

Microsoft Center of Excellence

NEWSLETTER

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From the Experts

Welcome to the first edition of our Microsoft Center of Excellence Newsletter. This quarterly publication will serve as a window to all of the educational content our experts have compiled to empower your Microsoft journey. Discover what's new in the world of Microsoft and get a fresh perspective on the latest industry developments with insights from our team of specialists. If you have any questions or comments, please do [let us know!](#)

We kicked off 2016 with some big changes from Microsoft. It seemed like every week in January and February we'd find another big change. So this month, we want to summarize what happened and talk a little bit about what these developments mean for Microsoft technology and licensing moving forward.

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Microsoft Raises the Minimum Seat Threshold for the Enterprise Agreement (EA)

EAs have been around for a long, long time. The EA has also been one of the most stable licensing platforms in the industry. Product Use rights and pricing are another story entirely, but the fundamental structure of the EA still looks a lot like it did when it first launched. Annual payments, True-Ups, price-locks—those have been licensing bedrock for Microsoft since the beginning of (Internet) time. Until 2016 that is, when Microsoft announced that the EA minimum seat threshold of 250 seats is being raised to 500 seats. Why? One word: MPSA.

The MPSA Program is the replacement to Select Plus, and Microsoft has big plans for MPSA. MPSA is a generational effort to simplify licensing, but Microsoft is getting there in measured stages. MPSA has evolved to the point where it's often a better fit for 500-seat and below customers—it's more flexible, less "all-in-and-my-annual-payment-is-too-big", and more accommodating to the needs of smaller organizations. But, if you are a big organization, MPSA has a lot to offer as well, and we recommend taking a look at it if you're coming up for an EA renewal. Chances are the EA in some form is still going to be the best fit, but MPSA is catching up. It really depends on what you prioritize, and how you are going to prioritize it. Let's say you're coming up on a big renewal. What means more to you—stability, predictability, and cost containment? Or is it flexibility and a more consumptive model to accommodate a period of change? You don't have to be one or the other—it's a continuum. But where you land on that continuum could have ramifications on the type of investment you create to get there. It's all in the numbers—but the good news is that there are more choices now. There are more paths from A to B.

Microsoft Retires Windows Roaming Rights and Changes How They Support The Windows OS on New Hardware

Both of these changes are big, and we write about them below (and on our blog). Our focus in this issue of the COE Newsletter isn't to get into the specifics of the changes, but rather to explain what the changes mean for the Windows Operating System. Microsoft is making it clear both in the technology and the licensing that Windows 10 is really Windows-as-a-Service. We have written extensively on what that means, and the best ways to prepare, but these changes show that Microsoft is committed to the path.

Windows 10 is Windows Last. After this, it's all builds and updates and service branches. That means every organization has some new decisions to make when they roll out Windows 10. Go Current Branch for Business and adapt to two to three new builds a year (and not just adapting your environment, but also making sure all your application-dependent vendors do likewise)? Go with the static LTSB build, but have more challenging upgrades down the road? Now with the changes to how Microsoft supports the hardware, the only choice no one has is not to make one. Whether it's Office 365, Azure Active Directory, or Windows-as-a-Service, the whole of the Microsoft ecosystem is changing because of the cloud, and the cloud economy. The change isn't just around the edges anymore—it's in the heart of the Operating System.

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Flash Traffic: Important Microsoft News



Windows 7 and 8/8.1 Support Phased Out on 6th Gen Processors

We've already released a few articles and even a video on this topic (see links below), but this announcement lit up the blogosphere a few weeks back. The short version: Microsoft is pulling the plug on support for Windows 7, 8 and 8.1 on all new systems that have 6th gen processors (think Intel Skylake). They will offer support on select 6th gen models but only until July 2017, at which time the only truly supported OS for 6th gen and higher systems will be Windows 10.

We've had deep-dive conversations with scores of customers large and small since this announcement, and we get it. This is the kind of change that poses a major challenge to many—a change that they weren't expecting and has budgetary impact now, even though 2016 budgets were set a long time ago. That's why we recommend a planning session to explore all the pathways to Windows 10 if you have a hardware refresh or OS-related project that crosses the July 2017 boundary. The good news is that there are many choices, many ways to get there. We just need to put our heads together and figure it out, and we're ready to help!

Microsoft Retires Windows Roaming Rights:

New Microsoft Product Terms were released February 2016, and we noticed a significant change: Microsoft is going to discontinue Roaming Rights for Windows OS Software Assurance and Windows VDA Subscriptions. We'll write more on this later, but for now remember that Roaming Rights are what you use to access Windows virtual desktops from non-company-managed devices (for users that have multiple devices).

