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# Broad Reach

Superior Endeavors' Annual Customer Newsletter

May 2003

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### **Computer Operating Systems - Windows Lifecycle Management**

The rapid pace of change for Information Technology (IT) is difficult to follow. From a financial perspective, hardware and software purchases for desktops and servers are generally expensed rather than capitalized. Does this accounting treatment mean that the useful life of these assets does not stretch beyond one year? The answer to this question for almost all businesses is a resounding no. However, understanding the lifecycle of these IT assets is a critical component of managing Business Risk and Total Cost of Operations/Ownership (TCO).

Computer operating systems and their associated hardware are the foundation for running business applications. The remainder of this article will discuss the key factors in managing the lifecycle of Windows based computer operating systems.

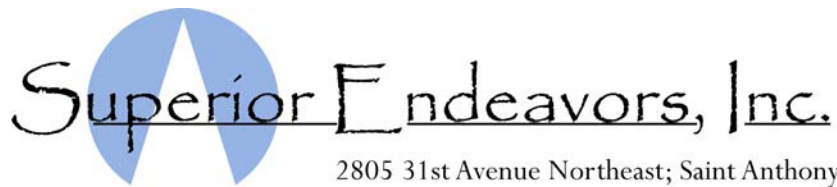
#### **Availability**

Computer hardware vendors match their offerings with the Windows operating system offerings from Microsoft. The tier one hardware vendors (Dell, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, and Toshiba) strive to make their hardware lifecycles between 12 and 15 months. Within a particular hardware model lifecycle, stable device drivers and firmware images are offered. This assumes a consistent version of the operating system for the length of the hardware lifecycle. As operating systems are discontinued, the lack of device drivers makes it difficult to update hardware components.

The table below outlines the availability timelines for the various Windows desktop and server operating systems.

<i>Windows Version</i>	<i>Release Date</i>	<i>Last Date of Sale</i>
<b>Windows 95</b>	August 1995	December 31, 2000
<b>Windows NT 4 Workstation</b>	July 1996	June 30, 2002
<b>Windows NT 4 Server</b>	July 1996	June 30, 2002
<b>Windows 98</b>	June 1998	June 30, 2002
<b>Windows 98 SE</b>	June 1999	June 30, 2002
<b>Windows ME</b>	December 2000	December 31, 2003
<b>Windows 2000 Professional</b>	March 2000	March 31, 2004
<b>Windows 2000 Server</b>	March 2000	March 31, 2004
<b>Windows XP Professional</b>	December 2001	December 31, 2005
<b>Windows Server 2003</b>	April 2003	Unknown

Only currently available operating systems should be purchased with new hardware. Migration plans should be put in place for older operating systems during the period between the last date of sale and Microsoft's end of extended support. In most cases, it is a best practice to transition to newer operating systems as part of new hardware purchases rather than upgrading older hardware.



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### Compatibility

Compatibility refers to whether the applications work with a given version of Windows. Beyond availability, application compatibility with an operating platform (hardware and operating system) drives the lifecycle of workstations and servers. Enterprises that are relatively aggressive in adopting new applications, including new versions of their existing applications, should try to eliminate older operating systems closer to the end-of-support dates announced by Microsoft. The reason for this is that independent software vendors (ISV's) generally follow Microsoft's lead in supporting their applications on versions of the operating system supported by Microsoft. In addition, ISV's strive to support their applications on as few versions of Windows as possible. This minimizes development and support costs and reduces complexity.

There is a lag between the release of a new version of Windows by Microsoft and the time when the majority of applications will be officially supported on it. For Windows 2000, a major release of Windows (major releases generally include significant new application programming interfaces, file systems, or user interfaces), that period was about 18 months. For a minor release, such as Windows XP, the period is shorter but still in the 12- to 15-month range. Enterprises adopting new versions of applications on old versions of Windows may find that support for the older versions of Windows has been eliminated.

The best practice is to plan application introductions and upgrades around hardware and operating systems changes. This minimizes user disruption and allows for coordinated user and administrative training.

