

The Untold Story of Microsoft Migration Woes

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What an Organization Really Encounters If It Migrates to Windows

In today's fast-paced IT world, some organizations consider moving from one solution to another as if it's a foregone conclusion or a simple task. But when you're talking about a significant aspect of your infrastructure, the task of moving is anything but simple. As a result, regardless of how appealing such a decision might seem to some, it should be objectively and thoroughly vetted out.

Doing due diligence before making a major infrastructure switch is critical for any organization. It should come as no surprise that when organizations neglect to carry out such needed evaluation and analysis, the experience and results they end up with are often considerably different than expected.

With that in mind, we wanted to get an insider's look at what happened to a few organizations that recently migrated from Micro Focus® Open Enterprise Server or NetWare® to a Windows Server environment. As our sources asked organizational insiders about the expected benefits and end results of the move, the answers they were willing to give weren't all that surprising. But it's the questions they refused or weren't allowed to fully answer that proved to be most provocative.

In most cases, the tip toeing around certain questions seemed to be politically motivated—even though we promised the insiders complete anonymity. Why the high degree of concern? In almost all cases—and as you might expect with a migration gone bad—executives in the organizations made the decision to migrate without ever seeking input from those closely involved with server management or network operations. Post migration, some of these decision makers abruptly left the organization. In other cases, IT personnel frustrated with the migration departed as well. Regardless, all these organizations tended to keep the entire truth of what happened close to the vest. However, this paper seeks to uncover the truth to at least some of the impact such a migration creates.

Plan Your Budget, Then Double It

Of course there are unexpected, unpleasant surprises that pop up with major migrations such as this. Unplanned costs are chief among these. One of the common mistakes organizations make when considering a move to a Windows Server environment is a vast underestimation of the actual costs. In fact, cost overruns seem to be the norm.

This was exactly the case for one of the healthcare providers we talked to. They had projected US\$45,000 in additional hardware for their migration to Windows Server, but ended up paying more than double that at US\$110,000. Similarly, the provider planned on US\$90,000 to cover consulting engineer fees, but actually paid US\$160,000. When we tried to get even more details on the overall costs, they indicated they couldn't reveal those numbers for legal reasons. However, they did share that shortly after the migration was complete, the director who had spearheaded it left the organization under less than favorable circumstances.

Other organizations we talked to had similar experiences. Here is what just a few of them said about the unanticipated cost overruns of their Windows Server migration.

"The cost was a bit of a shock to our CFO."
(Manufacturing customer)

"We underestimated the number of Windows Servers we would need and had to add another SAN—with hosts—for a cost overrun of over [US]\$75,000."
(Higher education customer)

*"Our storage needs were larger than originally expected."
(Hospital system)*

*"The data center has grown so large it had to be relocated
to an off-site location."
(Healthcare provider)*

Expect to Hire Additional Help

No matter how talented their IT staff was, to minimize migration problems—and even in an attempt to meet project deadlines—the organizations we consulted found that they needed outside help. That outside help came in a number of different areas, including planning, consulting on migration tool selection and usage, scaling hardware needs, and reconfiguring all their workstations.

*"Consultants were brought in to help execute the plan, as well
as extra hands to help with workstation stuff since it was clear
in the first few months that we simply didn't have the bandwidth."
(Healthcare provider)*

*"Fact is, we simply make more putting in Microsoft solutions.
Between support issues, patches, and forced upgrades
we keep pretty busy."
(IT consultant)*

After the migration, many found that they lost some of their best and most tenured IT people. Some left in frustration after having to deal with the difficulties of the new Windows Server environment. In those cases, new IT staff had to be brought in and acclimated to the organization. In other cases, valuable people were forced out through layoffs as the organization had to bring in new people with Windows Server experience. Not only do both scenarios result in significant expense, they were both very disruptive to IT operations and morale.

