**The End of Windows XP Support** **Is Around the Corner – Are You Prepared?**

Microsoft will end support for Windows XP next week, on 8 April, 2014. Leaving Windows XP unsupported will expose organisations to a growing risk as the number and severity of security exploits grow, and continued support from Microsoft will be costly.

We asked Michael Silver, vice president and distinguished analyst at Gartner, to provide his thoughts on the impact for organisations still running XP after 8th April.

**Q: How many organisations do you estimate are still using Windows XP?**

A: Lots. Really, almost every organisation will have some XP left – there’s lots of Windows 95 running in hospitals, for example. But overall, when support ends, we estimate that 20-25 per cent of enterprise systems will still run XP and that one third of large organisations will have more than 10 per cent of their systems remaining on XP.

**Q: The risk of security breaches on systems running Windows XP beyond April 2014 is high. How should companies still running XP address these concerns?**

A: 1) Have a plan to get rid of it ASAP.

2) Reduce user rights on the machines, restrict the PC to run only “known good” applications, and minimise web browsing and email use on the PCs.

3) Move critical applications and users to server-based computing. Where users or applications can’t be moved for regular use due to licensing cost, or capacity issues, have the applications installed for server access in case of emergency.

**Q: What are some other risks for a company still on Windows XP after 8th April?**

A: Even in organisations without Windows XP, a user that puts an unpatched Windows XP machine on the network can introduce problems.

**Q: For a company getting off Windows XP, what are the key decisions and problems that must be addressed before beginning a migration to a later version of Windows or another OS?**

A: While most applications now support Windows 7, it’s possible an organisation has very old applications or versions that don’t. Application testing is of paramount concern. Organisations need to decide whether to deploy Windows 7 or Windows 8. A migration to Windows 7 will likely be faster, but one to Windows 8 will have more longevity – Windows 7 support ends in January 2020, less than six years away, and organisations that are so late on Windows XP should not get into the same situation with end of Windows 7 support. For many, the best alternative would be to deploy Windows 7 for the most critical users and applications now and working to be able to start deploying Windows 8 starting early in 2015.