



A CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION



Windows Server 2003 End of Life

Executive summary

Following the recent end of support for the [Windows XP Operating System](#), Microsoft have announced that Windows Server 2003 will reach end of life (EoL) on **14th July 2015**.

The announcement has important implications, with industry experts estimating there are over 10 million machines still running Windows Server 2003 [across the globe](#). As such, affected organisations must plan proactively for EoL, which will generate significant risks to IT security, compliance and costs.

Several potential options exist, such as upgrading to Windows Server 2008/2012 or migrating to an alternative open-source or cloud-based solution. It is also possible to retain the current Server 2003 system in conjunction with custom support agreements with Microsoft. It is up to each business to decide the best solution for them.

What does End of Life mean?

- 1) **Security:** Although products will continue to function, Microsoft will not provide automatic fixes/patches, security updates or online support, and new threats will not be addressed. Given many servers are internet facing and accessible via a website or database, an outdated system is vulnerable to external attack putting applications and businesses at risk. Experts suggest that hackers could reverse engineer future patches for more modern systems to identify and subsequently [exploit any shared vulnerabilities](#).
- 2) **Compliance:** Using of Windows Server 2003 beyond EoL is likely to cause compliance difficulties. Most compliance and regulatory standards consider running end-of-life software to represent a control failure, whilst service providers are likely to prompt organisations using hosted services to update legacy software so that existing service-level agreements can be met.
- 3) **Cost:** Custom support will need to be in place between an organisation and Microsoft in order to receive future patches and security fixes, in addition to other capital expenses to consider. Investments in advanced firewalls, network segmentation and intrusion detection systems all represent additional costs and may make the transition to a new server the more economical long-term option.

Mitigations and recommended actions

- 1) **Upgrade to a modern Windows Server:** Both Windows Server 2008 and 2012 represent viable [upgrade options](#) and detailed instructions on how to manage either process [are available](#). Providing sufficient time is set aside for planning and implementation, the situation can be managed with minimal disruption.
- 2) **Move to an open-source or cloud based solution:** Open source operating systems based on Unix or Linux, or cloud based solutions represent viable alternatives to Microsoft Windows Servers.
- 3) **Stay put:** If your organisation cannot migrate in time then a combination of custom support agreements and improvements to existing security, e.g. deployment of Microsoft's Enhanced Mitigation Experience Toolkit (EMET), can help to mitigate some security concerns while the upgrade/migration is planned.

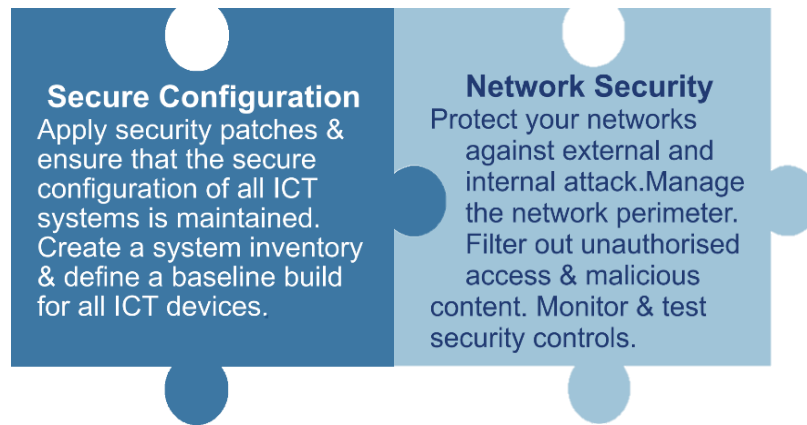


Figure 2: Extract from the UK Government’s 10 Steps to Cyber-security

Whatever decision you make, keep in mind the government’s 10 Steps to Cyber-Security, which provides useful general advice and guidance and specific information on maintenance of secure configuration and effective network security (Fig 2).

Appendices

The lifecycle of Windows Server 2003

Microsoft have released several upgrades (Windows Server 2003 R2) for Microsoft Server 2003 since it launched to provide additional functionality and to consolidate patches and fixes (Fig 1 and Table 1).

Technical support, warranty claims and design changes were offered until the end of mainstream support in July 2010. Since then, Microsoft has provided extended support but this will also stop on 14th July 2015.

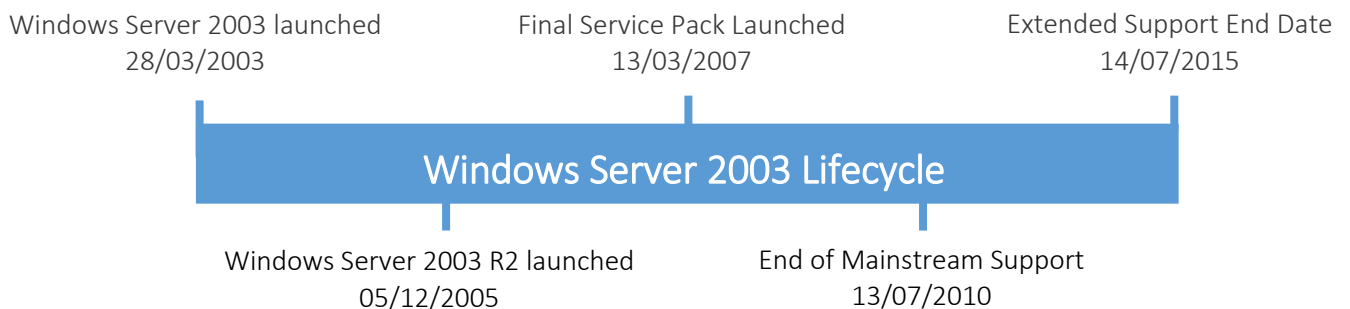


Figure 1: An overview of key dates in the lifecycle of Windows Server 2003

Product Released	Lifecycle Start Date	Extended Support End Date
Standard Edition (32-bit x86)	28/05/2003	14/07/2015
Standard Edition (x64 Edition)	28/05/2005	14/07/2015
Datacenter Edition (32-bit x86)	28/05/2003	14/07/2015
Datacenter Edition (x64 Edition)	28/05/2005	14/07/2015
Enterprise Edition (32-bit x86)	28/05/2003	14/07/2015
Enterprise Edition (x64 Edition)	28/05/2005	14/07/2015
Web Edition	28/05/2003	14/07/2015
R2 Standard Edition (32-bit x86 and x64 Edition)	05/03/2006	14/07/2015
R2 Datacenter Edition (32-bit x86 and x64 Edition)	05/03/2006	14/07/2015
R2 Enterprise Edition (32-bit x86 and x64 Edition)	05/03/2006	14/07/2015
Compute Cluster Edition	06/09/2006	14/07/2015

Table 1: Summary of the release date for each version of Windows Server 2003