

No. 204. When You Finally DO Upgrade to 7...

by Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR
715 N Dries Street, Saukville 53080 (262) 268-1949
wb9rqr@att.net

Last time we explored how to keep XP going for a few more years. But eventually, you will want to migrate upward to a newer version of Windows. Although Windows 10 is on the horizon (I have just heard it will be a free upgrade for Win 7/8/8.1 and Win Phone 8.1 users), it appears at this writing that Windows 7 is still the most desirable version higher than XP. Let us therefore look at some of the factors that you will need to consider.

My suggestion: get the OEM version. What the heck is that? OEM stands for **O**riginal **E**quipment **M**anufacturer, available online from various retailers for significantly fewer dollars than the regular boxed versions that you might pick up from Best Buy or other local stores. You are not supposed to buy OEM versions unless you are building PCs to sell to others, and sometimes (rarely, today) you might be asked to also buy a USB cable or other little hardware purchase to verify you are a builder (just do it if asked). I have recently (27Dec14) seen OEM versions of Win7 Home Premium for under \$30, though most seem priced at \$60-80.

The OEM version comes with no support from Microsoft, which accounts for the cheaper version, though the usual Help Files are included. OEM versions will also not come with a fancy retail box like you might get at Best Buy. You'll get just an install disk with a product key (and make sure you get both of those). Also, the license is tied to the first computer you install it on. If you change to a different model of motherboard after installing it, the OS (Operating System) may well stop working until you call Microsoft and convince them to let you use it.

Although usual versions of Win7 come in Upgrade and Full versions, OEM versions will not let you directly upgrade from XP or another OS. That's OK. You want to install it as a Full Version, which means a clean install. You will need to copy all your "stuff" off of your machine before you start the installation process, because everything will be deleted. That includes all your documents, pictures, data and application settings. Then you will need to move back your documents and re-install your applications after Windows 7 is up and running. Sound like lots of work? It is, but it is absolutely the best way to go. My suggestion: bite the bullet and do it right! When finished, it will be worth the clean install.

What about 32-bit versus 64-bit versions? My suggestion: get 64-bit. Microsoft tells you that the 32-bit versions will support 4 GB of RAM (Random Access Memory, the memory "sticks" that you pay good money for). That is really not true. Because of the way the OS handles memory access, 32-bit versions of Win 7 can only access about 3.1 GB of RAM, so if you have 4 GB in your machine, nearly a quarter of it is unused. The 64-bit version of Home Premium can access up to about 16 GB of RAM. By the way, you should plan on providing at least 4 GB for your new OS.

OK, now which version? Most folks will be perfectly happy with Windows 7 Home Premium. This version will provide a good list of capabilities without breaking the bank. If cost is no impediment, Windows 7 Professional might be better, though many of us will never use the additional features that this version supplies. My suggestion is Windows 7 Home Premium.

Next time, I will discuss approaching the installation. Happy Computing!

"I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper."

--Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in "Gone With The Wind".