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Upcoming Windows Updates and Services in 2021

WHAT'S NEW ON WINDOWS 10?

Microsoft tends to release major updates followed by several smaller ones meant to implement minor feature changes and improvements. This likely won't be the case in 2021.

Sources indicate that the first of two updates will be released sometime in the spring next year. It will be a servicing style update similar to those released in the latter halves of 2019 (19H2) and 2020 (20H2). To illustrate, the 19H2 update included improvements in battery usage efficiency, while the 20H2 update focused on enhancing general performance and quality. The spring update (21H1) will likely be in preparation for the bigger one (21H2) coming around the fall.

Next year's major update will likely enable x86 64-bit Windows 10 to be emulated on computers that use ARM processors. This is good news if you use ARM-based computers, such as Microsoft's very own Surface line of notebooks. With the update, you will be able to run legacy Windows programs on your device.

WINDOWS 10X

Google's Chrome OS might not be as feature-rich as Windows 10, but its lightweight nature and simple interface make it a hit among users who want a fast and straightforward operating system. That it is exclusively built into light, compact, and affordable notebooks — called Chromebooks — certainly adds to its appeal.

Microsoft's Windows 10X is purportedly its answer to Chrome OS. It's a lightweight version of Windows 10 designed to perform well even on low- to mid-range computers. Windows 10X also boasts an updated, modern-looking interface, formidable security, and excellent battery efficiency.

Like Chrome OS, Windows 10X will be exclusive to a specific line of computers which, according to reports, may include ARM-based and foldable devices. Windows 10X will likely become available in the earlier half of 2021.

CLOUD PC

Windows 10 Cloud PC is a service that allows you to install applications to a version of Windows found on the cloud. Both the apps and the OS are streamed to your computer and use very little of the machine's power. This makes it a great service for computers with low memory or ones that suffer from weak performance. Any apps installed via Cloud PC will appear on your Start menu as if it were installed locally on your machine.

Cloud PC will likely be an integrated service with both Windows 10 and Windows 10X. Windows 10X devices likely will not come with win32 local support, although the feature may be added in a future update. You can resolve this issue by installing your win32 programs on Cloud PC and streaming them via your Windows 10X device.

Microsoft has yet to confirm the exact nature and scope of their upcoming updates and services, but we can make educated guesses. In any case, it seems users can look forward to improved performance on Windows 10, as well as more opportunities to Save money and get more out of their tech investments.

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Two-Step and Two-Factor Authentication: What's the Difference?

Every business should have a strong cybersecurity posture to keep cybercriminals from infiltrating their network. One way to do this is by implementing a strict authentication process using two-step or two-factor authentication. These two processes are so similar that many confuse one with the other. Learn the difference between the two and how you can leverage them to safeguard your network.

If you want to improve your business's cybersecurity, you should take a closer look at your authentication process. Two-step and two-factor authentication are two of the most commonly used authentication methods. Many businesses use the terms two-step and two-factor authentication interchangeably, but there are subtle differences between the two.

TWO-STEP AUTHENTICATION

A two-step authentication process requires a single-factor login (such as a password or biometric reading) as well as another similar type of login credential that a user must provide. This process typically requires entering a password for the first step and entering another security code for the second step, which may be accomplished by providing a one-time code generated by an authenticator app such as Google Authenticator.

Two-step authentication adds an extra step in the verification process, making it more secure than single-

step authentication (i.e., providing only a password). However, if a person or business is hacked, it won't be enough to stop hackers from getting a hold of whatever they are looking for.

TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Two-factor authentication, a subset of multifactor authentication, is significantly more secure than two-step authentication. This type of authentication requires two different types of information to authenticate a user's identity. For example, it could be a combination of a fingerprint or retinal scan as well as a password or passcode. Because of the additional authentication information required, hackers would have great difficulty breaking into a network using a two-factor authentication system.

WHICH ONE IS BETTER?

Relying on a single-factor authentication process is no longer sufficient in ensuring the safety of your network. Securing the authentication process and making it difficult for cybercriminals to access your network should be on top of your priorities. Deciding whether to use two-step or two-factor authentication largely depends on your business's specific security requirements. To take the stress out of securing and protecting your network, call us today for expert cybersecurity advice.

RJ2 SPOTLIGHT

Jeff Dann

President

Jeff was the founding partner of RJ2 Technologies in 1998. For over 15 years, Jeff served as the President and CEO of RJ2 Technologies providing a full complement of valued technology solutions targeted towards small and mid-market customers. Jeff is fully committed to helping customers utilize technology in a manner that improves their business efficiency, deliver timely information and allows the primary focus to be on operating and growing their business.



