The Executive's Guide to Windows 8

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Introduction

Windows 8's arrival has triggered an avalanche of speculation, criticism, optimism, and analysis. And no wonder. Windows 8 represents a dramatic shift away from the incremental changes we've grown used to since Windows 95. Proponents suggest that Windows 8 will bring greater flexibility, lower costs, and increased productivity. Critics say that the OS offers little business benefit and that the new interface will only confuse users and require extensive training.

One thing is certain: IT decision makers have many factors to consider when determining what their organization might gain—or lose—from a Windows 8 upgrade. In this guide, you'll see what industry analysts and IT professionals think about the new OS, who is planning a Windows 8 deployment (and who is holding back), the reasons behind that go/no-go decision, and what Microsoft's strategy is likely to mean for corporate IT down the road.

Does it make sense to upgrade?

Depending on who you listen to, Windows 8 is a brilliant reimagining of the operating system paradigm, a consumer-oriented platform that will succeed only with the mobile device crowd, a design catastrophe that's ill-suited for anyone who needs to do serious work, or Microsoft's only recourse in a world where PCs are facing extinction.

Or perhaps it's a little bit of all those things.

Here's what IT leaders need to focus on when they evaluate the pros and cons of a Windows 8 migration.

Windows 8: Four big takeaways for business and IT

By Jason Hiner

You're going to hear a lot about the hits and misses of Windows 8 over the next few weeks. You'll read wildly divergent reviews of Windows 8's flagship device, the Microsoft Surface. But if you are a business decision maker or an IT professional and you are trying to sort out what Windows 8 has to offer and whether it is a good fit in your company, here are the four most important factors you need to understand.

> People who are used to Windows will be confused by Windows 8 at first, and people who are familiar with iPhone or iPad are not going to be able to figure out how to use a Windows 8 tablet right away.

1: The learning curve is steep and training is required

With Windows 8, Microsoft is making the most radical change in the history of Windows. Yes, this is even bigger than the launch of Windows 95. Why? Because Microsoft is completely rewriting the idea of what it means to use a computer. The old file and folder metaphor is gone. The visual image of a desktop workspace is history (except for legacy apps). In fact, Microsoft has done away with metaphors from the physical world and unnecessary graphics altogether and replaced them with plain fonts and boxes. This makes Windows much more adaptable to different screen sizes and much more touch-friendly.

I applaud Microsoft for its boldness in moving the Windows platform forward. This will improve computing for the next decade. But in the next breath, I have to issue a warning to businesses that want to support Windows 8: The learning curve is steep. Windows 8 is designed for touch screens and it is generally user friendly. But the user interface is not as self-evident as the iPhone or the iPad. You're not going to be able to hand it to a toddler or a technophobe and have them immediately start navigating it without instructions.

Of course, it's also more capable than iOS in many ways, but that comes at the price of complexity. People who are used to Windows will be confused by Windows 8 at first, and people who are familiar with iPhone or iPad are not going to be able to figure out how to use a Windows 8 tablet right away. Training will be to be required.

2: Security has improved in practical ways

One of the biggest behind-the-scenes improvements in Windows 8 involves security. While that's not very flashy or noticeable, it's something that will improve the lives of users by preemptively protecting them from a lot of the things that can cause their computers to slow down, or worse, be compromised by hackers or malware. The main thing you need to know about Windows 8 security is that it makes Web browsing safer, it makes using browser extensions safer, and it makes downloading and using apps safer.

3: Windows RT has business restrictions

There are important differences between Windows 8 and Windows RT. Microsoft has not done a good job of communicating those differences, especially in relation to the Microsoft Surface tablets. Windows RT is basically a "lite" version of Windows 8 that runs on ARM processors, which means that it can run on smaller, less expensive machines with much better battery life. At the Windows 8 launch event on October 25th, Microsoft Windows chief Steven Sinofsky called it, "a new and exciting member of the Windows family."

Devices running Windows RT look and feel exactly like Windows 8, and that's part of the problem. A lot of consumers and businesses will probably buy devices like the new Microsoft Surface (running Windows RT), being launched at the same time as Windows 8. Despite the promise of these machines being more powerful than other competitive tablets and devices, consumers will find that they can't run traditional Windows apps, and businesses will discover that they can't connect to a Windows domain. And while Windows RT devices include a version of Microsoft Office 2013, it is the Home & Student edition, which doesn't include Microsoft Outlook and isn't licensed for business use unless you buy a commercial use license.

There is enough hand-wringing over the Windows RT confusion that some are predicting that the product is DOA. I don't think the situation is that dire, but I do think businesses need to thoroughly research whether devices running Windows RT will work in their environment before deciding to support them or they will end up with some very frustrated users.

4: The Windows app ecosystem is changing—big time

With the launch of Windows 8 also comes the launch of the Windows Store—Microsoft's answer to the Apple App Store and Google Play. This radically changes the model of how software is installed on Windows and makes it much more akin to the way users install apps on smartphones and tablets. For the most part, that's a good thing. It's easier to find Windows software and faster to buy and install it, and it's in a central place where Microsoft verifies the value, safety, and authenticity of the software so that you know you're not downloading something that will infect your machine with malware.

Companies that want to deploy custom Windows apps that are restricted to their employees—or IT departments that want to deploy software the old-fashioned way by loading it on a bunch of systems themselves—will need to do what is called "sideloading" apps. That means installing apps manually instead of doing it through the Windows Store.

More for business…

Interestingly enough, at the Windows 8 launch event, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer said, "We're going to continue to add to the Windows 8 experience for business. Look for more to come." He specifically pointed out a couple of Microsoft products—Dynamics and Yammer—that will soon have updates related to Window 8.

Since the entire Windows 8 product cycle has been so heavily consumer-focused, maybe Ballmer's comments will give IT and business professionals some reason to hope for a little more attention on the enterprise side.

CIOs may have no choice in supporting Windows 8

By Scott Lowe

It's more than obvious that an enterprise migration to Windows 8 will not look like the migration to Windows 7. In fact, many organizations remain in the midst of their Windows 7 deployments and won't even consider a look at Windows 8. Other organizations have completed their Windows 7 projects, while still others remain firmly and happily planted on Windows XP.

> For organizations that have implemented BYOD policies, it will be difficult to make Windows 8 tablets an exception.

Many CIOs have indicated that Windows 8 is not currently on their radar, and many have indicated that they intend to skip Windows 8 altogether while they either await Windows 9 or stick with Windows 7 or XP. Personally, I see many XP organizations ultimately being forced to Windows 7 because of emerging compatibility issues in new third-party software releases.

