

Is Time Running Out on Your Legacy IT Systems?

Microsoft has already extended the support lifetime of Windows NT 4, after recognising the needs of the massive user base that this venerable operating system still has. However, it is now confirmed that support will cease at the end of 2004. Are your systems prepared?

New Technology



At its release, Windows NT 4 represented a major step forward in the performance and functionality of Microsoft's business-oriented operating systems, and many manufacturers of automation systems and related products moved to embrace it by building their products on it. This move away from a myriad of character-based displays and disconnected, functionally limited systems meant that control systems became easier to build, use and maintain.

Old News

NT 4 is now more than 8 years old (with older releases stretching back for more than a decade) and is a severely outdated product when compared to modern Windows Server System products. Of course, the same thing can also be said for the automation systems running on it. And of course, while Microsoft is retiring NT 4, support for these older automation products is becoming much harder to find as well.

The Hardware Angle

The other major problem is that the hardware NT is being run on is often nearly as old as the OS itself. Finding replacement parts for these machines when they are needed – and components such as fans and power supplies *will* wear out – is becoming problematic. Unfortunately, a straightforward hardware upgrade is usually not an option, especially with server machines – the major PC manufacturers no longer support NT for new machines, so drivers and customer support are not provided.

Catching Up / Housekeeping

All this means that any legacy automation system running NT represents a weak point in your organisation. NT is more susceptible to viruses and security breaches, and has poorer connectivity and reliability, when compared to modern OSes. What would happen to production if a hardware or software failure happened right in the middle of a busy production run? How long would it take to get a replacement system in place?

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All this adds up to a simple conclusion – time is nearly up for NT-based automation systems. It's time to move forward, *before* that critical system goes down due to an irreparable hardware failure, or a security breach causes a major crash. And Alba is here to help.

Our Services

At Alba we've worked extensively with every major OS Microsoft has released. Even more importantly, we have installed numerous automation systems on these different platforms, and we have the capabilities and expertise to upgrade your control system completely to today's standard. We perform risk analyses on your systems and can give expert advice on what hardware, operating systems and automation software are required. We can then configure, install, test and commission your system, making sure it is tuned not only to give best performance, but also that it is as secure and reliable as it can be. We can upgrade any of the following automation systems:

- Allen-Bradley
- DeltaV
- Rockwell
- Fix and iFix
- Siemens
- Wonderware
- And more.....

We can bring your systems up to date with the latest versions, or where necessary, replace them with an entirely new system that will meet and often exceed the capabilities of the old one. Using Oses like Windows 2000, Server 2003, and XP will also greatly improve the security, reliability, connectivity and manageability of your systems.



Risk Management

Change due to obsolescence is an inevitable consideration with any IT system. Alba can help by providing you with the advice and solutions you need to move your systems forward in a controlled way, before a serious failure occurs. That way you can make sure that you control the change, rather than the change controlling you.

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