

Windows XP Released to Manufacturing: Let the Testing Begin!

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Microsoft has released to manufacturing (RTM) Windows XP, its upgrade to Windows 2000 Professional. Enterprises should now begin testing the operating system (OS) in earnest.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 24 August 2001, Microsoft announced that it has released Windows XP to manufacturing. Microsoft has scheduled the official product launch for 25 October 2001, but PC makers may begin shipping hardware loaded with the new OS as early as late September.

Analysis

Windows XP largely aims at the home user but also has significant implications for enterprises. Therefore, enterprises should fully test all their software and various configurations, build new images and test Windows XP's new features thoroughly. Some enterprises will get RTM copies from their Microsoft account representatives or will receive it in the mail shortly, and Windows XP will appear on select media in September 2001. Gartner sees Windows XP as a minor upgrade to Windows 2000: in version terminology, if Windows 2000 Professional was NT 5.0, Windows XP is NT 5.1.

During the past few weeks Microsoft has taken several steps to ensure Windows XP ships as planned. Microsoft appealed the ruling that it took illegal steps to maintain its OS monopoly (see *Gartner FirstTake* FT-14-2722 "Microsoft's Appeal Strategy: Delay Until Windows XP Ships") and settled its highly publicized disagreement with Kodak. Although an injunction against Windows XP remains possible, Gartner still believes Windows XP will launch as planned. Enterprises that plan to deploy Windows XP should therefore continue as planned but should consider Windows 2000 Professional as a suitable alternative if Windows XP is delayed.

Overall, Gartner reiterates its previous recommendations. Enterprises rolling out Windows 2000 or well into a Windows 2000 deployment should continue. Enterprises that have not begun testing and planning should consider skipping Windows 2000 and deploying Windows XP. We remind enterprises that Windows 98 and Windows NT version 4 will cease direct distribution to original equipment manufacturers on 30 June 2002. If at all possible, enterprises should avoid bringing in new PCs running versions of Windows other than Windows 2000 or Windows XP.

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