

Proposed *Windows 10* for Business Review by PCHS (8/6/15)

Executive Summary:

Like with the original *Star Trek* movies, every other *Windows* OS (operating system) release is worthwhile and *Windows 10* continues this pattern: *Windows XP* was good, *Windows Vista* was weak; *Windows 7* was very good, *Windows 8* was a catastrophe (don't take my word for it—ask *FORMER* Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, if you can find him!); there WAS NO *Windows 9*, and *Windows 10* is attractive.

The bottom line is, it makes more sense for most business organizations to wait to deploy Windows 10. The high Internet bandwidth requirements and steeper learning curve surpass the benefits of running this futuristic and immature new OS. On the other hand, individual business users who have fast Internet and are excited about experimenting with the newest Microsoft OS will probably be pleased with Windows 10.

Review:

Windows 10 launched as a free upgrade for *Windows 7* and *Windows 8* owners on July 29, 2015. This initial review focuses on the main differences between *Windows 10* and *Windows 7* as they apply to small and mid-sized businesses. (We had/have advised *AGAINST* any business client running *Windows Vista* or *Windows 8*.)

Why You Should Consider Upgrading to *Windows 10*:

1. **Cost** – Upgrades from *Windows 7* and *Windows 8* (but NOT *Windows XP* or *Windows Vista*) are free for the first year (before July 29, 2016.)
2. **Longer Support** –
 - April 11, 2017- Extended support ends for *Windows Vista*
 - January 14, 2020 - Extended support ends for *Windows 7*
 - January 10, 2023 - Extended support ends for *Windows 8*
 - October 13, 2025 - Extended support ends for *Windows 10*
3. **Modest Hardware Requirements** – *Windows 10* should run well on any PC that currently runs *Windows 7* well.

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4. **Compatibility** – *Windows 10* evidently runs all the software that runs on *Windows 7*, and Microsoft did an outstanding job of ensuring that during the upgrade process all of your existing settings and configurations (email, calendars [including Google's,] mapped drives, printers, etc.) are maintained.
5. **Usability** – The *Start* button is back! Many (most?) users will take to *Windows 10* pretty well, and some will actually enjoy using the new features (live tiles, the *Cortana* voice assistant, the new *Edge* Internet Browser, Virtual Desktops for creating separate workspaces, etc.)
6. **Ubiquity** – *Windows 10* is intended to be the single OS running across all Microsoft desktop PCs and laptops, as well as tablets and phones.
7. **Search / Cortana** – *Windows 10* introduces *Cortana*, a voice assistant similar to Apple's *Siri*, Google's *Now* and Amazon Echo's *Alexa*. *Cortana* can respond to voice commands and perform Internet searches, open email, launch programs, take dictation, create calendar activities, etc. From our experience *Cortana* is probably as smart as *Siri* and *Now*, but dumber than *Alexa*. Undoubtedly *Cortana* will improve over time.
8. **Better Security** – *Windows 10* has new security features (*Device Guard*, *Windows Hello*, instant/ automatic security patches, etc.) which should help maintain a securer computing environment. *Bitlocker* (which first appeared in *Windows 8 Pro*) is still around (on the *Pro* level) , offering full device encryption, but *Windows 10 Pro* now offers application and file level data separation, which can enable data protection even if that data leaves the device. This is particularly useful for laptop users.

Why You Should Consider Staying in *Windows 7*:

1. ***Windows 7* is Adequate for Most Business Users** - And will continue to be supported beyond the expected lifetime of your current PCs and laptops (through 2020.)
2. **Long Installation/Upgrade** – *Windows 10* requires a high-speed Internet connection and takes hours to install or upgrade.
3. **Greater Ongoing High-Speed Internet Requirements** -- New Features like *Cortana* and the instant/automatic security patching process demand a high-speed Internet connection.

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4. **Steeper Learning Curve** – Most users will find the *Windows 7* - to - *Windows 10* transition somewhat more difficult than was the *Windows XP* - to - *Windows 7* transition.
5. **Less (Short Term?) Stability** – While *Windows 10* seems to be remarkably stable for a brand new OS (or should we say the third iteration of *Windows 8?*) , it is in many ways a radical departure for Microsoft and using *Windows 10* (at least until the fourth quarter of 2015) will be a bumpier ride than staying in *Windows 7*.
6. **Mandatory Updates** – *Windows 10* is more secure and up-to-date than previous versions of *Windows OS's*, but Microsoft's decision to force updates upon users has already led to disruption due to broken hardware drivers over-writing working drivers, etc. Driver and feature updates CAN be delayed which can reduce disruption but this requires more due diligence on the part of IT support staff.
7. **Privacy Concerns** – Microsoft's End User License Agreement for *Windows 10* in part states that:

“We will access, disclose and preserve personal data, including your content (such as the content of your emails, other private communications or files in private folders), when we have a good faith belief that doing so is necessary.”

This may be seen to be a further erosion of user's privacy and may be of concern to some users.

Conclusion:

Windows 10 improves on *Windows 7*; it is an intelligent mix of the novel and the familiar; it is what *Windows 8* was meant to be. *Windows 10* is not a mature product and as such it presents a somewhat inconsistent user interface (UI); it adds some cool new features like *Cortana* and includes decent *Mail* and *Calendar* apps. Its flat, minimalist, clean and high contrast approach to UI design mimics Apple's and is indicative of an OS that is playing catch-up in an attempt to remain relevant. Finally, *Windows 10* is also the most radical, controlling and invasive version of *Windows* ever released. If you DO choose to install *Windows 10* we recommend changing some default settings related to automated updates, WIFI access and Microsoft's Privacy Policies.