### Supportability

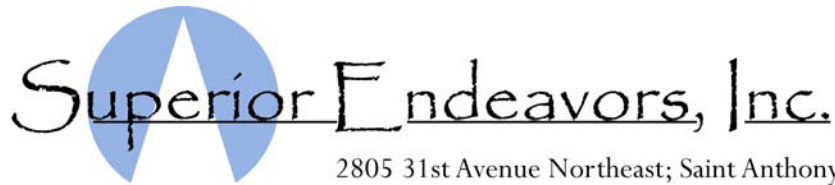
Microsoft's support lifecycle policy for business and development software was introduced in October 2002. Microsoft's support phases provide consistent guidelines and are based on the product's "Date of General Availability". The support phases are defined as:

- **Mainstream Support Phase** – Five years from Date of General Availability. Mainstream support includes incident, warranty, hotfix, and security patch support;
- **Extended Support Phase** – Two years beyond Mainstream Support Phase. Extended support includes assisted support, that may be charged on an hourly basis, security patch support, and can include hotfix support;
- **Online Self-Help Support** – Eight plus years from Date of General Availability.

The table below details the support phases for the various Microsoft operating systems.

<i>Windows Version</i>	<i>Release Date</i>	<i>Mainstream Support Retired</i>	<i>Extended Support Retired</i>
<b>Windows 95</b>	Aug. 1995	12/31/2000	12/31/2001
<b>Windows NT 4 Workstation</b>	Jul. 1996	6/30/2002	6/30/2003
<b>Windows NT 4 Server</b>	Jul. 1996	12/31/2002	12/31/2004
<b>Windows 98</b>	Jun. 1998	6/30/2001	6/30/2002
<b>Windows 98 SE</b>	Jun. 1999	6/30/2002	6/30/2003
<b>Windows ME</b>	Dec. 2000	12/31/2003	12/31/2004
<b>Windows 2000 Professional</b>	Mar. 2000	3/31/2005	3/31/2007
<b>Windows 2000 Server</b>	Mar. 2000	3/31/2005	3/31/2007
<b>Windows XP Professional</b>	Dec. 2001	12/31/2006	12/31/2008
<b>Windows Server 2003</b>	Apr. 2003	4/30/2008 (est.)	4/30/2010 (est.)

Microsoft's support lifecycle policy will allow enterprises to better manage the support of their IT



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operating environment.

#### **Bottom Line**

What does Microsoft's moving these operating systems toward end of life mean for your enterprise? Gartner believes that these milestones mean that enterprises need to have a road map to get off these older Windows operating systems. Although a Windows operating system does not stop working the day after Microsoft drops support for it, enterprises need to determine how much risk is involved if unsupported operating systems continue to be used. The risk analysis should focus on the compatibility of enterprise applications and the supportability of these applications in an unsupported operating system environment. The lack of hotfix patches and security patches for unsupported operating systems is another important factor to consider when analyzing this risk.

Enterprises should not purchase new systems with the current/existing operating system version when the successor operating system has been shipping for twelve months. For example, Windows XP Professional, which was generally available in October 2001, should be installed on new PC's instead of Windows 2000 Professional beginning in October 2002. This approach helps insure that the initial bugs in the operating system have been patched and independent software vendors have released compatible versions of their applications.

A regular replacement cycle for system hardware will help to maintain a supported, cost effective, low-risk, efficient, and highly available application operating environment. This proactive approach is a key factor in reducing the TCO of IT.

#### **Acknowledgements**

This article was based on information gathered from the following sources:

- Gartner, Inc. <http://www3.gartner.com/Init>
- TechRepublic <http://www.techrepublic.com>
- Microsoft Corporation <http://www.microsoft.com>
- Microsoft's Support Lifecycle  
<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=fh;%5bLN%5d;lifecycle>

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## **ASP Endeavors**

### ***News from the ASP Endeavors Area!***

Superior Endeavors' Application Service Provider (ASP) Endeavors Area is an application utility providing flexible, reliable, and cost effective ways to host your business applications. Application performance is independent of the memory and processor capabilities of the client and the speed of the Internet connection. Security is state of the art and includes antivirus and connection encryption to keep your business critical communications and data safe. The ASP Endeavors Area goal is to allow you to focus on your business, not the technology needed to run your business.

