

Windows 10: Versioning and Updates

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Preamble

Due to the overall length of this article, it will be provided in two parts, part one will discuss *Windows updates*, and part two will discuss *data collection*.

Part 1: Windows Updates

Windows 10 is "apparently" the last numerical version of the Windows operating system. This appears to fall in line with the Apple's "OS X" – or "OS 10". Now, rather than altering the actual version number, Windows – and Mac for that matter, are "naming" their versions. For example, the latest Windows 10 version – referred to now as "builds", is 1809 and code named "Redstone 5", and which was released to end users November 13, 2018.

Windows 10 – when *push-comes-to-shove* is really an update of Windows 8.1 and which was released in late 2013. One significant element that set Windows 8.1 apart from the other versions of Windows was with regards to Windows 8.1's "intended" use – and that was the use of a "touch screen". Apparently, the designers thought that the keyboard and the mouse were going the way of the dodo bird. Well, it would appear that for many of us "older folk" this was a major oversight on the part of the Microsoft development team. This may all change one day – especially with children being brought up with tablets, and which is entirely touch driven.

Though I am involved in the computing industry, I do not consider myself either a "geek" or a "nerd" – as both terms are, grammatically speaking, rather demeaning. To me, a computer is simply a "tool" – not unlike a hammer or hair dryer, though the latter is of no real practicable use to me any longer. And interestingly, as a tool, there has been no real significant advancement in computing technology since the introduction of Windows 95 way back in August of 1995. Some may disagree with me on this point – but I would be more than happy to hear their reasoning. But I do digress.

I must admit, I am not a real fan of Windows 10 – and for the following two reasons, 1) updates and 2) data collection. Both of these factors are, at least to me, *a potentially serious concern*. Notice that I used the term "potentially". After all, this is my point-of-view – and it just may be opposite to what others believe. Regardless, I would like to share with you my reasons for these two concerns.

Updates and the Internet

It might be very interesting to note the fact that updates to the Windows operating systems became a real concern with the introduction of the Internet. Prior to that time, the only way to *infect* a computer was through the insertion of some kind of "physical media" – such as a floppy disk. Now, if you can imagine for a moment that the Internet is similar to a "floppy disks" – then you might get an idea of the need for concern – not necessarily a serious and immediate concern, but a concern nonetheless.

So, when a threat posed itself that could *potentially* affect the smooth operation of Windows, the folks at Microsoft would offer updates – or patches, to fix that error. Sadly however, for the most part, such patches *were more reactive than proactive*. That is, the threat had to be made known *first* – so that the patch could be made to repair that threat.

Now, such "threats" are generally categorized into four main groups namely, low, medium, high and severe. As a neophyte back then, I willingly agreed to allow updates on my computer – only to discover

later that a patch designed to fix one particular error more-often-than-not caused an error somewhere else. As a direct result of such updates, this often meant a complete re-installation of the Windows operating system – a job that took anywhere from 1-4 hours to complete, and which was often repeated.

This led to ascertaining just what a particular patch was actually designed to do. And what I was to discover that was of particular interest was that many of these so-called patches *were really not required*. And over a period of some months, I also discovered that many of the issues that users were facing with their computers were, in the end, *self-inflicted* – and where updating the computer would really be of no effect and which may only exacerbate the problem. Over the next year I was also to discover that of the four levels of threats, that threats of a severe nature were, for the most part, *almost nonexistent*. To keep things short, what this taught me *was that an understanding of the basics of computers and computing was what the end user really needed to know*. And being the father of seven children, the points that I taught my children resulted in my not having to work on their computers **at all!** And one of the steps that I took to minimize computer problems *was to stop Windows updates entirely*. In this way, the saying, "If it ain't broke...don't fix it!" was to be an ever-present reality. Now we have Windows 10!

With Windows 10 – *this apparently has now all changed*. The folks at Microsoft have stated – and in no uncertain terms, that it will be impossible to disable the updating of the Windows operating system. But is this indeed true? Scouring the Internet has revealed a number of "methods" that state the possibility of disabling Windows 10 updates completely. But is this indeed true? What is important to understand here is that – more-often-than-not, when Microsoft introduces a new operating system, that operating system will contain errors of one sort or other. Thus the need for updates. At some point however, the major issues that plagued the operating system will be resolved, thus minimizing or even eliminating the need for updates. However, I was led to believe that Windows 10 will always be Windows 10 – meaning that updates would always be necessary. But is this true? Well, apparently not!

Version Numbers and Codenames

The current version of Windows 10 is based on "version numbering" – with the latest being "Version: 1809 (OS Build 17763.107)" – codenamed "Redstone 5". Prior to version 1809, there was version 1709. Thus the first version of Windows 10 was version 1507, codenamed "Threshold 1" and which was released to the public in July of 2015.

