



## A GUIDE TO MANAGING END OF SUPPORT FOR **MICROSOFT SERVER 2003**

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When first released, Windows Server 2003 offered the best scalability, performance, and security. In fact, many businesses still rely on it today. However, Microsoft plans to end all support for Windows Server 2003 in July 2015. Many third-party hardware and software providers will follow suit. Business owners who still rely on Windows Server 2003 will soon face vulnerable, out-of-date systems.

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## WHAT CAN BUSINESS OWNERS EXPECT IN A POST-SUPPORT ERA FOR WINDOWS SERVER 2003?

For starters, Microsoft and third-party security software will no longer offer automatic security updates. This means no new security patches, virus definition updates, exploit reports, and security warnings. Servers running Windows 2003 will be defenseless against malware and other attacks. Businesses can bet that hackers have been actively preparing for Windows Server 2003 end of support.

To make matters worse, hardware and software manufacturers have little reason to continue updating or creating Windows Server 2003 products past its end of support. Once your system breaks, the only options will be to repair it yourself or search the web for legacy parts. Replacing worn down or broken components is possible, but may take hours of work. And you may still face limited functionality. What's more, software and other applications will no longer be updated. Any new functionality that didn't exist prior to July 2015 can only be added with costly, custom development.

## AVERTING DISASTER BEFORE THE END OF SUPPORT DATE

### Businesses with Limited Time

The best option is to replace your aging server with a newer one, and then install a more up-to-date version of Windows Server. With this option, you replace hardware and software at the same time. This translates to less time spent upgrading, fewer disruptions, and better performance.

Another option is to simply upgrade your software. This will only work if your hardware is recent enough to support newer versions of Windows Server.

### Budget-conscious business owners

A mixed approach might be the option best suited to businesses on a strict budget, with some hardware and some software upgrades. The best strategy for your company will depend on a set of factors unique to your organization. These factors may include:

- The capital you can invest in upgrades
- The amount of service disruption you can afford
- The capabilities of your IT staff.

Whatever option you choose, it's critical to plan now. According to Microsoft, most companies take anywhere from 18 to 32 months to execute a successful migration. From that perspective, July 2015 is approaching fast, and the reality is you have to be well prepared.

In order to properly prepare for the end of support for Windows Server 2003, you need to understand the challenges surrounding it. Here are 4 steps you can take to overcome these challenges and successfully change your server operating system.

## 4 STEPS FOR SURVIVING THE WINDOWS SERVER 2003 END OF SUPPORT

### 1 Recognize the Problem

The end of support for an operating system means that Microsoft will no longer provide security updates for it. Running an operating system after support ends is very risky. Outdated operating systems are susceptible to all sorts of remote attacks and malware.

Additionally, even after problems are discovered, they won't be addressed by Microsoft. This means unsupported operating systems remain permanently vulnerable.

### 2 Assess Your Infrastructure

This is an IT problem, so to solve it, you need to know your IT infrastructure. Make a list of all of your computers, and find out what operating system each one is using. Then figure out each computer's workload.

Microsoft recommends identifying which servers are mission-critical to your business, so that you can focus on upgrading those servers first. Non-essential assets can wait until the end of the process.

### 3 Find A New Server Operating System

Now that you know what your IT infrastructure looks like, you can determine which new server operating system will work best for you. The server operating systems that Microsoft currently provides are:

- Windows Server 2008
- Windows Server 2008 R2
- Windows Server 2012
- Windows Server 2012 R2

Some of these options may require you to purchase new hardware, while others will let you reuse the hardware that you have.

Companies should have a new server operating system in place before the Windows Server 2003 end of support. They can also move services to the cloud in order to cut costs and reduce the reliance on physical infrastructure.

## **4** Make the Change

After selecting a new server operating system, companies can begin migration. Migration is the process of moving from one server operating system to the next. Migration can take several months, so companies should start as soon as possible.

For help with migration, or any other concerns related to the end of support for Windows Server 2003, you should consult an IT service provider.



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