

The End is Nigh: The fall of Windows XP is imminent...

The beginning of the end: XP in 2014

In 2014, Amplicon drew your attention to what was then the imminent end of support for the much-loved Windows XP Pro platform and offered help to customers that needed viable alternatives. It was not really until April (the official date of withdrawal of support) that other businesses in the technology channel got on board with the message.

Even Microsoft was not very forthcoming at the time!

An industry report cited in The Register in early 2014 showed that around 40 per cent of respondents had still to migrate from XP and many were just burying their head in the sand and not planning to make any changes at all. Was this you? For original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), building fixed function, or dedicated devices, the warning was clear.

The lack of support for users meant real security risks and problems with user interfaces. Modern PCs just did not work as well with the outdated platform. It was a warning shot for OEMs, System Integrators (SI) and other users alike, who had successfully built on XP for years that the time was finally coming for changes; that change would be imposed on those not acting on their own.

For those in retail, there was the extra burden that meant that systems built on XP would no longer be updated with security patches. Key Microsoft services such as Security Essentials and the Microsoft Malicious Software Removal tool stopped being useful and Microsoft themselves said that 'any PC running Windows XP after April 8 2014, should not be considered protected as there will be no security updates for the Windows XP operating system.'

A pretty clear and damning message.

Suddenly, this would mean that millions of devices handling credit and debit card transactions would no longer be compliant with PCI (Payment Card Industry) rules, leaving them open to huge risks and massive fines for non-compliance. Expectations in the industry seemed to indicate that it would only be a matter of time after the loss of security protection, and hackers would be able to break into XP based systems and access personal and financial information.

By sharing the news and providing clear and simple options to upgrade, Amplicon has helped businesses protect their software and hardware estates by moving to Embedded options. Today, Embedded licensing, the built-for-purpose license for dedicated and fixed function devices, is becoming increasingly central to many end-points and networks.

With the rise of the Internet of Things (IoT) and more devices becoming connected, the benefits of switching are clearer than ever. The end of support for XP gave OEMs, SI and many other businesses, the perfect opportunity to migrate to Embedded based operating systems such as WES7, and WE8S, which not only saved cost, but importantly negated the need for a costly hardware refresh for many IT estates.

The real end of XP in 2016

However, what about if you are building and developing new devices right now? Switching to Embedded licensing, because of the longer availability and support, will mean that systems that are already developed and built on XP platforms will continue to be supported. However, if you are building and testing new devices now, what you need to be aware of is that from **December 2016**, you will no longer be able to buy embedded versions of XP Pro through distribution.

It is essential for all to understand the implications of this change and prepare for it now! We all know how long the development cycle for new products can be. Amplicon will not be able to ship products with XP Pro FES on board. It will therefore be necessary to migrate to a later operating system such as Windows 7, 8, 8.1 or 10. It is critical that nobody is caught out...and as before, **Amplicon can help.**

What are the consequences of continuing to develop on XP platforms?

The danger of not moving to Embedded versions of modern windows are very real. Due to the amount of time, money and expertise spent in developing new products, each product is expected to be in the market long enough to justify and give a return on investment

For these reasons, even in today's rapidly changing world, hardware and systems are regularly updated. However, they could still be in place for several years; often needing to be to deliver an adequate return on investment. If you are building systems with XP now, there is a risk that when embedded versions of XP are no longer available through distribution you'll be faced with an immediate and urgent need to redesign or redevelop your device mid-lifecycle.

For recently released devices built on XP, the last bastion of support, the distributor, will also be unable to help you. It is time to recognise that as far as XP Pro is concerned, the fat lady is now singing at the top of her lungs, and it's time to move on.

What are the options?

There are a number of options available and the highly experienced team at Amplicon can help and advise you on which option is most suitable for your business. Windows 7 Pro is the most widely used Windows operating system and is still supported until January 14th, 2020. Therefore, if your product lifecycle fits into that timeline, it can be a great choice for your business. Windows 8.1 Embedded Pro is fantastic for newer functionality such as multi-touch gesture input, Kinect for Windows and Internet Explorer 10. This is supported until July 11th, 2023.

What else should I think about?

In an article for Computer Weekly, Clive Longbottom, Director at industry analyst Quocirca, discussed other ideas to consider when making the switch away from XP. He suggested that "if you're planning to migrate your operating system then, take the opportunity to review whether a full desktop model is the right one for the organisation, or whether a server-based approach of either full or hybrid virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) makes more sense". He says: "By centralising desktops and data, organisations will regain more control over information assets and can apply

centralised security such as data leak prevention (DLP), and will be in a better position to support mobility and bring your own device (BYOD) by enabling access to data and applications from any device. Having data held centrally also helps with analytics, as well as availability through backup and mirroring.”

Preparing for the Internet of Things with modern Windows operating systems

With the rise and rise of the Internet of things, dedicated connected devices are becoming increasingly important. In a recent report, Gartner predicted that by 2020, there would be 25 billion connected things in use, including a quarter of a billion connected cars. They see ‘connected kitchen’ devices delivering ‘significant benefits across industries spanning retail, healthcare and insurance, in addition to significantly addressing sustainability issues.’

With the explosion of information, connectivity and smart devices and systems, the internet of things is set to change the way we work and live. Intuitive, touch screen systems will be central to these changes and the later versions of Windows really help bring these to life. So actually, there are a whole lot of things to think about with the end of XP through distribution.

Moreover, while December 2016 may still seem a way off, it is sensible to want to understand your options as early as possible. If you’re an OEM not using Embedded licensing at all, then now is a great time to talk as there are significant benefits and cost savings available to you. If you are already building devices on Embedded XP, then you know that after 2016 you cannot ship them with this on board, so moving to the modern windows versions makes sense now. Either way, you will want the support of an experienced team who can help you identify the best options and benefits for your business, and at Amplicon, we’ve got the skills and resources to help you!