



Should your business upgrade to Windows 10?

A comprehensive guide from the Microsoft experts at Softchoice

Introduction

Microsoft promises the newest version of their operating system, Windows 10, to be the best yet. But organizations considering an upgrade are confronting a familiar set of questions: Should we upgrade? Why should we upgrade now? And, if so, how?

This guide is designed to answer those questions.

In the first section you will find an overview of all the reasons you would consider an upgrade, from the glossy new features attracting the everyday users, to the more advanced, important changes that affect your organization's security and productivity levels.

In the second section we focus entirely on the most impactful changes coming to Windows 10: licensing, software updates, and patch management. With these come a whole new paradigm, eliminating Service Packs and offering new seamless and continuous ways to stay up to date and compliant. The takeaways for how this affects your business, apps and users are significant.

In the final sections we provide information on how to proceed, should you feel ready to investigate an upgrade for some or all of your users.

A word of caution: Information from Microsoft HQ is evolving regularly. Some answers regarding licensing were only announced a few weeks before the official release, and we expect details to become clearer in the weeks and months ahead. Please use this guide as an assistant for planning and conversation purposes within your business. If you'd like to assistance in weighing your options or charting a path forward, contact a Softchoice Account Manager today for access to our expert advice and professional services. You'll learn more about our online resources for further reading, and services on the final page of this guide.

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1 Should you upgrade to Windows 10?

This is the key question for many IT leaders. “Sure, it sounds amazing. But is it right for my team? And do we have the budget, requirements and time to do it?”

Making the leap to a new Windows operating system is no small decision. To give you some direction, we’ve scoured through hundreds of resources to find the most crucial and exciting reasons your organization would want to upgrade. By no means will this information alone be enough to address your complex questions and challenges when considering the upgrade. We do hope to pique your interest to get the conversation started.

A new vision of computing: user experience, Start Menu, mobility

The tag line for the global rollout of Windows 10 says a lot: “A more human way to **do**.” Accompanied by a glossy video focusing on all the new ways our children will interact with the digital world (a world where every screen is a touch screen, for example), Microsoft makes it clear that with Windows 10, they are not just unveiling a new operating system, they are releasing their new vision for how the world relates to technology. For businesses, it’s important to understand if this new vision will have a positive impact on their workforce, productivity and end user satisfaction.

Watch the Windows 10 intro video



Familiarity and the Start Menu drives productivity

The return of the Start Menu is big news. Many organizations stayed put on Windows 7, or faced frustrations on Windows 8 when the Start Menu had been replaced with the tiled, mobile inspired UI. In Windows 10, the much beloved feature makes a comeback, with some updates. Microsoft has combined the “old” with the new, bringing the same list-like search function we all know from the Start Menu, with a simultaneous view of the touch-based, live tiles layout. These tiles are customizable and provide real-time insight into what is happening in your favorite apps. The bottom line is that your users will welcome the return of the Start Menu and might even find this new version helps them get to their work faster, and more intuitively than ever.

1 Should you upgrade to Windows 10? (cont.)



Converged touch and desktop experience liberates the mobile workforce

Similarly, Windows 10 offers a truly converged, unified experience regardless of what device your users are on, be it a tablet, smartphone or laptop. Everything is built for touch and mouse.

What about hardware?

With new form factors set to make an appearance later this year, organizations will find brand new hardware and software capabilities to enable a truly mobile, dynamic workforce. Previous versions of Windows hinted at this unified experience, however fell short in some key aspects. Windows 10 appears to get it right, and will likely be the first operating system used en masse to usher in a new era of converged computing.

Better Security and Support

While these are straight forward reasons, they are worth mentioning. Windows 10 comes with the latest support and security features that other versions simply don't have.

On the support side, Microsoft promises to cover and continually update Windows 10 until 2025. For users on ageing versions of Windows, this makes a move to Windows 10 even more attractive. Importantly, Windows 7 will be going end of service in 2020. It might be in your best interests to switch now to an OS that will be around longer, depending on your short and long term objectives.

For security, it's a similar story. With the latest operating system, you benefit from the latest, up to date security patches and updates. In the next chapter, we explore the new way Microsoft is offering up these security and feature updates in more depth. Needless to say, expect faster support and service when an issue is identified with Windows 10 than you would with an older, less prioritized operating system.

1 Should you upgrade to Windows 10? (cont.)

More speed, versatility and compatibility with Edge and Internet Explorer 11

Tying together Microsoft's new vision of computing is a new web browser, known as Edge. In it, organizations will find plenty to love, and should consider it for their users, especially those who work almost exclusively on the Web.

