

Using Windows 7 to transform IT systems management

Windows 7 adoption is a great opportunity to get a better handle on IT systems management



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You can't watch "Dancing with the Stars" or "Lost" without being subjected to those strange Microsoft ads for Windows 7. Yes, we get it. The new operating system (OS) enriches and simplifies the user experience. More than just a refresh, Windows 7 is an evolutionary leap to a more powerful, richer personal computing experience.

But what does this mean for the IT professional who would have to deploy the new operating system on dozens, hundreds or even thousands of computers? It's a lot of work, and, yes, has a direct impact on user satisfaction. It makes you wonder if there is a better way.

However, instead of looking at Windows 7 in a personal computing vacuum, IT professionals are finding that the new OS is a great opportunity to get a better handle on IT systems management. They are using the shift to Windows 7 as a way to better understand what is out on their network and improve the way they monitor, audit, patch, manage, secure and backup distributed machines.

Coupled with the Kaseya IT Automation Framework, Windows 7 is transforming the way IT professionals conduct day-to-day IT management.

This white paper will discuss:

- An overview of Windows 7 and the Kaseya IT Automation Framework
- The importance of assessing network and hardware readiness for a Windows 7 upgrade
- How Windows 7 and Kaseya can transform day-to-day IT systems management for your organization while improving user productivity

A Grand Opportunity

The decision to deploy Windows 7 is similar to the Clash's dilemma in their 1982 song "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" Much like the lead singer's realization that "If I go there will be trouble / If I stay it will be double," IT professionals need to decide if the upgrade is worth the hassle.

Have you or are you planning to upgrade to Windows 7 in the next 12 months?	%
No, not at all	21%
Yes, some targeted machines	54%
Yes, throughout our entire organization	26%

According to a recent survey conducted by Kaseya, 80 percent of IT professionals are planning a Windows 7 upgrade in the next 12 months.¹

On one hand, standardizing on Windows 7 would enrich your users' computing experience, giving them powerful new tools to manage the business, but it could increase complexity throughout your IT environment and cause training, interoperability and support headaches. On the other hand, maintaining the status quo with older versions of Windows is the safe choice, but you could be stifling innovation and limiting your organization's ability to keep up in a competitive marketplace. If you go there will be trouble, if you stay it will be double.

However, standardizing to Windows 7 is a unique opportunity to get a better handle on your IT systems management strategy, helping you deliver consistent, transparent and manageable IT

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“While there may be short-term cost, the long-term benefits could be bountiful.”

¹ Kaseya surveyed 500 IT professionals in March 2010 about their plans for Windows 7 migration and systems management. Two-thirds of respondents represented healthcare and education markets and half are employed by companies with more than 10,000 employees.

services throughout your organization. While there may be short-term cost, the long-term benefits could be bountiful.

According to Microsoft, its intent with Windows 7 is to enrich and simplify the user experience. A task bar has been added to the bottom of the desktop to help users more easily navigate between applications. Connecting to peripherals, printers and scanners is much easier, and users can personalize configuration on the desktop, allowing them to work the way they want. Windows 7 also includes touch-screen technology and enables seamless file sharing and downloads. All these technologies are intended to enrich the user experience and make computing simpler.²

How Important Are These to You? Improve User Productivity	%
Important	30%
N/A	1%
Not Important	5%
Somewhat Important	12%
Very Important	47%
(blank)	5%

Improving user productivity is an important factor when deciding to migrate to Windows 7.

Coupled with the Kaseya IT Automation Framework, these benefits can be translated to a better, more efficient desktop management strategy.

Kaseya IT Automation Framework

The Kaseya IT Automation Framework gives you a single platform in which to implement an integrated and proactive IT systems management strategy. As a result, repetitive tasks are streamlined and you have complete visibility and access into all machines on the network from a central, Web-based management console. Repetitive tasks like desktop policies, audit, remote access, patch management, security, monitoring, backups and software deployment are automated, letting you get a better handle on IT systems management.

Much like preventative dental care, Kaseya’s proactive approach to IT systems management prevents major issues from occurring while giving administrators a single tool in which to quickly identify and resolve the small ones. Kaseya even empowers users to take a larger role in the performance of their computers, giving them the ability to create and view tickets and perform basic maintenance and upgrades from their desktop.

As a result, IT is more productive and costs less, user productivity is increased and the risk of security breaches, data loss or regulatory non-compliance is dramatically reduced.

First Things First: Are You Ready and Do you Have the Budget?

Coupled together, Windows 7 and the Kaseya IT Automation Framework can improve transparency throughout your IT environment, streamline operations and enrich the user experience. But first you need to assess the impact the upgrade has on network performance, uptime and user productivity.

