Windows 8 -
Application Compatibility: A Preview

AOK Technology Briefing

This document has been created by

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Published: August 2011
Introduction

With over 400 million licences sold, Windows 7 has been a tremendous success for Microsoft and has been recognised as the fastest-selling operating system in Microsoft’s history. But now that Windows 7 is more than 18 months into this very successful release cycle, it’s time to start planning for the next version of Microsoft’s flagship operating system, currently code-named Windows 8.

Whilst a firm release date for the next version of the venerable Microsoft platform is yet to be fixed, Microsoft has published some key drivers for the planning of Windows 8, including:

- Explosion of form factors (desktop, server, tablet, mobile)
- Connectivity is assumed
- Enterprise and Personal Computing worlds collide
- Content Experience is now personal

Fast Forward from Windows 7

Microsoft has committed to incorporating some of the fault tolerance and resiliency features found in Windows Server 2008 R2 into the Windows 8 desktop, offering a more secure and robust computing platform. Judging from the currently published plans, Windows 8 will be an evolution from the Windows 7 desktop platform, and as such it is expected that the following features are not likely to change significantly:

- Kernel drivers based on Windows 7 architecture
- Networking will be improved but no major changes expected
- Internet Explorer 9 likely to be the default browser

This means that the core compatibility challenges inherited from the migration efforts of moving from Windows XP will still present a core compatibility issue for Windows 8 desktop adoption.

With an evolution from Windows 7 in mind, the following changes are expected in Windows 8:

1) No more Windows XP Mode
2) Evolution of Windows Identity:
   - User accounts could be connected to the Cloud
   - PC will logon to websites for the user
   - Windows identity moves from PC centric to user-centric
3) Improvement of Windows Help and Support

The authors of this paper expect that these infrastructure and system management level changes will not significantly affect legacy application compatibility in the same way that the Help and Documentation changes did with the move from Windows XP to Windows 7. However, changes and enhancements to user profile and configuration settings may present challenges in migrating application settings to the new Windows 8 platform.
New for Windows 8

Learning from customer feedback (both enterprise and consumer), Microsoft has indicated that one of the primary drivers for change in Windows 8 will be improved and updated System Management and Windows Update technologies. In addition to Microsoft’s current commitment to ensure that the hardware requirements for Windows 8 will be the same (or lower) than Windows 7, the following new features are expected to be delivered:

1) Support for ARM CPU architectures
2) A New Look: Ribbon UI for Explorer driven by HTML 5 and JavaScript
3) Hyper V 3.0 (Core Virtualization and Management Tools)
   - Support for more than 4 cores and new file format
   - Hardware Acceleration and Bandwidth Management
4) Windows 8 will support multiple form factors: desktop, tablet, mobile
5) Windows App Store (buy and download applications)
6) Windows Update (now need to manage virtual machines)
7) Windows Reset Button (allows for single push-button reset of a PC)

Given these planned changes to the desktop operating system, there may be a change to how applications are installed, configured, secured, updated and then uninstalled. Further, these changes may cause application compatibility issues. A brief, non-exhaustive list of potential application compatibility issues could include:

1) Support for ARM CPU architectures may introduce low-level compatibility issues
2) Hyper-V 3.0 Virtualization may not be suitable for all applications
3) New security settings and restrictions may cause application issues

Summary

In summary, Windows 8 will build on the success of Windows 7 with improvements on servicing and manageability. We should expect faster start-up times, easier user identification and management and a more intuitive interface that supports multiple platforms. The price to pay for these modern requirements and enhancements is the potential for some applications to potentially not behave as expected in the new environment. The challenge most organisations will face when attempting to install, configure and ultimately deploy Windows 8 is to determine what applications are best suited for each of the many scenarios offered by the next version of Windows.
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About ChangeBASE

ChangeBASE Ltd. is the world leader in automated application analysis, remediation and conversion. In 2007, ChangeBASE first introduced AOK, a software suite which automated the testing and remediation process for moving applications to the latest operating system. Since then, ChangeBASE has never stopped pushing the boundaries of what automation can do to facilitate enterprise application migration, and today, enterprises across the globe are using AOK to move to Windows 7, the latest edition of Internet Explorer, and Virtual platforms from Citrix, VMware, Microsoft and Symantec. The scope of AOK has also expanded; in addition to automated analysis and remediation, AOK can automatically convert native applications to virtual formats.

ChangeBASE has always aspired to facilitate the application migration process, by accelerating time scales and improving the quality and consistency of output, while minimising costs and resource requirements. Through AOK, ChangeBASE is now helping 6 of the global top 10 FTSE companies to reduce costs and migrate faster. What’s more, the team at ChangeBASE pride themselves on having dedicated and transparent relationships with all their clients and partners, helping them to build a large body of satisfied customers.

ChangeBASE has also attracted a strong and extensive partner base, including global agreements with large systems integrators, as well as localised alliances with resellers and distributors. Cementing this partner base are its strategic technology alliances; ChangeBASE is Microsoft Gold Certified, a Citrix Ready Partner and a VMware Technology Partner. There are now thousands of people around the world who recommend ChangeBASE and AOK.

About AOK

The AOK product suite by ChangeBASE will help you maintain the compatibility and integrity of your application estate, through automated application compatibility testing and remediation, as well as conversion to Virtual formats.

Early in a migration process, AOK quickly and accurately catalogues and reports on application compatibility issues that are likely to arise from migration to a new operating environment, helping you to make the best decisions for your own environment and estate. Once you have chosen your target platform, AOK automatically tests and fixes your applications ready for deployment, which can speed up packaging delivery by 75%. Subsequent changes to any part of the new operating environment can be re-run against the entire portfolio - all at the press of a button. Further, if you are migrating to a Virtual platform, AOK’s auto-sequencing tool can also dramatically reduce packaging times, virtualizing up to 150 applications a day.

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