Now this next point is both very, very interesting and important. What I was to discover was that specific versions of Windows 10 also had what is referred to as "support cycles" – simply meaning that a particular version of Windows 10 would not longer be supported as a direct result of a new version replacing the previous one. For example, support of version 1507 ended on May of 2017. What this really means then, is that when a previous version of Windows 10 is "deprecated" – or "*to withdraw official support for or discourage the use of a software product in favor of a newer or better alternative*", then the previous versions of Windows 10 are really no longer supported. If you review Microsoft's support cycle, this is similar, if not identical to the previous versions for Windows – for example Windows 7 and Windows XP. Interesting! If this is true – and it sounds as if it is, then stopping the update process of Windows 10 might function in a similar – if not identical manner as the previous versions of Windows.

Now, regarding Windows 10 updates, the following is taken from Wikipedia regarding the most recent version, "Version 1809 (October 2018 Update)":

"Windows 10 October 2018 Update, or version 1809, codenamed 'Redstone 5', is the sixth major update to Windows 10 and the fifth in a series of updates under the Redstone codenames. It carries the build number 10.0.17763. The first preview was released to Insiders on February 14, 2018. The update was made available to public consumers on October 2, 2018. On October 6, 2018, Microsoft halted the public rollout of the update due to a serious bug that deletes user's files after updating. On October 9, 2018, Microsoft re-released the update to Insiders, stating that all known issues in the update (including file deletion bug) was identified and fixed. On October 25, 2018, Microsoft confirmed the existence of another bug which overwrites files without any confirmation when extracting from a ZIP file. The ZIP bug was fixed for Insiders on October 30, 2018. The public rollout of the update resumed on November 13, 2018."

Now, did you happen to notice the mention of the October 2018 release and the "serious bug that deletes user's files after updating!" You have got to be kidding! I would say that the unknown deletion of a user's files would be considered "serious". What would be the compensation for those that fell victim to this update? Sadly, none! Notice that the above also states that the update that deleted user's files was released to the public on October 2, 2018! Then four days later, Microsoft halts this public release. Well, thank you Microsoft ... but what of the missing data?

Over the years that I have used the Windows operating systems, I have always said that my two favorites were Windows 95 and Windows XP. Though these two versions were not devoid of problems, for most of us, such problems never presented any real issues. My reason for mentioning these two operating systems is that I disabled updates immediately. From this point forward, I would monitor Microsoft's support cycle keeping an eye on those updates that were really important. Interestingly, I believe that in the years that I and my clients used Windows XP that I sent out only one email that was the result of a "severe threat".

So, what do we do with Windows 10 and the update process then? Monitor "the versions and the builds". For example, the pre-release of the next build, Version 1903, codenamed "19H1", is the seventh major update to Windows 10 and which was released in July of 2018. Being a "pre-release" means just that, a release that is being made available to the beta-testers – even though this testing period did nothing to prevent the serious bug of Version 1809! So, do we really need to update to Version 1903? I think that I would wait on this one!

Before moving on to the next point, a word or two about "service packs", When Windows 95 was first introduced, as we have seen, this version of Windows was not entirely bug-free. Approximately one year later, Microsoft would issue a "service pack" which contained patches to repair known issues. This service pack was labeled "SP1" – so Windows 95 would be known as "Windows 95 SP1". This would be followed by Windows 95 SP2 one year later. Notice the time frame – *one year*. Now compare this time frame to the above time frame of Windows 10:

Version	Release Date	Support Cycle
1507	July 29, 2015	May 9, 2017
1511	November 10, 2015	October 10, 2017
1607	August 2, 2016	April 10, 2018
1703	April 5, 2017	October 9, 2018
1709	October 17, 2017	April 9, 2019
1803	April 30, 2018	November 12, 2019
1809	November 13, 2018	May 12, 2020

Notice that there were two major releases of Windows 10 in 2018! *This is pretty serious stuff here!* The same occurred in 2015 and 2017.

What I believe to be important to understand is that the version numbers of Windows 10 are really no different than the previous version numbering. For example, we had Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows Millennium, and so on. So, again, notice the release date and the support cycle in the table above.

What does really mean to you and to me? Well for me and my house, if I did make the move to Windows 10, I would cease the entire update process – or ensure that I was using a previous version that had been for the most part, well tested.

Note: On January 22, 2019, Microsoft released to the public Version 1809 (OS Build 17763.292) – with the previous version of 1809 being OS Build 17763.107. Now, subtract 107 from 292 – leaves us with 185 updates! Now, is it possible that one of these updates could cause data loss? Are you willing "to take that possibility"?

I hope that you have find this information understandable and of practicable use to you? Stay tuned for part two on "Data Collection".

Sincerely,

Dell Krauchi

February 3rd, 2019