The most comprehensive published application is Superior Endeavors' electronic messaging suite. This suite is more than a simple Internet E-Mail service. It includes Microsoft Outlook™ on the client side and Microsoft Exchange 2000 on the server side. The services bundled in the electronic messaging suite include E-Mail, instant messaging, fax messaging,



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calendar/scheduling, task management, and Microsoft NetMeeting for collaboration. In addition, each user has access to Microsoft Office Professional for managing E-Mail attachments and 100 MB of disk space for personal document/message storage.

Superior Endeavors' electronic messaging suite delivers enterprise class messaging services without the need for technology infrastructure investments in hardware, software, and support staff. Like a simple Internet E-Mail service, the electronic messaging suite can be accessed from any Internet connected Windows client including PocketPC based personal digital assistants.

Contact us to discuss how we can provide customized application services or for a risk-free no cost trial of our electronic messaging suite.

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## **Financial Endeavors**

### ***News from the Financial Endeavors Area!***

Superior Endeavors' Financial Endeavors Area specializes in providing everything from bookkeeping to financial analysis services. The current economic climate and the recent high-profile corporate scandals have increased the awareness of and the importance of financial accountability and disclosure.

In spite of the increased visibility in the services provided by the Financial Endeavors Area, business is quieter than we would like. As a result, Superior Endeavors is offering customers a no cost or obligation review of their financial statements. The review will be completed using the methods and tools that most banks use to analyze and evaluate financial statements. Contact us for more information or to schedule your financial statement review.

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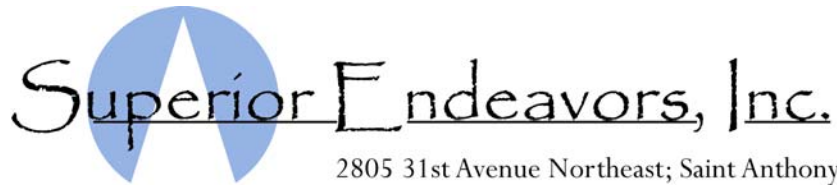
## **Network Endeavors**

### ***News from the Network Endeavors Area!***

The Network Endeavors Area had a record-breaking year in 2002. We achieved this success by providing responsive support, flexible deployment options, and personalized service. Network Endeavors' clients include businesses that range from small single user offices to multi-location offices with sophisticated networks. The Network Endeavors Area added network-cabling design and installation services in 2002 including design and installation of wireless local area networks.

The Network Endeavors Area wants to build on its success in 2002 by increasing its customer base. As a result, the Network Endeavors Area is offering new customers a no obligation no cost audit of their network and distributed systems. This network audit will include a high level inventory of client and server systems along with specific recommendations for improvement. Contact us today for more information.

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## **Remote Access Endeavors**

### ***News from the Remote Access Endeavors Area!***

The Remote Access Endeavors Area has experienced a change in the remote access landscape. Businesses have deemphasized telework as a result of the current economic climate. At the same time, the tools and services that support mobile computing have improved dramatically. The most important of these improvements is in the area of Virtual Private Networks (VPN's) and the availability of cost effective high-speed Internet access.

The Remote Access Endeavors Area has partnered with the Midwest Institute for Telecommuting Education ([WWW.MITE.Org](http://WWW.MITE.Org)) to offer business and government organizations comprehensive telework solutions. Contact us today for more information.

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## **Contact Information**

If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions concerning the information in this newsletter, please contact Superior Endeavors' WebMaster by E-Mail at [WebMaster@Superior-Endeavors.Com](mailto:WebMaster@Superior-Endeavors.Com) or call us at **612.706.3226**.

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