For those who intend to ignore Windows 8, I don't think it's going to be quite as easy to do as it may have been to skip, say, Windows Vista. Sure, many organizations will put into place policies that prevent the installation of Windows 8 on official corporate desktops and laptops. But that alone will not prevent these same organizations from having to support it anyway.

BYOD

Primarily, Windows 8 will worm its way into organizations through BYOD initiatives, regardless of whether those initiatives are officially sanctioned. Even if an organization doesn't deploy its own Windows 8 desktops and laptops and absolutely forbids the use of personal Windows 8 desktops and laptops, it's important for CIOs to bear in mind that we're moving to a Windows 8 everywhere world. In this era, Windows 8 runs on devices that span the spectrum and include tablets and, if you count Windows Phone 8, mobile devices.

For organizations that have implemented BYOD policies, it will be difficult to make Windows 8 tablets an exception. After all, Windows 8 tablets will likely be a whole let easier to support than some other tablets. Organizations' tools may run natively on the tablet. This is not generally the case with iOS—or with Android-based devices on which it's necessary to run Windows-native applications through some kind of remote connection.

Although Windows 8 is quite different from Windows 7 in many ways, those who have experience in supporting Windows 7 won't have much trouble upgrading their skills to include Windows 8. From a support perspective, it may be easier in some ways to support Windows 8 in a BYOD scenario than it is to support other platforms.

The executive

I expect that Microsoft's Surface (Windows 8, x86-based edition) will, at least for a while, be a popular device. If Microsoft executes well, it could be a long-term winner. I also suspect that some people in the upper echelons of organizations will buy these devices and want to use them at work. This is part of the BYOD coin. But senior management, unfortunately, often has different rules, so IT may end up supporting these devices through that backdoor entrance into the company.

Feature set

Windows 8 does, in fact, carry with it some features that CIOs might find compelling, depending on the organization's needs.

Windows To Go

Windows To Go might be an answer for your need to support part-time or temporary staff. You can provide these people with a USB stick that contains Windows To Go, which is a full corporate desktop. This USB stick can be inserted into any Windows 7 or Windows 8 computer and the user will be presented with your corporate desktop image.

Direct Access

Direct Access has been improved in Windows Server 2012 and Windows 8 and provides users with a VPN without needing to use a VPN. With Direct Access, users can directly access the corporate network from anywhere. Their machines can be managed as if they were local and users get access to the resources they'd have if they were on the local network.

Sideload Windows 8 style apps

With the Enterprise edition of Windows 8, organizations will be able to sideload Windows 8 style apps without having to use the Windows Store.

Summary

Although many IT leaders are planning to skip Windows 8 altogether, forces may align that make this decision far from a slam dunk. You may end up discovering that Windows 8 is, in fact, a part of your support portfolio.

Key security improvements in Windows 8

By Patrick Lambert

Windows 8 is similar to Windows 7 in many ways. But thanks to the new interface, and the need to redo a lot of the old code that used to be inside the OS, Microsoft was able to make numerous security improvements. In fact, Windows 8 is one of the many things hackers at the latest Black Hat and DEF CON conferences went against, trying to break the OS open—and this latest Windows version came out on top.

Secure Boot

The first notable improvement is Secure Boot, which helps protect against low-level exploits and rootkits. Basically, Secure Boot is a security process shared between the OS and the UEFI (the BIOS), where PC makers can add a special detection code that requires the whole booting sequence to be signed with digital certificates. From the moment you press the power button, all the way to the login screen, you will be certain that everything is being loaded as it should be.

One of the more malicious types of malware are rootkits, because they can place themselves deep inside your system. They get loaded during the boot process before Windows has a chance to load up—nevermind any of the antivirus programs you may be running. Secure Boot prevents this type of exploit.

In a corporate environment, there's no question that this will help; it should be turned on everywhere. Some people have complained about Secure Boot because it will be mandated for all PC makers if they want the Windows logo on their machines. And when it's turned on, it prevents any other OS, such as Linux or Free-BSD, from being installed. However, PC makers have made it clear that users will be able to turn it on or off inside the UEFI options—just not on ARM-based machines.

SmartScreen

Another security improvement in Windows 8 and Internet Explorer 10 is called SmartScreen. This is a new system in which Microsoft will be keeping track of all downloads from the Internet. When you get a program online, the SmartScreen filter will look at it and see whether others have downloaded it as well. Then, it will rate the program based on how popular that particular piece of software is and whether any malware was detected in it.

If SmartScreen is turned on, and you download something that has a low rating, a warning message will appear. This will help prevent phishing attacks, where users may think they're downloading a certain popular program but instead have been duped into downloading something else.

Again, there are complaints about this feature. If you're a small independent developer, you won't have a high rating for your new updates. The way to make sure your users don't get a scary warning when downloading

your software is to obtain an approved digital certificate and get your apps signed. However, this is one more step required for developers to make Windows-approved software.

Safer apps

Windows 8 style apps are also safer than traditional Windows apps because like any modern smartphone, they each run inside their own sandbox. That means these apps can't access the whole system like traditional apps can, and there are more checks being done against them. And because these apps will be sold exclusively through the Microsoft store, the company will be able to check them before they get onto users' machines.

Windows 8 also includes an easy-to-use option to restore your entire system to a previous, safe state. While there have always been ways to do that in the past, Windows 8 makes it a lot easier. If something does infect your system, you can reinstall a clean OS in just a few clicks.

IE 10

Finally, Internet Explorer 10 also has increased security by running plug-ins in their own sandboxes and breaking tabs into different processes.

Conclusion

Overall, Windows 8 is shaping up to be an improvement on the security landscape. Does this mean it will be foolproof or that you should upgrade all your corporate systems right away? Obviously not. Any new software takes time for malware authors to poke at it and find holes. Also, upgrading to a new OS, especially one that has such a drastically different user interface, is more than just looking at the security model. If users are confused as to how to do common tasks using the new interface, it could cause a lot more nightmares for the support staff than having to deal with malware. But at least for now, we know that Microsoft is doing the right thing when it comes to security under the hood of Windows 8.

Upgrade to Windows 7 better for some companies: Avanade

By Spandas Lui

While Windows 8 is suitable for organisations across the board, an upgrade to Windows 7 will make more sense for some companies, according to Avanade CTO Adam Wengert. Partly owned by Microsoft, the consultancy firm specialises in deploying the vendor's technology to clients, which now includes the newly released Windows 8 operating system.

Armed with plenty of practical experience on the new OS, and despite Microsoft's optimism that Windows 8 will win over the enterprise, Wengert understands the reluctance of CIOs to jump on board.

