

COMPUTERWORLD Operating Systems



Print Article



Close Window

IT pros prefer old XP over new Windows 7, survey says

And forget Vista: When they upgrade, they're going straight to Microsoft's next OS

Gregg Keizer

April 14, 2009 ([Computerworld](#)) Cautious business IT administrators are more willing to stay with the devil they know, Windows XP, than risk the devil they don't, even if the latter is the highly touted Windows 7, a research company said Monday.

According to Dimensional Research Inc., which surveyed more than 1,100 IT professionals in March, 72% of those polled said that they are more concerned about the cost and overhead of migrating to Windows 7 than they are about continuing to supporting the eight-year-old Windows XP. Only 28% felt the opposite, that they're more worried about holding XP's hand than migrating to Windows 7.

The results not only illustrate IT's historical distrust of change, but also shows how strongly corporate administrators are wedded to the aged XP, said Diane Hagglund, an analyst at Dimensional and the survey's author. "IT hates nothing more than change," she said, "and in the open-ended comments, there was a clear trend that people wanted to say good things about XP — things like, 'It's been very good to us.'"

"There's definitely a correlation between their satisfaction with XP and their hesitancy to move to Windows 7," she added.

Even though Windows XP officially slips into a [limited support phase today](#) — seven and a half years after it was released, two and a half years later than for most other Microsoft products — business users rely on it like no other operating system.

Dimensional's poll found that 97% of the IT professionals surveyed said that their companies and organizations are still running XP, by far the highest return for any operating system. Vista, for example, was used in just 40% of the companies, while Linux was in 32%. Mac OS X was in 28% of firms.

For those willing to ditch XP, Windows 7, which hasn't even made it to [release candidate status](#), is the clear winner over the proven — some would say problematic — Windows Vista.

According to Hagglund, 83% of the people polled said that they would skip Vista and move directly to Windows 7. Even more telling, of the IT professionals who said they would upgrade to Windows 7 by March 2010 — the group most eager to get off XP — more than half (53%) said that they would do so explicitly to avoid Vista.

Only 17% said that they'd upgrade existing Windows systems to Windows 7 in the next year. That caught Hagglund off guard.

"I was really surprised that, even with really [positive reviews for Windows 7's beta](#), adoption would still be really, really slow and cautious," she said of the survey results. "They've spoken really loudly, and said even if the product is great, we're going to take it slow."

She put some of the blame on Vista's shoulder. "Negative public perception of Vista seems to have helped build this layer of distrust with Windows 7," Hagglund said.

But the prognosis for Windows 7 now *is* brighter than Vista's ever has been. Even before Windows 7's release, one out of six IT professionals claim that they'll migrate to the operating system by March 2010, 59% by March 2011.

"In June 2008, nearly 18 months after the release of Vista, and several months after SP1, 60% said they had

no plans to deploy it," said Hagglund. "So Vista was even worse [in IT's eyes], and Windows 7 is not nearly as bad."

Dimensional's survey was conducted for KACE Networks Inc., a systems management appliance maker in Mountain View, Calif. The report can be [viewed at KACE's site](#) (registration required).