

Reducing PC Deployment Costs in Small or Large Migration Projects

A brief analysis of Gartner's latest research "Cost Model: Migration to Windows Vista and Windows 7" and opportunities to drive hidden costs down

Gartner's latest research by Michael Silver on the cost model for PC migration¹ to the new classes of Windows operating system is a very insightful analysis, setting the stage for further discussion on costs, processes and tools. It illustrates the various costs blocks and creates assumptions based on their research with customers and vendors, helping us identify, question and verify without having to define the aforementioned.

It is debatable if all costs can be applied for all forms of organizations. However Mr. Silver's framework suggests opportunity to change certain factors, cost units and organizational characteristics. Moreover it opens a more critical discussion on the true costs accrued and set for the individual company, group, department or vendors involved.

The framework differentiates between Enterprise Fixed Costs, Group Fixed Costs, Individual Variable Costs, Hard- and Software Costs, and Application Development Costs. Some of the areas identified are well documented and can be easily re-calculate; others however remain ambiguous and require further discussion. In the upcoming deployment cycle from Windows 2000 or Windows XP to Windows Vista or Windows 7 the cost will increase reciprocally to the previous deployment cycle, due to the increasing digital demand in the work place. Albeit we assume that the last deployment cycle was 3 – 5 years ago we can conclude and verify that more applications are used, more data has been created and the dependency from the PC has increased exponentially.

In the same way the cost structures have changed. While most cost blocks are obvious (hard- and software costs, training, physical roll-out), the soft costs are still uncertain and are often neglected. Newer cost blocks have also been added to address the increase in new jobs. What has changed from the last big migration?

¹ Michael A. Silver: Cost Model: Migration to Windows Vista and Windows 7. Gartner Research G00167193. 14 May 2009.

- More applications and software tools have been internally developed to address needs within the company or agency. These applications often were written for the specific Windows operating system and less with upcoming releases in mind.
- Users have more data, more applications, more settings to deal with
- Dependency on the PC has increased which in turn increases costs for down time
- The increased complexity of the systems increases the need for more training and support during the deployment cycle
- Even power users decline in understanding with increased complexity
- IT groups suffer chronic head count shortage and rely on high consultant costs

For the current deployment cycles from Windows 2000 or Windows XP to Windows Vista and Windows 7 Mr. Silver assumes costs from \$ 1,035 for locked and well-managed users to \$ 1,930 for unmanaged users.² Roughly 50% of the costs are related to the purchase of new hard- and software. The other 50% are related to preparation, analysis and actual deployment.

Let's focus on the costs that are completely unrelated to buying new hard and –software. These costs are driven by upgrading the software to be Windows Vista or Windows 7 compatible. In the migration from Windows Vista to Windows 7 the costs drop significantly, because most software packages don't require an upgrade.

It is even more important to this discussion that we highlight that 50% of deployment costs are **NOT** related to buying new hard- and software. In the category of the unmanaged user approximately \$1,000 are estimated costs related to the preparation and actual deployment itself. While the report by Mr. Silver lists many categories, he has created a catch-all category of “Self Support/Informal Training/Downtime” that counts for 35% of the deployment costs. He shows a loss of 12 hours at an average of \$28/h.³ “Post Implementation Support” is only estimated at 4.8 minutes per user and “Role-based Application Install” only at 2h per user.

The “Individual Variable Cost” under which the above categories fall under-represents the true costs. It can be assumed that the “Unmanaged User” has data, settings and applications on the existing PC that need to be migrated to the new PC. These soft costs are often ignored by analysis as they are overlooked and dismissed for fiscal relevance. However, the individualization of the new PC will regain the user's effectiveness and utilizes or builds on the success gained by the new PC and application upgrade.

² Page 6-7, figures 3 and 4, in: Michael A. Silver: Cost Model: Migration to Windows Vista and Windows 7. Gartner Research G00167193. 14 May 2009.

³ Figure 4

The transfer of data, settings and applications, which are not part of the corporate image placed on the new PCs usually require by hand installation by the user or IT personnel. Subsequently it increases downtime, support calls and installation time.

In order to reduce deployment costs we have to acknowledge the costs of transferring the “individualization” of an existing PC to the new PC. It might increase the model proposed by Mr. Silver, but it offers resolution and an overall understanding of what is needed to deploy the new PC with all the individual data, setting and application.

We can assume that the non-managed user has a large amount of data, settings and application to move to the new PC while the lock and fully managed user has far less. In most organizations we find a diversity of users, ranging from both dichotomies. Perhaps at headquarters there are highly managed users, however their proprietary subsidiaries, field offices, remote and foreign locations and specialized operations (i.e. labs, projects etc) have less non-managed users. Clearly demonstrating that even highly managed IT operations experience needs to migrate users of less managed quality.

The cost analysis has to illuminate the soft and hidden costs related to the user’s participation in the actual new PC installation. With increased user involvement (vs. an IT professional), the higher the operating cost. For example, an average competent worker receives a new PC, fully imaged to utilize the latest applications. The employee will spend hours, sometime days transferring data, reconfiguring settings and installing individual software packages. In this example support calls will increase dramatically, because the end user often does not understand the interface and infrastructure, amid the inability to manipulate individual settings.

The application, data and setting migration processes offer significant savings by utilizing software tools that are cost-friendly, effective and easy to run. Depending on the hourly compensation applied and the level of IT expertise interaction the “Individual Variable Cost” for the PC migration can be reduced significantly.

Remote non-managed users will have the highest cost of migration, but will offer the highest savings by utilizing the right tools.

Figure 1

Individual Variable Costs

- User Training
- BackUp and Installation Prep
- Old PC optimization and clean up
- New PC Image Install
- Transfer
 - Data
 - Settings
- Applications Install
- Restore, Test and Optimize
- Self Support/Informal Training/Downtime
- Post Implementation Support