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Windows 10 vs Windows 7

Many of you still have Windows 7 operating system on your computer.   You can identify this in two ways: the start button icon will be a circle globe or you can right click Computer (not This PC) and select Properties to see the current version.

Windows 7 will no longer be supported on January 1, 2020.   It will still work, you will just not be receiving any new security updates which will leave your computer more vulnerable to problems.

So what are your options?   You can purchase Windows 10 (no longer a free download) for $120 and install it using a special upgrade software and should keep your applications and data intact.   Or, you could take the opportunity to purchase a new computer which will come with Windows 10 installed.   Another option would be to convert your computer to Linux, which is free.   Best to talk to me in detail if you are considering this.   Some of you may find it superior to Microsoft; see the note below about my new remote support option.

Don't be concerned about the difference between Windows 7 and Windows 10, the tools I add make it similar to Windows 7, using ClassicShell.net as your start menu.   The menu looks a lot like the Windows 7 menu and for many, is easier to use than the Windows 10 menu.   The Gadgets, icons on the right that show a clock and calendar, sometimes weather info, can also be added back, though they use a lot of RAM. During Windows updates, you might be asked if it is OK to fix ClassicShell and/or 8Gadgits and you should click yes to these questions.

Windows 10 Updates are a necessary evil.   They happen often and people that leave their computers on all day may not notice they are happening.   Most of the calls I get are related to updates.

"My screen went blank for a long time, I think my computer died."

"My computer is frozen"

"My computer is really slow and I am not doing anything"

Updates will usually show up during the boot up process if you watch the computer boot up, also when you restart or shutdown the computer.   You can check to see the status of an update by doing the following steps:

1. Click the Start button
2. Type Updates and Security
3. Select the Windows Updates Settings or Check for Updates

4. Check Windows updates should be at the top of the window with a button to Check for Updates
5. If there is no button, you may see that updates are in process.

Some updates can take hours to complete. Some might show an error. The general rule is to let them run their course over several days before you intervene. Leave the computer on for the day, restart the computer if there is an error. Shut down and restart a computer at least once each day because most updates require a restart to complete. Be patient, it will save you much grief in the long run.

AVG free vs Norton

AVG seems to be sending out many new releases for the free version this year. It is okay to install this but be careful to select Basic and not the Trial version when starting the install. Many are inclined to select the column that has all the green check marks thinking it is better, and the trial will ask you to pay in a month or so. If you have already downloaded the trial and are being prompted to pay, go to the Control Panel and uninstall the trial version and click the button to click to keep the Free version. AVG is also now offering other products to download and install. I don't recommend installing these because they're more complicated and/or confusing but PCTools is the best of these. I do use two other products for cleanup, CCleaner and MalwareBytes. CCleaner seems to do the best job at removing temp files in all your browsers and cleaning up the registry. All have free versions.

Comcast subscribers should know that you can install Norton Internet Security for free. I have been using it on many of my computers and it is nice not to get the ads from AVG all the time. Just log on to Xfinity and your account, then click on My Account, scroll down to Services and select Internet, then scroll down to Virus Protection and select Download Now. You will be required to register with Norton. No big deal, just watch the check boxes to be sure you turn off the notices from Norton.

Economical New Computer Costs

Computer costs continue to be low. New laptops with Windows 10, 8 gig of RAM and webcams in the bezel of the display, can be found under $350 (I have one available now at this price that is set up and ready to use, no labor cost and it comes with an SSD, first come, first serve). New desktop computers are frequently on sale at Frys and Best Buy for the same price. If I do the setup in my office, the cost for the setup with data transfer is $90. I include the purchasing and picking up the computer with that price and can usually turn this around within 48 hours. LCD flat panel displays at 19" and 23" are less than $100, 27" are around $150.

If you want a higher quality laptop, I would recommend going with an Intel processor i-5 to i-7 and at least 6gig of RAM if not 8gig or 12gig. Optical drive are not usually included anymore since most applications are downloaded and movies are streamed. It is worth finding laptops with SSD

(solid state hard drives), because they are four times faster than conventional hard drives and manage shock much better.   The SSD is usually smaller capacity but don't let this put you off.   Check the current hard disk space you are using, likely it will be less.   Some computers come with two drives, and SSD and conventional hard drive.   In this case the conventional drive is usually 1TB.   The cost for these laptops are usually in the range of $700 to $1200.   Also, if you need more space for data, consider just adding a flash drive for you data but get two so you have a backup.

Consider one of my free "to a good home," desktop computer with Linux.   I have one complete system available now that includes a display. Also, first come first serve but you can get on a wait list.

Upgrade your hard drive to speed up the computer. The cost of SSD have dropped in the last two years. As a result, I have been doing many upgrades of older computer to SSD drives.   The total cost for just the upgrade is usually under $130 for a 500gig drive and under $200 for a 1TB hard drive, including parts and labor.   Usually clients want me to do a standard clean up of the computer while I have it which adds just $60.   The upgrade transfers all the information, including programs (applications) so everything looks the same but is four times faster.   I have done many of these in the last year and it makes a big difference to my clients.   It takes me about two days to get the SSD and then my work takes 24 hours to do the transplant. I can do these on laptops or desktops.

Log-Me-In to Zoho

Most of my clients still prefer having me access and work on their computers remotely when issues come up.   I find that about 60% of my time is now remote access work. This benefits the customer since it is my lowest hourly rate ($60) and it also gets the customer up and running in a very short period of time.   Please don't hesitate to use this tool to be sure you don't get into deeper trouble.   I have used LogMeIn for a number of years but the prices went up dramatically when they were purchased by GoToMyPC or it might be the other way around. They are now all under the LogMeIn corporate name.   Anyway, I have wanted to find a remote application to replace this because LogMeIn does not support Linux (yet) and I found a really good alternative called Zoho.   They are based in India but have excellent support and the cost to me is about one third the amount I was paying to LogMeIn, and they support Windows, Apple (I know, I don't support Apple, but now that there is a MacPro in the house, I kind of do) and Linux.

In Closing

Much of my business is tuning up computers including adding RAM and SSD hard drives. I haven't needed to build a computer in a long time, since it is more economical to buy new or surplus computers and upgrade them. If you have specific needs, I do still offer new builds. Also, there are recycled computers available from Amazon, at much lower rates.   I purchased one for myself and for a few clients and they are working well.

Remember, clean out those dead files using Disk Cleanup and CCleaner

(https://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download) , and backup your data files. Upgrade your AVG Free or contact me to do it for you. Every quarter, run CCleaner and Malwarebytes. Also run the once-a-year free PCTools from AVG, use the one step option, then uninstall the application after, so you won't be reminded frequently to purchase it.

Thanks for reading. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you find this information helpful, please forward this email to friends and family.