Life in the Enterprise Beyond Windows XP: Essential Steps Toward Migrating to Your Next OS

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If you're in any way involved in the IT operations of your company, then you know all too well that on April 8, 2014, Windows® XP will reach the end of its life and officially be moved aside by Microsoft®.

If you're not already managing a Windows 7 or 8 infrastructure, this whitepaper will provide ample support to help you begin an XP migration right away.

QUESTION: DO I NEED TO MIGRATE NOW? (AND WHY?)

In a word, yes. Most experts agree that it will take between six and 18 months to migrate away from Windows XP and there's no debating the fact that on April 8, 2014, support from Microsoft – in virtually every form except custom contracts – will cease. That's a sobering fact when you consider that there will be no more updates or bug fixes for an operating system that has undergone several hundred patches, if you count those included in service packs.

If there's still any doubt in your mind (or in the minds of the key decision makers in your enterprise) as to whether or not you need to migrate off of Windows XP, listen to what Microsoft says about the end of life of Windows XP: "The security and privacy implications of this event could have significant impacts on your business, so if you're running either of these products you should plan to take action soon."

The "either of these products" in Microsoft's statement calls out the fact that, in addition to Windows XP going end-of-life, Internet Explorer 6 on XP, Office 2003, Exchange Server 2003 and Exchange Server 2010 Service Pack 2 (newer service packs of Exchange Server 2010 will continue to be supported) will all join XP on the list of enterprise applications that will not be supported after April 8, 2014.

Industry experts agree with Microsoft that there are four critical areas of enterprise computing that will come under heavy fire after XP's end-of-life date:

- Security – Without frequent, critical security updates, the XP environment will become increasingly vulnerable to viruses, malware and other harmful software that could literally bring your business to a halt. Staying on XP and isolating your PCs from infection will be a complicated and costly game to play.
- Software – Even beyond Microsoft, software and hardware vendors will be reluctant to support XP platforms – or they will simply stop supporting them altogether. This includes the device drivers that form the critical link between hardware and software. It's also unlikely that any new software will run on XP; Microsoft's latest Office products do not, for example.
- Support – One word: expensive. With telephone and online support no longer available, estimates for custom Microsoft XP support agreements will range into the hundreds of thousands of dollars per year at the enterprise level.
- Productivity – In an unsupported XP environment, all of the above risks are bound to cause a drop in productivity if the business suffers any downtime as a result of security breaches or the old hardware's incompatibility with new software.

IF YOU'RE STILL ON XP, YOU'RE NOT ALONE (BUT THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING)

Windows XP was the most-used operating system in the world for approximately 11 years. Despite the fact that Microsoft effectively signaled XP's end of life back in 2009, as of June 2013 nearly 38% of the world's PCs were still running Windows XP, putting it in second-place among all operating systems behind Windows 7, at almost 45%.

Thousands of applications -- private and commercial – have been written to run on XP, and moving those apps to either Windows 7 or 8 will involve some effort. Plus, commercial applications will eventually drop support for Windows XP and focus their development attention and budgets on what Microsoft refers to as "more modern operating systems."

If you've started running some numbers about the quantity of XP machines that need to migrate to a new OS and the internal and third-party resources available to make your migration happen quickly, you'll soon see that the "still-haven't-migrated-off-XP" club is one to which you do not want to belong.

In fact, the more you analyze the job ahead of you, the deeper the April 8, 2014 iceberg gets. And, with rising demand, the resources to help you migrate will become increasingly scarce the longer you wait.

It's easy to see that migrating off Windows XP is anything but a simple IT project, regardless of the number of users in your enterprise. Commenting in an April 2013 article in *Redmond Magazine*, David K. Johnson, senior analyst for infrastructure and operations at Forrester Research, said:

> "Some [organizations] have already attempted to migrate to Windows 7 and failed … They failed because they failed to take the time to analyze their applications well enough or didn't really communicate the plan effectively across the organization and had problems.
>
> "[They] didn't put enough automation in place to do it effectively either, and some are facing restarts of the migration. Those are rare, but happening. We are also seeing cases where companies are asking about extending beyond the deadline of 2014, and wanting to know what's going to happen to the Windows XP environment and what the relative risks are if they are no longer using regular security patch updates and other things from Microsoft.
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> "And our answer is obvious: it's going to definitely put your security situation at risk and we would not recommend any unpatched systems being used on the network unless they are completely isolated."

WHERE DO YOU START? WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Moving your enterprise to a new operating system is much more than "just another optional software update" to increase functionality. It requires multiple decisions – much more than simply selecting Windows 7 or 8 as your new OS. There are hardware issues to consider, support agreements, licensing, and training – all of which will trigger budget concerns. Insight has extensive experience helping clients implement operating system migrations. This experience taught us that you must carefully assess seven key areas when migrating away from Windows XP:

