

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Windows 10 is Finally Here— Should You Upgrade?

By Joseph G. Hodges, Jr., Esq.

On July 29, 2015 Microsoft finally released its newest PC operating system, Windows 10, to the general public after some two years of development and beta testing. It is intended to replace Windows 7 and 8.1 (there never was a Windows 9). Owners of legacy Windows operating systems like Windows XP and Windows Vista are pretty much left to their own devices as to upgrading to Windows 10, because support for those older operating systems was terminated by Microsoft prior to 2015. One of the first reviews of this new operating system was in the July 29, 2015 issue of *The Wall Street Journal* entitled “Not-So-Broken Windows, Finally,” which basically sums up the essence of most of the other reviews that are mentioned below. In fact, at the end of August it was reported by *ZDNet* that Microsoft had revealed that more than 75 Million devices were already running Windows 10, the largest amount for any of their operating systems in a one-month time period.

The purpose of this article is to review some of the pluses and minuses of the new Windows 10 operating system and to explore a few of the issues that have come up since its release at the end of July. Hopefully, then, readers of this column can decide whether or not they want to upgrade to this new operating system, and, if so, when and how. In this regard, *PC World's* “Best of PC World”

dated 7/31/15 contains links to several excellent articles about Windows 10, including “The Windows 10 Upgrade: Who should do it, who should wait,” “How to Install Windows 10 on your PC,” “What happened when we ran Windows 10 on some old PCs,” and “How to use Microsoft Edge, Windows 10's new browser.”

CNet (cnet.com) did a detailed review of Windows 10 on July 28, 2015 (the day before its official release). In summary, they concluded that Microsoft got it right this time (alluding to some of Microsoft's past operating system mistakes, especially with Windows Vista and 8.0). They also felt Windows 10 bridges the gap between PCs and tablets without alienating anyone, and that the new system combines the best bits of old and new Windows features into a cohesive package. They state that the upgrade process “is mostly painless, and free for most Windows 7 and 8 users” (which is true). On the negative side, they felt that many of the new features will be lost on those who don't care about touch, and that the automatic forced updates could spell trouble later on (and they already have—see further below about this). Their bottom line is that “Windows 10 delivers a refined, vastly improved vision of the future of computing with an operating system that's equally at home on tablets and traditional PCs—and it's a free upgrade for most users.” A similar article that is worth reading is *ZDNet's* (*ZDnet.com*) “Windows 10: Finally decent Windows first release” (7/27/15), which describes it as a work in progress.

To be a little more specific, this system is a combination of the dependable components of Windows 7 and the touch screen vision of Windows 8. It is in fact available as a free upgrade for ex-

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isting Windows 7 and Windows 8 noncorporate users. The goal was to build an operating system that spans all devices without alienating any one platform. It is chock full of fresh features, including a lean and fast Internet Explorer replacement called Edge, a voice controlled virtual assistant called Cortana, and the ability to stream real-time games to your desktop from an Xbox One in another room. Of particular note, the Start menu is back (thank goodness) after being deleted in Windows 8, and it works the way one would expect

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it to. The Windows 8 tiles are now more sensibly attached to that start menu. The fiendishly hidden Charms bar has been morphed into the more straightforward and easier to find Action Center. Some other features of note include a dizzying array of keyboard shortcuts giving you no less than three ways to do things, the virtual desktops that are accessed through the Task View button, the Snap feature that was first introduced in Windows 7 and allows for visual use of multiple apps on one screen, Wi-Fi Sense that seamlessly connects your devices to trusted Wi-Fi hotspots and can allow you to share that connection with others, and Windows Hello and Passport which allow your PC camera or a fingerprint scanner to turn your body into a password. There are the usual quibbles and gripes, some of which are discussed in further detail below, but all-in-all *CNet* reviewer, Nate Ralph, says: “. . . it’s a winner. It’s flexible, adaptable and customizable. And it’s been battle-tested by an army of beta testers for the better part of a year, making it one of the most robust operating system rollouts in recent memory.”

