

A Road Map for Upgrading to Windows XP

A popular question I get every week has to do with the possibility of upgrading a computer to a newer operating system such as Windows XP. Many people think that a newer operating system such as Windows XP can help speed their system up. Unfortunately this is not always true and in many cases I have seen Windows XP slow a computer to a snails crawl. Because of this it is very important to prepare for your operating system upgrade adequately.

It is not necessarily a good idea to install Windows XP on any old computer. Some people may disagree with this little bit of advice, but I would only install Windows XP on a 500mhz or faster system with at least 256 Megs of ram. Technically you can install Windows XP on a lesser system, however your performance will be slower then it was before.

There are many good reasons for upgrading your computer to Windows XP. Some of these reasons include increased stability, better multimedia support and yes, with the right system specification an increase in performance. Windows XP is built on the Windows NT kernel, a source code that Microsoft wrote to be a stable. A stable operating system means less blue screens and less illegal operations. This alone should be reason enough to want to upgrade. Windows XP's support for multimedia is better then ever with wider Plug and Play support for items such as Digital Camera's and Digital Camcorders. Also Windows XP can manage much more ram memory then Windows 98. More managed ram memory means greater system speed and performance.

Unfortunately there are some drawbacks about upgrading to Windows XP. Some older software such as EZ CD Creator 4.0 and Norton Antivirus 2001 are not compatible with Windows XP and will require a new software purchase. Some older hardware, such as scanners, will also not be compatible and will require you replace that equipment. These reasons are why you should run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor before spending any money on the upgrade software. This Upgrade Advisor can be found on Microsoft's web site and after it is run on the computer system it will generate a list of software and hardware that will either not run or require a software upgrade to work properly.

Before you get started be sure to take this advice. **BACK UP YOUR DATA.** In fact anyone who owns a computer should read this part twice. Sit down and think about what is on your hard drive, would it be devastating if you lost that data? Then why don't you have it backed up? If you knew that you're your hard drive was going to die tomorrow, won't you back up your data? My advice is to pretend that your hard drive is going to die every tomorrow. Any way, off my soapbox, once you have your data safely backed up you can then decide whether you want to do a clean Windows XP install or an Upgrade.

For a cleaner, trouble free installation it is better to do a new installation after formatting the old hard drive. Of course this type of installation will guarantee the work of having to reinstall your programs and data. The other option is to install the Windows XP Upgrade version that will install Windows XP over the top of your old Windows 98. The advantage to this type of upgrade is that you don't have to worry about re-installing your software and setting. However any problems or bugs that was in your old operating system will migrate to the new operating system.

After the Windows XP completes the installation you should then install any drivers for your video, sound, and other hardware. One important note here, I don't recommend using the original software CD's that came with the hardware. It is a better idea to download the latest drivers and software from the Internet to get the most compatibility with Windows XP. Lastly, and perhaps most important, run the Windows Update Advisor to get the latest software patches to completely secure your new operating system.

If you have a problem with your computer and need the help of a professional computer technician then give Thomas or Roger a call at 947-0749 or e-mail us computerdepotonline@att.net. Your computer problem could be our next Powell Post article.