

Six Months Until the End of Windows 7 Support

Don't let Windows become your next big security risk

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THE CLOCK IS TICKING

On the 14th of January 2020, Microsoft will officially end support for its nine-year-old operating system, and for the most part, stop providing vital security updates and patches to the thousands of organizations around the globe still running Windows 7.

While Microsoft is offering a few options for extended support for the largest organizations, these packages will come at a price.

Back in 2014, when Microsoft ended support for Windows XP, the cost of support for an organization with 10,000+ Windows machines levelled out at just under \$2,000,000 a year. By failing to upgrade their systems in time, enterprises ended up paying millions in order to remain on an outdated – and increasingly ineffective – IT infrastructure.

While many businesses are better prepared for the end of Windows 7 than they were for the end of Windows XP, the move to the new Windows 10 operating system does come with its own set of challenges.

One of the key concerns for businesses is the introduction of 'as a Service' updates. Windows as a Service will mean that IT managers must update their operating systems far more regularly, rather than waiting for a mass migration once every few years. This means more testing, more roll outs, and ultimately, more network congestion.

So just what can enterprises do to prepare themselves for this major change? And just how far are they through their transitions to Windows 10? In January 2019, we set about to answer these questions, surveying over 200 IT decision makers to find out where they are in their migration process. Now, with just 6 months to go until the official death of Windows 7, we at Kollective are revisiting those decision makers to find out where their migration stands.

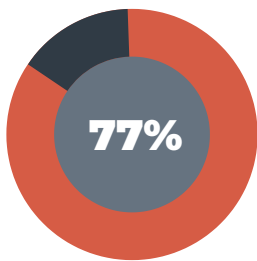
THE STATE OF MIGRATION

When Kollective last reported on the state of migration in January 2019, our research showed that nearly half of businesses (43%) across the US and UK were still running Windows 7 – while 17% didn't even know about the end of support deadline.

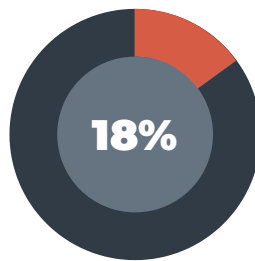
Now, revisiting this research with 6 months to go, the vast majority of companies appear to have made significant progress. Our latest research shows that 96% of businesses have now started their migration away from Windows 7 and over to Windows 10.

Simply starting the process, however, isn't enough – with some companies having taken as long as three years to migrate from Windows XP to Windows 7. While the migration process has been streamlined by Microsoft for the move to Windows 10, there is still a significant risk of larger enterprises missing the January 2020 deadline.

As it stands, only 77% of businesses have completed their migration to Windows 10. Perhaps even more concerning, nearly 1 in every 5 large enterprises (18%) are yet to complete their migrations. This is despite Microsoft announcing it would discontinue support for the OS nearly four years ago – giving IT departments a significant lead time to get their enterprises in order and to move employees over to Windows 10.



77% of businesses have completed their migration to Windows 10



18% of large enterprises haven't yet migrated to Windows 10

\$500,000

The estimated cost of missing the Windows 7 end of support deadline for an enterprise running 10,000 machines

THE AWARENESS ISSUE

Even after businesses migrate away from Windows 7 and over to Windows 10, IT teams will still have a lot of work to do to ensure that their systems are secure and up to date. For many, this comes down to a lack of awareness around the issue of 'Windows as a Service'.

While 96% of businesses have started their migration to Windows 10, many have not yet realized the implications of this migration for their ongoing update and patching schedule. It's not just Windows that is shifting to an 'as a Service' update model. As more applications move to the cloud, continuous updates will rapidly become the new normal. With this inevitable disruption on the horizon, it's even more vital that large organizations and those with distributed workforces invest in a software-defined enterprise content delivery network to ensure these updates are delivered in a timely fashion without disrupting business-critical functions.



15%

Of IT professionals are not aware of Windows as a Service and the need to continuously update their endpoints running that OS.

WHAT IS WINDOWS AS A SERVICE?

Windows 10 has been described as the ‘last Windows operating system’. This doesn’t mean it’s disappearing, but rather that users will have to regularly and incrementally update instead of migrating to a whole new OS every few years. In short, there will be no Windows 11, 12 or 13 but simply ‘Windows’ as a cloud-based service.