Many businesses are spurning Windows 8. Credit Union Australia doesn't find the operating system compelling, and the Commonwealth Bank told ZDNet that it will be moving to Windows 8 only because there are no viable alternatives. Microsoft's Surface tablet isn't tickling the fancy of many CIOs, either.

Although Wengert thinks that Windows 8 is suitable for all businesses, he conceded that some companies are better off with Windows 7.

"In reality, if our customers are already on the road to Windows 7, or if they're on XP and want to take the next step, we think Windows 7 is a terrific place to land," he told ZDNet. "From an enterprise perspective, in terms of scalability, security, integration, and so on, Windows 7 meets the mark."

Wengert understands that CIOs may not find Windows 8 all that appealing if they are looking for an operating system to solve certain pain points. Instead, Windows 8 presents organisations with new opportunities to change how they operate, he said.

"What Windows 8 does is introduce a new element into the Microsoft suite and align it with what the vendor has always been great at, which is the desktop experience. It brings in new avenues for enterprise-quality devices to get into companies.

"This makes [mobile devices in the enterprise] more manageable and can be easily integrated as opposed to the situation we have today.

"We think organisations are going to look at Windows 8, because they have opportunities to actually improve how they do business."

Some companies will be thinking about how they can redesign the way they work to take advantage of what Windows 8 can offer, which is greater integration between desktop and mobile devices, according to Wengert.

Microsoft Australia business group leader Tina Flammer told ZDNet that features such as Windows To Go will be appealing to businesses and will be a driver for Windows 8 uptake. Windows To Go is available on

Windows 8 Enterprise version and allows users to boot an imaged version of the operating system on any device that meets minimum specification requirements.

BYOD or CYOD?

Avanade has a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy in place, where employees are encouraged to buy their own devices through a gadget fund from the company.

In light of the Windows 8 launch, the company is looking at introducing a choose-your-own-device (CYOD) option, whereby workers can pick a Windows 8-based device from a small list. This may include convertibles and tablets, such as the Microsoft Surface or Dell Latitude 10.

Despite having a BYOD policy in place, Avanade much prefers the CYOD option.

"I think CYOD is absolutely where our company is heading, and it's what we're seeing our customers lean toward," Wengert said. "We're pretty excited, because with Windows 8, you really have an opportunity to do that without sacrificing some of the security and standardisation elements companies are struggling with today across the different OSes they support."

Six business-friendly features offered by Windows Phone 8

By Ben Woods

Microsoft needs Windows Phone 8 to be a success to restore its standing in the smartphone world. In particular, the new mobile operating system contains a number of business-focused features that Microsoft hopes will help it make up the ground it has lost to iOS and Android devices.

Office and Windows 8

Perhaps one of the Microsoft platform's biggest strengths is its ability to work with its touch-friendly desktop OS and its legacy enterprise apps, such as Office—and Windows Phone 8 is no different.

All Windows Phone 8 handsets come with a non-ad supported version of Office that includes Word, Excel, OneNote, and PowerPoint but leaves out things like Access. Think of it like the free "Student" version of Office that comes preinstalled on new devices, except without the ads.

Microsoft's Office suite has undergone a significant overhaul in the last few months, and the introduction of Office 365 brought Office mobile's cloud-sync capabilities. This means that any changes made to documents or last-minute additions to that crucial PowerPoint presentation are automatically synced with versions on other devices.

"It's about you and your data rather than what device you happen to be working on," Richard Warren, technical services professional lead for Windows Phone 8 in the UK, told ZDNet at the Windows Phone launch. "Because it uses the same binaries, the same code, as on a PC, there's no messing around with formatting, so the PowerPoint presentation we can see here is exactly the same as you'd see on the screen. If we're cloud connected, we can sync all this content together."

In addition to offering a two-way content sync, it supports bookmarking. So if you're part way through editing a document and need to leave the house or office, you can pick up exactly where you left off on your phone.

Email support

Naturally, Windows Phone 8 also provides extensive email support (including Web-based services and Exchange) via Outlook Mobile and offers the option of receiving them all in one inbox, which can be filtered by account.

"You get the standard Outlook mailboxes, nice threaded conversations, and full access to your Outlook," Warren said. "If you're running an Exchange 2010 server on the back end, you get virtually all the services: 256 SSL, Information Rights Management—all of that."

Behind the scenes of the syncing is Microsoft's (also revamped) SkyDrive service, which automatically backs up documents, pictures, and other files from a Windows Phone 8 handset.

Encryption

Warren told ZDNet that corporate data on the device should stay protected, thanks to full internal storage encryption. However, in the interests of balancing consumer and BYOD demands for the devices, Microsoft made the decision not to encrypt microSD storage, to allow the removable storage (and anything saved on it) to work on other devices too.

"The SD card is Windows-readable, so I can pop it out, put it into a PC, and it will just read it." But maintaining this Windows readability meant no encryption.

"The encryption we use is hardware-based, so there's a TPM chip inside the phone that maintains the keys; if I take the card out it has no access to its keys and it becomes a non-readable piece of media."

While this obviously raises questions about the security of any data saved on external storage, Warren added that only music, videos, photos, and e-books can be stored on the card for that reason. If you try to save any other kind of file—say, a sensitive business document—to the expandable storage, it simply won't let you.

"We limit the type of data that can be stored on the SD card, and it does it through the header, not file extensions, so you can't fool it. The idea is that first, it makes it readable and second, I can segregate personal content away from business content. So when that device is being managed through a mobile device management system, it wipes the internal storage but doesn't touch your personal content," Warren said.

Mobile device management

Microsoft wants to woo businesses by allowing Windows Phone 8 to be managed by a number of tools, ranging from Exchange Active Sync (EAS), for performing things like a device wipe, to tools like MobileIron or InTune found in larger enterprises.

Business app stores

Similar to the device management aspects of the platform, Microsoft has also considered the app needs of business users, in particular the potential security risk presented by giving all employees unfettered access to the full Windows Phone 8 app store.

The solution is to allow businesses to host their own on-premise version with their own curated app content.

"It's not an easy process; we don't just give the certificates away. You have to go through a fairly rigid process to get permission to do this. We get VeriSign in to assess the situation. Once we're happy with that, we will give that organisation a subordinate code-signing certificate," Warren said. "With that they can basically build their own internal app store. That allows them to deploy line-of-business applications automatically to the devices, but it's role-based. So as you add the app store to the phone, it [realises who you are] and knows that you require these apps, these news feeds—and it delivers them automatically to a branded hub on the home screen."