It's easier to talk about a use-case to see the potential impact: I'm an employee with a company-owned notebook, which is covered by my corporate Enterprise Agreement. Therefore, I have Software Assurance on my notebook. However, I also access a Windows VDI from my notebook as well as my home PC. Windows is licensed per accessing device (unless I went with a user-based subscription) and, in this case, I have two devices: my notebook and my home PC. Instead of making me buy another license + Software Assurance, Microsoft created Roaming Rights. Roaming Rights let me access my VDI from any non-company-managed device without having to buy additional licenses. I just need Software Assurance on my main device.

So what happens now?

Microsoft states in the February 2016 Product Terms:

4.14 Roaming Rights Retirement for Windows Enterprise and Windows VDA

Customers with active SA for Windows Enterprise or Windows VDA retain Roaming Rights through the later of:

- the end of their existing Enrollment or Agreement term, or
- January 31, 2017

You have until January 31, 2017 (or whenever your Enrollment expires, whichever is later), and then Roaming Rights are no more. So what happens to me with my notebook and home PC? Without Roaming, that home PC is no longer licensed, unless I move to the user-based subscription model for Windows. Under a user subscription I can have multiple devices and the terms will still allow me to cover my home PC for VDI access.

If you are running virtual desktops or virtual applications and users have “anywhere” type of access from multiple devices, this could affect you. Call us and we can walk through it in detail to see if you have any risk, and what to do about it if you do.

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Trending Blog Articles



SQL Server 2016: The Buzz Beyond Security

by Jonathan Clark

The highlights of the newest version of Microsoft's SQL Server 2016 take security and visibility upgrades of earlier versions and move toward availability, simplicity, and consistency. With only a few days to go before the end of support for SQL Server 2005, IT professionals are talking a lot about upgrades. While security is an important factor to consider, other improved features bring a lot to the table.

[\[Read More\]](#)



What End of Support for SQL Server 2005 Means for You

by Lane Shelton

For five years, Microsoft's SQL Server 2005 has been in its extended support phase, but its end of life is near, which can pose security risks to an organization. The primary risk to not upgrading before the deadline is that there will be no more updates or security hot fixes. "Unless the organization has a costly support contract with Microsoft, they're on their own when it comes to updates and protection," said Steve Ragan, Senior Staff Writer for CSO Online.

[\[Read More\]](#)



Windows 10 and VDI: Time to Rethink Your Desktop Strategy

by Rick Sabarese

Unlike versions past, Windows 10 is being touted for many things—from new mobile device management (MDM) and data protection features to helping enterprises better handle BYOD to across-the-board usability enhancements, including a major tweak to the Start menu and the addition of Cortana, Microsoft's popular digital assistant.

[\[Read More\]](#)

This Month's Authors



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Areas of expertise: Licensing, Microsoft Software, Touchscreen, Windows 8

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Product-Related News

SharePoint Online Plan 2 and OneDrive for Business Plan 2 pricing changes

Starting March 1, 2016, the pricing for SharePoint Online Plan 2 and OneDrive for Business Plan 2 will increase from \$8 to \$10 per user per month. This is Web Direct/MOSP prices; other channels/programs will have corresponding changes.

New Cloud Add-on SKUs of Project and Visio Released in March with 20-30% Off

Starting March 1 through June 30, 2016 Cloud Add-ons will be available for Project and Visio customers for 20-30% off. Targeted customer segments include commercial and government. This offer will be available in the EA, EAS, OLV, OVS, MPSA, and WWGP programs. Add-ons enable hybrid customer scenarios through enablement of cloud services while retaining the licensing security of their traditional on-premise licenses and active Software Assurance.

Step Up to Office 365 E5 with the Step-Up SKUs

New Licensing Office 365 E3 and E4 Add-on Step-Up SKUs are unique offerings that allow the existing 365 Add-on customers to migrate to Office 365 E5 during the mid-term of their EA Agreement. The use of the E3/E4 Add-on Step-Up will convert their existing E3/E4 Licensing Add-on position to an E5 Add-on. The Step-Up is calculated as difference between the prices of the license they have now vs the price of the license they are upgrading to.

SQL Server 2014 Developer Edition

On March 31, 2016, the SQL Server 2014 Developer Edition will be discontinued as a paid Volume Licensing program offering. Instead, it will be made available as part of the (free) Visual Studio Dev Essentials program. Starting April 1, 2016, the software can be downloaded here. |

Programs impacted include Open and Select Plus, SEL, and WWGP.



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