1. Application Compatibility – This should be Step One: learning which applications are compatible with a new OS and what's needed to adapt those that are not up-to-speed. Since XP is no longer shipping with new PCs and devices coming onto your computing platform, you'll need to develop a plan to keep legacy XP-only applications usable.
2. Desktop Virtualization – Virtualization should be considered as life support rather than a long-term solution for XP-dependent applications. Older applications may be able to run on XP virtual machines or thin clients within a VDI environment, but virtualization done simply to prop up legacy applications is a short-term fix, not a long-term solution.
3. Licensing and Volume Activation – Insight thoroughly understands the licensing issues you'll face as you purchase and install thousands of licenses for a newer version of Windows and its related applications. You must have a full understanding of the state of your current licensing agreements and what your financial exposure may be before you can intelligently move forward.
4. Networking – A more modern OS will certainly support networking technologies that may have been unsupported or had less-than-optimal support, under Windows XP. There may be newer technologies (for example, wireless, Bluetooth, or cloud) that bring enhanced levels of productivity and performance to your enterprise that were unavailable to you under XP. For these reasons, you will have both hardware and software choices to consider.
5. Performance and Hardware Compatibility – If you don't already have a plan to manage the consumerization of enterprise IT and understand strategies such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), Choose Your Own Device (CYOD), and Bring Your Own Access (BYOA), then your migration plan must provide solutions to ensure that all on the devices on your various networks work together seamlessly and securely and provide a uniform user experience.
6. Security and Control – This critical area will require a detailed assessment to understand: 1) Where you are under Windows XP, and 2) What it will take to get you up-to-speed with the advanced security and management capabilities of Windows 7 or 8. You will no doubt have new functionalities and tools at your disposal – but these will offer you little advantage unless your IT team understands how to make the best use of them.
7. Training and Certification – Understanding the type and scale of the training programs you'll need is critical -- from both an operational and financial standpoint. A well-planned training program is the cornerstone for a successful rollout and absolutely imperative for migration success.

UNDERSTAND THE TOTAL COSTS

For many organizations, the cost of migration ranks near the top of reasons to delay. While initial costs are potentially high, you can minimize them by carefully planning and managing the process. Remember: holding onto Windows XP will actually cost you more over time, so be sure to factor in total cost of ownership (TCO) of your infrastructure. If you look only at the initial migration costs, you are ignoring the bulk of the cost equation.

Consider, for example, that annual support costs for PCs three years old or older often exceed the purchase price of a new PC. For many organizations looking to migrate their OS, the most cost-effective option might be to time that migration with their PC refresh cycle. This approach can not only reduce support costs, it can also deliver lower service desk costs through:

- Built-in tools that allow remote troubleshooting and repair
- Increased user productivity from intelligent performance
- Improved operating system stability with Intel Core vPro platforms

Lower power consumption is one added bonus of newer PCs, which feature the latest Intel processors and a new operating system. Intel® Core vPro™ technology also offers a comprehensive set of security, manageability, and productivity-enhancing capabilities that can actually help your migration go more smoothly.
Core vPro platforms are up to 50 percent more energy efficient than three-year-old systems, decreasing your TCO and helping your business run more efficiently. Intel® Turbo Boost Technology intelligently allocates extra processing power when you need it most, and helps reduce power consumption when you don't. You can also boost energy efficiency with Intel® Wide Dynamic Execution, which delivers more instructions per clock cycle, so less power is needed to complete a task. Plus, Windows 7 includes new power management controls with an emphasis on idle power management.

ABOUT INSIGHT

Insight is a trusted technology provider of hardware, software and service solutions to business and government clients in more than 190 countries. Insight is focused on helping organizations move their technology goals forward in the areas of Cloud; Data Center and Virtualization; Unified Communication and Collaboration; Mobility, Network & Security; Data Protection and Office Productivity. Founded in 1988, Insight is a Fortune 500 company headquartered in Tempe, Arizona with approximately 5,400 teammates worldwide.

THE INSIGHT APPROACH

Insight takes a comprehensive approach to helping clients with their Windows 8 Deployments. This includes consulting services as well as comprehensive multi-site deployment and full IT lifecycle services. Insight has also participated in the Windows Jumpstart Program, which has proven successful in catalyzing many of client deployments. The Insight Services team stands ready to partner with you to plan, deploy and even operate your enterprise IT infrastructure post-migration.

Our experts will work with your IT team, using best-in-class software assessment tools. Insight offers both packaged and custom Windows deployment services – based upon each client's specific needs. We can help you determine if Windows 7 or Windows 8 is your best choice to replace Windows XP – for most companies it's not a clear-cut decision.

Insight's Optimized Windows Desktop/Endpoint Offering provides clients with an action plan and roadmap for their Desktop Infrastructure. The solution will be customized to the client's immediate and strategic business needs as well as their current IT environment. Even with a packaged offering, Insight clients enjoy the benefits of our strategy: "Don't just deploy – optimize and consider needs beyond the deployment itself."

We work with clients in multiple industries and verticals to design Optimized Desktop/Endpoint implementations. Insight provides a holistic, use-based approach in which different user challenges are analyzed and solutions offered to support them. Our approach acknowledges that today's workers demand flexible work styles and must have the desktop to support their needs, not one designed for IT. Insight provides in-depth analysis of the use cases in existence to design the optimal Windows environment.

We can then help you map your migration, and seamlessly integrate your new hardware and software solution. At Insight, we seek to be our client's trusted advisor. That means more than selling hardware, software and services. It means standing by what we sell through the complete IT lifecycle: strategy, design, integration, implementation, management, repair and replacement. Insights stands with our clients, to see their solutions implemented and performing as desired. We are there for questions, training, repairs, upgrades and counsel. Our experience and technical expertise provide our clients customized solutions for a streamlined and successful XP migration.

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