WINDOWS 10: THE OS FOR ALL PLATFORMS

By Microsoft's own admission, Windows 10 is like no other operating system it has ever created. It exists across multiple platforms from desktops to tablets to Windows phones; as do the apps designed for the new OS. It's self-updating and self-healing in ways mostly invisible to users. That has lead Microsoft to coin a new term when describing Windows 10: Windows as a service.

In fact, Microsoft says Windows 10 is the last OS it will ever create. That doesn't mean Microsoft is leaving the OS market. Instead the company plans to release significant upgrades and patches to Windows 10 in such a way that everyone from enterprise IT administrators to home users will no longer need to go through the process of rolling out a new OS. Windows 10 will simply evolve and change over time, possibly significantly, without end users having to do anything.

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Windows 10 is a platform upon which any computers and devices within the enterprise can standardize. Its new features will help to make Windows 10 a true game-changer. For example, having security updates quietly added to all Windows 10 machines without engaging users in lengthy install process choices means that the OS should be able to maintain a high level of security.

This is especially true because Windows 10 will be supported by

Microsoft

the new Microsoft Cyber Defense Operations Center (CDOC), which the company is spending millions to build. The CDOC will be constantly monitored by the company and will help Microsoft protect, defend and respond to current and emerging cybersecurity threats leveled against the new OS.

Behind the curtain, the CDOC supports Windows 10 and other Microsoft products. It employs a combination of publicly-available

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Microsoft technologies, third-party programs and internally-built custom applications and tools designed by the Microsoft research, engineering, and security teams. It is specifically set up to monitor the hyper-scale infrastructure of more than one million servers hosted in more than 100 datacenters around the globe. Businesses and private users simply need to install Windows 10 to begin receiving the benefits and protection of the new Cyber Defense Operations Center.

THE UNIVERSAL OS
The fact that Windows 10 can run on desktops, tablets and phones helps demystify the sometimes convoluted choices that crop up for most enterprises attempting to implement a BYOD or mobility program. Applications authorized to run safely on desktop computers should now also perform well on tablets and even smartphones, as

long as they're all running the Windows 10 operating system. Microsoft calls this new breed of programs Universal Applications.

What really makes Universal Applications running under Windows 10 so unique is they will perform the same way when running on various platforms with identical or nearly-identical interfaces from mobile to desktop. They can also be managed in a similar way. Those same Universal Applications can

share both authorizations to be part of the enterprise in the first place and permissions as to what each one and each user is allowed to do with them. And IT staff can manage them from a central location. As long as all devices on an enterprise are running Windows 10, users can enjoy the same level of protection and reliability in the office, when telecommuting from home or even sitting at a café working on their phones.

Business and IT leaders know all too well that rolling out a new OS can be a challenging process, especially in an enterprise environment. The reluctance to change to a new OS is understandable.

However, there may be little choice but to make the jump to the new operating system.

In the past, there were numerous reports of difficulties moving from Windows XP to Vista or Windows 7. A lot of organizations shied away from the awkward interface of Windows 8

altogether. That history is one of the reasons why Microsoft is attempting to eliminate those rollover processes all together with Windows 10.

In any case, holdouts may not be able to stick it out for very much longer. Support for Windows XP ended in 2014. Mainstream support for Windows Vista Service Pack 2 and Windows 7 Service Pack One concluded in 2015. And even the workhorse versions of Windows 7 are only four years away from having their support ended as well. That's just a blink of the eye in terms of enterprise IT planning.

Most businesses understand the reality of needing to upgrade to Windows 10, and many are doing so quickly in order to avoid any mad rush later on as Windows 7 approaches its end of life. In a recent survey of enterprise customers conducted by Flexera Software, more half of the respondents, a full 58 percent, acknowledged plans to roll out and upgrade to the Windows 10 operating system within 18 months of its release.

If one more upgrade can eliminate OS roll-overs all together, and Windows 10 comes packed with new features making security and application management largely invisible to the end user, there seems little reason not to make the jump. The only concern may be first ensuring those Universal Applications truly operated as stated.

