

My Windows 8 Experience

Microsoft has invaded the holiday season with Windows 8 which has been accompanied by a huge media blitz. Windows 8 is, by far, the most visually different version of Windows to date. It is a platform designed to invade the Apple i-Pad controlled tablet marketplace.

Windows 8 has some distinct advantages over Windows 7. It starts faster, especially if you have a solid state drive. It has improved Windows Explorer & File Copying features, Touch & Gesture based commands, native USB 3.0 support and built in support for configurable multiple monitor features.

When I initially loaded Windows 8 Pro-32 onto my computer, it was as a virtual machine. I was presented with the Windows Start Screen and for a moment I have to admit I was a little lost. The Start Screen has no Start Menu, no Run Command, not even a Shut Down button. When you launch a true Windows 8 application such as Internet Explorer 10 it doesn't even have convenient red "X" to close it again. Luckily the old keyboard sequence <ALT><F4> still works so I used that instead.

A right click and you can select "All Apps" on the bottom right corner of the screen. Here you can find many familiar programs. A right click can add the program to the main Windows Start Screen. Other settings are accessed thru the Charms feature that appears when you move your mouse to the upper or lower right corners of the screen.

At this point I was concerned that this was going to be more than a little cumbersome to use. Fine for a tablet, but I longed for my old desktop. Well there is a Start Square for the Desktop and that sort of looked like my old desktop except for the fact that there was no start button. The only icons on this desktop were for Internet Explorer 9, Windows Explorer and Control Panel, a place to start.

Configuring Windows 8 Desktop

From here I set about setting up a network connection to Libra and tested and confirmed that Libra still worked just fine on Windows 8, first hurdle completed. Next step was to find a way to get my Start Menu back again. I found a product called Start8 that does just that and converts the Windows 8 Desktop into one that looks and feels like Windows 7 for the small fee of five dollars. Mission accomplished, I jumped in and fully converted to Windows 8.

Well for anyone who wants to convert from Windows 7 to Windows 8 all I can say is "Be Careful". The conversion seemed to go well and all of my old programs were on my new Windows 8 Desktop. I tested everything and with the exception of a few utilities that were incompatible, all seemed fine except my smaller 128 gb Solid State Drive was a little full. I followed the post upgrade instructions to delete left over system files only to find when I rebooted that I was stuck in a fatal reboot loop. I was unable to even get into Safe Mode to see if there was something I could easily fix.

I booted off the Windows 8 DVD which gave me 2 options. I could choose a complete wipe of the drive or a Windows 8 Refresh which would save all of my files. I chose the latter thinking that this was equivalent to an Operating System Repair in earlier versions of Windows. What I didn't know until it was too late was that while it does save your files, it also goes ahead and replaces both Windows and removes all of your old programs as well.

So I was faced with a rather blank desktop and had to spend the better part of a day re-installing everything that I needed to function once again. That was a couple of weeks ago and I'm happy to say that there have been no further problems operating under Windows 8. I now have something that looks and operates just like my old Windows 7 but with admittedly duller looking windows. Dull I can live with.