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2014 – The End Of Windows XP ???

Microsoft has announced that they are dropping support for Windows XP effective 2014. What does this mean for the average company still running XP on their computers? Do they need to be replaced? Can they be upgraded? These are some of the questions people have started to ask.

Unfortunately there isn't an entirely clear answer. Somewhat earlier in 2013 I might have said that it wasn't a major issue. Windows XP will continue to run but Microsoft would stop creating Windows updates for it. Only more recently has that lack of support begun to seem more ominous. During the later part of 2013 many Windows XP computers were hit by a peculiar bug that caused them to become dreadfully slow. This turned out to be a bug in the Windows Update routine that caused the computer to become so focused on Windows updates it couldn't seem to do anything else. Even though the bug was acknowledged and a fix posted, a number of computers went down to the point that we just had to replace them.

This was largely due to the fact that the necessary updates took a huge amount of time to apply and often did not work. I even had to fully re-install Windows XP to fix a few of them. As a result of these problems a number of clients undertook to upgrade and/or replace their XP machines with newer ones running Windows 7 which has become the operating system of choice for businesses across North America and Europe.

Windows XP is already on the bottom of Windows update priorities as Windows 7 and Windows 8 all get priority service. As a result it is expected that XP issues may escalate in the next few years. If a major security weakness is detected in Windows the programmers will go to work to fix it. This will affect Servers and workstations and the way in which they interact with one another. If a change is required to Servers, Windows 7 & 8 in the future it may in fact block the ability of an XP computer to interact with the more secure newer Windows based computers and that could effectively render them useless as network workstations.

Windows XP Upgrade Solutions

Windows XP was released in the fall of 2001 and was to date the longest lived Windows product that Microsoft has produced. Due to the negative reviews for Windows Vista it wasn't until Windows 7 came out in the fall of 2009 that businesses felt confident to consider upgrading their core operating system. In the mean time many of those computers grew to be 10 or more years old.

If your XP computers are standalone or only communicate with other XP computers or servers 2003 or older you may not have any immediate problems. In mixed environments with newer file servers like 2008 or 2012 the chances of problems developing will be much higher.

If your computer is approaching 10 years of age then replacing it may be advisable to both avoid potential down time and to increase productivity since older computers tend to slow people down.

There are basically 3 possible routes to avoid future XP problems in mixed environments.

1) If the computer has a solid processor and about 2gb of Ram Memory it can be upgraded to Windows 7 via the Registered Refurbisher Program for $50 plus services.

2) They can be replaced with a Refurbished Dual Core Computer for between $175 and $275 depending on model and processor level. These are typically 3 year old computers coming off leasing contracts.

3) They can be replaced by new Windows 7 or Windows 8 computers. These typically cost $550 and up when equipped with Windows 7 or 8 Professional Edition which is always recommended when connecting to business servers and other computers.

While there is likely no great rush to do so, I think it would be wise to have a plan moving forward so that if Windows XP does become an ongoing problem you will be prepared to deal with it.