



Window 7 Tips

to be used as an internal resource only

While we're all thinking of Windows 8, Windows 7 adoptions at many enterprises continues. Some industry surveys project migrations to peak even as Windows 8 makes its debut some time next year.

With that, here are seven quick and totally random but useful tips that might save you some work as you migrate over to the current OS:

1. Record Problems.

The Problem Steps Recorder (PSR) is a great new feature that helps in troubleshooting a system. At times, Remote Assistance may not be possible. However, if a person types psr in their Instant Search, it will launch the recorder. Now they can perform the actions needed to recreate the problem and each click will record the screen and the step. They can even add comments. Once complete, the PSR compiles the whole thing into an MHTML file and zips it up so that it can be e-mailed for analysis to the network admin (or family problem solver, depending on how it's being used).

2. Employ Deployment Image Servicing and Management (DISM).

If you quickly want to list or manage Windows packages, features or drivers, use the command-line utility DISM. The "image" in the name may fool you into thinking that this is solely a deployment tool. An online command-line switch lets you manage the features in the currently loaded OS. To get a list of the loaded Windows features, enter `dism /online /get-features /format:table`. To enable a feature, enter `dism /online /enable-feature /featurename:<name>`.

3. Embrace Troubleshooting Packs.

Designed to help users troubleshoot and solve problems on their own, you need to update your support procedures to acknowledge these Packs. For example, don't force users to repeat steps the Pack already walked them through, and consider developing your own Packs (in Windows PowerShell) to support in-house systems.

4. Check Reliability.

The Reliability Monitor was introduced in Windows Vista as "The Reliability and Performance Monitor." In Windows 7 it has been separated from Performance Monitor and moved to a new location under the Action Center. You open the Action Center in Control Panel and then look under the Maintenance options for the "View reliability history" link. You can also just type in Reliability Monitor from the Instant Search.

5. Restore Point Previews.

Many of us used to shut off System Restore because we were terrified to actually use it; under Windows 7, we can be much calmer. After selecting a Restore Point, Windows will now offer to show you which files and folders will be affected by restoring to that point.

6. Remote Desktop Console.

Windows 7 Remote Server Administration Tools (RSAT) does not include a console-based remote desktop utility. And even if it did, the standard remote desktop console has some nagging limitations: It can't move connections around in the list; it can't sort by folders and so forth. If you manage lots of servers from your Windows 7 workstation, try downloading a copy of mRemote from mremote.org. This donation-requested utility allows you to mix together a variety of remote control applications, including Citrix Independent Computing Architecture (ICA), Microsoft Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP), Virtual Network Computing (VNC), Secure Shell (SSH) and rlogin. All host names are displayed in a standard tree control that can be divided into folders, sorted alphabetically, and allow you to assign different logon accounts and secure passwords to each connection.

7. Simplify Cloned Machine Setups.

You can't run Sysinternals' newsid utility to change the identity of a cloned Windows 7 machine (either a virtual machine or imaged PC). Instead, create a template installation then run `sysprep /oobe /generalize /reboot /shutdown /unattend:scriptfile`. Clone or copy this virtual machine file. When it launches, it will get a new SID and you can fill in the name. The reference for building unattended script files is at tinyurl.com/winunattend.

