

## ***Crossing the Digital Divide Volume 11***

“Windows”

by Joseph Feigon  
for the Observer

We've been working on taxes, not unlike most of America. Having electronic records can be incredibly empowering, particularly for those in business for themselves (farmers, service providers, retailers, professionals, etc.). I've often reflected on the simplicity of a single W2, an interest statement from the bank, and a short-form tax return. The decision to launch a small business, with all its freedoms and responsibilities, comes with greater opportunity to offset business expenses against business revenue, hopefully with enough profit to feed/clothe/house oneself. Without a computer, the boxes of receipts, invoices, time sheets, mileage logs, office items and more can become daunting, and a certain recipe for tension.

What does this have to do with Windows?

Let's paint a picture: your PC is running Windows 7 Home, you have a copy of Microsoft Office 2007 you moved from your old PC. You heard about Intuit's Quickbooks for your home/farm/non-profit/business accounting, your last upgrade was to Quickbooks 2013. Everything worked.

In an almost viral (nagware) fashion, Microsoft has added KB3035583 (Get Windows 10) to their upgrade library. I'm known to preach “stay current” “update often” “patch regularly”, and have encouraged everyone to avoid Windows 10 for the time being. Yes, there is a way to disable the update, and never see the UPDATE NOW pop-up windows, but, doing so requires the “automated downloads, choose install” option on Windows Updater. For many, this will be easy and simple, for most, stopping the Windows 10 alerts will also result in no patches or security fixes being applied – the average user isn't motivated or comfortable with somewhat routine PC administrative tasks.

Microsoft failed with the successors to Windows 7: Vista, Windows 8 and Windows 8.1. Vista introduced a new style, but required more resources than most consumer PC's had. Windows 8/8.1 could not provide the stability of Windows 7, and despite all media indications to the contrary, not all third party applications have been verified for use on Windows 10, including mainstream products like the aforementioned Quickbooks 2013. Most big companies have retained Windows 7 as their desktop operating system standard. The pressure is on, as most of these big companies replace desktop PC's every 3-5 years. Microsoft needs Windows 10 to work, predictability, with a wide variety of software, some of which is still quite viable 2-3 years after purchase. And folks wonder why I'm anxious to see true Broadband options here in rural California. You can do almost everything with Cloud services today, use the latest software without the need to buy a license and install something. Applications and storage have become separated from the computer at one's desk, and often can be accessed and used from most any operating system; Linux, Mac, BSD, Android, Windows and more. I digress, this is topic for another column.

Real world example: I had a client with an over zealous employee, somewhat comfortable with computers, but who's job function was very much non-IT. He liked Windows 10, upgraded

both his home computers, then decided to do the same thing at the office. I get the panic phone call when the bookkeeper arrived: Quickbooks no longer worked, printers had vanished from the network, and network file access slow. We were able to restore Windows 7 on two of the three machines “upgraded”. We fixed the problem created by accident. The client lost hours of productivity. Add in my fees, a stressed out bookkeeper, and a hysterical sales person, it became expensive exercise.

Don't get me wrong, I think Windows 10 will be a rock solid product, once the first “Release Pack” addresses the code errors in the new operating system. Should you buy a PC with Windows 10 pre-loaded? If you're buying new, and NOT migrating older software licenses, yes. If your next PC is a replacement for something you also installed third party software onto (Office Suite, Accounting Suite, Point-of-Sale, etc.), be 100% confident the third party software has been verified to run on Windows 10. A typical business class PC is roughly a \$1,000 investment, add a new Office license and Quickbooks license, buy a new printer or two, and your \$1,000 PC just became a \$2,000+ investment. Yes, you can still get Windows 7 (Professional and Home Premier) if the replacement PC needs to work in an existing environment.

If your PC was purchased with Windows 8 or 8.1, by all means, upgrade.