However, company users are not necessarily cut off completely from the public app store. On-premise app store administrators can choose to essentially republish public apps on their own branded internal store.

Lync integration

There are other features too, like Lync feature integration into the OS, which means that when you have to join a conference call, you simply need to pull up the details of the call, press Join Online Meeting, and enter the PIN code.

Conclusion

Whether this raft of business-friendly features can stop the impending march of Apple's iOS platform into enterprises remains to be seen. But it must surely appeal to IT administrators more than alternatives such as Android.
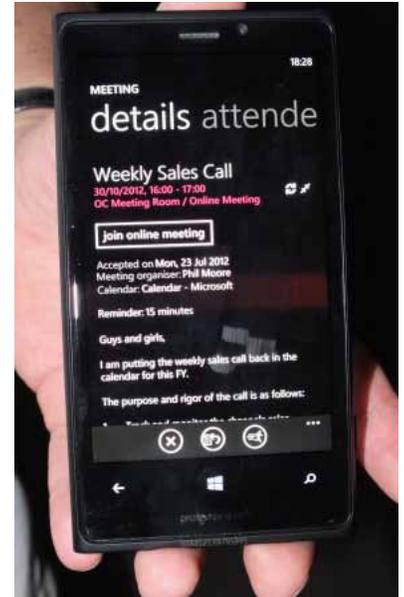
Who plans to upgrade?

Armed with the considerations outlined in the previous section, we can turn our attention to how those issues are playing out in the real world. One way to gauge where Windows 8 is headed in the business arena is by looking at enterprise adoption plans.

What are business and IT leaders saying about their plans to upgrade (or not)—and what reasons are driving their decisions? Security and tablet/mobile integration top the list for those who plan to upgrade. But the Windows 8 style UI and associated end-user training requirements are deal killers for a vast number of businesses.

Does Windows 8 make sense on business desktops? Tech chiefs are split

By Steve Ranger

Microsoft has described Windows 8 as its most important new operating system in nearly two decades—a "generational change" with a completely new user interface and a new emphasis on touch-screen computing.

Alongside the launch of its new smartphone operating system and its Surface tablet, Windows 8 is Microsoft's response to the vastly changed technology landscape it now inhabits. Tablets—most notably the iPad—are eating into sales of laptops and PCs, and Microsoft is playing catch-up on both.

The commercial pressure on Microsoft demands that it respond with a new operating system that has the feature firepower to take on its rivals. And while consumers will have little choice but to adopt the new operating system because it will come as standard when they buy a new PC, that doesn't necessarily mean corporate customers will be rushing to adopt it.

Many businesses are still using Windows XP—a sturdy workhorse of an operating system launched way back in 2001. Others are just completing upgrades to Windows 7, which went on sale in 2009. Businesses tend to upgrade slowly because of the scale of their infrastructure; for example, they need to ensure that other business applications will still work post upgrade. And the associated cost means CIOs need a good reason to upgrade in the form of clear business benefits, especially when budgets are so tight.

CIO Jury responses

TechRepublic assembled a CIO Jury panel of 12 IT chiefs to weigh in on the viability and value of Windows 8 in business. The panel was divided on the prospects for Windows 8, with some suggesting that the new features are actually off-putting rather than attractive.

When asked "Does Windows 8 makes sense on business desktops?" panel members were split evenly, which suggests that Microsoft will have to work hard to make a case for upgrading.

Cost is one issue that will hold organisations back. "Not in the current financial climate," said Richard Storey, head of IT at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

One of the most striking aspects of Windows 8 is a new user interface (UI). Gone is the Start button, and applications are presented in a way that is similar to the Live Tiles seen on a Windows Phone device. Smartphone users are used to this sort of user interface. But Kevin Quealy, director of information services and facilities at Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, warned this change might put off enterprise customers.

"The new UI would inhibit users who are used to the traditional UI. I believe businesses will turn their backs on Windows 8 unless major changes are made. Users do not want a tablet experience when working on a desktop or laptop computer."

Similarly, Mike Woodford, executive director of IT Technical Services USANA Health Sciences, said there is not much interest for business in yet another upgrade so soon after Windows 7. "Our internal testing shows that there is little in the way of additional business value that comes with the very large learning curve for the average user due to the new UI, which lacks the intuitiveness (perhaps the familiarity) of the Windows interface that everyone is comfortable with."

He added, "We are seeing very little functional value for the cost of change and pain of user transition and training."

Microsoft may find that IT departments will need good reasons why they should take the time and effort needed for such a significant upgrade. Jeff Canon, CIO of Fire and Life Safety America, said a companywide upgrade to Windows 8 would be too disruptive at this time.

"Test users in our company didn't like losing the Start button. Users stated it didn't feel as useable as Windows 7. They struggled a little bit adjusting to the new interface. Users are still excited about the potential to use the same OS and apps on their desktop/laptop and the Surface tablet, but there's significant risk to short-term productivity."

He added, "It's more likely that we'll deploy the tablets and then upgrade to Windows 8 on their laptop/desktop as users become comfortable with the new interface… if at all. Windows 7 works very well for us—no one here is jumping up and down to swap it out."

However, many of the CIOs said the use of Windows 8 by consumers will finally lead to enterprise adoption.

Afonso Caetano, CIO at J Macêdo, has been testing Windows 8 for several months. He said that while it will deliver "more advantages than any other version before," the impact to the regular desktop users will be "profound"—which means a well-structured implementation project, including training and internal "selling" of the new productivity and integration features, is needed. He also said use of the operating system is likely to start with mobile devices, such as Surface and cell phones, and then after some time, spreading through the corporate desktops and notebooks.

Meanwhile, Mike Roberts, IT director at The London Clinic, thinks success depends on the uptake of mobile devices. "As users turn to the new version, businesses must follow," he said.

Tim Stiles, CIO at Bremerton Housing Authority, said, "It will first become pervasive in the mobile environment, then migrate to the business desktop."

Adam Gerrard, CTO at Laterooms.com, said given that more of the workforce are using the latest technology at home, as well as bringing their own devices to work, it makes sense that they should be more productive using the newer interface that ships with Windows 8. In turn, he said, this should reduce the burden of training for new employees and the cost of providing support to them.

John F. Rogers, IT manager with Nor-Cal Products, said that while he was not looking forward to another upgrade cycle and all the work it entails, he is intrigued to see how this particular operating system will fit into the business desktop ecosystem, since it's something of a hybrid OS.