*"The organization's best staff was always gone by the time we got
there—either left the company, fired to save money, or reassigned.
Those reassigned are also pretty hostile to the migration effort."
(State government contractor)*

It Always Takes Longer than You Expect

Our investigation found that it's not uncommon for an organization that migrates to end up having to renew their licenses for Micro Focus solutions—sometimes for multiple years beyond the expected migration end date. In some cases, organizations even expanded their license footprint due to the lengthy migration timeframe.

*"The original plan was for a six-month project, it ended
up being a little over two years."
(K-12 customer)*

When recounting how its migration took longer than expected, a customer in the higher education sector talked about how the staff working on the migration had to give up several weekends to try to make up time. That's one thing if you're a consultant that's getting overtime, but another entirely if you're not. One of the reasons it cited for the long delays was simply that the tools used for data and account migrations didn't work as well as expected. As a result, the team had to perform several file restores.

Several other customers blamed their migration delays on the difficulty in moving from the simple rights management model of Novell Storage Services (NSS) to the much more complicated rights management scheme of Windows Server. Some customers even ended up having to completely redesign their folder structures. One customer summarized their struggles as follows.

*"Microsoft's New Technology File System (NTFS) is just awful.
The inheritance is a joke. I miss NSS already. Whenever we need
to modify top-level rights, it takes hours to days to apply as
Windows sets it directly to all files and folders underneath. Argh!"*

One unhappy customer who found out just a little too late about the difficulty in dealing with rights management when migrating to Windows Server vented his frustration with the creation of a YouTube video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=91QZOE7h89U. While you might find the video entertaining now, it's sure to leave a sour taste in the mouth of anyone who has endured the hassles involved with granting access rights after a move to Windows Server.

It's Not a One-to-One Swap

One of the reasons that a migration to Windows Server goes way over projected costs is that organizations simply don't realize that it's not a one-to-one swap. As already mentioned, organizations almost always need more hardware than was required with their Micro Focus environment.

*"The original plan was to simply replace the old hardware that
ran our Novell (now part of Micro Focus) file services environment.
We ended up having to double our hardware requirements and
install a new backup solution. Cost us way more than expected
and my bosses weren't happy about signing that check."
(Manufacturing customer)*

Additionally, organizations typically ended up having to hire more people to configure, patch and manage their new Windows Servers. Some of this was due to issues with security (the proverbial “Patch Tuesday” problem), but some of it was simply the result of Windows Server being inherently more complex than an Open Enterprise Server environment.

Printing Nightmares

One of the most common pain points of a migration to Microsoft was in the area of printing. While the world has largely gone digital, the truth is that printing still happens—and on a scale that underscores its continued importance to organizational productivity. This is why many of the recently migrated customers we talked to identified Micro Focus iPrint® as one of the capabilities they missed most in their file services environment. The loss of its self-service features stymied end-user productivity and made it more difficult to complete everyday tasks. They also found that in their new Windows Server environment, the demand for printer support escalated drastically. All of this adds up to additional cost and even more work for already-stretched helpdesk resources.

“Printing has become a nightmare. What was once a fairly automatic task for end users has become a helpdesk bottleneck. There’s no self-service feature like iPrint’s maps, and users are unsure of what printers they need access to. And don’t even get me started on secure printing—that’s a whole other can of worms I don’t want to discuss.”
(Healthcare provider)

“You have to redo printers from scratch. There are some solutions for migration, but they are more trouble than they are worth. You’ll miss iPrint.”
(State government contractor)

Lack of Mac Support

Mac users are growing in number every day, and they’ve come to expect a full seat at the IT table. So it’s no surprise that the lack of Mac support was another migration hot button for the organizations we talked to. While the AFP support and the Kanaka client in Open Enterprise Server make using a Mac seamlessly easy, the same can’t be said for Windows Server. Customers learned the hard way that Windows Server does not support resource forks, that certain characters allowed by Macs aren’t allowed by Windows, and that many of the names of their users’ Mac files would have to be changed to work in a Windows Server environment.