With this new approach comes a number of concerns for enterprise IT teams. As ever more frequent, large OS updates are released, IT teams will have less and less time for testing and distribution. For enterprise IT teams that take 1-2 months to roll out new patches, this represents an enormous backlog of updates, presenting a major security threat and potential entry point for future cyberattacks.

BE PREPARED

While the majority of businesses are aware of the end of Windows 7 support, this is not to say that they are adequately prepared for the event. Despite being aware of Windows as a Service, nearly a third of organizations have not yet prepared their infrastructure for the increase in updates.

A large number of IT departments also appear to have deprioritized the move to Windows 10 in favor of investments in big data and cloud computing. Interestingly, despite many businesses needing a software-defined enterprise content delivery network (SD ECDN) in order to facilitate the distribution of Windows as a Service updates, very few IT professionals see the adoption of an SD ECDN as a priority before 2020.

THE SOFTWARE DELIVERY PROBLEM

Following the migration to Windows 10, the biggest problem for large enterprises, and those with distributed workforces will be the need to install regular Windows as a Service updates quickly and at scale.

As it stands, 79 percent of businesses don’t install OS updates when they first come through, and 53 percent must wait at least a month before successfully installing vital OS updates across their entire organization. 28 percent of IT teams also say that they find it difficult to distribute software and system updates at scale. If enterprises are going to overcome this issue and keep their systems safe in the age of Windows as a Service, they need to improve their processes and invest in network infrastructure that can support this change.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

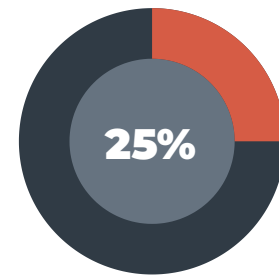
As businesses prepare for the end of Windows 7 and begin to think about how they will manage the torrent of Windows as a Service updates set to arrive in 2020, there are a number of options available to IT teams.

LUCKILY IT TEAMS HAVE OPTIONS:

#1 Is to ignore the distribution problem and accept that there will be a significant delay between when patches are released and when they are installed. By simply ignoring the issue, however, enterprises are not only putting off the inevitable, they are creating a cascading buildup of outdated machines and leaving their networks vulnerable to security breaches.

#2 Is to rip out and replace their entire network infrastructure. This is not only extremely expensive but will require significant downtime for large sections of the business. In the long term, it can speed up the delivery of updates, but in the short term, it will cause major disruption and remove budget and resources from more pressing IT issues.

#3 Is to pay for more time. Microsoft understands the time and resources required to deploy a new OS to all endpoints. They are offering a pay-per-endpoint extended Windows 7 support package. And for top tier enterprise customers, they will extend Windows 7 support for those who purchase Windows 10 now, but need more time to migrate over to the new OS.



25% of businesses plan to adopt a SD ECDN to manage their network in future

THANKFULLY, THERE IS ANOTHER WAY...

SOLVE IT WITH SOFTWARE

By using a software-defined solution, businesses can dramatically decrease the bandwidth load on their networks, and potentially remove their current hardware infrastructure.

The Software-Defined Enterprise Content Delivery Network (SD ECDN) works through a system of peering, evenly distributing bandwidth to ensure fast delivery of files, OS updates and vital security patches. The greater the number of peers across a complex distributed enterprise, the more efficient content delivery becomes – turning even legacy hardware into intelligent edge devices. An SD ECDN is particularly efficient in delivering content to remote sites, where a hardware distribution point is too far away to be effective, or there aren't enough users to justify a dedicated distribution point.

Networks that couldn't hope to deliver software at scale can now do so with ease, without interruption to critical business functions. Using the Kollektive SD ECDN, your business can increase the speed of software distribution, streamline Windows 10 migration and future proof against Windows as a Service updates. This same technology can even be used to scale mass live streamed video events. This can all be achieved without a costly overhaul to the organization's IT and network infrastructure.

FIND OUT HOW A SOFTWARE-DEFINED ENTERPRISE CONTENT DELIVERY NETWORK CAN BE USED TO STREAMLINE YOUR MIGRATION AND TO HELP KEEP YOUR BUSINESS UP TO DATE

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