



## Windows Server 2003 R2 End of Support

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Extended support (†) for Windows Server 2003 (all editions) officially ends on July 14th, 2015 (see Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Support Lifecycle). Mainstream support for Windows Server 2003 ended on July 13th, 2010.

After July 14, Microsoft will no longer issue any updates or patches for any version of this product.

It is also highly likely that any applications or services you have running on this platform are also approaching or have passed the end of their own product support lifecycle, and remember the underlying hardware platform, physical or virtual!

Don't forget, Windows Server 2003 has been superseded by Windows Server 2008, Windows Server 2008 R2, Windows Server 2012 and Windows Server 2012 R2!

In light of the notice Microsoft has been giving customers since April 2013, you should have already migrated off this platform. But if, like many of us, you have not, then you need to take steps now to plan and execute a migration strategy to protect your infrastructure. If you don't take action, in addition to exposing your organization to an increased security threat, escalating support costs and possible service outages, you may well put your organization in danger of contravening any applicable compliance regulations.

By migrating to Windows Server 2012 R2, Microsoft Azure, Office 365 or any combination, you can achieve concrete benefits, including improved performance, reduced maintenance requirements, and increased agility and speed of response to the business.

In 2014 there were 476 critical updates released for Windows Server 2003, and so far in 2015, out of 63 updates released, 34 were for Windows Server 2003. Consider the impact when you will get no updates moving forward.

Here is a sample action plan:

### 1. Envisioning

Determine your target end state for Windows and Active Directory, which will guide you in the other steps.

### 2. Discovery

Use tools to aid in the documentation of the software and applications running on Windows Server 2003 — ideally, Microsoft System Center 2012 R2 or, if you don't have that, then the free Microsoft Assessment and Planning (MAP) Toolkit.

Produce a hardware and software inventory along with performance metrics for your servers. This will help you determine likely virtualization candidates.

Make sure you document all the dependencies on your Windows Server 2003 servers, which you will need to know to plan your migration and testing. Dependencies may be printers (does Windows Server 2012 R2 have the relevant drivers?), scanners, fax servers and so on. File shares and network storage devices also need to be considered, and now would be a good time to double-check access control lists and broken inheritance.



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If you have domain controllers running on Windows Server 2003, then you will need to plan your Active Directory upgrade and everything that entails. Schedule workshop sessions with application owners and business representatives to determine which servers and applications need to be migrated (possibly to the cloud) and which can be decommissioned, along with planning possible service windows in which to perform the migrations and who will write and perform your acceptance tests post-migration.

(Microsoft refers to this classification as the "Six Rs": Rehost, Refactor, Revise, Rebuild, Replace or Retire.)

Determine whether your applications will run on the latest Microsoft platform or whether the applications themselves will need to be upgraded.

### 3. Planning

Use the information you gathered during discovery to plan exactly which applications will be migrated as is, which need to be upgraded, which can be decommissioned and which can be hosted in the cloud (IaaS, PaaS or SaaS), and how they will be migrated and tested.

Remember to create and test a backout plan!

Create and manage your communications plan for end users, application owners and business representatives.

Document the servers and applications to be migrated in terms of business criticality, complexity and risk to the business. This will inform your decisions on the order of migrations, the effort involved and the testing required.

### 4. Pilot

Pick a server from each criticality, complexity and risk classification and test your migration, testing and backout plans. Revisit your migration planning documentation with lessons learned from the pilot.

### 5. Migration

Ensure that your communications plan to end users, application owners and business representatives has been implemented.

Execute your migration and test plans in co-operation with the application owners, business representatives and testers.

Issue daily progress reports and be prepared to back out and revisit servers and applications in the event of problems.

Have a post-migration workshop and produce and publish a post-migration report.

Remember, you still have your day job to perform, so perhaps now is the time to bring in some external expert help!

† Extended support offers a continuation of certain mainstream support items such as paid per-incident support, security updates and ongoing use of the Microsoft Knowledge Base. However, during the extended support cycle, non-security hotfix support terminates (unless customers specifically purchase that offering), no-charge incident support is eliminated, and design changes and feature requests are no longer offered.



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