

ARE YOU VULNERABLE IN 2020?

MICROSOFT PRODUCT END OF LIFE





SUMMARY

Worried about the looming end of life deadline for your Microsoft products? The company is ending support for several popular business tools in 2020. This includes Windows 7. It's a hassle but this change doesn't have to be a bad thing. Here's what's happening and how to take advantage of this opportunity to future proof your computers.

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R.I.P. Your Microsoft Faves

RIP Windows 7. For many businesses it's a tough parting. As late as September 2018 some 41% of Windows 7 users still hadn't moved on to the latest operating system. Yet sticking with existing systems until 2020 or beyond could lead to a truly bitter end.

And Windows 7, which could be the operating system on your laptops and desktops, isn't the only one on Microsoft's DNR list. Are you relying on 2010 Word and Excel? Running Windows Server 2008/R2 or Small Business Server 2011? Does Exchange 2010 control your email and calendars? All of them are reaching end of support in 2020. That's a big deal.

Before we talk about why it's such an issue, let's make sure we're all on the same page about what end of life really means.

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Understanding End of Life Issues

What does end of life mean for your business? When you first buy a product, Microsoft provides mainstream support such as:

- Offering security patches
- Releasing design changes or new features
- Providing complimentary support
- Warranty claims.

Microsoft stopped all but security patches five years after the product's release. After all, they want to put resources behind the versions they are still selling in stores.





OK, so you might be thinking, we don't need new features or design, and we've never used the warranty. Plus, at this point, we've got everything figured out, so we can continue on without Microsoft's help. Understanding their answers in the forums was a headache anyway!

Only in 2020, they'll also stop the security upgrades that provide patches and bug fixes for the tools you're using. In June 2018, Microsoft even announced but didn't fix an OS bug. They also stopped answering Windows 7 Community forums.

Thinking you haven't been doing updates, so this won't make much difference for you? Try again. The updates were probably taking place without you knowing through Microsoft autoupdates. That's not going to happen anymore.

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What This Means for Business

Without ongoing security support, your business runs the risk of cyberattack.

Your users will keep working to improve processes, sell product, and increase revenues. Meanwhile, hackers will work just as hard to find weak points they can attack.

It's a little like pest control. Ants, spiders, roaches and other bugs are always looking for a way into your home. What do you do? Try and close any gaps they might use to get in and regularly bug bomb to keep the creepy crawlies at bay.

Microsoft was once your pest control service. The company provided the fixes needed to protect your business from cyber criminals.

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What a Cyber Attack Might Look Like

Once inside your network or systems these cyber criminals can have a pretty painful bite. They might use malicious software (malware) to take over your business computers. They don't return control until you pay a ransom. Or, they might take important data for use in identity theft.

Maybe they'll want to mess with your IT infrastructure and shut you down. Imagine a denial of service attack as a bug infestation that is so constant you are driven from your home. With the boom in cryptocurrencies, some criminals want to leverage your computers' processing power. You'd eventually notice your computers running slower and skyrocketing utility bills.

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It's Not Worth the Risk

Cybersecurity attacks are costly. Take 2017's WannaCry attack infecting more than 230,000 computers in 150 countries. The perpetrators demanded \$300 ransom per computer. The average data breach costs a company \$3.86 million, according to the Ponemon Institute. And the average denial of service attack costs a company \$2.5 million.

Beyond these hefty price tags, a cyber attack can also put your business at risk of:

- Compliance issues
- Massive fines
- Costly downtime
- Brand reputation damage
- Customers jumping to a competitor.

Where does this leave businesses relying on Windows 7 and other legacy products? Let's consider the options.

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Preparing Your PCs for 2020

The good news is that you have options. The first one is not so great. Ignoring the risks, you could continue on with your Microsoft products, hope for the best. While you're doing that, malicious actors are looking to exploit that loyalty.

A second approach is to pay extra to keep getting security updates from Microsoft. This is paying now to put off what is inevitable. After all, the company is only offering three years of extended, paid support. For example, a Windows 7 Pro User can pay \$50 per device for the first year of Extended Security Updates (ESUs). The price doubles in year 2 (\$100 per device) and again in year three (\$200). That's a total of \$350 per device until the ESUs expire in January 2023, when you'll be out of luck all over again.

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Antivirus service providers are offering a third option. Seeing an opportunity, they'll offer patches and bug fixes for paying customers. The problem is that these companies offer only limited, reactionary support. Plus, they'll only be in it as long as it proves profitable, so their help could end without warning.

Looking long-term and being proactive, you'll want to go with the upgrade option we discuss next.

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Future-proofing Your PC Assets

Upgrading to the latest versions of Microsoft products is an opportunity. This investment will improve productivity while future-proofing your PCs. For example:

- Windows 10 security updates regularly and has online users community and technical support. The increased operating speed and improved functionality and usability will drive productivity.
- Upgrading to cloud-based Office 365 can improve collaboration. Users can access email, calendar sharing, and files in real time from any device, wherever they are.

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Why not wait until 2020?

Why is it a good idea to begin migration sooner rather than later? Here are our top four reasons.

1. **Risk.** Data breaches and other cyber threats are costly.
2. **Difficulty.** Migrating isn't always easy. Depending on your IT infrastructure, it could take a lot of work.
3. **Availability.** Don't scramble to find partners to support your migration efforts.
4. **Flexibility.** By upgrading now, you gain the ability to pick a good time for your business to change over its systems.

Migrating data to a new system, securely and efficiently, takes work and knowhow. A Managed Service Provider can tackle the upgrade for you



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