White Paper | Parallels Remote Application Server

Microsoft Windows Server 2003 End of Life

Microsoft Windows Server 2003

Still running Windows Server® 2003? Microsoft® has announced that the end of life (EOL) for Windows Server 2003 (WS2003) is July 14, 2015. We are quickly approaching the EOL of what most IT administrators and technicians consider the most stable and problem-free Windows Server operating system. WS2003 R2 has been a metaphorical rock.

Industry experts estimate that there are more than 10 million machines across the globe still running WS2003, and many will continue to do so for various reasons until EOL or close to that date.

In the past several years, Windows® XP and WS2003 have played a very important part in the progress of companies' IT infrastructures. It should be a cause for alarm that so many businesses still rely upon an operating system originally released almost 10 years ago. The matter also concerns all the applications developed for WS2003, since they will not work on the newer OS. In addition, migration is not easy It has been calculated that over 200 days are required to complete it successfully.

All of this is a sword of Damocles hanging over IT administrators, who have to maintain all systems with WS2003 EOL getting closer every day. In addition, over the last 10 years, many customized applications have been developed to meet companies' specific needs, and all of these have to be rewritten in order to continue functioning. Traditional methods of modernizing applications reinstalling, upgrading the machine, or rebuilding, are extremely complex, expensive, and time consuming. It is very likely that not all applications will be ready and not all systems will be tested in time for the July 2015 cutoff. Therefore, it is almost impossible to guarantee business as usual.

The vast majority of businesses neglect server migration and upgrade planning, allowing insufficient lead time and resulting in last-minute, frantic, stressful, and risky forced migration in order to ensure continuity of service, support, and security.

Parallels RAS Windows Server 2003 Migration Approach

WS2003 will not suddenly stop working as soon as support expires. The file server will still serve files, and users will still be able to access the resources they require. A virtualized instance of WS2003 will reduce the risk of an OS without support and security patches. The migration is mandatory, but it need not be done all at one go. With a good plan, you can migrate to WS2012 with reduced complexity and risk.

Parallels Remote Application Server (RAS) has a unique feature that allows you to manage and publish applications and remote and virtual desktops from the most common hypervisors: Hyper-v®, VMware®, and Citrix®. IT administrators can publish different applications from different hypervisors at the same time. This vendor independence means that Parallels RAS broadly delivers the same features and functionality, with the same interface, regardless of the technology in use.

Parallels RAS is compatible with several versions of Windows Server, including WS2003, meaning that in the same farm you can administer WS2003 and WS2012 in the same farm. The migration process has to occur in different stages; initially very few corporate applications will be ready for the new OS. The possibility to work simultaneously with two different OSes reduces complexity and keeps your business up and running while you are working on application updates.

In contrast to the main actors in the arena, such as Citrix, Parallels RAS will continue to support WS2003 in order to provide businesses the possibility to migrate from this OS at their own pace. With a broader timeframe, companies have the opportunity to create a more convenient and less stressful migration path as doomsday approaches.

Parallels RAS is built to facilitate the day-to-day job of the IT administrator, by offering the best solution for application virtualization, remote desktop, and VDI. Parallels RAS is an all-in-one solution, with no extra components required, which allows you to leverage your existing infrastructure and drive your company to the next level.

Conclusion

There have been many changes in IT over the last several years: the evolution from 32 to 64 bits, the virtualization of Server, Desktop, and Application, and now the end of life EOL of WS2003. Companies have to leverage new technologies to maintain high productivity and reduce operational cost. The migration from WS2003 offers the opportunity to take the latest technical advances on board.

The migration from WS2003 is complex and very expensive in terms of planning, cost, and risk. Many corporate applications will not work on the latest OSes, which means day-to-day business activities are at risk. Delays in planning for the event might force companies to recklessly undertake a fast and furious migration over the next few months.

Parallels RAS offers you the possibility of continuing to work with Windows Server 2003, allowing your IT administrator to deal with WS2003 EOL over a longer timeframe. With Parallels RAS, it is possible to mix different versions of Windows Server (2003, 2008 and 2012), avoiding the restriction of having to use only one OS to run all operations. With Parallels RAS, the IT administrator can manage the whole infrastructure through one central console, and can publish applications for WS2003 or WS2012 at the same time, with no limits. Applications that are ready for WS2012 can move to the new OS straight away, while other applications can continue running on WS2003.