

# NT operating system hits the buffers

IT solutions provider Ramsac has issued a warning to companies about the implications of running Windows NT after Microsoft withdraws support for the operating system on 1 January 2005.

From that date, security patches and software updates will no longer be available for the popular business platform, leaving thousands of companies, many of them SMEs, exposed to potential security and operational problems. However, Microsoft online self-help will be available until 1 January 2007 for Windows NT Workstation 4. Users who purchased updates, or service packs, will still be offered limited help according to the terms of their software license.

"Nearly 80 per cent of UK companies are using Windows NT within their infrastructure, many as their main operating system," said Ramsac managing director Robert May. "NT's reliability makes it a popular choice for business users which in turn makes it a target for virus writers and hackers, who want to cause maximum damage and disruption."

To illustrate NT's vulnerability,



**Microsoft withdraws NT support**

Microsoft's last major security announcement about a patch for Internet Explorer to remove a serious security flaw, urged all users of its MS operating systems, including NT, to download the security update.

Many companies have already migrated from NT, but May believes that there are a large number of users who are reluctant to swap out software that works well.

"While I can see the logic in sticking with NT, having unsupported software underpinning an IT network is a bad idea," said May. "Not only are firms opening

up their systems to possible attack, they are also in danger of contravening supplier guidelines, an increasing number of which require partner companies to operate robust and reliable IT systems."

Companies should upgrade to meet with BS7799, an international security standard that obliges businesses to only use software that is supported by the vendor.

May added: "Running NT over anything but the short term after 1 January 2005 is not an option. While I do not blame Microsoft for wanting to move customers on from older products, many companies have not made sufficient provision for product migration and are unaware of the potential problems. These companies should seek advice on how they can safeguard IT systems while moving to a more up-to-date platform, which in the majority of cases will be Windows Server 2003 and Windows XP Pro."

Ramsac is offering a free 'NT audit' to companies currently running the software. For more information, call 0870 7569001 or email [info@ramsac.com](mailto:info@ramsac.com).