Understandably, Microsoft’s limited Mac support seemed to hit the education sector the hardest. Education customers had quite a bit to

say about how they missed the Mac support that we provide and the problems caused by the minimal support in Windows Server.

“Mac support is definitely more painful—so much is lost when we can’t use AFP.”
(Higher education institution)

“A lot of our Mac users had really long file names, in multiple nested directories, all of which had to be retro-fitted before we could migrate the files.”
(K–12 customer)

“The professors were very upset when we told them they would have to add extensions to their file names if they wanted to continue to be able to click a file and have it open with the correct program.”
(Higher education institution)

“Files with non-standard names got truncated in odd ways. We had to go back to the drawing board and have them clean up and rename files, then re-run the data migration.”
(Higher education institution)

Problems moving Mac files into a Windows Server environment seemed to pervade the stories of the organizations we spoke to. A state government contractor indicated that during one such move, its migration tool failed to copy two million files. Some customers also reported that the latest version of SMB in Windows Server tended to cause data corruption in Mac files, not to mention higher levels of user frustration and a big jump in helpdesk calls.

Business Disruptions During and After

Anyone planning a large-scale infrastructure migration recognizes that the move itself has the potential to cause significant business disruptions. But the move from our file services environment to Windows Server environment caused ongoing problems in unexpected places.

As already mentioned, the exodus of experienced personnel was a common business disruptor. The failure of mission critical applications caused serious disruptions for some organizations. Data loss as a result of the migration also proved to be a significant disruptor for many customers. And training new and existing IT personnel, as well as end users themselves, on the new environment had negative impacts.

But the following quotes identify a few other ways the move to Windows Server disrupted business for past customers.

"Our admins miss the stability of the Novell (now part of Micro Focus) servers. Our on-call rotations have gotten more tiring, and servers now have a standard once-a-week reboot schedule at pre-defined windows."
(Healthcare provider)

"Processes and workflows are changing almost daily to adapt as we run into new bumps in the road and make adjustments to the overall plan."
(Hospital system)

"We've had to setup a routine reboot time for our Windows servers."
(Manufacturing customer)

"Support tickets and security issues have increased. Security is an on-going concern, more so now that the majority of servers are Windows. End users require more assistance with Mac and printing issues. Morale on the support team is such that some have left and others are looking to move on."
(Higher education institution)

You Can't Plan for Everything

Even the best-planned migrations can generate problems. Some of the most common issues seem to be data corruption, data loss and—perhaps even worse—public exposure of confidential data due to the loss of the robust security infrastructure an organization enjoyed with their previous environment.

In discussing his involvement with a state government agency's migration from Micro Focus to Microsoft, a contractor explained its unpredictable nature as follows.

"You are basically intentionally crashing an airplane. You plan and plan, and work and work, but in the end, you're going to have problems. That's a fact. You're doing things that would get you fired if you tried it before or after a migration."

When asked about the biggest pain point of the migration, the contractor's response was very telling.

"Are you serious? The entire thing is a huge exercise in stress and frustration. That's why companies bring in contractors to do it! After we leave, people can hate us and blame us for everything!"

And the impact of unforeseen migration problems can extend far beyond stress generation and blame games. When an organization is in a high-stakes business, migration "gotchas" can have extremely serious consequences, as one healthcare provider discovered. A mission-critical application with life-and-death implications to its patient care went down for two days during the migration. The root cause? An incorrect security setting and miscommunication between an analyst and the migration team.

Almost any organization faces higher costs and lost business opportunities if its systems fail during a migration. But ask yourself what else your organization, its customers and its stakeholders stand to lose. Investor confidence? Media support? Taxpayer trust? Regulatory compliance? In an era of consumer power—where information is shared in nanoseconds and companies succeed or fail based solely on how the public perceives them—no one can afford to be the next front-page IT debacle.

