

Managed PC Refresh: The Clear Path to your organisations PC Refresh

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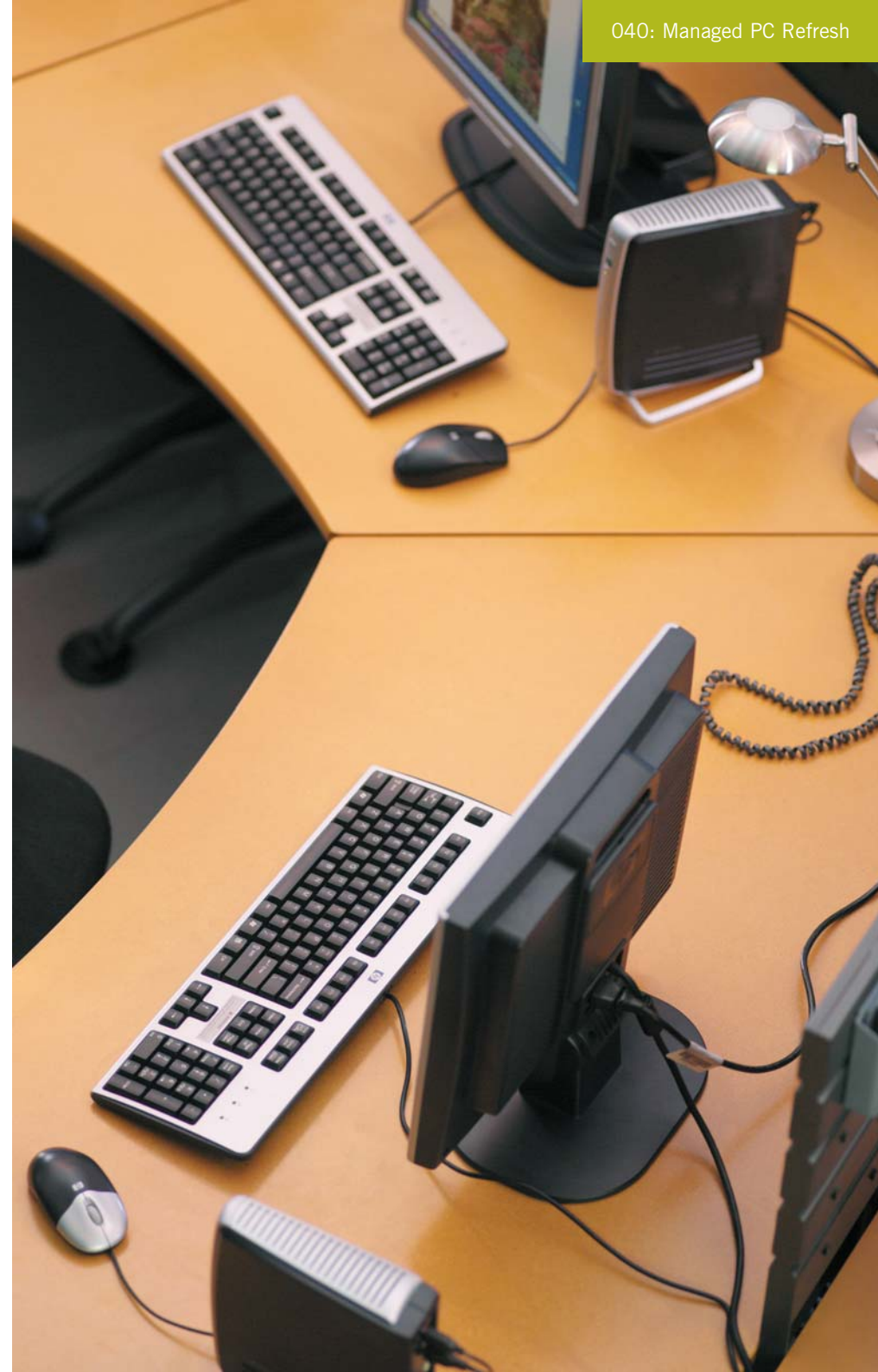
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The economic downturn of the last few years has forced many corporations to overextend the useful life of their PC investments. Many of today's enterprise PCs are four or more years old, run on outdated operating systems (OSs), are costly to service and are technologically dated. Large-scale PC refresh initiatives have been hindered by overworked IT departments, staff reductions, logistical challenges and large capital outlay requirements. To overcome these challenges, enterprises are turning to managed PC refresh providers that specialise in sourcing, implementation and deployment of IT upgrade initiatives.

What is driving the need for PC refresh?

A number of industry developments are accelerating the need for corporations to update employee PCs. One of the largest drivers is Microsoft's decision to conclude support for Windows 98 and NT Workstation 4. With this decision comes an end to technical support and important OS security patches. For businesses in the health care, insurance and financial services industries, this is a chief driver. Gartner estimates that investments in PCs running Windows 98 or NT Workstation 4 will not be viable for 70 percent of enterprises in 2005.

Independent software developers are following Microsoft's lead and phasing out support for applications installed on older OSs. Network and printer drivers are also affected. As businesses purchase new peripherals, it will become more difficult to find supported drivers for PCs with older OSs.