"Whether it makes sense will be dependent upon how well the two interfaces work together and whether end users will be able to successfully make the transition and make it work for them. I'm sure there will be some resistance to change as there always is, but I do think that as computing moves toward other input mediums such as touch, it will gradually become more the norm."

Kevin Leypoldt, IS director at Structural Integrity Associates, sees some "compelling features" for the enterprise in Windows 8. He cited the Refresh and Reset feature, which could cut down on reimaging time and costs, along with Windows to Go, client-side Hyper V, Secure Boot, and File History. But he added, "It's my opinion that this is a transitional OS for Microsoft. As so many technology pundits are saying, Windows 8 may fall into the same pattern as ME and Vista."

Jerry Justice, IT director with SS&G Financial Services, thinks it's an inevitable move for Microsoft: "They have to get away from the 'legacy' app delivery model to a more cloud-centric app model, and touch is one requirement."

John Gracyalny, VP IT at SafeAmerica Credit Union, said, "It makes as much sense as moving from Win2K to WinXP or from WinXP to Win7. The only question is when, and that is driven by when my software vendors certify it."

The CIO Jury panel:

- Jeff Cannon, CIO of Fire and Life Safety America
- Afonso Caetano, CIO at J Macêdo
- Dan Fiehn, group head of IT at Markerstudy Group
- Adam Gerrard, CTO at Laterooms.com
- John Gracyalny, vice president - IT with SafeAmerica Credit Union
- Jerry Justice, IT director of SS&G Financial Services
- Kevin Quealy, director of information services and facilities at Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia
- Mike Roberts, IT director of The London Clinic
- John F. Rogers IT manager with Nor-Cal Products
- Tim Stiles, CIO at Bremerton Housing Authority
- Richard Storey, head of IT at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Mike Woodford, executive director of IT Technical Services USANA Health Sciences

Rejected: 74% of organizations have no plans to deploy Windows 8

By Bill Detwiler

Microsoft Windows chief Steven Sinofsky has described Windows 8 as "a generational change" the likes of which hasn't been made since Windows 95. With Windows 8, Microsoft hopes to move its flagship OS beyond the PC into the fast-growing tablet market. But according to TechRepublic Pro and ZDNet research, Microsoft hasn't convinced many IT decision makers that Windows 8 is an essential OS upgrade.

In October 2012, we asked TechRepublic members to share with us their organization's plans for Windows 8. More than 1,200 people responded, and we compiled the data into our *Windows 8 Business Intentions* report. The following are five key takeaways from the report.

- **73.7 percent of respondents say their organizations have no plans to deploy Windows 8, with 23.8 percent reporting that they will skip the OS altogether.** By comparison, a 2009 ScriptLogic survey (PDF) found that 59.3 percent of 1,100 respondents had no current plans to deploy Windows 7.

Windows 8 Deployment Plans

|	
We will skip Windows 8 altogether	23.8%
We have no current plans to deploy Windows 8, but may reconsider deployment in the future	49.9%
We plan to deploy Windows 8 after the first Windows 8 Service Pack is released	4.6%
We plan to deploy Windows 8 within the next 12 months	10.7%
We plan to deploy Windows 8, but haven't set a time frame	11.0%
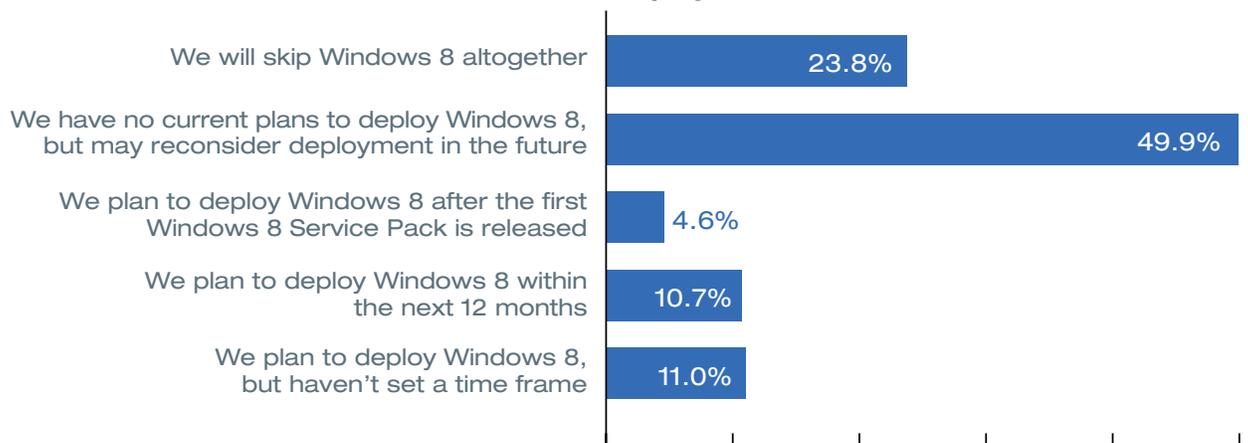
Percentage of organizations, n=1,207

- **Only 15.8 percent of respondents who run Windows XP or an earlier version as their organization's primary OS say they plan to deploy Windows 8.** This is far below the 29.7 percent of those running Windows 7 and the 50 percent of those running Windows Vista who plan to deploy Windows 8.

Windows 8 Deployment Plans by Existing Primary Operating System

	Won't deploy or no plans currently to do so	Plan to deploy
Win 7	70.3%	29.7%
Vista	50.0%	50.0%
XP or Earlier	84.2%	15.8%
Other (Apple OS X, Google Chrome, Linux)	78.4%	21.6%

■ Won't deploy or no plans currently to do so   ■ Plan to deploy
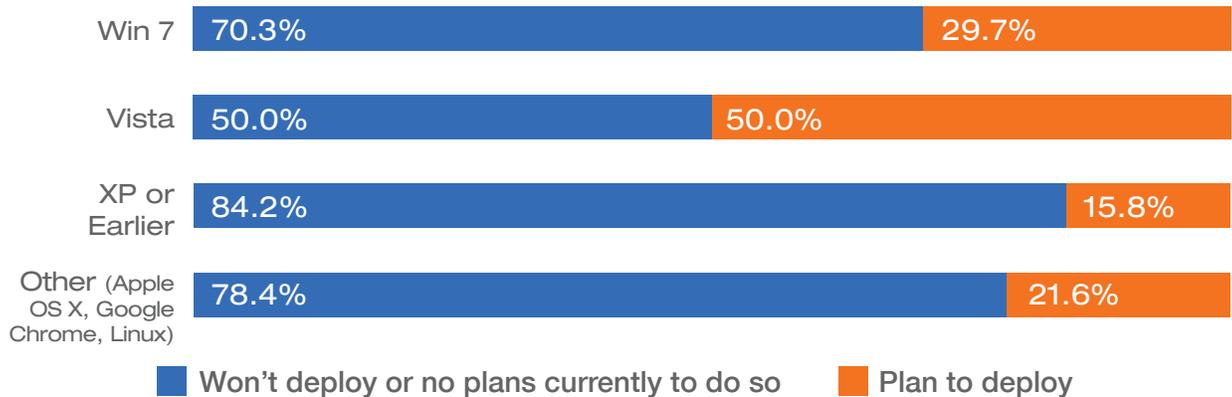
Percentage of organizations, n=1,205

- **Security and tablet/mobile integration top the list of factors rated important by respondents who plan to deploy Windows 8.** 61.2 percent of respondents rated tablet/mobile integration a 4 or 5 in importance.