Don't Expect Any Real ROI

The companies we spoke to all bought into the idea that moving to Windows would deliver benefits to the bottom line. But the reality was that the licensing, hardware and business costs associated with the migration—not to mention the higher ongoing maintenance and support costs of a Windows environment—made the entire proposition a debit, and not a credit, to the bottom line. In fact, in spite of whatever they may have been promised, the payoff for the organizations we studied never materialized.

Some organizations made the mistake of comparing apples to oranges when it comes to ROI. In essence, they let their Micro Focus environment languish, and then allowed this outdated deployment to be compared with the shiny stats and marketing mojo of the very latest version of Windows Server. Perhaps these organizations are still running NetWare and haven't yet experienced the benefits of Open Enterprise Server on Linux. Perhaps they haven't consolidated servers or optimized their environment with the very latest support packs. Whatever the reason, they have failed to recognize that, like any software product, our offerings need to be maintained. When kept up-to-date and maintained properly, our solutions offer an ROI that can't be beat.

The hospital system we talked to made their feelings quite clear about their Windows Server migration and expected ROI.

"It has been time consuming, stressful, and with no visible ROI."

But the most telling and insightful comment came from a state government contractor, who had the following to say about his experience migrating organizations to a Windows Server environment.

"Well, I make good money at it. Beyond that, I can't see a ROI for the customer. In the end, people share files, save files, send and receive email, and set appointments. Same stuff. If most of my migrations would've maintained their Novell (now part of Micro Focus) environment they would've spent less money and been just as happy."

You Lose Valuable Benefits in the Bargain

In most cases, not only does a move to Windows Server cause organizations to spend more money with no noticeable gain in benefits, but they also find that they have lost valuable productivity features and services they once enjoyed.

In addition to Open Enterprise Server's trusted file and storage services, unmatched print services, broad interoperability, proven network management and other standard features, the following represent a few of the additional benefits that Open Enterprise Server customers enjoy:

- **Micro Focus Filr**—Filr gives IT centralized control over user file storage, while empowering end users with simple file access and sharing from any location and device
- **Domain Services for Windows**—Streamlines user and group management and simplifies infrastructure complexity in mixed environments
- **Dynamic Storage Technology**—Provides powerful storage management capabilities that reduce storage costs and make backup and recovery of critical data easier
- **Kanaka Client for Macs**—Gives Mac users a standard, seamless way to connect to storage resources with the ease of a single log in
- **Micro Focus Cluster Services (two free nodes)**—Enables businesses to protect their mission-critical workgroup services and ensure business continuity

Discover the True Value of Your Investment

The facts are clear. Anyone who thinks that migrating their network OS from Micro Focus to Microsoft will be a simple endeavor with guaranteed upside needs to think again. The feature-rich reliability and cost efficiency you get from us can't be beat.

If you or anyone in your organization is considering a move to Windows Server, don't be hasty. Don't fall for the lie that Windows is the face of the future. The truth is that Linux is the platform with the highest growth rates around the world, not Windows. Open standards and community-driven innovation is the future, not vendor lock-in and monopolistic practices. Take the time to discover the hidden costs and real nightmares associated with a migration to Windows Server.

Contact us and we'll help you understand the value of your existing investment and why maintaining it is the best and most strategic choice for your organization's success.

To learn more about Open Enterprise Server, visit: www.novell.com/products/openenterpriseserver/

About Micro Focus

Since 1976, Micro Focus has helped more than 20,000 customers unlock the value of their business logic by creating enabling solutions that bridge the gap from well-established technologies to modern functionality. The two portfolios work to a single, clear vision—to deliver innovative products supported by exceptional customer service. www.microfocus.com



Micro Focus
UK Headquarters
United Kingdom
+44 (0) 1635 565200

U.S. Headquarters
Provo, Utah
801 861 4272
888 321 4272

Additional contact information and office locations:
www.novell.com