

Windows XP Sails into the Sunset... MAYBE

by Jill Gilbert

Jill Barson Gilbert, QEP,
is president of Lexicon
Systems, LLC. E-mail:
jbgilbert@lexicon-
systems.com.

Microsoft ends support for its popular Windows XP operating system this month. With market pressure, the company pledged to provide malware protection updates for another 15 months. Microsoft repeatedly urged customers to upgrade to Windows 8.x, and warned of the risk of using the operating system without Microsoft's support. Remarkably, 19% of IT professionals completing a survey in December 2013 were unaware of the issue.¹

Today, a sizeable number of businesses continue to use the nearly 13-year-old operating system; Windows XP's popularity is second only to Windows 7, and XP gained market share in January at the expense of Windows 8 (see Figure 1).²

XP Staying Power

Released in August 2001, many considered Windows XP the best operating system since Windows 3.1. They largely ignored Windows 2000 and Windows Me. Similarly, many also leapfrogged



over Windows Vista to Windows 7. Vista was slow, posed hardware and software incompatibilities, and shortened laptop battery life.

Windows 7 offered improvements over Vista, with faster startup and better compatibility. It became Microsoft's most popular operating system, with a 47.5% market share. Windows 8.1, with its modern, tiled, touch interface, presented unique issues. Its unfamiliar interface required re-training workers at significant cost.

While Microsoft wants Windows XP users to migrate to Windows 8.1, companies still using Windows XP prefer Windows 7.

End of Support Impacts

Stick with XP ('I'd rather fight than switch')

Many enterprises would rather fight Microsoft's wishes that they switch to Windows 8.1. Some continue to use XP past the "end of support" date and others may upgrade their systems, but not to Windows 8.1.

Continued use of XP, however, presents several challenges:

- slow system performance;
- screen resolution limited to 800 x 600 pixels;
- incompatibilities with newer hardware and software;
- security risks once Microsoft stops malware protection support;
- possible loss of competitive advantage; and
- ultimate need to upgrade.

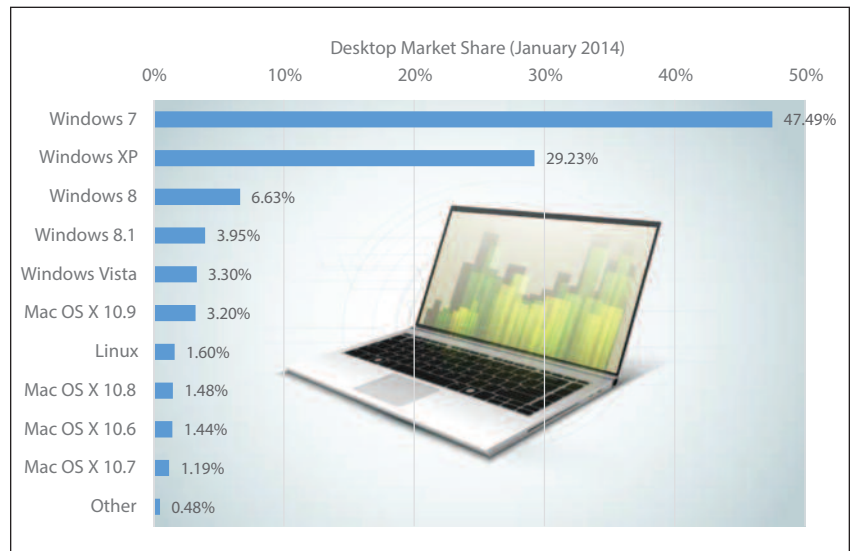
Change OS ('I'd rather switch than fight')

Changing to a different operating system (OS) also presents challenges:

- rationalizing the use of all desktop software, eliminating some;
- moving some applications to the Cloud;
- modifying some applications to run on the new OS;
- significant system and user acceptance testing; and
- lengthy deployment times.

Those that switch rather than fight Windows XP's limitations can benefit from the following:

- faster startup and processing;



- modern interface;
- ability to run up-to-date enterprise software;
- ability to leverage smartphones, tablets, and Web apps; and
- ability to collaborate via desktop- and Web-based tools.

Figure 1. Windows XP is second only to Windows 7.

Source: Net Applications, <http://www.netmarketshare.com> (accessed February 20, 2014).