- **The Windows 8 style UI and associated end-user training requirements are off-putting to many respondents.** 41.4 percent of respondents rated the Metro user interface (now called the Windows 8 style or Modern style UI) as very important to their company's decision not to deploy Windows 8. Open-ended responses from those without plans to deploy Windows 8 further illustrate respondents' concerns with the new UI.

How important were the following factors in your organization's decision not to deploy Windows 8?

"Nightmare waiting to happen in the corporate world. [The] UI will be difficult to train people [on]."

"Win 8 is not suited for an enterprise due to the metro interface and pathetic dual screen support."

"Windows 8 offers our laptop and desktop environment no compelling features. Pandering to tablets with [their] UI did not go over well at [all]."

"The user interface is just too much of a change...I did a test demo [and the users] all hated it."

"[I] feel that no start menu would be a retraining issue to [end users]."

"A reduction in productivity due to bad GUI design"

"Metro GUI is not good for traditional application uses on desktop machines. [It's] good only for tablets and handhelds."

*"We don't have touch screens. [Touch screens] seem to be important to the new OS."*

Open-ended responses to those who selected "Other" on the survey question

- The number of respondents in Australia, Canada, Europe, and the US with plans to deploy Windows 8 was lower than in China, India, and Southeast Asia. Of all the regions, the US was lowest, with just 24.6 percent of respondents reporting current deployment plans.

Windows 8 Deployment Plans by Geographic Region in which Primarily Based

Region	Won't deploy or no plans currently to do so	Plan to deploy
Australia/New Zealand	74.0%	26.0%
Canada	73.2%	26.8%
China	66.7%	33.3%
Europe	74.4%	21.6%
India	56.7%	43.3%
Southeast Asia	69.4%	30.6%
US	75.4%	24.6%

■ Won't deploy or no plans currently to do so   ■ Plan to deploy
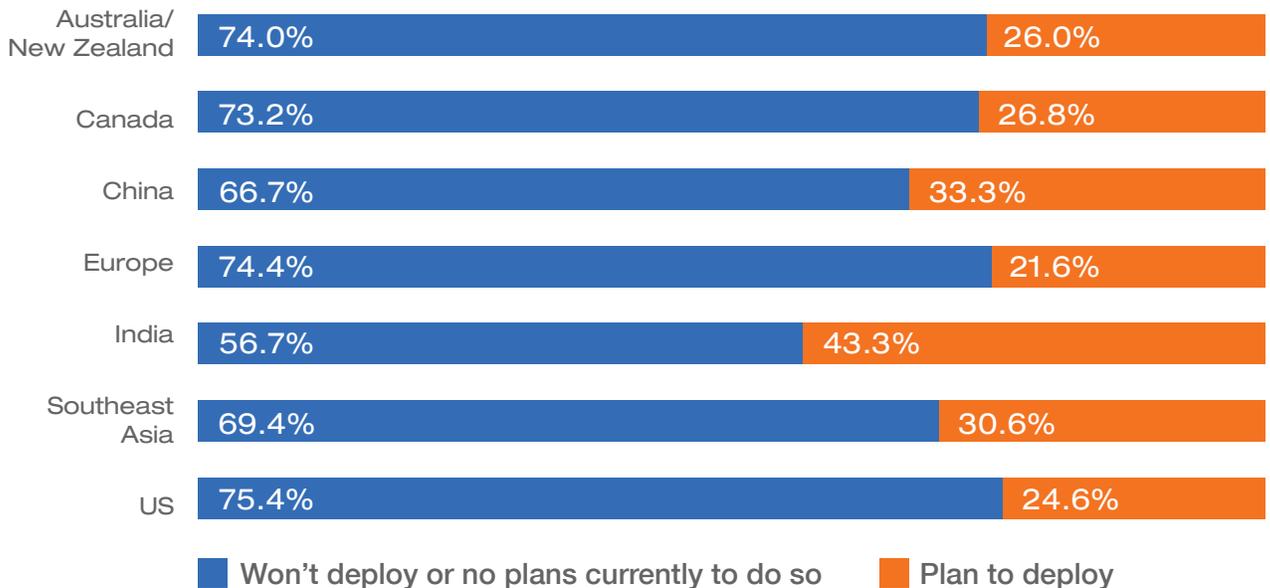
Percentage of organizations, n=1,102

These are just a few of the data points the study uncovered. The full *Windows 8 Business Intentions: Deployment Plans, Driving Factors, Roadblocks, and Strategies* includes the following:

- A breakdown of Windows 8 deployment plans by organization size, primary geographic location, and industry sector
- An in-depth look at the factors important in the decision to deploy Windows 8, such as upgrade price, administration tools, and cloud integration
- Additional analysis of the driving factor behind the decision not to deploy Windows 8, such as time, resource, and budget constraints
- A look at the business leaders involved in making the Windows 8 deployment decision
- A complete breakdown of deployment strategies—staggered, mass deployment, or hardware refresh
- Information on the percentage of computers that organizations will move to Windows 8

Why did Microsoft gamble on the new UI?

It's all about touch and tablets

There's no question that Microsoft has gone out on a limb with this radical new version of Windows. And it may be a while before we know whether Windows 8 is going to be relegated to the OS hall of shame with ME and Vista or it represents an inspired vision that will meet the needs of a rapidly changing IT landscape.

In the meantime, understanding why Microsoft made the decisions it did—and what specific challenges Windows 8 is designed to address—will help you decide whether deploying the new version makes sense for your organization.

Surface, Windows 8, and Windows Phone 8: Has Microsoft pulled off its biggest reinvention ever?

By Steve Ranger

October was a (re)defining month for Microsoft, with the unveiling of three key products in less than a week—all aiming to deliver one message: that Microsoft is not only relevant but central to the post-PC world.