Before moving forward with any software migration, it’s important that you have the appropriate infrastructure and hardware in place. In fact, it’s important that you know exactly how many machines are out on the network period—information that many organization fail to accurately keep. More than just an operating system upgrade, Windows 7 changes the way you deliver IT services to users, facilitating richer communication between the user, the workstation and the IT administrator. There may be bandwidth, processing, memory and storage requirements. The latest version of Office may need to be installed. Drivers may need to be downloaded. Network connections reconfigured. Hardware upgraded.

² Microsoft. Get to Know Windows 7. <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7>. April 2010.

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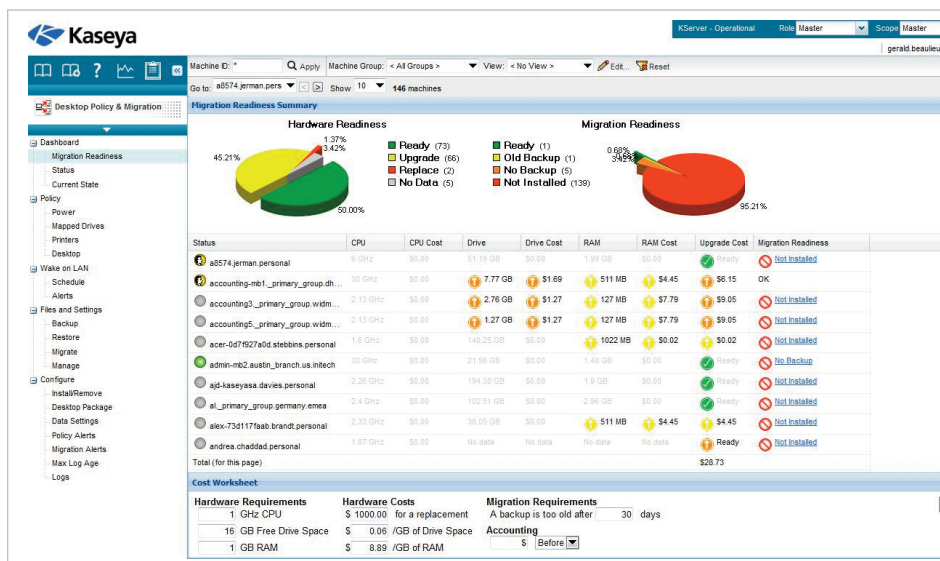
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Do you have a mechanism in place that can help audit your infrastructure and identify required upgrades for Windows 7 migration and an estimated cost?	%
No, and it doesn't interest me	10%
No, but that would be helpful	34%
Yes	55%
(blank)	1%

More than one-fifth of IT professionals currently do not have a readiness mechanism in place that gives them the ability to identify required equipment upgrades for Windows 7 migration and an estimated cost.

Then you need to calculate how much the process of updating your network infrastructure will cost and what kind of disruption users can expect during the implementation. If laptops need to be completely replaced, it's important to know how much that will set you back. If servers need to be rebuilt, what will be the impact on your users?

Part of the Kaseya platform is a powerful readiness dashboard. An integrated module built directly on the Kaseya management console, it gives you a complete picture of the entire network and identifies components that need to be updated or changed to make the Windows 7 migration a reality.



At the touch of a button, you can see that there are 46 Windows machines deployed across your organization. Out of those: 27 desktops are ready for upgrade now, 16 desktops need additional memory and three laptops don't have the required storage space.

Kaseya will then calculate the cost to upgrade each machine based on a baseline you have inputted. The report can produce a summary like the one above or drill down and give details for each computer. After reviewing the report, you may decide that the cost to upgrade the 16 desktops with additional memory is well within your budget, but the three laptops are better off being replaced completely.

You can then run a report for various other mission-critical software programs that would run on Windows 7 such as Office 2010, Internet Explorer 8 or your new business intelligence application. Instantly, you'll know what you'd need to do to prepare for these complementary upgrades.

The readiness dashboard can also help reduce the downtime required to migrate the machines. With all your IT asset information consolidated in a single repository, you won't need to conduct a time-consuming, costly and intrusive manual audit. Without this base knowledge, a simple upgrade that was expected to take a week could balloon to several weeks once the full scope

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is known. Kaseya gives you this information from the outset in a matter of minutes, providing a baseline you can use to accurately set downtime expectations with the management staff and with users.

Ensuring User Satisfaction and Consistency

After upgrading your infrastructure and deploying Windows 7 on the appropriate machines, it’s important that you preserve user settings. Reconfiguring Windows or Office preferences is tedious, and it’s almost impossible to catch everything manually. No wonder users are invariably wary of software updates. They have specific computing habits and understandably want to preserve the “feel” of their computers. It’s up to the IT staff to make sure they have access to the tools and information they need and it’s presented in a way that makes them comfortable.

