

July 2010

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Microsoft Products Reaching End-of-Life Support

If you're still using Windows XP or Windows 2000 Server, please be aware that they will reach end of support on July 13, 2010. If you experience a problem, issue or outage on one of these products Microsoft may not be able to help you resolve your issues until you have upgraded to a supported level of product. Expetec Technology Services stands ready to help you with transitions and upgrades. Call us today to find out how to be certain your network and desktops stay at the ready to support your business.

Work Wherever You Want

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Where will you conduct business

3 Reasons Online Services Save Money

by Heather Clancy
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It is almost unthinkable to run any business successfully without e-mail. Or, for that matter, without conference calls or instant messaging services that allow employees to share information more efficiently.

The good news is that small-business owners can now opt for many of the same communications and collaboration tools much bigger companies have at their disposal-without having to shell out the on-premise technology investment once necessary for these applications. How? By subscribing to online versions of these apps; that is, by joining the ranks of companies which have opted for software as a service.

Microsoft offers one example. A Standard subscription to its Business Productivity Online Suite (BPOS) provides a small company with Exchange e-mail, SharePoint site hosting, Communications Server instant messaging and presence applications (which tell people within your network when you're online), and LiveMeeting Web conferencing service. The Dedicated BPOS option layers additional security and archiving features on top of these basic applications.

Market research firm IDC estimates that most United States companies will be using these business applications and shifting more of their technology budgets to support this model.

It's easy to see why. For one, small-business owners can forego large capital expenditures that might negatively affect cash flow by opting for a monthly, quarterly or annual subscription fee. They'll be able to get new employees up-and-running on applications in a matter of hours rather than days. Over time, they can save substantially on the traditional costs associated with supporting and maintaining aging hardware and software.

There's another big plus, especially in this age of telecommuting, mobility and increasingly ubiquitous high-speed Internet access. Hosted applications can be securely accessed from virtually anywhere at anytime with many different devices, including computers, smart phones and other personal digital assistants with connectivity features. This is an especially important consideration for small-business owner Kelly Faris, co-founder and president of Toronto-based company Remote Stylist.

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Better Together? Better Believe It!

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When I was much younger, I had a 1971 Mustang fastback I nicknamed "Sleek." I loved that car, so much that I hung onto it way past its useful life span. I became my local mechanic's best friend, bringing my treasured wheels in every few months for yet another repair.

I finally wised up and traded it in for a brand new Mustang. As soon as I drove off the dealer's lot, I kicked myself for not having traded up sooner. My new ride was built better and had standard features that weren't even available as options on my previous car. I could count on it to start up on even the coldest Chicago mornings (and trust me, they can be very cold). What's more, it had more acceleration than old Sleek, an important attribute when trying to pass someone on the Dan Ryan Expressway.

So, here's the question for you: Have you hung onto your business software for too long, as I did with Sleek? If you're still running Windows XP or an older version of Windows, it's time to take a good look at the options for upgrading. See what new features, new speed, and new reliability can mean for your



today? Chances are that you, your colleagues, or your employees will spend time out of the office. These days, it's not necessary to spend eight hours in the office to put in a full-day's work.

How Things Will Change: Work When and Where You Want

Imagine if you had full, secure access to all your business data, applications, and resources from anywhere, on any device, and at any time. Many small and medium-sized business (SMB) owners already do. They've extended their office networks to allow themselves, their colleagues, and employees to work from anywhere they happen to be.

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Quote of the Month

I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him.

Abraham Lincoln

LOL



"Good news - shove has come back to push!"

workplace.

Let's start with the obvious. Your previous Windows platform has been a loyal and trustworthy performer. But like Sleek, it's coming to the end of its useful life. I can even tell you the end of support date for Windows XP Service Pack 2 and Windows 2000: July 13, 2010. Support for Windows Vista RTM ended even sooner - April 13, 2010.

To be sure, Microsoft isn't going to leave you out in the cold. There's an updated Service Pack (SP3) already available for you, but the question is, why not take a look at all the business advantages and great new features Windows 7 has to offer instead of messing around with another service pack?

In fact, let's take it a step further. Why not upgrade to Windows 7 Professional and Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2008, and really put your business on the fast track? It will help you boost your productivity, increase your security, and enhance your IT flexibility.

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How to Get Repeat Customers: 7 Steps

By Jeff Wuorio

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"Don't be a stranger now." You've surely heard that expression, a most hospitable one. But for small business owners, a returning customer is essential to survival.

For the entrepreneur, it's important to understand how to build a base of customers who return to your business time and again. Here are seven ideas and strategies to consider:

1. Repeat customers cost less than new ones. Studies show that it's less expensive to bring existing customers back than to attract new ones. It makes sense, considering the expense of advertising, marketing, media and other tools necessary to lure new customers. Also, getting a new customer's attention can often be a matter of timing.

"Prospects will only listen to your pitch when they're ready to buy or make a change," says Ed Brennan, chief creative officer of Harrison Leifer DiMarco, a marketing and public relations firm. "That means you have to constantly be in the hunt to find those few that are ready to make a switch."

2. Repeat customers are walking billboards. If a customer comes back to your business, chances are pretty good that she liked what she saw the first time around. And, from there, chances are she's going to spread the word—publicity that comes free of charge to you.

"Recent estimates put each person's circle of influence at between 50 and 300 people. Imagine the time it would take a sales rep to generate 300 potential prospects," says Jay Lipe, author of *The Marketing Toolkit for Growing Businesses*. "Yet by connecting with a repeat customer, and finding ways for them to communicate with their circle of influence about your company, you've just expanded your sales force, without incurring additional overhead."

3. To build repeat customers, be consistent. On the surface, a solid base of repeat customers might seem little more than a matter of providing excellent service or products. True, but excellence cannot be a hit or miss proposition—repeat customers return because their experience is consistently solid. Drew Stevens, author of *"Gold Medal Customer Service"*, cites three companies that are icons of consistency:

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