

SecurElement White Paper

The Beginning of the End for Windows Server 2003

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As with anything in life nothing lasts forever, and never is that a truer statement than in the world of technology. It seems new technologies are born daily and while it's always thrilling to see the next big thing, sometime it's sad to see an old favorite face an inevitable decline. Microsoft made the End of Support announcement for Windows Server 2003 during the end of 2013, but July 14, 2015 marks the official date that the popular Server OS will actually meet End of Support. So what does this mean for those still running Windows Server 2003?

I've heard several customers tout the argument that if it isn't broke why should they fix it? While this does seem like a logical statement, I never recommend this advice for situations concerning business critical technologies. Since the release of Windows Server 2003, Microsoft has been continuing to make major strides with subsequent releases including Windows Server 2008, Windows Server 2008 R2, Windows Server 2012 and the most recent Windows Server 2012 R2. Facing a migration from a 4 iteration old OS can present numerous challenges, however, according to the IDC, "Windows Server 2012 R2 offers relatively good application compatibility with Windows Server 2003." (Gillen, 2014) This is good news for SMBs still utilizing Windows Server 2003. We often recommend staying current with software upgrades and at a minimum upgrading upon every other release.

Another critical factor in upgrading is the list of improvements included in Windows Server 2012 R2, and according to the IDC these include, "integrated virtualization, better security, extensive scalability, new operational roles, and script execution capabilities." (Gillen, 2014) While it may seem ambitious to upgrade directly from Windows Server 2003 to Windows Server 2012 R2, it is definitely recommended that it be done (as opposed to upgrading to some OS between the two). Microsoft has supplied a plethora of tools on the [Windows Server 2003 End of Support website](#) to determine applications and workloads running Windows Server 2003, how to assess those applications, how to choose a destination for those applications and workloads, and finally how to migrate to Windows Server 2012 R2. These tools can be used to migrate yourself or in conjunction with a trusted Microsoft partner.

In the event that the above mentioned enhancements to the Server OS are not enough to incite a migration, maybe this list of security concerns will hasten the decision. According to the IDC, "Some of the key concerns customers face after [the Windows Server 2003 End of Support date] include lack of patches/updates/non-security fixes, elimination of security fixes, lack of support, application support challenges, compliance issues, and an inability to leverage modern cloud options from Microsoft and other vendors." (Gillen, 2014)

The idea of having critical network infrastructure exposed to potential security breaches and vulnerabilities should be enough to persuade any SMB on the cusp. Learn more about migrating by reading Microsoft's "[Transform your Datacenter white paper](#)." Another great resource is the [Windows Server 2003 Migration Planning Assistant](#) that will walk you through the points I mentioned above. Lastly, be sure to engage with a trusted outsourced IT provider/ Microsoft partner to assist with the migration and any additional network infrastructure requirements that are associated with that move.

Works Cited

Gillen, A. (2014, July). *IDC White Paper - Windows Server 2003: Why You Should Get Current*. Retrieved from IDC:
<http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/server-cloud/products/windows-server-2003/>

About the Author



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