


IMPROVE USER  
EXPERIENCE, SECURITY,  
AND STAY ALWAYS  
UPDATED WITH  
WINDOWS-AS-A-SERVICE





Windows-as-a-Service has been making news, as it is a significant divergence from how Microsoft releases new features and functionalities in their Windows Operating System. Previously, new features were included in the new version of the operating system and released three to four years apart. Organizations wishing to access these latest features and functionalities were required to engage in a full-scale upgrade project. This could take months, if not years, to roll out across a large organization. With new technology evolving rapidly in computing space, and the security of corporate data under constant pressure, the earlier approach to upgrades is largely unsustainable.

A more agile approach was necessary and led to the launch of Windows-as-a-Service, the method by which updates and new product features of Windows 10 are released twice annually through a 'continuous update delivery model'. This model enables Windows OS and Office application updates to be deployed to users on an ongoing basis rather than as a big bang project a few years apart.

While in the past, organizations partnered with a system integrator for their large-scale Windows upgrade, they will now need to continuously collaborate with a technology partner who locks step with them to roll out upgrades across the organization and ensure critical applications are always up and running.

**Windows-as-a-Service is the method by which Microsoft ensures enterprises and users of Windows 10 are always provided with the latest functionalities and features of the operating system on an ongoing basis.**

## RE-IMAGINE THE MODERN WORKPLACE LANDSCAPE WITH WINDOWS-AS-A-SERVICE

With Windows 10 powered by Windows-as-a-Service, the modern workplace can be always available and up to date. Business users can access their work from anywhere, anytime, and can do so in a collaborative, secure environment.

 Windows  Office  Windows Server Microsoft Azure Microsoft System Center

### *Platforms that benefit from Windows-as-a-Service*

#### Now to drill-down to some of the key advantages of Windows-as-a-Service

##### **Planned access to updated features :**

With a new version of Windows 10 and Office 365 ProPlus released twice a year, organizations can ensure they have a workplace platform that is current with new features in line with updates in technology. Incremental software updates minimize the need for expensive end-user training for each release. Users can also capitalize on advanced collaboration and improved mobility.

##### **Always updated security :**

With script kiddies successfully wreaking

havoc even for global organizations, security requires frequent updates. To ensure they are ahead of hackers, Microsoft promises security updates along with their bi-annual features released for Windows 10 and Office 365 ProPlus. These updates provide device, identity, information protection, and threat resistance. With time, Microsoft envisages a shrinkage in the security gap between updates, such that hackers get the least time possible to learn and hack.

##### **Simplified management :**

Along with Windows 10 enhancements, Microsoft has also simplified the workplace infrastructure management with System

Center Configuration Manager and cloud-based management platforms - Enterprise Mobility and Security (EMS). These management tools also follow a continuous update methodology in line with Windows 10 releases. This enables incorporation and management of new features seamless. In addition, leveraging Windows Analytics provides organizations with valuable insight on compatibility data for planning upgrades, proactively identify and remediate critical end-user impacting issues and report compliance of all devices. These management tools help enterprises to adopt Windows 10 semi-annual releases with minimal disruption.





## THE PROCESS TO TRANSITION TO WINDOWS-AS-A-SERVICE

Windows-as-a-Service enables enterprises to transition from a project-based approach to a process-based approach with well-defined governance and change management. Enterprises can follow a structured approach in two phases,

### Phase 1 – One-time establishment

- **Analysis** – Enables the enterprise or the system integrator to understand the business structure, gather and analyze data on applications, processes, devices, and users; define application criticality, identify early adopters, and gather change control requirements.

