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during the last days of tax season. Windows XP has been killed, and you have to upgrade to Windows 8.1 or leave your accounting computers both unprotected and in violation of federal law.

Dave McClure • Apr. 29, 2014



By now you have discovered the sad and silly trick that Microsoft played on you during the last days of tax season. Windows XP has been killed, and you have to

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No, you can't have the same life extension for your XP computers. You are not rich enough, or powerful enough. You and I have to upgrade to Windows 8.1.

Think of Windows 8.1 as the ObamaCare of computing. It doesn't really work, no one is buying into it, and they can't get the web site to work properly (see the story on how the install isn't working even if you do upgrade to the Windows 8.1 Update, over at <http://www.infoworld.com/t/microsoft-windows/windows-81-update-woes-pile-errors-80070020-80073712-800f081f-80242fff-800f0922-240249>). In the end, it still won't do what we were promised, but it will wreck the desktop PC industry while Microsoft shoves it down our collective throats.

So what is an accounting office to do if it wishes to stay legal, keep its protection from viruses and move forward? Here are four steps I can recommend.

- **Upgrade To Windows 7.** You can still buy the Windows 7 operating system (Windows 7 Professional, full copy for \$60 to \$140 online), either as an upgrade or with a new PC if yours does not meet the minimum requirements of 1 Gb processor, 1 Gb RAM and 16 Gb of hard drive space. Not that this will buy you much time — Microsoft has announced that “mainstream support” for this operating system will end in January of next year, far short of the launch date for Windows 9. Do you are stuck gain upgrading the Windows 8.1.
- **Upgrade to Windows 8.1 and change the default programs.** By design, some of the programs in Windows 8.1 default to the horrible Metro versions. These have been made a little more palatable with the Windows 8.1 Update, which at least now have buttons to search and to close the apps. But it is annoying trying to view a home video and getting thrown into a video player that is trying to sell you pay-per-view movies or downloads. I go into the search button, type in defaults, and change all the programs I can to the “desktop” versions. There, it now works like it

has in the past. No angst. Make sure you select the desktop version of Outlook,

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- Windows-C: Displays the charms bar.
- Windows-D: Launches the Windows 7 desktop.
- Windows-E: Launches the Windows 7 Explorer.
- Windows-F: Opens the File Search pane.
- Windows-H: Opens the Share pane.
- Windows-I: Opens the Settings pane.
- Windows-K: Opens the Devices pane.
- Windows-L: Locks the PC.
- Windows-Q: Opens the global search utility.
- Windows-1, Windows-2, and Windows-3: Open the first, second, and third open appson the Windows 7 taskbar, respectively

Whatever you decide to do, staying with Windows XP is not an option. Like ObamaCare, if you like you current operating system, you can't keep it. There are now a ton of sites that offer to continue support for your Windows XP version until Windows 9 makes it appearance in mid to late-2015. Many are sincere, a few are sincere but don't have the expertise, and many more are scam sites just waiting to infect your machine with malware. The truth is that none are likely to satisfy the requirements of federal regulations for security of client data.

Reality Check

A compendium of ideas, products, rants and raves from the viewpoint of the author. Not that the author has no financial interests in any of the products mentioned. Feel free to disagree, or to share your ideas by sending them to davemcclure@cpata.com.

Internet Site of the Month. **Pre-installed PC Malware.**

(http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/download/presskits/dcu/docs/idc_031814.pdf). Okay, this IDC study is

mostly an effort by Microsoft to dissuade you from using pirated software from

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worth a few seconds trying them out, especially if you are growing tired of the default Windows 8.1 screen.

[Thumbs Down] – **Laptop Batteries On Fire.**

(<http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/Laptops-on-Beds-Can-Lead-to-Fires-Safety-Officials-Warn-214839591.html>). As this goes to press, yet another major manufacturer of laptops is recalling their hardware due to the risk of fire. Bottom line is, pay attention to the recalls and if your laptop seems to get hotter than you can touch with your hand have it inspected as a fire hazard. Better than losing your house or your life.

[Thumbs Sideways] – **Bluetooth 4.0.** Really? We just introduced the Bluetooth 3.1 spec and it is already obsolete. Worse yet, this one comes with a gobbledy-gook list of benefits that even the most hardcore geek would have trouble explaining. Was this new spec necessary? Does anyone care? Or are Bluetooth manufacturers so desperate for sales that they will invent new versions just to force PC makers to buy their newest products? Time will tell, but I am betting Bluetooth 5.0 is just around the corner.

[Thumbs Down] – **Android's Privacy Invasion.** Trust Google to come up with a cell phone operating system that requires you to give up all of your personal privacy just to install an app. You can't even see what an app does before giving up all of your rights to all of your information, including location information and other personal details. Give it up, without ever knowing how the information will be used and by whom. And they wonder why identity theft is rampant. Thanks, Google!

[Thumbs Up] – **Uninterruptible Power Supplies.** On average, an office or home office in the US will have 15 power interruptions or brown-outs each year, according to IBM. Japan and Western Europe have slightly higher interruption rates, but stay up 99.98 percent of the time. Since each interruption can mean damage to a

computer or server, it only makes sense to invest in a UPS system for each mission-

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