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Another important factor is the rising cost of supporting older PCs. Giga Research reports that hardware failures increase after a PC is four years old. They explain that "the majority of organisations will spend more on desktops if they standardise on a four-to five-year refresh cycle than with a three-year refresh cycle."

Forrester revealed that notebooks have a higher likelihood of failure in the third and fourth year of use, often occurring outside of warranties and incurring additional costs. In addition, move, add and change procedures become more complex and standardisation is harder to achieve when older PCs remain deployed.

New technology is also driving PC refresh initiatives. For example, notebooks with built-in wireless capabilities – such as those with Intel® Centrino™ chips – are prompting businesses to update their mobile workforce PCs. Additionally, more complex applications are demanding faster processors, further supporting the need for a PC refresh.

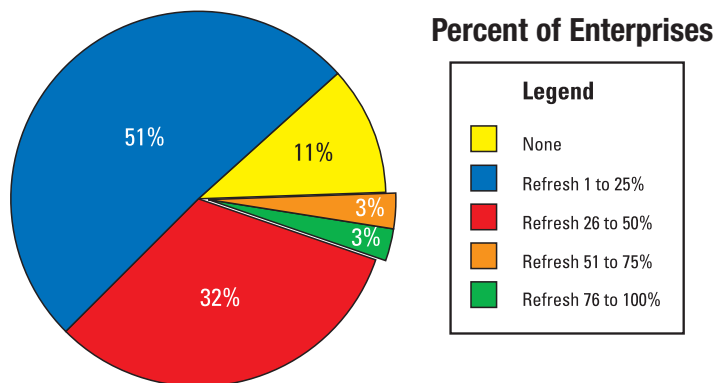


Figure 1: Research from Forrester reveals the percentage of PCs enterprises plan to replace or upgrade. Despite the immediacy of the need, many enterprises are not moving forward with significant PC refresh initiatives. Figure 1 illustrates that only 6 percent of enterprises plan to refresh more than half of their PCs between 2004 and 2005. A number of management and logistical challenges are preventing wide-scale upgrades.

The challenges of PC refresh

For enterprises that want to coordinate and manage PC refresh initiatives in-house, there are many challenges that must be overcome to ensure a smooth implementation. Some significant challenges include:

Lack of in-house experience: For many enterprises, the last major refresh was performed before the year 2000. Often, in-house IT personnel lack the experience necessary to take on the complicated task of refreshing PCs.

Extensive planning: The process of assessing the current state of PCs within the organisation and identifying areas that need updates is a massive undertaking. Issues such as interoperability, software compliance, application updates, inventory location and lease schedules must be examined. Asking the right questions and knowing what to look for requires comprehensive planning.

Logistics hurdles: The logistics involved with PC refresh can be overwhelming. Challenges include storage, shipping, project management, reporting and field communication. A large-scale PC refresh project requires diligent management, tracking and monitoring of multiple resources.

Physical space constraints: The on-site, physical storage of hundreds or thousands of PCs is challenging for most enterprises. New incoming equipment must be coordinated and the proper disposal of outgoing equipment must be accounted for. Just-in-time delivery is the expectation, but often not the reality.

Working with many locations: Multiple buildings spread across many cities further complicates PC refresh. Many resources must be scheduled and remote workers must be considered.

Avoiding downtime: Performing a PC refresh without impacting downtime is a challenge. Most enterprises cannot afford any user downtime, forcing a PC refresh to occur in the evening and





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on weekends. If the project is performed after-hours, issues such as technical support availability and accessing secure rooms can slow progress.

Integration and testing: Mission-critical applications must work on new systems and extensive testing must be performed. Software images need to be developed for different employee groups and personal settings must be migrated to new machines.

Training: Training employees and the help desk on a new OS, equipment and applications is a large undertaking. In addition, temporary resources must be trained.

Proper disposal: Properly discarding old PCs has legal and environmental implications. Software must be removed, company confidential data must be scrubbed and certain components must be discarded in compliance with WEEE standards and industry regulations.

The solution: Managed PC Refresh

A wide-scale PC refresh program has not been performed by most enterprises in many years, causing businesses to underestimate the size and challenges of such a project. To overcome the logistical and staffing challenges common with major PC refresh initiatives, enterprises are turning to managed PC refresh providers.

Managed PC refresh is the professional management of all aspects of a PC refresh initiative – from sourcing PCs and notebooks to the timely deployment of the new PCs. An outside vendor that specialises in upgrading technology across the enterprise performs the service.

Managed PC refresh provides enterprises the ability to refresh PCs in a standardised way, minimising the impact on productivity, providing centralised management, helping businesses remain within budget and providing efficient rollout schedules.

The typical managed PC refresh initiative includes extensive planning, the formation of a project team, efficient execution and the opportunity for lifecycle PC management.

The components of a managed PC refresh program

A comprehensive managed PC refresh program includes everything from planning the implementation to total PC lifecycle management for years to come.

