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"Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably"

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The Windows 10 Delay:
How Microsoft Plans To Roll Out The Operating System

Microsoft has been gearing up for the release of Windows 10 for several months. As part of the release, the company will be offering free copies of the operating system to people with PCs running genuine copies of Windows 7 Service Pack 1 or Windows 8.1. The Windows 10 release is expected to be one of the largest software deliveries in history.

The tech giant revealed in June 2015 that it would release Windows 10 on July 29, 2015. Many people believed that this meant that the product would be widely available on that date, but this will not be the case.

A Delayed Release

As Microsoft's executive vice president of operating systems Terry Myerson explained in a July 2 blog post on the company's website, Windows 10 will be rolled out in stages. On July 29, Microsoft will start offering the OS to the 5 million members of its Windows Insider program. This select group includes the people that tested the various pre-release versions of the software.

After this initial release, the company will begin providing Windows 10 to "waves" of people who reserved their copies of the OS. These waves will slowly grow in size until everyone has a copy of the software.

This method leaves several issues unexplained, with technology journalists asking Microsoft   about how many users will be served in each wave, how much time will pass between waves, and how the overall scheduling process will work.

In short, Myerson's blog post revealed that access to Windows 10 would be delayed for regular users. It is now unclear when the general public will actually be able to get the software.

How to Get Windows 10

Microsoft paved the way for its Windows 10 release by sending out an update for Windows 7 and Windows 8.1. This update automatically downloaded the "Get Windows 10" application and displayed the application's icon in the taskbar.

The application allows users to reserve their free copies of Windows 10. When the operating system becomes available, the application will download the OS. It will then inform users about the download and ask them if they want to install it.

While signing up for Windows 10 before July 29 is the advised method for receiving the OS, users that decide not to reserve a copy will still have plenty of time to get their hands on the software. The free-upgrade offer lasts for a full year after the scheduled release date. However, after July 29, 2016, users will have to buy a copy of Windows 10, even if they were eligible for the free upgrade.

Windows XP and Windows Vista users are not eligible for the upgrade. Similarly, the offer doesn't cover the Windows 7 Enterprise, Windows 8/8.1 Enterprise, or Windows RT/RT 8.1 editions. However, the Windows 10 Enterprise and Windows 10 Education editions will be available for purchase starting on August 1, 2015.

For help navigating the Windows 10 release process and for advice about which version is right for your company, **call us anytime at (410) 884-0225.**

How To Avoid Runaway IT Projects That Empty Your Wallet

In 2002, McDonald's decided to implement a system to provide their corporate executives with a bird's-eye view of their 30,000 stores, to track, measure and monitor everything from profitability to cooking-oil quality. The project, named "Innovate," was a massive five-year project with a billion-dollar budget. Two years into its implementation, McDonald's executives abandoned the project and wrote off the $170 million invested, saying they needed to reduce capital expenditures.

Even though YOUR business isn't a McDonald's with a billion-dollar IT budget, chances are you've had at least one failed IT project that derailed, emptying your wallet and leaving you with nothing other than a grudge. And if you haven't had that happen yet, chances are, as you grow, you will. So how do you avoid going down a rabbit hole of spending on an IT project?

Here are five key strategies to keep you on track:

1. Begin with the end in mind. The clearer you are on what "success" is for the project, the more likely you are to achieve it. Take the time to sit down with your executive team and decide exactly what the new system should look like.

2. IT projects need to be driven by an executive who understands the business need and outcome, NOT the IT department. If you and your executive team aren't going to be heavily involved with the process, decisions and management of the project, don't start it.

3. Think in smaller, "bite-sized" projects. If you have a major system to build or overhaul, break it into smaller, manageable chunks so that problems are contained and costs controlled.

4. Manage the project hours. Scope creep is the biggest challenge to keeping your project on time and on budget. If your project starts to take on a life of its own and goes over your budgeted time frame and your budget by more than 10%, it's time to start re-evaluating what's going on.

5. Missed milestones are a red flag. While it's normal to miss a few milestones by a small margin, your IT team should not be allowed to consistently miss key milestones in the project.

