

TOP 5

Reasons Why You Must Migrate Away From Windows XP Today

Every IT professional knows the end is coming soon for Windows XP support, but a surprising number of organizations have yet to make the move to either Windows 7 or 8. Waiting any longer, however, is a losing proposition.

By now, everyone's heard that support for Windows XP — one of client computing's true workhorse operating systems for the past decade — will end on April 8, 2014. Logically, all IT professionals know they have to make the move to XP's enterprise follow-on operating systems: either Windows 7 or 8. There are big benefits in moving to the new operating systems, and major headaches for failure to do so in advance of the support end date.

Yet, a staggering percentage of XP users are still stuck in neutral. What's the holdup? And, more relevant for users and IT organizations, what are the biggest implications for not migrating away from XP before it's too late?

There's no denying that there remains a large block of XP installations. Market tracker NetMarketShare said that as of April 2013, Windows XP still constituted 38% of the installed base of PCs. In the classic technology adoption book *Crossing the Chasm*, these users would kindly be called the late adopters of new technology — if not the final holdouts, called laggards.

Are these IT organizations the equivalent of car owners in the 1970s who refused to buy a new model until they could no longer purchase leaded gasoline? Certainly, IT decision-makers aren't brazenly stubborn, and they're certainly not stupid. Obviously, there are a number of factors holding them back from migrating to avoid being "end-of-lived," even though Microsoft made the announcement more than five years ago. Migration costs, application testing and validation, investment in new PCs that can efficiently run

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Windows 7 or 8, and deeply entrenched user behavior are just a few of the factors that have delayed many organizations' move away from XP.

Cost, of course, is the biggest issue for many organizations, because it's measured in two ways. First, there are the costs of actually migrating: new licenses, personnel to test and validate application compatibility and resolve any incompatibilities that may pop up, and possibly IT services firms to help with the migration. Second, many companies may incur significant capital expenses to upgrade or even replace their PCs because older machines may lack the memory, storage or other components necessary to run Windows 7 or 8.

Still, it's inevitable that IT organizations are going to have to bite the bullet, because being without certain types of support for XP is an invitation for disaster. Some companies may have started down the migration path but may be underestimating the time and effort required to beat the deadline. Others, especially those with large numbers of XP-based clients outside of corporate headquarters, will simply run out of time and then have to make some very tough decisions. Here are some of the top reasons why waiting even another day to migrate XP users to Windows 7 or 8 is too long.

#1. Be prepared to lose your security compliance and deal with the pain and suffering sure to follow. This isn't a scare tactic:

Your not-yet-migrated XP machines will be sitting ducks for hacking or widespread industrial espionage on April 9, 2014. It's no exaggeration to note that organized cyber criminals are waiting to exploit XP security vulnerabilities on that day and every day thereafter until updated client-based security measures are installed. Microsoft states the danger very starkly on its website: "Unsupported and unpatched environments are vulnerable to security risks. This may result in an officially recognized control failure by an internal or external audit body, leading to suspension of certifications, and/or public notification of the organization's inability to maintain its systems and customer information." There are a few workarounds that, while potentially effective for the short term,

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are inelegant at best and wasteful and even dangerous at worst. For instance, some organizations may choose to get their XP machines off the backbone network and isolate them so viruses, malware and denial-of-service attacks don't infect the rest of the organization. Of course, this will likely prevent those users from accessing core applications or vital data, which seems like an exorbitant price to pay simply to avoid having to switch operating systems. Others may decide to use endpoint security software to "containerize" XP vulnerabilities instead of patching the operating system. Whatever workaround an IT organization may take, it's likely to result in more expensive and complicated solutions, which is unfortunate, considering that they have a much simpler one staring them in the face: migration. Another key issue to consider: the significant cost for Microsoft's Custom Support service so organizations that have yet to migrate can receive support. There's usually a \$200,000 minimum for organizations to receive Custom Support, although it's not unheard of for some customers to pay much higher amounts depending upon their needs. Finally, keep in mind that third-party security programs used on XP also will begin to drop support for the operating system.