Planning and methodology: Developing a plan and methodology involves the process of assessing the current state of the enterprise, identifying users who will be affected by the refresh, pinpointing locations for upgrading, revealing technology platforms and setting priorities. An outline of the necessary steps is prepared and includes implementation, user training, support personnel changes, contract and warranty updates, license agreement impacts and desktop asset management.

Forming the project team: Developing a project team involves coordinating both external advisers and internal decision makers. The project team traditionally involves personnel from departments ranging from procurement to support, as well as users and IT staff. Outside consultants typically aid with deployment, project management, field delivery, distribution and integration.

Execution: The execution phase begins with the acquisition of PCs, software and other components based on agreed-upon standards. For example, different departments will require the use of notebooks or desktops and specialty applications. Products must be acquired, configured, tested, integrated and deployed. The right equipment must be delivered to the right users and old equipment must be disposed properly. Other execution aspects include back-end support processes and the management of equipment leases.

Lifecycle management: A well-managed PC refresh initiative should open the door for lifecycle management of PCs. With lifecycle management comes asset tracking, integration with financial systems to reveal the total cost of ownership, software license management, asset management, support services and a technology plan to renew PCs on a regular basis.



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The benefits of managed PC refresh initiatives

A managed PC refresh program overcomes all of the challenges identified in this paper and provides additional advantages. Benefits include:

- **For-hire expertise:** Augments in-house experience with trained PC refresh professionals.
- **Extensive planning:** Provides a proven methodology and planning guidance to ensure the project progresses to a successful outcome.
- **Logistics support:** The PC refresh vendor handles the complex logistics management procedures.
- **Off-site product storage:** Product is stored at off-site facilities, tested and then shipped ready to implement at the client site.
- **Multi-location accommodation:** An experienced PC refresh provider can easily accommodate many physical office locations and home-based users.
- **Downtime eliminated:** Fully trained PC refresh personnel work around employee schedules without disrupting business, eliminating unnecessary downtime.
- **Integration and testing:** Extensive integration and testing are performed in simulation labs and tested in the enterprise environment prior to deployment, eliminating dead on arrivals.
- **Training:** Guidance is provided for training the help desk and users across the enterprise. In some cases, additional help desk personnel can be provided during the launch.
- **Proper disposal:** Product is disposed per WEEE regulations, applications are removed and data is deleted from PCs.
- **Enhanced productivity:** Newer systems will provide enhanced productivity and faster performance for employees.
- **Economic advantage:** Significant cost efficiencies are gained by purchasing equipment in bulk. Support costs are also lowered because new PCs are more reliable and are under manufacturer warranty, reducing service calls and substantially lowering the total cost of ownership.
- **Greater security:** As newer OSs are continually updated, corporations avoid security vulnerabilities and are provided enhanced protections for intellectual property.

- **Lifecycle management:** Managed PC refresh sets the stage for a lifecycle management strategy that affords companies opportunities to refresh technology on a scheduled basis.

What to look for in a managed PC refresh provider

When looking for a managed PC refresh vendor, many key issues should be examined. A qualified partner should provide the following:

Developed, proven methodology: Seek a vendor with a field-tested methodology that has been refined and proven in IT deployment projects of varying scale.

Experience in the enterprise: The ideal vendor should have extensive experience working with the challenges faced by businesses. The vendor must be able to efficiently process hundreds or thousands of PCs each month while not compromising quality. The vendor should also be able to provide references to back up its claims and must be able to meet the multi-location needs of many enterprises.

Project management: The support of certified project managers and project management professionals is a requirement in projects of this type.

ISO 9001:2000-certified integration: Seek a vendor that can perform custom integration, configuration, testing, authentication and activation at an ISO 9001:2000-certified configuration centre to guarantee consistency, ensure thorough testing, and reduce the deployment time on site. The vendor should also have testing and high quality assembly procedures that eliminate dead-on-arrivals.

Vendor agnostic: Work with providers that are not limited to specific manufacturers or software vendors so the best solution can be developed for each need, based on all available options. In addition, work with a vendor that has strong partnerships and licensing support for multiple software developers, ensuring excellent pricing and access to available inventories.



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Asset disposal: Seek a vendor that meets the WEEE standards for asset disposal, can provide certificates of destruction and can certify that data is securely removed from PCs.

Support: The ideal vendor should be able to support the needs of multi-location enterprises via field teams and centralised hot swap locations.

Technology refresh: The vendor should provide the option to extend refresh services beyond the PC with refresh services covering storage, servers, networking, remote access capabilities and security.

Lifecycle management: The vendor should offer full PC lifecycle management services, including asset tracking, integration with multiple systems, license management, asset management, support services and a technology plan to renew PCs on a regular basis.

Simplify PC refresh with Insight

As one of the world's largest providers of IT products and services, Insight offers proven strategies and practices to streamline the steps, reduce the risks and ensure success of critical IT deployments, including PC refresh. Leveraging its proven methodology, certified project management practice, ISO 9001:2000-certified Custom Configuration and its nation-wide services capability, Insight has successfully executed a number of large and medium-scale PC refresh projects. Insight features a comprehensive lifecycle management program that helps enterprises reduce the ongoing costs of PC refresh, including trade-in, remarketing and asset disposal programs.

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