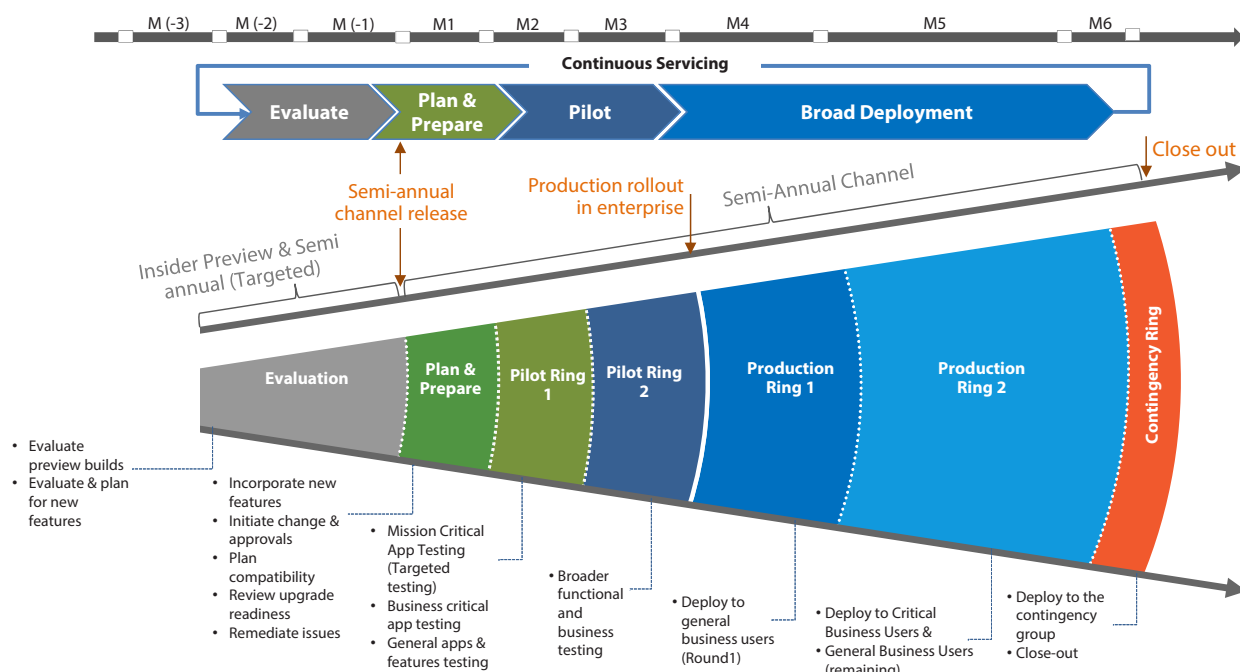
- **Definition** – Facilitates mapping of the business to servicing framework and define servicing processes. It determines the roles and responsibilities, design servicing rings and roll out methods, define change management, and feedback mechanism.
- **Implementation** – Includes configuring servicing tools and test beds, establishing the process and onboarding of pilot users, configuring service rings, publishing process guides and establishing a feedback mechanism. It also includes executing updates for a pilot set to validate the solution.

### Phase 2 – Repetitive Activities

- **Continuous Servicing** – Allows for evaluation and validation of new

features, change management and user communication, targeted deployment to pilot rings, reviewing the success and engaging in a broad deployment to production.

- A typical servicing model will involve defining servicing rings considering the business structure, application criticality, site distribution and defining a responsibility matrix for the IT and business early adopters and testers. This in turn needs to be established in the enterprise and configured on the configuration management and distribution platform. Each new semiannual release is then validated for features, compatibility with apps and devices, stability and readiness for broad deployment in the enterprise by working through the servicing rings.



\* Plan & timelines for illustration only

## CHALLENGES THAT ENTERPRISES COULD FACE WHEN ADOPTING WINDOWS-AS-A-SERVICE

While enterprises seek to leverage Windows as a Service, here are a few challenges they could encounter without a technology partner.

- **Keeping pace with releases and roll out to the business** : Some enterprises may not have the required expertise or bandwidth in-house to continuously evaluate new features, identify changes to existing features, test them, incorporate them into the enterprise configuration, and rollout to the business users
- **Managing application impact** : Enterprises need to evaluate the impact on their applications while implementing the new version of Windows 10
- **Aligning to the paradigm shift** : Very few enterprises will be able to define and establish a seamless process with IT and business collaborating to test, pilot and rollout the updates on an ongoing basis

- **Ensuring end user change management** : Another challenge is to ensure users are informed, taken into confidence and prepared for frequent updates, including making them aware of new features and capabilities

While the continuous updates delivery model allows users to access the latest version of Windows OS and Office application with planned frequency, here is how organizations can implement these changes by collaborating with the right technology partner.

To begin with, ensure the partner offers the full spectrum of services from consulting and implementation, to continuous servicing. An ideal technology partner should have extensive experience executing end-to-end Windows migrations, is an active contributor to the Microsoft incubation program, is a CSP provider, and a certified partner with access to product updates earlier and faster. The partner should also have tie-ups with key hardware OEMs and access to solution accelerators, and proven transformation and operational tools to de-risk migration and ensure faster delivery.



## CONCLUSION

For organizations wishing to be truly digital, evergreen, and secure, Windows-as-a-Service offers an opportunity to be agile, responsive, and digital. Having transited to Windows 10, it is an imperative for organizations to put in place a robust process that is essential for managing this environment with minimal effort.

## About the Authors



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