



How to cut the cost of IT SUPPORT in your business

Are your users spending too much time sorting out their own PC problems? Not sure that every PC in your company is up-to-date with patches and anti-virus security? Are you able to support PCs even when they're out of the office (e.g. home workers and laptop users)? Are you still using Windows XP? Need a better inventory of your software and hardware assets?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', then Windows Intune could be exactly what you're looking for.

Business IT problems

Effective IT management is more than a technical issue. It is a business issue: it can reduce costs, improve productivity and support new ways of working. Some of the business issues that Windows Intune addresses are:

- **Productivity.** Time is short. You can't afford unproductive users but letting them solve their own computer problems can be incredibly inefficient and it can be just as expensive if you have to get someone to go and fix that problem in person.
- **Privacy and security.** Computer security is another IT problem that every business faces. Data loss can be catastrophic for a company and a virus outbreak can cost thousands of pounds to clear up¹. In other words, you can't afford to let your fleet of PCs get out of date either.
- **Flexible working.** Whether it is taking your laptop home for the weekend or employing staff who work offsite, companies need to be able to support mobile and flexible working. But providing IT support to people outside the office and ensuring that their laptops are secure can be a challenge.
- **Multiple offices.** Supporting PCs in different places, especially if you don't have a lot of dedicated IT staff, can be difficult. Branch offices, shops, newly-acquired business units and overseas offices all need IT support but it can be a struggle to provide it from a central location.
- **Bring your own computer.** In the old days, a company car was a common perk. Now, companies usually give employees a cash contribution towards their own vehicle. Similarly, some companies let employees buy their own PC, with a subsidy, and bring it to work. However, you still need to be sure that the new computers are protected and up-to-date.
- **Asset management.** You need to know what IT assets you own for accounting and insurance purposes. But taking an inventory can be surprisingly time-consuming and, if you don't do it regularly, it's easy for asset registers to get out of date quickly.
- **Software licensing.** In addition, many businesses overlook the risk of software piracy – are employees using software you haven't paid for? Directors can be held personally liable for software theft in their business, even if they aren't actually doing it themselves. A related problem is paying for software that you don't use. Many companies can actually save money with effective licensing, providing they know what they actually need and use.

¹ http://www.infosec.co.uk/files/isbs_2010_technical_report_single_pages.pdf

Cutting the cost of IT support

Dealing with IT can be a challenge. Yes, of course, you want technology that can make a difference to your business but at the same time you can't afford to take risks or spend recklessly. But nobody goes into business hoping to spend all their time fixing, upgrading, maintaining and supporting computers. There is an opportunity cost to all that routine work.

In fact, managing PCs can be surprisingly expensive. According to Gartner, a firm of IT analysts, the total cost of ownership (TCO) for a desktop PC over four years could be more than four times its purchase price. Notebooks can cost even more – up to six times their initial cost. But, reassuringly, good PC management can cut these costs by 42-45 per cent².

Just upgrading your operating can save money. IDC, another firm of analysts, found that upgrading to Microsoft Windows 7 can save 9.7 hours per user per year in IT labour costs (all those problems the IT engineers don't have to fix any more) and another 43 hours a year by increasing end-user productivity (fewer reboots, less down time etc.)³

IT management blues

Ask an IT expert how he spends his time and four topics will feature heavily:

- **Supporting users.** IT engineers spend a lot of time helping users fix problems – crashes, lost files, forgotten passwords, unfamiliar software etc. etc. It's not just the time taken to diagnose and fix the problem. If the support engineer has to visit the user in person, there's also travel cost. And, of course, IT problems waste users' time too. The best way to reduce the cost of support is to make it easier for engineers to fix problems remotely using remote desktop technology – giving them temporary remote control over a user's PC so that they can fix it.

This cuts out the travel time and makes IT engineers much more productive. You can estimate the cost of desk-side support by taking the hourly rate of your IT engineer and multiplying it by the amount of time they spend travelling to and from users. It also allows third party technicians, such as Microsoft Partners, to offer a remote support service. In addition, proactive monitoring of a computer's vital signs, such as free disk space, can also stop problems before they happen.

