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THE 2020 PROBLEM

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- Small Business Server 2011
- Windows Server 2008
- Exchange 2010
- Windows 7
- Office 2010

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So, the GDPR is in full swing and you're up to date with your data protection responsibilities (we hope – if not, you need to talk to us).

You might think this could be the perfect opportunity so just get on with work without having to worry about anything else for a while. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news but as we all know, life is rarely that easy.

Unfortunately, there's another important landmark looming that all businesses need to know about.

In 2020 all of the following software reaches the end of its life:

- Small Business Server 2011
- Windows Server 2008
- Exchange 2010
- Windows 7
- Office 2010

You might not be sure whether you have any of this software. But the chances are high that you do.

Because we estimate that 1 in 3 businesses rely on this software every day.

This is a big problem for businesses. Here's what "end of life" actually means.

It means Microsoft will no longer support and fix the software. It will abandon it to focus its teams on supporting newer software.

This creates four key problems for businesses still using it:

Problem 1

If it breaks... it'll stay broken.

Problem 2

If you need support on a problem you've not come across before, there'll be no-one there to help.

Problem 3

Your business will no longer be GDPR compliant. GDPR requires that any software you use is suitable. End of life software doesn't count.

Problem 4

This is the biggie – end of life software is commonly targeted by hackers. Because they can exploit old vulnerabilities, safe in the knowledge that Microsoft won't spot what they're doing and fix the problem. The end of security updates creates huge data security problems.

If yours is one of the hundreds of thousands of businesses that rely on this software - you need to upgrade

And since upgrading can take weeks or months to be planned and implemented correctly, the sensible thing to do is get right onto it now, not leave it until the last minute.

Which leads us on to another problem. How do you know whether you're using this stuff in your office? The vast majority of business owners and managers neither know nor care what tech they have, as long as it works.

So, if you're struggling to work out whether you'll need to upgrade, here are some tell-tale signs:

You're operating on Windows 7

Again, this might not be something you're sure of, so to find out which version of Windows you're using, follow these instructions:

1) Click the Start button. Enter Computer in the search box, right-click Computer, and then click Properties.

2) Look under Windows edition for the version and edition of Windows your PC is running.

Your Outlook is a golden-brown colour

Depending on who you talk to, the old version is either brown, orange or gold (or a sort of burnt umber if you want to be really fancy). All you need to know is that if it's not blue, it's probably the 2010 version.

Your Start button looks like this:

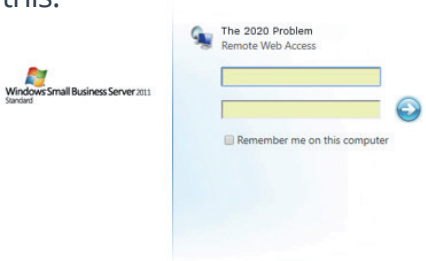
The old version is round and multi-coloured. Pretty maybe, but out dated.

You have to physically back up files

If you're still saving information on USB sticks or having to remember to update information to a specific location every day, it's time to change.

You're using remote Web Access in the Small Business Server

Your login screen looks like this:



You've got time for a cuppa and a chat while your PC boots up in the morning

The latest versions are ready 24/7 so there's no need to wait around for your computer to warm up and load all your files.

You can only access files on your own computer, in the office

The latest technology allows you to log on to any computer or access all the information you need on any device, at any time.

I know what you are thinking.. why not just wait until 2020

When you've already got a to do list as long as your arm it's tempting to just put jobs like this on hold for a few months. But time flies, and a year and goes quickly in business. These things take time too, and the last thing you want is to leave it until the last minute and then find things aren't working properly.

GDPR is a perfect example. As of July 2018, a huge 80% of UK businesses are still falling short on their data protection responsibilities... two months after the new law came in.

Sure, some just decided to take their chances, but the majority just left it too late and then went into panic mode.

By the time the deadline was upon them they were still left with a mountain of paperwork and regulations to get through and found themselves completely unable to keep up.

Leaving things until the eleventh hour is never a good idea in business. It causes stress, disruption and loss – especially when computers are involved.

The problems are already starting

Some applications, such as the latest version of Sage Line 50 won't install on these older versions, while others will be sluggish at best.

It might take a while for the effects to show, but don't forget that one of the requirements of the GDPR is that all businesses use fully supported software. That means if you choose to continue to use old versions of software, you're putting your business at risk (especially if it leads to a data breach).

Cyber crime is a genuine, scary threat that cannot be under estimated. Hackers love it when companies fail to apply patches or get the latest versions of software because it gives them the perfect route in. If yours isn't up to date, your systems are at risk – leaving you wide open to data loss.

Then there's the other financial implications. Outages cost UK businesses dearly. According to a survey conducted by Beaming and Opinium in 2016, downtime accounted for losses of £12.5 billion and 145 million hours. That's before we even start thinking about the other repercussions, like unhappy customers and loss of face.

Upgrading now just makes good sense. Streamlined systems mean greater productivity, so with no disruption to business you'll be able to keep staff, customers and your accountancy team happy.

Upgrading is good for business

There's been a lot of talk about digital transformation, and around 88% of UK businesses have now adopted cloud computing in some form.

Cloud computing is where you use software through your browser, rather than having to download it to your device. It's more future proof than older software.

It also means you can access any data from any device, any where. Great flexibility. To be brutally honest, those businesses that don't upgrade are going to be left behind.

Taking the leap to cloud computing offers a host of benefits:

Removal of a single point of failure: It's no longer the case that if one thing goes wrong, everything else does too

Simplified systems: Applications all work more effectively together, with better collaboration throughout entire organisations

Instant access to your files from any device, at any time

Potential to reduce staff costs due to increased productivity, **which leads to:**

Increased profits

Reduced capital costs

No more snow days: Staff can communicate and work on files no matter where they are

Flexibility: Services can be customised and scaled up or down according to need

Strategic value: Updated systems give businesses a competitive advantage

Upgrading your software before it reaches end of life is a necessity if you want your business to stay operational

That said, any kind of upgrade is going to take research and a lot of thought. It's not something that you should enter into blindly because IT plays such an integral role in business.

Yes, you need to upgrade and you need to do it in time, but the choices you make will depend on how your specific organisation works.

Talk to a trusted provider of IT services (known as a Managed Service Provider) before you take the plunge. A good one will be able to provide you with honest, impartial advice based on what works for you rather than trying to flog you loads of stuff you don't need.

You need someone who knows how to keep your data safe and your systems running like clockwork. Someone like us.

Contact us today

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