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vs. older systems where the user could choose if and when, or if at all, to apply any updates. Microsoft wanted to be sure all Windows 10 PCs had the latest bug fixes and security patches. This criticism is well founded given that when the first update (KB3081424) was rolled out in early August it didn’t always install properly the first time around. Windows automatically tried to roll it back and reinstall it again and again, putting many users into an endless loop they could not stop. The apparent cause of this according

to *Forbes* on the Microsoft Windows Forum was a bad entry that was written into the Registry by the installer program and prevented further attempts to reinstall the update correctly. *Forbes* suggested a temporary work around to the problem that is documented in the Forum and involves deleting certain keys in the Registry to get rid of the bad entry and then letting the update try again.

This is not for the faint of heart, so alternatively it is suggested you wait until Microsoft issues an official fix. In the meantime, other suggestions include setting your Wi-Fi connection to metered and/or uninstalling the bad update using the Microsoft Troubleshooter. See *PC World*, “How to Cure Windows 10’s worst headaches” (8/26/15). Apparently Microsoft is quietly rewriting its activation rules for Windows 10 as a consequence of this incident. See *ZDNet* article by Ed Bott in “The Ed Bott Report” (8/12/15).

A related problem is the size of the system installation files, which currently measure between 2.5 and 3.5 GB. This may be too big for some users with limited hard disk capacity or slow internet connections. Microsoft will need to find ways to deliver its upgrades in smaller packages in the future.

As for the new Windows 10 browser, called Edge, while it is fast and clean and handles modern web pages, some of its features seem somewhat gimmicky. The real challenge will be to see if its promised improvements due out by the end of 2015 evolve. *CNet* did a Windows 10 Web browser shootout between Edge vs. Internet Explorer (IE)

vs. Chrome that was published in *CNet News* on 8/3/15 and concluded that Edge performs well, that Chrome still has the fastest performance, and that IE was either a close runner up or a distant third in most of their tests.

There are a lot of privacy concerns given that Microsoft will be doing all of its updates for Windows 10 from its own servers and the cloud in the interests of what is described as “a smart, seamless experience across devices” (*PC World*, Article 2971725, 8/24/15). This article goes on to detail

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how the user can disable a lot of this Windows 10 integration and provides tips on what those features do. These include turning off personalized ads, Cortana and its privacy settings, Wi-Fi Sense, OneDrive that can store your files on Microsoft’s cloud server, and the privacy options in Settings.

As for how, when, and if, to upgrade, there are several useful resources out there. The best one to start with is *ZDNet’s* “Windows 10 laptops and tablets: Your upgrade guide” (7/30/15) for those of you who are looking for a new Windows 10 compliant laptop or tablet. If you are upgrading from Windows XP, some of the following articles might be of interest to those who are still running that version. *The Lawyer’s PC*, “A Fond Adieu to Win XP” (4/1/14). *ZDNet Tech Today*—US newsletter entitled “How We Got

from Windows XP to Windows 8.1” (4/10/14), “Microsoft: Why the Windows XP Show is Finally Over” (2/4/14), “Windows XP Support Ends: Survival Tips to Stay Safe” (4/8/14) and “The End of XP Support: The Complete Guide for Stayers and Switchers” (4/8/14). Fortunately there is some good upgrade advice for Windows XP users contained in *CNet’s* Community 8/21/15 Newsletter entitled “What’s the best method to upgrade from Windows XP to 10.” If you are upgrading from Windows 7 or 8, see CNN.com “Upgrading from Windows 7 or 8? You’ll love Windows 10” (2/22/15). Also see *PC World’s* “The Windows 10 upgrade: Who should do it, who should wait” (7/27/15) and “How to install Windows 10 on your PC” (7/29/15). If all else fails and you need to revert to your previous version of Windows, there is help for you. *CNet* published an article on how to revert to your previous version of Windows in a Column entitled “Windows 10 is here— how was your upgrade experience?” (7/31/2015).

So, in summary, it seems clear that Windows 10 is here to stay and that, at least so far, it appears to be an overall winner. Moreover, with its current update procedure in place, it promises to be kept up to date and current as time goes by. Given that Microsoft has already ended support for Windows XP and has already announced the planned end of support for Windows 7 and 8, upgrading to Windows 10 seems inevitable, with the question being when. For users of Windows 7 or 8, the fact that they have one year from the introduction of Windows 10 to upgrade for free suggests strongly that those users should consider signing up for this now and contemplate doing their upgrades sometime within the next three to six months.