

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

How to face
The 2020 Problem
like a hero



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Christmas is nearly here, and along with all the family get togethers, office parties and mountains of brussels sprouts there's one thing you can always count on - there will be loads of action movies on the TV.

'Tis the season to chill out and watch your favourite action heroes battling the baddies and racing against the clock to save the world. But this year, it's going to be different. This year you'll also get the chance to be an action hero in your own right.

In fact, the future of your business could depend on it...

In January, Microsoft is withdrawing support for some of its most popular old business software. This creates a huge problem for organisations everywhere, because when it inevitably fails, it can't be fixed.

IT experts are calling this The 2020 Problem. And it's estimated that **half of all local businesses will be affected.**

When your software goes out of support it won't stop working straight away, but you will soon start to notice a difference in performance. **Microsoft withdrawing support also means there will be no more:**

✗
Technical support for any on-going issues

✗
Bug fixes for new problems

✗
Security fixes for undiscovered vulnerabilities

As well as the disruption, downtime and lost productivity that comes from sticking with old software, The 2020 Problem is also a nightmare in terms of data protection.

One of the most important requirements of GDPR is that all organisations that hold customer data only use software that's up to date and fit for purpose. So, if you're thinking about hanging on to your old programs and hoping for the best, you're putting yourself at risk of losing customers and facing the kind of fine (and reputational damage) that's impossible to recover from.

The legislation may have been in force for 18 months, but people at the Information Commissioner's Office are really finding their feet now and making an example of anyone who doesn't take their data protection responsibilities seriously. Their stance is that everyone's had more than enough time to get their act together. So those who still fall behind are being met with zero tolerance.

But perhaps the biggest concern - and the bit where you can really put your action hero prowess to the greatest use - is the fact that end of life software makes businesses of all sizes a target for cyber criminals.

Out of date tech represents easy pickings for hackers, even more so once Microsoft stops looking out for suspicious activity or fixing problems. Once the regular security updates have gone, the potential for data theft is huge.

Cyber crime is already at an all-time high. And when The 2020 Problem properly kicks in it's going to be even worse.

These people know no shame and nobody is off-limits.

The overall cost of cyber crime in the UK is estimated at £27 billion per year, £9.2 billion of which comes from hackers stealing intellectual property from businesses. It's estimated that 3,809,448 files are stolen or compromised every day. That's 158,727 per hour, 2,645 per minute and 44 every second. Make no mistake, these are the bad guys. And you have to stop them.

If yours is one of the hundreds of thousands of businesses that rely on this soon-to-be-dead software, you don't have time to waste. There's no denying this is a monumental pain in the proverbial, but instead of complaining about the fact that Microsoft have done this, let's turn it into a positive.

So, channel your inner John McClane (or Ellen Ripley) and take action.



WHAT WOULD AN ACTION HERO DO?



1

Assess the situation

The best movie heroes are courageous, quick-thinking and more than a little bit gung-ho, but that doesn't mean they jump into situations head first. You need to know what you're dealing with, which in this case starts with finding out what systems you're using.

The software that Microsoft is killing in January includes:

The big two:

- Windows 7
- Office 2010

And also:

- Windows Server 1809
- Microsoft Project 2010

- Microsoft SharePoint 2010
- Microsoft Visio 2010
- Microsoft Office 2016 for Mac
- Windows Server 1809
- Small Business Server 2011
- Windows Server 2008
- Exchange 2010

If this all looks like a load of tech jargon that means nothing to you, you're not alone. This is a problem for a lot of business owners because they don't particularly care about what tech they've bought as long as it does the job. And that's OK as long as everything's going smoothly.

Here are a few pointers to help you out.



Click the start button on your computer, enter "computer" in the search box, right click "computer" and then click "properties". If you see Windows 7 anywhere, it's time to upgrade



If your start button is shiny and 3D, you're ok. The older version is round and multi-coloured - and it will soon be gone forever



If your Outlook icon is gold/light brown, you're using an email system that's on its last legs.



If you're still manually backing up files on USB sticks or having to save to a specific location every time you edit a document, it's time to change. Microsoft's new software is intuitive and automatically saves files so you don't have to.

2



Be Prepared

Action heroes don't get caught out. No matter what life throws at them, they're always ready with an arsenal of weapons, one liners and good old fashioned common sense. They know that if you take your eye off the ball for even a second that's plenty of time for the baddies to strike.

If you snooze, you lose.

Upgrading your IT system can take weeks or months to get right, so don't leave it to chance. Action heroes need a guy on the ground who can guide them through the dangers and support them when the going gets tough. So enlist a trusted IT expert to help you with the transition.

If you leave it too late you'll have to take your chances of dealing with cowboys who cut corners and won't be there when you need them. There's no time to waste here. So start hoarding your resources now so you and your business can stay safe.

3



Be selfless

The key to being a real hero is to put others first. Whether they're saving people from collapsing lifts, releasing hostages from high-rises or rescuing kittens from burning buildings, action heroes are known for their selfless acts.

Ok, so it's a bit of a stretch to compare your business data to actual human lives. But it's important to consider why we have data protection laws in the first place.

Your customers need to know that you respect and value them and won't pass their data over to the baddies. By making sure your computer systems are safe and secure, you're showing your customers that their privacy matters to you.

Upgrading your computer system might seem like an expense you hadn't catered for, but it will help keep your customers happy.

Which is also great for you.

4



Look at the bigger picture

All great action heroes know that it's no good focusing on just one guy with a knife when there are others hiding behind with guns, grenades and machetes. You need to look at the whole picture to see what threats and opportunities it presents, and that's the best way to see The 2020 Problem too.

Upgrading your computer system is actually great for business, opening up a whole new world of possibilities for you to be bigger and better than ever before.

It's also essential if you want to keep up with the competition. 88% of UK businesses are now using cloud computing in some form, and those who resist are getting left behind. Customers and employees expect today's companies to be forward thinking and flexible.

And when you finally make the leap you'll wonder what took you so long. Here's the really great thing – upgrading won't be half as expensive as you think, and will actually end up saving you money in the long run.



THE BOTTOM LINE

The 2020 Problem is real, and you need to do something about it fast. Would John McClane give up or bury his head in the sand? No way. So go on, be the hero and save your business while you've still got time.

Yippie Ki Yay (you know the rest)

We're the guys on the ground who support the heroes. Let's talk.

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