- #2. Migrating now will ensure continued access to the vital and vast third-party ecosystem of Windows partners and support organizations.** It won't be long before you won't be able to upgrade your XP-based applications or resolve XP-related problems through normal support mechanisms. And you can forget about XP-based peripherals, drivers and other add-ons that enhance the capabilities of your base machine. Already, most independent software vendors have stopped developing XP versions of their applications, and most PC hardware manufacturers have stopped supporting XP on models introduced in the past few years.
- #3. Pervasive mobility — BYOD, consumerization of IT, always-on computing — is nearly unachievable without the move to Windows 7 or, especially, Windows 8.** Although Windows 8 still has a ways to go in terms of gaining widespread industry acceptance, its enhanced support for tablets and smartphones makes it a strong long-term option for companies embracing the notion of pervasive mobility. By contrast, XP isn't a viable solution for tablets or smartphones (even though it's technically possible to run XP within virtual desktop infrastructure environments). Even for notebooks, XP doesn't support the full range of mobility features organizations need today to fully equip their mobile workforces for anywhere, anytime connectivity. This is a huge problem for younger employees who have literally grown up with the bring-your-own-device concept and expect nothing less in their work lives.

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- #4. If your organization is migrating key applications and services to the cloud, staying on XP much longer will be a huge impediment.** Cloud access from XP is going to be tough for a few reasons. First, XP clients are not only far from optimized for accessing cloud services, but also for actually working in a cloud environment. Even XP clients residing on high-bandwidth networks will find that performance lags, latency increases and network connections drop more often than with newer Windows versions. Second, many of today's cloud-based applications and services require client infrastructure with sufficient memory, storage, graphics and other capabilities, which is simply beyond what XP-based machines can reasonably deliver. Finally, an increasing number of workers access cloud-based services, data and applications from outside their headquarters, where they may have access to a hard-wired network connection. As discussed earlier, XP-based notebooks are going to come up short when it comes to working in a cloud environment.
- #5. Moving to Windows 7 or 8 now is a far better economic proposition than putting off the inevitable until early 2014.** Sooner or later, every IT department is going to have to make this move, so organizations are going to have to commit budget to upgrade or replace systems, invest in new Windows licenses, and make the migration as quickly and seamlessly as possible. Those costs, however, are likely to be offset fairly quickly by lower total cost of ownership due to improved security features; increased functionality, such as advancements in Active Directory and group policy settings; and the ability to support pervasive mobility, desktop virtualization and cloud computing.

Accelerating the Migration from XP to Windows 7 or 8 With Dell

The reality most IT organizations face is that they lack the budget, staff resources, in-house expertise or all three to embark on an operating system migration without some outside expertise. Dell's extensive experience in helping IT organizations migrate to new versions of operating systems can be an invaluable resource in easing the migration pain for lingering XP camps.

Dell provides end-to-end device and operating system migration for organizations ranging from a single location with 500 devices to those with hundreds of thousands of devices spanning a wide

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geographic range. Its services range from application inventory preparation to full deployment of operating systems and devices.

Dell's migration consultants work to enable such capabilities as image creation, application inventory and rationalization, application compatibility, application packaging, deployment planning, deployment automation and field deployment. Customers ready to build their own desktop operating system image for Windows 7 or 8 can take advantage of Dell's experienced technical consultants to aid in developing gold-standard images, using the Microsoft Deployment Toolkit.

Dell also offers a Windows 8 Readiness Boot Camp to help IT departments deploy Windows 8 tablets, which starts with reviewing the scope of the intended deployment, executing the transition and then transferring intellectual property related to the migration to the rest of the IT team. As part of the boot camp, Dell's team works with customers to build Windows 8 images for the tablets, validate application compatibility, deploy the new systems and develop a set of best practices for group policy.

For customers needing deep assistance in planning their desktop infrastructure transformation, Dell provides a one- or two-week managed deployment service. Dell's application factory-tests and packages approximately 300 applications per week; more than 8,000 applications have been tested for Windows 7 compatibility to date, and more than 2,500 applications have been sequenced for usage with App-V.