Is Your Dental Practice Ready to Upgrade to Windows 10?

by Darby TechForce

There's no doubt about it – change is hard. Remember a few years back when your practice upgraded from Windows XP to Windows 7? It looked familiar at first but once you started poking around, there were a lot of changes to get used to. It may have even slowed down your workflow temporarily while your staff adjusted to the new interface.

Despite the growing pains, Windows 7 was ultimately a tremendous upgrade in terms of speed, features and safety. Dental practices have enjoyed the ease-of-use and appealing visuals of Windows 7 for years. But in January 2020, Microsoft will discontinue support for its beloved operating system, leaving users with no choice but to upgrade to Windows 10.

So what exactly does it mean to upgrade to Windows 10?

First, we'll tell you what it's not. Windows 10 is *not* an operating system update. Updates, which are sometimes called patches, are free downloads that repair features that aren't working properly, address security issues and improve the operation of hardware and peripherals. While updates are important, *upgrading* your operating system is a much bigger deal and will make significant changes to your practice computers.

System upgrades involve completely removing your current operating system and replacing it with a newer version. In this case, replacing Windows 7 with Windows 10. Don't worry; as long as you have support plans in place, you won't have to re-purchase your practice management and digital imaging software. Software manufacturers typically release free updates for their products that make them compatible with new versions of operating systems.

Do I really have to upgrade?

Yes. Ultimately, upgrading to Windows 10 is something you need to do for the safety of your practice and your patients.

Microsoft is still releasing updates for Windows 7, which means your computers are protected…for now. But come January, any problems that arise won't be patched up. Therefore, any computers still running Windows 7 will be vulnerable to cyberattacks – which can cripple your practice and reputation. Knowing that your network is unprotected and failing to do something about it puts your patients' protected health information (ePHI) at risk. If a data breach occurs because you didn't upgrade, it will be considered a HIPAA violation.

1.800.886.2093 | darbytechforce.com

How do I know if my practice is ready to upgrade?

Before upgrading to Windows 10, complete these five essential steps:

Back Up Your Data: It's critical to first make sure you have a recent backup of all of your practice data stored in a secure, off-site location. As we mentioned, upgrading to Windows 10 means you'll have to wipe your computers and server completely clean and re-configure your network once the installation is complete. Failing to back up your patient files and other practice data means you could lose everything in the process. This is called a data breach and could result in significant HIPAA fines.

Ensure Your Computers are Powerful Enough to Run Windows 10: It's important that your computers are powerful enough to run the new operating system. If it's been at least five years since you've purchased new computers, you may need to invest in new hardware to ensure proper speed and performance.

If Necessary, Purchase New Computers before the End of the Year: If your practice's computers are out of date, be sure to purchase new ones before the Windows transition at the end of the year. The sooner you do this, the better! With the holidays, there may be a backlog of people requesting computers and worst case scenario, your practice might not get its new machines until February – leaving you unsupported and unprotected for two months.

Install Windows 10 and Download All Compatible Software Updates: Now you can install Windows 10 on your practice computers. Following installation, don't forget to download updates to maximize efficiency and protect your systems from vulnerabilities that could be exploited by hackers.

Restore Your Network from Off-Site Backups: Now you can safely restore your practice data from the secure, off-site location you stored it in Step 1!

If you don't have someone on your team who can help you check these items off your to-do list, consider working with a dental IT company who can assist you with backups, upgrades and selecting the right hardware and software for your needs.

Now is the time to upgrade to Windows 10!

When technology isn't your first language, upgrading your operating system can seem like an overwhelming process. Luckily, it doesn't have to be. At Darby TechForce, we specialize in helping dental practices get the most out of their technology so they can focus on what's most important. Our dental IT experts can assist with all of your technology needs such as securely backing up your most important files, making recommendations on hardware and software, and integrating everything in your office so all components work together flawlessly.

The IT pros at Darby TechForce can also help you upgrade to Windows 10. With 20 years of experience in dental IT, we have a process in place to minimize downtime and revamp the entire network of an average size dental practice in just one day. We use both on-site and remote network engineers to get your practice up and running quickly so you can keep more patients in your chair.

Call us today at **(800) 886-2093** to find out how we can help smooth your transition to Windows 10.

darby **techforce**
powered by HTI