The near-simultaneous launches of Microsoft Surface, Windows 8, and Windows Phone 8 show that Microsoft is mustering its armies for the battle of ecosystems with Apple and Google.

So what do these products add to Microsoft's strategy? Let's take a look at each element, one by one.

> The near-simultaneous launches of Microsoft Surface, Windows 8, and Windows Phone 8 show that Microsoft is mustering its armies for the battle of ecosystems with Apple and Google.

Windows 8

Windows 8 is a daring move for Microsoft, a company that has always been more comfortable with incremental updates rather than revolution. But with the Start Button banished and a new emphasis on touch for many uses, revolutionary is just what Windows 8 is.

For Microsoft, such a change in emphasis and a statement of intent was a necessity—the company needed to show that Windows could live on beyond the increasingly irrelevant PC, especially on tablets.

But the changes to the UI will take a long time for consumers and businesses to adapt to. In making this leap, Microsoft may secure its long-term relevancy, but it will take a hit in the short term when it comes to take-up of Windows 8.

Surface

Microsoft probably envisioned its Surface tablet as an arrow aimed directly at the heart of Apple, but mixed reviews probably means it's unlikely to hit that target. But don't underestimate the power of an enormous install base: Apple desktops are still in the minority (and Chromebooks even more so), meaning the vast majority of businesses and consumers will still be looking for a Windows-based device next time they upgrade.

The existence of Surface (and the Windows RT and Windows 8 devices on the way) will at least give those buyers an option for a Windows tablet that hasn't existed until now—in which case, it's done its job. And as I've pointed out elsewhere, hardware is a key way of owning the relationship with the consumer. So being in the hardware business with the Surface (and most likely Microsoft-built phones in future) is now essential.

Windows Phone 8

Windows Phone 7 was acclaimed by some but bought by few. However, Windows Phone 8 could deliver the user experience and integration across devices (via SkyDrive and potentially via its support for NFC) that might give consumers and businesses a reason to make the jump to Microsoft's mobile OS.

To my mind, the Windows Phone UI has now overtaken iOS and Android in terms of elegance, and some of the hardware that runs the OS makes the iPhone look positively dowdy. It's unlikely to unseat iOS or Android any time soon. But with more apps and enough marketing support, Windows Phone 8 stands a decent chance of improving Microsoft's standing in the smartphone world, with analyst predictions that it could be the number three mobile OS by 2017.

Conclusion

So has Microsoft pulled off a reinvention? In the short term, not quite. Windows 8 will take a lot of getting used to, Surface hasn't so far been the smash hit with reviewers that Microsoft hoped for, and Windows Phone 8 is still building from a very low base.

But what Microsoft has done is set out a comprehensive strategy encompassing touch, tablets, and smart-phones that is consistent—and that Apple and Google will have to take seriously—and in that it has suc-ceeded. How Microsoft supports and delivers on this strategy over the next year will be key.

Windows 8 is only one part of Microsoft's brave new world

By Simon Bisson

Microsoft's big launch in late October spanned three days in three cities, two operating systems, one device, and a flagship conference. New phones and tablets are great for consumers, and for enterprises, and a new OS opens up new possibilities for developers. But there's a bigger story behind it all.

That one big launch or, rather, re-launch, is the most interesting thing to come out of Microsoft's big week: the company's reinvention of itself as the home of a modern, user-centric platform that covers both software and hardware to deliver services to users—one that's ready to set the computing agenda for the next 10 years.

But why the re-launch, and why now? There's a problem that faces all companies, a life-or-death moment that can mean a future of growth—or of stagnation and eventual irrelevance. It's what Harvard professor Clayton Christensen called *the innovator's dilemma*. How can you reinvent a business on the fly, with no opportunity to hit a pause button?

IBM did it by allowing its Global Services consulting business to grow, turning the old IBM into a rump organisation that still makes money but has stopped being the engine that drives the business.

Microsoft's changing environment

Microsoft's challenge is more complex. The environment in which the company operates is changing, from the way people buy and deploy technologies to the underlying silicon that powers our world of software.

What can a company built on a set of core products do, especially when those products are at heart more than a decade old? You can't just rip them up and start again—you have to change completely, and as quickly as possible, while bringing along as many of your customers as you can.

The answer for Microsoft is twofold. First, it's making a big bet on building a new business in its Azure cloud platform that could one day overshadow the rest of the organisation, while still building it on the structure of its current tools.

Second, it's reinventing—or as it reiterates, reimagining—its core products, replacing disparate, often incompatible, foundations with one single Windows everywhere, from phone to tablet to desktop to server and from office to home to street to car.

The result is a wholesale reinvention of Microsoft and an end to the internal rivalries that used to hold the company back. Reimagined and reinvigorated, the new Microsoft is a very different organisation. It all adds up to what the big launch was all about: the delivery of a coherent vision that's been missing for much of the past decade.

Windows is the foundation of Microsoft's future, but it's a Windows that's quite different from the Windows of old. Windows 8 puts natural user interfaces front and centre, much like the new Windows kernel-powered Windows Phone. With a variant of the same kernel in phone, tablet, desktop, server, and cloud, Microsoft can now offer a single programming model that scales from pocket to Azure.

Apps that run on any Microsoft platform

Looking at the new Microsoft platform, it's clear that the transformation has been planned for some time. In the past few years, Microsoft evangelists have been encouraging developers to work with modern design patterns, including the Model-View-Controller pattern that's at the heart of delivering applications that can run on any of the company's platforms.

Using the new portable libraries, core business logic can be wrapped to run on phone and PC, with separate user interfaces. Similarly, new tools in Azure allow services to be built that run on mobile devices, including iOS, and on desktop PCs and tablets.

The new Microsoft has its eyes clearly set on the future, aiming to define more than the next decade of computing and providing in today's tools and technologies an inkling of the world we'll be inhabiting in 2032, two decades from now.

That's where another side to the reinvention of Microsoft comes in, one that takes advantage of new trends in machine learning and in Big Data and taps into the fundamental work in computer science that's been pursued at Microsoft Research.

Despite all the work we've done over the years, and all the advances in technologies, computers and smartphones don't live up to their potential. They are devices that both measure and mediate our personal contexts. They're where we plan what we're doing, where we navigate to a destination. They know where we are, what we're doing, who we're doing it with—and as a result can be used to indicate what we might do in the future.

For an example of what is happening here, take a look at the new Local Scout service in Windows Phone 8. Instead of a dumb local search application, it's designed to learn your preferences, using your social networks and your history to generate results tailored to your tastes and filtered by the preferences of your friends.