FEATURED PARTNER



As your needs grow and change over time, so do our features and capabilities. Endlessly scalable, flexible, and reliable, our cloud communications platform is truly future-proof, so you can focus on your business, and know that your communications solution will always remain relevant and competitive.

Feature Partner Product: SkyCom

Unified Communications

Unified Communications (UC) is the seamless integration of voice, presence, chat, data, applications, and other technologies that help drastically improve your communication processes and business productivity. Our software and services enable you to access your account and seamlessly incorporate our high-value cloud communication services.

Hosted PBX & VoIP

You want a reliable, high-quality phone system that simply works. And so you can focus on your business, and not your communications platform, our system adapts and adjusts to your needs and seamlessly works the way you do. Whether you have five (5) or five hundred (500) employees, we have a solution that meets your needs.

Virtual Auto Attendant & Mobile VoIP

Use auto attendants, cloud extensions and mailboxes to stay connected with your customers and employees—with all the features of a high end phone system. Best of all, you can seamlessly connect mobile and home workers with current or future office locations. It's all the same cloud communications framework, so you can scale up as needed, and connect based on your specific business requirements.

Choosing the Right Computer for Your Small Business

With the rise of eCommerce and remote working, the importance of computers in business has never been more apparent. But what kind of computers does your small business need? Should you invest in desktops or laptops? Consider the following when weighing your options.

PORTABILITY

The pandemic has driven the majority of businesses to adopt remote work setups. If your business will implement a similar arrangement, investing in laptops is the smart move, as your staff can easily take their device with them anywhere they want to work. However, there may be instances when this can turn out to be counterproductive: if your employees can jump into work mode easily, they may get the impression that they have to work 24/7.

As such, you must not discount desktops altogether. While laptops are light and portable, modern desktop computers aren't nearly as immobile as they used to be. In many cases, desktop screens are thin and light, and all-in-one desktops are easy to move around.

MEMORY AND SPEED

Before, desktop computers had more memory than laptops, and they were faster because they had bigger processors. This has now changed, thanks to improvements in laptop technology. But until high-powered laptops become affordable to the general public, desktop computers are going to provide your business with more memory, speed, and power for your money.

How much speed and memory you need depends on the work you do. If your employees' work mostly entails word processing and emailing, laptops should be enough. But if they need to run gaming software or access heavy media files, better invest in desktops.

SECURITY

A desktop computer is more physically secure because it's often kept in one

location, making it easier to guard. And because a desktop's internet access is often a single source (whether through Wi-Fi or cable), it's easier to defend it against malware and cyberattacks.

If you choose to invest in laptops, make sure to have strict policies on how to protect devices that are used outside of the office. Don't let your staff connect to unsecured networks, and use encryption tools to protect data from unauthorized access. You must also employ mobile device management software to enable your administrator to wipe data clean off laptops should they get lost or stolen.

PRICE

Laptops, especially the smaller notebook-style ones, are a lot cheaper than desktops. However, desktop computers are also becoming more affordable through local channels and lenient payment terms. And with a capable IT services provider that can provide you with infrastructure or offer cheaper desktop options, cost probably won't be a deciding factor.

QUALITY

Although laptop computers provide the convenience of portability, they're prone to battery and charging cord problems. They are also easily damaged, especially if they are dropped or mishandled. By contrast, desktops are generally sturdier. But when they do experience a problem, repairing them can be expensive.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION

The desktop versus laptop debate is an old one, with supporters on both sides touting the advantages of their choice. A growing company usually needs a combination of both types of computers, especially as their needs evolve.

If you have questions regarding choosing the best computer for your company, give us a call. We'll be happy to assist you in improving your business.

January

"The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life."

- Bill Gates

TIPS OF THE MONTH

Remote Work Isn't Going Anywhere in 2021...Here's 3 Tips to Help Make it Better:

1. **Do Something Else First** - You lose the separation between life and work that comes from physically leaving your home and commuting to work.
2. **Define Your Space** - Along the same lines of creating boundaries, create a specific workspace with all of the technology, tools, and resources you need to get work done.
3. **Chunk Your Time** - Create different blocks of time for different types of work. You might have a chunk in the morning for deep, or focus work, and a chunk in the afternoon for dealing with administrative tasks and responding to email. The point isn't to schedule every task, but to group like things into buckets and tackle them together.