Upgrading to an OS other than Windows 8.1 creates unintended consequences:

- an upsurge in Windows 7 sales;
- renewed demand for Windows 7 computers; and
- cannibalized MS Office desktop and Windows 8.1 sales when organizations changed from Office/Windows client desktops to Google Docs or MS Office 365 in a Web environment.

Upgrade Options

Microsoft's data show that deployment of a new OS can take 18 months or more in large enterprises.³ Organizations that choose to change their OS can take one of two paths:

- 1 Upgrade existing hardware to Windows 8.1 or an alternative OS, or
- 2 Purchase new hardware and a new OS.

The market offers a range of OS options. Windows 7, Windows 8.1, and Mac OSX Mavericks are the more familiar options; iOS, Android, Linux, and Chrome OS are alternatives (see Table 1).⁴

Upgrade OS on Existing Hardware

Upgrading existing hardware to a different OS provides short-term advantages without immediate hardware costs. However, this is not a good strategy

Table 1. Operating System Upgrade Options.

Option	Hardware required	Advantages	Disadvantages
Windows 7	Existing desktop or laptop	Similar interface to XP Microsoft provides Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor tool Avoid immediate hardware upgrade costs	Reaches end of support sooner than Windows 8.x
Windows 8.1	Touch screen or conventional computer	Touch-friendly interface Runs older Windows software	Best suited to touch screen
Mac OSX Mavericks	New desktop or laptop	Intuitive user interface Thousands of apps Can run familiar office software Intuitive interface	New platform Apple hardware only Immediate, higher-end hardware costs
iOS	Smartphone or tablet	Mobility, connectivity Meets many users' computing needs Thousands of apps	Not suitable for power users or complex apps Small screen
Android	Smartphone or tablet	Mobile Intuitive interface Many hardware providers Thousands of apps	Fewer apps than iOS
Linux	Existing desktop or laptop	Open source Transparent	Requires sufficient technical expertise or support
Chrome OS	New laptop	Intuitive user interface Low hardware cost Fast startup, Web interface Access to Chrome apps, Web apps Ability to access Chrome browser from Window and Mac machines	ChromeBook required Web interface Not suitable for non-Web apps

for all organizations. OS upgrades require licenses, system testing, software rewrites, user training, and learning curves, all with associated costs. The path that makes the most sense depends on many factors, including company culture, the ability to adopt new technology, the number of systems, and why the systems still run Windows XP.

Purchase New Hardware and New OS

The market offers a wide range of computers with different operating systems and price points. The street price for a Windows 8.1 machine is \$300–\$1,200 or more; a ChromeBook is \$300-plus; and a Mac is \$1,000-plus—the same as a Windows Ultra-Book. New hardware has OS upgrade costs as well.

To Upgrade or Not to Upgrade?

To upgrade or not to upgrade requires thoughtful evaluation. Those who have yet to upgrade should:

- 1 spend adequate time to examine user needs—technology and needs have changed since the release of XP;
- 2 weigh the options and prepare a business case;
- 3 consider the total cost of ownership, beyond hardware and software;
- 4 identify a solution that best meets needs now, and for years to come; and, most important,
- 5 get objective help. **em**

References

1. "Awareness of Windows XP End-of-Life Deadline" [CIO Insight Slideshow]; *CIO Insight*, February 14, 2014; available at <http://www.cioinsight.com/it-strategy/enterprise-apps/slideshows/it-life-after-microsoft-ends-windows-xp-support.html> (accessed February 14, 2014).
2. Murphy, D. Microsoft Asks Windows 8 Holdouts: Upgrade to Windows 8 Already; *PC Magazine*, February 13, 2014; available at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0.2817.2451550.00.asp> (accessed February 13, 2014).
3. Dearing, G. The End of Windows XP: What You Need to Know; *WorkIntelligent*, February 13, 2014; available at <http://workintelligent.ly/technology/end-windows-xp-what-you-need-to-know/> (accessed February 13, 2014).
4. Wolber, A. Does Security Matter to You? Ditch Windows XP for One of These Upgrade Options; *TechRepublic*, February 05, 2014; available at <http://www.techrepublic.com/article/deciding-to-ditch-windows-xp-here-are-your-options/> (accessed February 20, 2014).