

SUN'S TRY AND BUY PROGRAM

>> FREE 60-DAY TRIAL



InformationWeek
BUSINESS INNOVATION POWERED BY TECHNOLOGY

FAA May Ditch Microsoft's Windows Vista And Office For Google And Linux Combo

FAA chief information officer David Bowen said he's taking a close look at the Premier Edition of Google Apps as he mulls replacements for the agency's Windows XP-based desktop computers and laptops.

By Paul McDougall, [InformationWeek](#)

March 6, 2007

URL: <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=197800480>

March is coming in like a lion for Microsoft's public [sector](#) business. Days after *InformationWeek* reported that the Department of Transportation has placed a moratorium on upgrades to [Windows](#) Vista, Office 2007, and Internet Explorer 7, the top technology official at the Federal Aviation Administration revealed that he is considering a permanent ban on the Microsoft [software](#) in favor of a combination of Google's new online business applications running on Linux-based hardware.

In an interview, FAA chief information officer David Bowen said he's taking a close look at the Premier Edition of Google Apps as he mulls replacements for the agency's Windows XP-based desktop computers and laptops. Bowen cited several reasons why he finds [Google](#) Apps attractive. "It's a different sort of computing strategy," he said. "It takes the desktop out of the way so you're running a very thin client. From a security and management standpoint that would have some advantages."

[Google launched](#) Google Apps Premier Edition last month at a price of \$50 per user, per year. It features online e-mail, calendaring, messaging, and talk applications, as well as a word [processor](#) and a spreadsheet. The launch followed Google's introduction of a similar suite aimed at consumers in August. The new Premier Edition, however, offers enhancements, including 24x7 support, aimed squarely at corporate and government environments.

Bowen said he's in talks with the aviation safety agency's main hardware supplier, Dell Computer, to determine if it could deliver Linux-based computers capable of accessing Google Apps through a non-Microsoft browser once the FAA's XP-based computers pass their shelf life. "We have discussions going on with Dell," Bowen said. "We're trying to figure out what our roadmap will be after we're no longer able to acquire Windows XP."

Bowen, however, said he has not definitely ruled out an FAA-wide upgrade to [Windows Vista](#) and related software -- if Microsoft can satisfy his concerns over compatibility with the agency's existing applications and demonstrate why such a move would make financial sense given Google Apps's low price. "We have a trip to Microsoft scheduled for later this month," said Bowen.

[Like the Department of Transportation](#), the FAA -- technically under DOT but managed separately -- has its own moratorium in place on upgrades to Windows Vista, Internet Explorer 7, and [Microsoft Office](#) 2007. Among other things, Bowen said the FAA's copies of IBM's [Lotus Notes](#) software don't work properly on test PCs running Windows Vista.

Bowen's compatibility concerns, combined with the potential cost of upgrading the FAA's 45,000 workers to Microsoft's next-generation desktop environment, could make the moratorium permanent. "We're considering the cost to deploy [Windows Vista] in our organization. But when you consider the incompatibilities, and the fact that we haven't seen much in the way of documented business value, we felt that we needed to do a lot more study," said Bowen.

Because of Google Apps' sudden entry into the desktop productivity market, what once would have been a routine decision at the FAA to eventually upgrade to Microsoft's latest software is now firmly up in the air. With similar debates doubtless

playing out at other government agencies -- and in the private sector -- Microsoft is going to have to work a lot harder than in past years convincing customers to follow its well worn path of new releases and follow-on patches.



Make your network **fast, reliable and secure.**
Visit **www.radware.com**

Copyright © 2006 [CMP Media LLC](#)