Edge is touted to be faster than the popular Chrome browser on a number of levels, by as much as 112%*. On top of that, it's introducing a number of new ways to engage and collaborate with content online, such as a tool that lets you sketch and doodle right on a Web page (think of using this during a screen-share, to present information on a web-page).

It's no secret that Internet Explorer has fallen out of favor with end users in recent years. With Edge, give users what they want, out of the gate. It's left to be seen if Edge will follow through with its enormous promises of being among the best browsers on the planet. If you are hoping to bring it to your users, a leap to Windows 10 is in order.

*[Source](#)

Additional features to note about Windows 10:

- **Faster boot up and performance:** Windows 10 starts up and resumes faster, making the most out of your hardware, and making users happier too.
- **Built-in security:** Protects against viruses, phishing, malware, and spyware. Regular updates protect you from the latest threats. Its built-in security is designed to work with the software and hardware you already have.
- **Windows Hello:** No more passwords – the option to log in with facial recognition or fingerprint instead.
- **Cortana:** The intelligent assistant comes to Windows, helping users execute tasks such as take notes and set reminders using their voice.
- **Gestures, voice and pen:** Users will be able to use gestures, such as waving their hand, to activate specific applications and accomplish small tasks. Similarly, the OS works nicely with additional input such as pens and voice.
- **Hardware options:**
Expect new form factors optimized for the converged touch OS to come out in the months ahead.



2 Free Upgrade, Enterprise Licensing and Software Updates

This section covers two significant changes to Microsoft's Windows 10: how much it costs, and how it handles software updates. From an IT perspective, these changes are significant and you will need to re-adjust a few things, from budgeting to how you think about Windows licensing as a whole.

Free Upgrade

If you've been following the headlines, you would be right to assume that upgrading to Windows 10 is free. That's because Microsoft is indeed making this upgrade to a new OS free of charge for the first time in its history. Consumers will be able to download it anytime and upgrade without paying a cent until July 29, 2016.

Unfortunately, this isn't the case for most organizations. In the enterprise setting, the free upgrade is only applicable to Windows Pro users. Most large scale businesses are running the Enterprise version of Windows and that is not covered by the free upgrade offer. The price you do end up paying will depend largely on the licensing and contract decisions you make alongside your Microsoft partner (such as Softchoice).

As you will see below, though, free upgrades will be available to any organization with Enterprise plus Software Assurance (SA).

Licensing Details for Windows 10

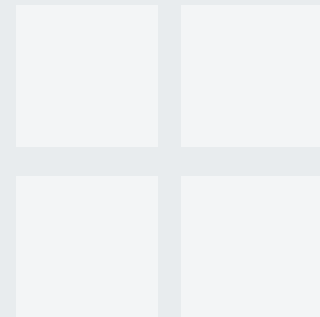
Two Editions – Both available “Per Device” or “Per User”

- **Win 10 Pro**

- Free upgrade offer until July 29th 2016 from existing Win 7 or 8/8.1 Pro
- OEM, retail or volume licensing upgrade
- SA is NOT available

- **Win 10 Enterprise**

- NOT a free upgrade unless customer has active SA
- SA is optional, but suggested
- SA includes MDOP
- Volume licensing upgrade only



Key Enterprise Licensing Options:

Windows 10 Pro	Small, lower mid-size businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management of devices and apps• Support for remote and mobile scenarios• Cloud technologies for organizations• Update quality confidence with broad market validation	OEM Retail/ESD VL Free Upgrade
Windows 10 Enterprise	Mid-size and large enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced security• Extensive device and app management• Full flexibility of OS deployment & update control• Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack (MDOP)	VL

Windows-as-a-Service, Software Updates and the “End of Service Packs”

Microsoft is completely changing the way it delivers software updates with Windows 10. Security patches will continue regularly, as needed. Instead of waiting years for new features and fixes to be bundled into massive “Service Packs,” Microsoft will release these regularly, and more responsively, in a new approach they are dubbing “Windows-as-a-Service.” It’s worth noting that Microsoft is relying heavily on the feedback from millions of volunteers called Windows Insiders, all vocal and enthusiastic beta testers throughout the ramp to Windows 10. Their direction will ensure problems and features are delivered faster and more efficiently than previously possible.

Is the end of Service Packs good or bad news?

This depends on who you ask.