Kaseya allows you to transfer user settings from older versions of Windows, Internet Explorer and Office applications to Windows 7 machines. It also lets you create user profiles that can be applied to new users or promoted/transferred employees. If a new accountant is hired in the Baton Rouge office you can ask the local hiring manager to plug in a laptop. You then press a button, and a user profile ‘Level 1 Accountant – Baton Rouge’ is pushed out to the machine. It automatically downloads required applications and drivers, loads preferences, sets up a new email account, sets authentication policies and emails the new employee a welcome packet from the IT department with training, help desk and policy information.

Updating the operating systems of hundreds of computers used to take weeks. Kaseya lets you automate the entire process from auditing to assessment to configuration, cutting the time down to several days—if that long.

What is the biggest inhibitor to Windows 7 adoption?	%
Complexity	5%
Cost	22%
End user disruption	13%
Interoperability issues	25%
Labor and time invested by IT staff	26%
Windows XP Experience	10%

Labor and time invested by the IT staff is the biggest inhibitor to Windows 7 adoption.

Automating IT Systems Management Through Windows 7

Once deployed, Windows 7 can be paired with Kaseya to give you a more powerful and more efficient IT systems management solution. The same remote, automated and transparent mechanism that allows you to efficiently audit your infrastructure, assess the impact of deployment and reconfigure the new operating system and applications can help you streamline on-going maintenance as well, giving you a better understanding of what is out on your network while improving the way you monitor, maintain, patch, secure and backup Windows 7 machines. At the same time, you can ensure your users a consistent computing experience by preserving their user settings.

Audit and Inventory

The Kaseya auditing module gives you a complete picture into your IT environment, continuously updating inventory, computer status and Windows registry information in a central repository. Having this information at your fingertips allows your team to make better decisions, give better answers and have a better understanding of your IT environment, helping you deliver efficient, powerful and transparent IT services to your users.

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Prior to Windows 7 migration, do/did you have an accurate snapshot of the systems deployed in your network?	%
No, I have no idea	6%
Somewhat, I generally know what is deployed on my network but not at that level of detail	42%
Yes, I know exactly what is out there including manufacturer, OS, registry information, installed software, user login and settings, event log data, performance data and security/backup status	52%

Almost half of IT professionals have no idea or a limited idea of what is deployed in their network.

The audit data is available to other Kaseya modules including reporting, service desk, patch management, endpoint security and backup, ensuring that administrators have reliable and accurate information at their fingertips when they are managing your organization's computers or remediating IT issues. This transparency saves time, reduces downtime and improves user productivity.

Auditing also helps with planning and budgeting. As we've shown above, the decision to upgrade software shouldn't be taken lightly. Reliable and accurate inventory information better arms you to make these decisions based on readiness, cost and potential disruption to users.

Remote Access

Kaseya Live Connect allows you to conduct all the core functions of IT administration on Windows 7 machines remotely from a single Web-based management console. This includes deployment, configuration, execution, update, logging, reporting, monitoring and remediation. And you can do this in the background with minimal disruption to the user, increasing your responsiveness and improving productivity.

Live Connect provides you with a thumbnail of the Windows 7 desktop, telling you exactly what is going on with a specific computer in real time. You can transfer files, download patches, run a backup, conduct a security scan, resolve registry issues or run just about any command without knocking the user offline. Kaseya's Live Connect allows you to do anything that you would be able to do onsite, but it lets you do it in the background and without disrupting the user.

Patch Management

Windows machines need a lot of care. Once a month, Microsoft hosts Patch Tuesdays when dozens of software upgrades are released, and IT administrators spend the next several days manually installing the patches on distributed machines. The process is tedious, interrupts users and rarely covers all computers. As a result, the organization is put at risk of a security breach and non-compliance.

Do you have a solution in place to help manage patches for your Windows PC's and Servers?	%
No, and it doesn't interest me	3%
No, but that would be helpful	23%
Yes	74%

One quarter of IT professionals still do not centrally manage patch deployment for their Windows PCs and servers.

Kaseya automates the deployment of all Microsoft patches, including Windows 7, Internet Explorer and Office from major OS service packs to specific security fixes. This automation ensures that the applications are updated quickly, remotely, consistently and with minimal impact on the user. All an IT administrator has to do is download the software once, test it on a local computer and push it out to waiting machines across the organization. Administrators can monitor the process from the Kaseya management dashboard or receive alerts if problems arise. You can even

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write and run scripts to further automate patch management. A reporting mechanism is included as well, giving you an accurate and up-to-date patch status of all Windows 7 machines.