It's also advisable to establish an ongoing monitoring process so Windows 10's automatic updates, especially the really large ones that are the equivalent of getting a new OS, don't wreck existing program functionality. With careful monitoring and application readiness maturity, Windows 10 should be able to fully realize the goal of greatly simplifying the enterprise computing environment.

Maturing the Application Readiness Process for Windows 10

The new Windows 10 operating system features universal applications that can run on any device and automatic updates to keep it healthy and safe. This should give peace of mind to general users. For enterprise deployments, however, the picture is a little less rosy. There's a greater possibility of encountering a few thorns. Compatibility issues with applications are bound to occur, and having no control over OS updates could mean some programs could unexpectedly stop working.

To keep up with Windows 10 updates and prevent compatibility problems, organizations need to mature their Application Readiness. It starts with a process to continually identify installed applications in your environment. This provides visibility into how many different versions and editions of applications you have and the information you need to make decisions about which apps to retire, consolidate, or move to the new OS. Using application rationalization to right size your application portfolio will help reduce costs and make transitions to new platforms more manageable. Then apps need to be tested for application compatibility and validated to ensure they can run as planned under Windows 10—on every platform from desktops to smartphones.

CONSOLIDATED TESTING PLATFORM

AdminStudio Application Compatibility reduces the time and effort involved in testing applications for Windows 10 compatibility. In fact, it's so easy to use, IT can quickly initiate a test of hundreds of applications and performance
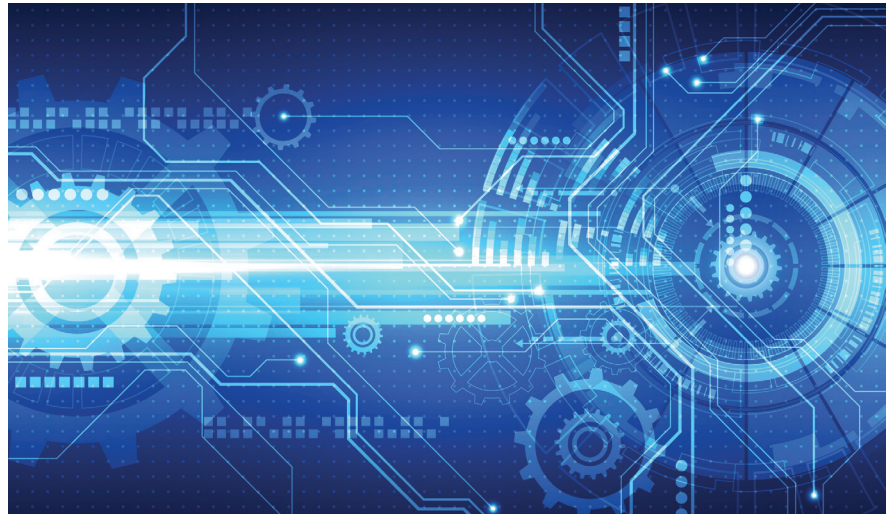
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levels across multiple platforms with the push of a button. Applications are then either fully approved, or flagged as having problems. Problem applications receive a detailed description of the issues involved. AdminStudio can even unmask unwanted aspects of mobile applications, such as location tracking, and flag those as well.

Besides Windows 10 application compatibility testing and remediation, the enterprise edition of AdminStudio can use the bulk loading of Web site addresses to ensure an organization's Web properties and the applications running on them work in both the older Internet Explorer and the new Windows 10 Edge browser.

While the spotlight is on the new Windows 10 OS right now, companies should remember much of what goes on within the enterprise is based on Windows servers. AdminStudio supports this important part of Application Readiness by enabling the testing of programs and code written for Windows Server 2008, 2012 and 2012 R2.

Windows 10 is certainly a new type of OS with new modes of upgrades and maintenance. Pairing its deployment with automated application rationalization, testing, and remediation capabilities like Flexera Software's AdminStudio Suite can ensure a smooth upgrade path for your organization.

Flexera Software delivers market-leading Application Readiness solutions to help enterprises in the inventory, rationalization, packaging, planning, and delivery of physical, virtual, and mobile applications, ensuring faster service delivery and continuous and predictable deployment into increasingly complex computing environments. To learn more visit www.flexerasoftware.com/adminstudio

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