Windows 8  
Why? Why Not? and When?  
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Just in time for the holiday season, Microsoft has released Windows 8 and it’s full of interesting new features. If you are asking yourself whether you want to upgrade and when to do so, here’s an overview on why you might want it, why you might not want it, and when you should plan to make the move.

New Features

1. Touch and Gesture  
   Windows 8 was designed to work in a touch and gesture environment such as smartphones and tablets. You can still use a mouse and a keyboard if you are using a desktop PC, but it was designed with touch in mind.

2. Live Tiles  
   Following closely upon the touch interface are “Live Tiles.” Although you can keep the old Windows 7 style desktop screen, the new interface has large “tiles” that represent buttons that launch applications (apps) or “hubs” that represent collections of applications. The cool thing about these large tiles is that they continuously update. For example:
   - Outlook tile: Shows how many new unread messages have arrived
   - Weather tile: Shows the local conditions
   - Facebook tile: Shows the “stream” of incoming updates
3. Windows 8 Everywhere
   This is my favorite feature (also known as “Settings Sync”). By connecting your Windows 8 device to the free Microsoft SkyDrive service, you can have all of your settings synchronized between all your multiple Windows 8 devices. This includes personalizations (background, colors, lock screen and account picture), passwords, language preferences, app settings, browser settings, and more. If you have a desktop at the office, a laptop at home, a smartphone in your pocket, and a tablet in your purse or briefcase, THEN YOUR UNIQUE WORKING ENVIRONMENT IS KEPT UNIFORM on all those devices.

4. Windows 8 ToGo
   Buy a 32GB (or larger) USB flash drive and export your own unique Windows 8 environment including programs like mail and calendar to it. Then take that flash drive anywhere, plug it into any suitably fast computer, turn it on and, voilà, you are running your own personalized Windows 8 environment just as if it was your own computer. The computer you are “borrowing” is left completely untouched without having to install anything on it. Just imagine where you could use this: “Business center” PCs at a hotel, “Conference room” computers at a client or vendor’s office, a friend’s laptop while on vacation. You can carry it around in your pocket or on your keychain. How easy is that?

5. Improved Security
   I know you hear this a lot, but that doesn’t make it not true. With Windows 8, Microsoft has introduced a huge improvement in boot-time security so that from the moment the power is applied to the moment the login screen appears nothing that’s not pre-approved to run can run. This fights those awful “rootkits” you may have heard about. Internet Explorer 10 also introduces “sandboxing” of separate tabs so that malware attacking one tab can’t get out into other tabs.

Compatibility
The most important aspect of any upgrade is whether or not the programs or applications that you want to run will operate properly. So far, in ENTRUST Labs testing, we have not found any compatibility issues with the programs we use. In fact, we performed an “IN PLACE” upgrade on one of our Windows 7 desktop PCs. If you are running Windows 7 and applications that are reasonably new, then odds are that they’ll run just fine under Windows 8. To find out for sure, download and run the Windows 8 Upgrade Assistant from http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-8/upgrade-to-windows-8. My 2.5 year old touchscreen laptop had only a handful of programs which required updates in order to run under Windows 8.
**Why Migrate to Windows 8?**

If you are a “consumer” buying a new PC for home, especially if you are purchasing a tablet, touchscreen laptop, or are not opposed to purchasing a (more expensive) touchscreen monitor for your new desktop PC, then there’s practically no reason not to purchase Windows 8. You'll love the new experience and all of your old programs will probably work. However, please see the “Why Not” section below for a few caveats.

If you are a business, the matter is a bit more complicated. Because of the high degree of compatibility, it’s more a matter of “When” than “Why” or “Why Not”. Here are a few compelling situations where you should plan to migrate to Windows 8 sooner rather than later:

- If you use or want to use multiple computing devices like a smartphone, an office desktop, a home laptop, and a portable tablet, then you definitely will want to get all of them on Windows 8 to get that unified experience.

- If you use a single laptop for almost all of your computing activities, then getting a Windows 8 computer with a touchscreen is almost a no-brainer. You can take advantage of all the new touch and gesture features and yet have the laptop keyboard and touchpad available when you need them.

- If you are mostly a “consumer” of content (data, reports, email, internet articles, publications, audio or video, etc.) then you will probably enjoy working in the touch and gesture environment of Windows 8. If you are a business executive who likes working as much as possible on an iPad, then imagine how much more you’ll enjoy working on a large 24” or 27” touchscreen at the office. Then you can take that same experience with you on the road with a Windows 8 tablet or laptop. On the other hand, if you are more of a “creator” of content (documents, spreadsheets, etc.) then you will want to read the Why Not section below.

**Why Not?**

1. **Touchscreen vs. Mouse & Keyboard**
   
   For many people who use only a single computer (at the office) for most things, then the new touch features and “live tiles” won’t add much to productivity. This is especially true for those “content creators” since most of that content is most efficiently created using a traditional keyboard and mouse. The “on screen” keyboards are functional at best, and no match for the kb/mouse combo.
2. That Start Button
In Windows 8, Microsoft did away with the familiar Start button which has been present since Windows 95. The old desktop paradigm doesn’t work for phones and tablets, so to create a unified experience, the Start button had to go. This is probably the biggest hurdle users will need to get over. However, there are ways to bring it back and there are third party companies producing special “Start Button” apps. So, if you really want to keep working “the old way” it is possible.

3. Training
The new environment takes some getting used to for many desktop workers, especially with the removal of the Start button. Though it is somewhat intuitive, it’s not something you can just “pick up” or “figure out on your own” immediately. If you want your workers to get the most out of Windows 8, then you will need to invest in some training to make sure everyone hits the ground running.

When to Upgrade?
The short answer, I believe, is “Soon,” even if not immediately. As mentioned before, for a consumer (“home”) user, there is almost no reason not to get Windows 8 immediately if you are in the market for a new computer, laptop, or tablet.

For business users, you will want to do your due diligence to learn if all of your applications are compatible with Windows 8 and then you will probably want to experiment with Windows 8 on one or two computers before you deploy Windows 8 widely in your organization.

If you are in the market to purchase new PCs in the near future, you should at least investigate Windows 8 at the first opportunity, especially for users who travel frequently with laptops or tablets. For desktop users, on the other hand, the benefits are less compelling and you can “take your time” before considering upgrading those users to Windows 8.

ONE MORE THING
ENTRUST Labs will continue to experiment with Windows 8 within ENTRUST. We’ll have more definitive information available to our consultants soon. Feel free to contact us if you have any specific Windows 8 questions you want us to research on your behalf.

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