- **Managing updates.** PCs need regular software updates as manufacturers find and fix problems, close security loopholes and improve functionality. For example, Microsoft releases a bundle of updates on the second Tuesday of every month. It is important to update computer quickly with newly-released updates because virus writers also follow security updates and use them to exploit acknowledged vulnerabilities. However, it can be difficult to make sure that every computer in the company is up-to-date, especially for remote users. In addition, users often postpone updates if they interrupt their work. So, instead of physically checking each computer, IT engineers need a way of remotely monitoring all the computers in a business to make sure they are up-to-date.
- **Trying to achieve consistency.** It's much easier to support users and plan for the future if everyone in the business is using a PC with the same operating system, the same set of office applications and the same anti-virus software; ideally with the same licence renewal dates. This allows users and IT engineers to build up a knowledgebase to deal with problems and get things done. It also reduces the complexity of support because a fix on one machine will work on all the others. Using the same anti-virus software makes it much easier to ensure that every PC is fully protected and to monitor for potential outbreaks. This creates a strong argument for licensing the same operating system and anti-virus software for all your PCs.

²Source: Gartner Says Effective Management Can Cut Total Cost of Ownership for Desktop PCs by 42 Per cent <http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=636308>

³IDC White Paper sponsored by Microsoft, The Benefit of Using Windows 7 in Small and Medium-Sized Businesses, Doc #223959, June 2010
<https://partner.microsoft.com/download/global/40147901>

- **Anti-virus management.** PCs need protection against viruses, spyware and other internet nasties. But many companies use the anti-virus that comes with a new PC or buy it over the counter on a PC-by-PC basis. Others use a mixed bag of anti-virus products with different expiry dates and licensing terms. This means a mix of different vendors and renewal dates. It can be very hard to keep track of all that. Companies with this kind of mixed environment rely on users to act on renewal notices and warnings about updates. This is a big risk. Instead, it's much more efficient and more secure to use a consistent product across the whole business and get central monitoring. That way your IT staff can ensure that every computer is continuously protected. It cuts down on the paperwork involved in renewing multiple licences at different times.

Without a system to centralise IT management, all these tasks take longer than they need to and cost more than they should. This is how Windows Intune can help you save time, save money and improve the productivity of your company's staff.

Windows Intune to the rescue

Windows Intune helps businesses manage and secure PCs using Windows cloud services and Windows 7. It combines a number of valuable elements into an all-in-one service:

- **Online PC management.** At a glance, you can see which computers are up-to-date and which ones need patching.
- **Malware protection.** Intune includes Microsoft's latest anti-virus software, helping to keep your computers clear of viruses and spyware.
- **Remote assistance.** Intune lets your IT staff (or your chosen third-party IT consultants) support your staff remotely, including remote desktop access.
- **Hardware and software inventory.** The system automatically collects information about your PCs and the software installed on them to give you a comprehensive PC audit.

- **Consistent licensing.** Intune also includes a licence to upgrade your PCs to Windows 7 Enterprise, providing users with an improved, intuitive interface and advanced search capabilities, plus BitLocker to help protect confidential data. It also allows you to standardise your PC environment on a single version of Windows and automatically get the rights to future versions of Windows, so you never have to worry about buying upgrades again.

It is similar to the systems that very large companies use to manage their PC fleets in terms of capability but, unlike them, it doesn't require expensive servers or onsite software. Instead, you monitor PCs and push out software updates via a web-based management console. Because it is an internet cloud service, it works equally well for computers in the office and those outside. In fact, you can manage any Windows PC as long as it can connect to the internet.

IT management from the cloud

Another big difference from conventional PC management systems is that you pay for it on a monthly subscription basis, so there's no big upfront capital cost. Intune comes with a 99.9 per cent uptime service level agreement and best-in-class support 24 hours a day, seven days a week⁴.

You can try out Intune for yourself with our [30-day free trial](#) or you can contact a Microsoft-certified [Intune Partner](#) to get more advice and help.

⁴ For more details about Windows Intune SLAs and support see: <http://www.microsoft.com/uk/windows/windowsintune/pc-management-how-to-try-and-buy.aspx>
 "With best-in-class support and a financially backed 99.9 per cent scheduled uptime SLA, you can have confidence the service will be there when you need it."