Tech Times

Solutions Unlimited, LLC

Don't gamble with XP: 3 steps to upgrade your company to a better operating system

April 8, 2014 marks the end of services for Windows XP. Many business owners are shocked to learn that this means Microsoft is abandoning all patches and updates. Have you made the change?

After a 12 year run with devoted users around the world, we are all sad to see XP go. This operating system is said to be Microsoft's most successful creation, but they are finally letting go of all support for Windows XP. Unfortunately, this will leave those who refuse to upgrade to a new operating system extremely vulnerable to security breaches.

XP's luck just ran out! *Most business owners large and small are up against the wall with this transition. Some say, the change to a new operating system will force them to change the software they rely on and others can't decide if Windows 7 is really the best choice since support for this operating system may have a short life of just six more years. These risks are just a few of the top concerns companies are considering.*

Compatibility struggles. *Many business own-*

ers have waited to make the change to Windows 7 or 8 because the software or applications they use are not supported with these newer operating systems. Unfortunately, this dilemma is very real with the hard stop date of April 8th looming over us. However, there are many solutions that offer more security, features and support. You just have to know where to look.

Red flags for certified professionals too.
Do you hold a specific certification or license for your business? If so, using XP may be a breach of your agreement warranting suspension of your achievements. When Microsoft pulls the plug on XP, there will be no patches or updates to support new issues that arise. Even security software vendors will stop pushing out updates and support for XP very soon paving the way for hackers to target die hard fans that try to survive on this outdated platform.

What can you do *to ensure your company data is*

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Irish Blessings

"May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light,. May good luck pursue you each morning and night."

"You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your father was."

"May you have the hindsight to know where you've been, the foresight to know where you are going, and the insight to know when you have gone too far."

St. Patrick's Day mischief

St. Patrick's day has many strange beliefs attributed to its roots. Take a look at these surprising truths about this lucky holiday.

Did you know that St. Patrick was actually British? *St. Patrick was born in Britain during the late 4th century. Later as a teen, he was captured by Irish rebels and taken to Ireland to work as a slave tending sheep. He accredited his survival of those years, and his escape, to his spiritual beliefs.*

St. Patrick wasn't always a saint. *After his escape, Patrick began formal religious training and eventually was ordained as a Priest. He believed that an angel in a dream told him to return to Ireland as a missionary. Patrick's familiarity with the Irish language and culture helped him to incorporate Irish traditions into Christian teachings eventually earning him the title of saint for his good deeds.*

Let me guess… shamrocks aren't

Don't gamble with XP...

(Continued from page 1)

safe? Take the plunge. Make the change. That's right, there really are no better options at this juncture. Giving Microsoft the stare down just won't cut it when it comes to protecting your company's most valued asset, your data.

3 Steps to upgrade your operating systems. It may seem like a tremendous task and it is. So, take a few moments learn about the 3 essential steps to consider when making the change.

1. **Audit all your equipment.** Audit all of your current systems and compile a list of reliant components. A full audit will help you identify the number of software programs, workstations and even servers currently using XP. Develop a plan for implementation with a complete list of trouble areas and a swift course of action to put your new operating system in play.

2. **Plan the transition as soon as possible.** While custom extended support options may be available through Microsoft, this is a costly band aid for a serious condition and may not cover all of your concerns. Protect your organization from attacks, security breaches, and data loss with a proactive solution to implement a new operating system as soon as possible.

3. **Implement the new solution and**

train your staff. New technology always brings a learning curve. Include training options in your implementation plan so your staff can dive right in to the new systems. Both Windows 7 and 8 are packed with new features and enhancements that can ultimately increase productivity for your entire organization. Look online at training videos and materials at http://windows.microsoft.com.

Need help auditing your systems?

Take advantage of our FREE Network Security Audit in which we will inspect every computer, server, and device your company uses to pinpoint security trends and risks that could threaten the longevity of your organization. You will receive a full account of your current operations along with our recommendations for the future.

We will work with you to review your current operations, develop a plan, and stay by your side through every step of implementation. Give us a call today!

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A little green training goes a long way

Every little change seems to warrant an implementation schedule these days. However, going green can be as easy as good training.

Energy efficient machines. Most companies have upgraded their computers and components to better models these days and many of these new toys are already rated for energy efficiency, but the way your staff uses them could be costly.

Throwing money away? Do your coworkers leave the lights on in every

room no matter the occupancy? Do they leave every machine plugged in and turned on when they leave the office?

Train for more efficient operations. Many companies are implementing energy saving techniques to save on consumables like electricity and paper.

Learn more about how to focus your staff on new environmentally friendly techniques for your operations. Visit:

www.earthshare.org

Even banks are struggling to upgrade

Microsoft's decision to discontinue service for XP has put many businesses in a lurch. Don't feel bad, banks are in the same boat.

Really? Banks? I know, generally we don't compare our businesses to giant enterprises like Wells Fargo, JP Morgan, or Bank of America, but when it comes to compliance and security we all face the same concerns. XP will no longer be a safe solution for the future.

Did you know there are over 400,000 ATM's across the US that still use XP? Thankfully, Microsoft is offering late adopters a custom support option designed to extend coverage long enough to migrate to a new platform. Most banks are forking out boat loads of cash and expediting their implementation schedules as much as possible to make the change quickly.