Service Desk

Administrators can remediate any problems from basic configuration errors to more serious issues on Windows 7 machines through Kaseya's help desk portal. The ITIL-ready service desk is integrated with the entire Kaseya IT Automation Framework, tapping into various Kaseya modules to provide administrators with the reliable and up-to-date information they need to quickly and non-intrusively identify, resolve and report any problem. Once a user submits a ticket, their machine is automatically authorized to be remotely accessed and controlled by a help desk administrator. Tickets can also be created, categorized, escalated and assigned automatically when alarms are triggered, allowing administrators to head off potential problems before the user is even aware there is an issue.

Users are empowered as well through Kaseya's end user portal, giving them a larger stake in the performance of their machine. The portal includes documentation, a knowledge base, frequently asked questions and a form where they can submit and check the status of tickets. The portal is integrated directly with the Windows 7 desktop and appears as an icon in the task bar. In addition to empowering users, the portal gives them an opportunity to troubleshoot minor problems and install pre-approved software, getting the machines back up and running more quickly and allowing help desk administrators to focus on more serious issues.

Agent Procedures

Any IT professional knows that automation isn't always simple. Finding the time to write and maintain script after script can be tedious, time consuming, and, frankly, a pain. Kaseya's Agent Procedures allow you to build virtually any Windows 7 execution, command or operation you want through an intuitive graphic interface with virtually no prior programming knowledge. It allows you to combine multiple scripts into a single, concise agent procedure, further streamlining complex automated operations while simplifying the process of writing, executing, updating and managing agent procedures.

For example, it typically requires up to five separate scripts to remotely defrag the hard drive of a Windows 7 machine. Kaseya allows you to roll all these scripts into a single procedure that 1) checks to see if the user is online, 2) executes the defrag operation, 3) confirms execution, 4) tests for performance issues and 5) generates a report. Instead of manually firing off separate scripts one after the other, Kaseya automates the procedure with the touch of a single button.

Working much like the patch management module, you can build an agent procedure to download Windows applications such as Office. The script can 1) make sure the user isn't online or a mission-critical task isn't in progress, 2) shut down running operations, 3) check for disk space, 4) download the installation agent, 5) run the installation and 6) reboot the computer when finished. A separate agent procedure can ensure the application is monitored and patched when necessary.

Security and Backup

Securing Windows machines is one of the most important and time-consuming aspects of IT systems management. Monitoring for viruses, malware and other malicious threats can be a full-time job, constantly putting out fires and rebuilding infected machines. Service packs need to be downloaded, patches need to be installed and anti-virus software needs constant updating. This can take its toll.

Kaseya streamlines security and data protection in a single, integrated solution. Monitoring and backup policies can be migrated to the new Windows 7 machines and continuously and remotely monitored and updated as threats grow more sophisticated.

Reporting

Reliable access to information is the key to transforming your IT systems management strategy from reactive to proactive. Kaseya's Info Center provides quick and easy access to all the data

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collected and stored throughout the system. You can view the information through Kaseya's fully-customized dashboard that provides an overview of all systems' status. This data can also be exported to other management solutions.

Reports can also be customized using report parameters and filtered by organization, machine group, machine ID, operating system or service status. You can output reports to PDF, HTML, or Excel documents and brand reports with your own logo. Reports can be scheduled to run automatically or on a recurring basis and can be private or shared, distributed to the Inbox of VSA users or to email recipients.

IT professionals are using Kaseya's Info Center for tactical and strategic planning, helping them set priorities, service level agreements, resource allocation and budgets. The easy-to-read reports also help educate the management team about the good work their team does and the work still yet to be conducted. This transparency boosts IT's reputation, making the resource procurement process that much easier.

Conclusion

The decision to standardize on Windows 7 should not be taken lightly, but it's important to recognize that the upgrade presents a powerful opportunity to transform the way you conduct day-to-day IT systems management. Coupled with Kaseya, Windows 7 automates much of the manual, repetitive tasks that bog down even the most efficient IT staffs. This automation leads to a preventative, proactive IT systems management strategy that helps you deliver consistent, transparent and manageable IT services throughout your organization.

How Important Are These to You? Implement a More Proactive IT Systems Management Strategy	%
Important	27%
N/A	1%
Not Important	11%
Somewhat Important	18%
Very Important	34%
(blank)	8%

Only one third of IT professionals think that implementing a more proactive IT systems management strategy is a "Very Important" factor when making the decision to migrate to Windows 7. We hope this white paper changes their minds.

So, if people are wondering, should I stay or should I go? The answer is yes. Moving to Windows 7 enables a more efficient IT systems management strategy. Just don't rock the casbah.

About Kaseya

Kaseya is the leading global provider of IT Systems Management software. Kaseya's solutions empower virtually everyone — from individual consumers to large corporations and IT service providers — to proactively monitor, manage and control IT assets remotely, easily and efficiently from one integrated Web-based platform. To learn more, please visit www.kaseya.com

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