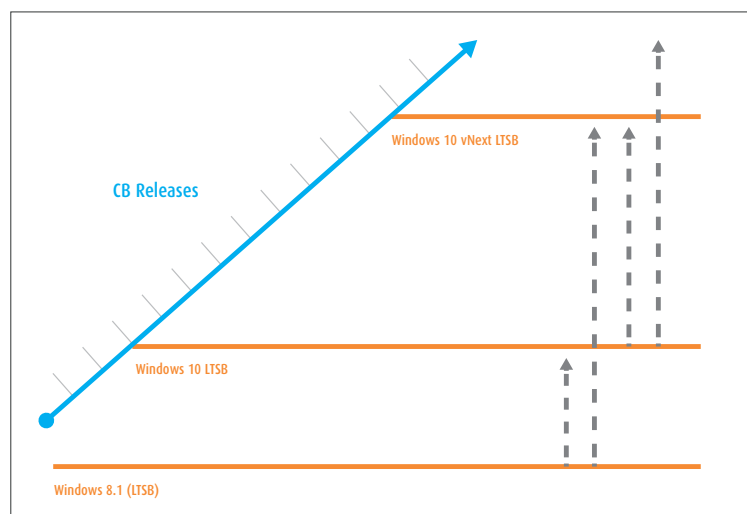
Many pundits applaud this change for ensuring the operating system can fix its errors faster. That said, it also potentially spells trouble for larger businesses that require longer test and dev times of new releases to ensure application compatibility. So what are they to do?

Frequency of Updates – On Autopilot or Manual

Microsoft still needs to address the concerns of larger organizations that are slower to adopt updates, due to stability issues. There are now three distinct paths you can select for receiving updates.

- 1. Automatic:** As with consumer versions, all updates come immediately, without any input from IT or end user
- 2. Short term, “Current Branch Release”:** This gives you the ability to delay updates for up to eight months in most cases, letting the early adopters work out the kinks before accepting your update.
- 3. Long Branch:** Delay indefinitely until your organization is prepared to upgrade. You will need to purchase Software Assurance to get this ability.

The diagram below illustrates how this plays out for organizations.



[Chart Source](#)

3 Deployment Services and Advice

If the time is right for an upgrade to Windows 10, understanding your options for implementing the new software is crucial. Picking the wrong licensing and implementation path has proven costly for many organizations that didn't have proper insight and methodology.

Readiness: How to determine if your environment is ready to deploy

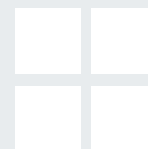
Understanding if your environment is ready, and highlighting where your requirements fall short is the first step in making sure your deployment goes smoothly. Microsoft offers an essential planning asset to get this process started, called the Microsoft Assessment and Planning Toolkit, or MAPS. The latest version MAP Toolkit 9.2 is designed for the Win 8.1 environment but can serve as a good starting point in your IT infrastructure assessment in the Windows 10 migration

This toolkit makes it easy to assess your current IT infrastructure for a variety of technology migration projects. This Solution Accelerator provides a powerful inventory, assessment, and reporting tool to simplify the migration planning process.

After MAPS, your next task is designing and completing a Proof of Concept. With Windows 10, this has become easier with an option to do an "in-place upgrade," a far less disruptive tactic in imaging your new OS environment. At this stage you'll want to focus on application and Internet Explorer 11 compatibility, to ensure your existing business line applications and workflows can function unimpeded. Microsoft is promising an exceptionally high rate of application compatibility, making this process relatively painless.

2 Steps to Windows 10 readiness

1. Run the Microsoft Assessment Planning Toolkit
2. Complete a Proof of Concept, ensuring application compatibility



Deployment Options

Above we mentioned how easy In-Place Upgrades are with Windows 10. This is not the only path at your disposal. Deciding which way to go will have different implications for your timelines, and planning, so take careful consideration at this stage.

Below are the options for deploying Windows 10, with details on which tools will be required for each one.

Wipe and Load (traditional process)	In-Place Upgrade *	Provisioning (Configure new devices)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capture data and settings• Deploy Windows 10 image• Inject Drivers• Install apps• Restore data and settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preserve all data, settings, apps, drivers• Install Windows 10 image• Restore Everything	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply a Provisioning Package to transform an out of box Windows 10 device into an Enterprise device• Remove extra items, add organizational apps, adjust configuration• Provisioning is NOT re-imaging, but rather applying Provisioning package to adjust Windows 10 as necessary
Tools: SCCM, MDT, WDS, and third party imaging tools	Tools: SCCM, MDT, WDS, third party imaging tools, Windows Update	Tools: Windows Imaging and Configuration Designer (WICD)

* Recommended for existing Windows 7, 8, 8.1 devices

Hardware

You may be wondering about device refreshes this year as well. We expect to see many new devices in the Fall of 2015.

Getting Started

This guide only scratches the surface of the questions you should answer before deciding on Windows 10 upgrade. As a top Microsoft partner in North America, Softchoice has expertise in:



Microsoft enterprise licensing



Data-driven assessments for objective understanding of usage and needs



End-to-end deployment services, including rolling out new devices

Contact your Softchoice Account Manager today to understand the best path forward with Windows 10 for your organization.