How Great Leaders Inspire Their Employees To Higher Commitment And Performance

It's probably true that most people who work with us will never care as deeply as we do about building our business. If they did, they'd probably be working for themselves! Yet there's a great deal we can do to raise the commitment level and inspire them to peak performance. The operative word here is INSPIRE. You can demand that people who work for you be punctual, or that they perform at a certain production level. Yet real commitment can only be INSPIRED. And inspiring people is what great leaders do best.

How do great leaders inspire others to commit themselves to their goals? It's not just their charismatic personalities, or that they give a lot of high-powered motivational talks. They communicate their vision so forcefully that other people adopt it as their own.

For example, Lee Iaccoca stepped into the ailing Chrysler Corporation and said, "We're going to turn this company around!" With clear goals, a solid plan of action and a strong conviction, he was able to inspire enough commitment from the US Congress that he secured the largest loan ever made to a private company. Then he inspired enough commitment in thousands of Chrysler workers to enable the company to pay back the loan ahead of schedule.

And that's the formula for any leader to inspire commitment – clear goals, a solid plan of action and a strong conviction. Communicate that to the people who work with you, and you'll have the kind of loyalty that makes them go the extra mile – if that's what it takes to get the job done.

Of course, it takes more than inspiration to run a successful organization. The people who work with you have to perform consistently at very high levels, and to get that kind of performance, you have to gain their trust. They have to believe that you will always be fair in your dealings with them, and that you are concerned about their best interests.

When people honestly believe they will benefit directly from their efforts, and that the more they give, the more they benefit, they perform at peak levels. So it's crucial that you show people how they will grow as they work individually and together to make the company grow, and then back up all your promises with solid actions.

It takes a lot of patience and effort to build a solid team of people who will share and help you fulfill your vision, but the results will be well worth all you put into it.

Congratulations to our July Starbucks Gift Card Winner, Spence Ball of ASSI Fabricators!

If you are a current Xper**CARE** customer, and would like an opportunity to be entered into our monthly drawing for a **$25 Starbucks gift card,** start filling out the survey you receive each time your support ticket is closed. We perform the drawing at the close-of-business on the last day of each month.

How To Backup Your Smartphone

You regularly back up your computers (or at least you should), but do you do the same with your smartphone? Given the massive amounts of contact information, photos, videos and other data we all carry around on smartphones, it's critical to back them up or risk losing all that data forever. There are two basic ways to back up your phone: automatically to the cloud or manually to your computer.

To The Cloud. Cloud backups are secured with your password-protected account. They can easily be configured to run automatically so you can "set it and forget it." Apple users can use iCloud to back up photos, contacts, calendars and other data. Turn on and configure iCloud Backup by going to Settings > iCloud. Android users can back up to Google servers in much the same way, using a Google account. Configure your preferences by going to Settings > Backup.

To Your Computer. Both Apple and Android users also can back up data directly to a computer manually. Generally, connecting the phone to the computer by cable is the quickest way to do this. Apple users can also use iTunes Wi-Fi Sync to wirelessly back up phone data to a computer. Remember, though, when backing up your smartphone to a computer, your data is only as safe as that computer. Be sure to back up the computer regularly as well.

How The US Government Created Its Own Cybersecurity Threat

The US government's reputation regarding cybersecurity took another hit in June 2015 when authorities revealed that hackers had broken into databases at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Department of the Interior. The attack was one of the largest thefts of US government information in history.

Initially, the government stated that approximately 4 million former and current federal employees might have had their records stolen. However, upon further investigation, several news outlets reported that the number of potential victims totaled as many as 18 million people.

The data breach is especially devastating because of the type of information that was stolen. The OPM handles the overwhelming majority of background checks for the federal government, and has extensive information about applicants for federal positions. This highly sensitive information could be used to blackmail these people or target them for cyberattacks.

Shortly after the news broke about the attack, the government announced that it would provide 18 months of credit monitoring and identity theft insurance to anyone that might have been affected by the attack.

Becoming aware of these threats is the first step toward countering them. Learn how to recognize fraudulent messages, and don't open messages from senders that you don't recognize.

Your company's cybersecurity strategy should include an employee training program that teaches staff members about phishing and other online threats. For more ways to prepare your company for the possibility of a cyberattack, talk to your IT service provider.