It's an approach that uses advanced computer science to deliver a user-centred result. Sure, it's not perfect today. But this sort of deep personal analytics is the shape of things to come.

Windows 8 only a transition

Microsoft's sea change is the result of an acceptance of that future and a realisation that the company has to change to build it. Windows 8 and Windows Phone 8 are the public face of that change, but they are only a transition—a step away from the world of computing we've known, to a new one, powered by smart devices and cloud services, delivering context wherever we are and whatever we're using.

It's a long way from the Microsoft that gave us Windows 95 and Office, but not so far from the one that's been quietly constructing a massive gaming network and designing the data centres and software needed to keep it running 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In Shakespeare's final play, *The Tempest*, Miranda, suddenly exposed to a wider world than one island, cries out, "O wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, That has such people in't."

Peel back the new user interface, plug into the new APIs, and there are many goodly creatures in the new Microsoft and in its re-launched platform. Now that they're here, it's up to Microsoft's developers and the larger community of software engineers and computer scientists to use them and build the compelling user interfaces, applications, and services that customers are demanding.

A brave new world indeed.

Microsoft places a heavy bet on Surface

By Patrick Gray

The release of Microsoft's Surface tablet signals a major push for the company on several fronts. At a high level, Surface marks Microsoft's reentry into the tablet market, one that it helped create in the early 2000s, only to see limited acceptance—and eventually, Apple dominated the market with its launch of the iPad.

Superficially, this seems like another entry into the "Look, Ma, I have a tablet, too!" category. But it's noteworthy because it's Microsoft's first foray into a major piece of hardware, one of the first "flagship" tablet-style devices running Windows 8, and the first major piece of hardware running Windows RT, the tablet-focused version of Windows 8 that's targeted toward the optimized ARM-based processor.

Initial reports indicate that Microsoft has bet heavily on this particular tablet, producing an initial run of five million units at a starting price of $499 (USD) apiece. In my mind, this move also marks some boldness and risk-taking from a company that seemed content to give up on innovator status in the last few years, cashing checks from its desktop OS and Office suite rather than attempting to change computing as we know it.

> It remains to be seen whether users can be bothered to jump aboard an entirely new platform that encompasses hardware and core OS functionality.

Own it

While Microsoft has taken some flak for producing its own hardware, this is a necessary move. I've owned several past tablet PCs, and the experience and good ideas represented by the platform were marred by poor driver support, inadequate batteries, high price tags, and a lack of interesting hardware.

Apple has long realized the benefit of tightly integrating hardware and software, and if Microsoft can successfully drive a hybrid strategy, whereby it releases flagship devices and maintains a cadre of hardware vendors filling in the gaps, some interesting things might happen. If nothing else, Microsoft has already set a high bar on the hardware front. This may do for the Windows-based tablet what competition from the likes of the MacBook Air did for the ultralight PC laptop category.

Looking good

Microsoft has apparently also hired some industrial and graphics designers, a marked departure from the past, when most of the visual tweaks to its products were geeky or more sizzle than steak. The dramatic change to the Windows 8 interface has CIOs raising a skeptical eyebrow—but it is certainly pushing computing in a different direction and represents far more bold thinking than pretty windows and animations.

Where it could all go wrong

There's a lot to like about the moves Microsoft is making. But it remains to be seen whether users can be bothered to jump aboard an entirely new platform that encompasses hardware and core OS functionality. I've talked to quite a few people who think that desktop- and laptop-type platforms represent the past. The majority of their computing interactions take place in browsers. Even in the corporate environment, Outlook and Office do the majority of the desktop-based work, and all the "action" happens in Web or proprietary-client applications.

For these people, consumers and corporate customers, Windows 8 with its new interface represents an answer to an unasked question, with Windows 7 essentially "good enough." Considering quite a few major companies still run the venerable Windows XP, Windows 8 may be a bridge too far.

One of the criticisms of the iPad, that it's just a "big iPhone," is also its biggest strength. The interface is no-frills and essentially gets out of the way so you can interact with your content and applications. Even with high-quality hardware, a new platform that's completely different from anything, except perhaps Windows Phone, may be a tough sell to a public wary of the "platform du jour."

While there are many unanswered questions around Surface and the raft of risks the platform presents, it's exciting to see a resurgent Microsoft that's breaking out of its rut, has learned a thing or two about design, and is willing to abandon decades-old computing conventions and partner relationships. Betting big has big risks, but quiet stagnation is equally risky and perhaps even more painful.

Microsoft still confident in wooing enterprise with Windows 8

By Spandas Lui

Windows 8 has been met with a <u>tepid reception from the enterprise sector.</u> But Microsoft expects to win businesses over with the new operating system's mobile security and management features to address the rise of the mobile workforce, according to Microsoft Australia business group lead Tina Flammer.

At the Australian Windows 8 launch, there was a lot of emphasis on what the operating system can bring to consumers and small businesses. Those are the segments Microsoft wants to target initially, according to Flammer, but she said that doesn't mean Microsoft isn't looking to court larger enterprises with Windows 8.

One of the biggest drawcards of the operating system is that it can operate seamlessly across desktop and mobile devices, particularly touch screen devices, such as tablets. Microsoft Australia general manager Pip Marlow said that Windows 8 "makes touch a first-class citizen," and that it is suitable for home and office life.

But so far, businesses have not responded well to Windows 8. The Commonwealth Bank said it is inevitable that it will adopt Windows 8, but it is <u>actively seeking viable alternatives</u>. Gartner has predicted that 90 percent of large organisations <u>will not adopt the new operating system broadly</u> and that this is unlikely to change anytime soon.

Flammer disagreed and claimed that the top worry for CIOs today is how to manage a mobile workforce with a broad range of devices—and she said that this is exactly what Windows 8 can address.

"Workers want a device they can enjoy, and the IT side of the business need to have the security and management to deal with across that," Flammer told ZDNet at the Windows 8 launch in Sydney. "That's what Windows 8 provides—incredible 'no compromise' devices that everybody loves, but devices that now have stronger security and management."

Flammer said that Microsoft gives organisations a choice on how they deploy the new operating system, should they decide to do so.

"Windows 8 was built on the best operating system of all time, which was Windows 7," she said. "It runs side by side with Windows 7, so whether you want to go all the way to deploying Windows 8 right away or you're already on Windows 7, it works beautifully.

"We have dozens of customers today who are in Windows 8 pilots, who are building Windows 8 line-of-business applications, so we are seeing a very positive response to the operating system."