feeling that in the over ten years since the Start button was introduced, people had been exposed to it in other ways, perhaps even ways they didn't expect. You may have noticed that the Start button cues have been slowly disappearing over the years. The big dialog box that appears the first time you boot Windows which has a miniature screenshot with an arrow pointing to the Start button? Gone. The arrow that animates across the taskbar which says *Click here to begin*? Gone.

By the time the first-time user has reached the desktop, the circular Windows Vista logo has been presented numerous times. It's on the boot screen, it's on the logon screen, it's on the box packaging. When it appears in the corner of the screen, the feeling of the designers may have been that the user has already been nudged plenty of times into clicking on it.

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