A pretty penny. This extended support option sure comes with a hefty price tag. At a cost of $200 or more per device annually and added costs for a full guarantee that every concern will be addressed, upgrading just became a more economical solution.

St. Patrick's Day...

(Continued from page 1) lucky either? *Actually, no! Shamrocks were used by St. Patrick to depict the Christian belief in the Trinity. It was an ingenious visual aid he used to explain a complex religious relationship to new followers of the religion.*

What about those Celtic crosses? Don't they have any merit?

Well, a little. Many religious Irish natives believe they are a great symbol for the Christian religion. However, the truth is, St. Patrick simply superimposed the Irish sun symbol upon the Christian cross, making what is now known as the Celtic cross.

Why celebrate such a mixed up holiday?

St. Patrick's day was made an official day to celebrate in the early seventeenth century to honor the heritage and culture of the Irish in general. People around the world have since adopted this observance as a day for parades, public festivals, feasts and of course wearing green. So, enjoy this day of celebration regardless of your heritage. Share a little Irish pride.

May your luck pursue you each morning and night.
**Happy
St. Patrick's Day!**

5 ideas to kick start a green initiative in your office

It seems like everywhere we go these days, products and companies are showing off their green qualities. No, it's not just a St. Patrick's day fad. Business owners are learning that "going green" can actually save some green. Here are 5 ideas to get you started.

1. Learn about and implement energy efficient computer usage.

Use the power management features offered on your computer and peripheral, but check with your technical staff first to ensure you're not turning off your computer when they are pushing out critical updates and patches. Sleep mode or power management features for your monitors and printers can save you money each year. Use power strips with surge protection and turn off the switch on the power strip when it is not in use to keep the strip from drawing unnecessary energy. Remember, advancements in technology will deem your equipment obsolete long before it wears out from being turned off and on.

2. Go paperless!

While it sounds like a great idea, how does an office accomplish this task? Scanners like the ScanSnap series from Fujitsu give you an instant image of any document right on your screen ready to save. Purchase scanners for key personnel and implement a document scanning policy to cover every piece of paper from the bills and notifications that come in through the mail to receipts and client documentation. You may also want a business card scanner to simplify data entry for new contacts especially if you have a sales team, attend regular social gatherings or participate in trade shows.

3. Centralized data storage.

A cloud based data storage system is a popular method of storing and sharing scanned documents throughout your company. Your scanners should be set to automatically save files to the shared cloud location. Provide authorized personnel with user ID's, and set proper share and security permissions to allow everyone access to the documents they need.

4. Try out paperless faxing.

Online fax solutions allow you to send and receive faxes via online or e-mail. There are a variety of solutions available. Make sure to elect a provider with proper security in place to ensure your company data stays confidential.

5. Paperless bill management.

Check out the various bill-pay services through your financial institution or change all the bills you can over to a credit card. Now, we aren't saying you should run up a mountain of debt, but many cards give you rewards for using them and offer a great audit trail for all transactions. Most financial software like QuickBooks, now allows you to import all your transactions directly from your credit card company for easy bookkeeping too.

Don't be afraid to go green.

It's really not as scary as it seems. To kick start the initiative in your office, pick one of these 5 ideas to get started and make a plan for implementation this year.

Give us a call if you need any assistance getting started, we have a green thumb!

"We make all of your computer problems go away without the cost of a full-time I.T. staff!"

Ask about our fixed price service agreements
— Computer support at a flat monthly fee you can budget for, just like payroll!

Inquiring Minds...

You're one hot shopper! *Or at least warm. And stores like it. An estimated 1,000 retailers, from tiny boutiques to Macy's, Inc., have installed heat sensors to monitor shoppers' paths.*

The idea *is that store owners can see through residual heat signatures exactly what their customers are looking at up close. They can tell what they pick up. They can see the highest traffic areas in their stores.*

That's good information *that allows store managers to put popular items in lower traffic areas. This way, shoppers don't get all bunched up in one small area.*

One such system *by Prism Skylabs, Inc., is made to track people's movements in real time. Prism Skylabs combines video from security areas with software to build flow charts of people's movements. It uses heat maps to show which products get picked up more frequently than others.*

The Internet of Things, a new economy. *No one would deny that the Internet of People has changed the world, but the next revolution will be even more dramatic: The Internet of Things.*

Take your basic soda machine. *It can take your order, make change, or take your credit card, but even so, it is a dumb machine. What it might do, what it will do, is take inventory of sodas and wirelessly order sodas that it needs. It will take inventory of itself as well,* noting which of its parts are not working in optimum fashion, and order the replacement parts.

Humans will service the machines. *According to Alain Louchez, Center for the Development of Application of Internet of Things, this technological revolution could well signal a new, dynamic economy of experts in data storage, analytics, data security, consulting, education, and training services, all industries that will spring up to support the machines.*

Our future with technology. *Louchez says that in coming years, a trillion everyday objects will become smarter. Your door will know where you are by communicating with your cellphone and it will open, but not for bad guys. Think of all things communicating with each other to make life work the way you want it.*

Wishing you the best of luck this St. Patrick's Day!
As a wise Irish man once said, "May your thoughts be as glad as the shamrocks. May your heart be as light as a song. May each day bring you bright, happy hours. That stay with you all the year long."