

# The AuditNet® Monograph Series

## “Is Your Number Up?”

Rob Harmer

<http://www.pcprofile.com>

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### Preface

The Monograph series grew out of my desire to establish an online electronic communication network for auditors. Before online services, bulletin boards and the Internet many auditors were operating without the benefits of peer collaboration and information sharing on a major scale. The Internet, founded on the principle of sharing and communication, changed the interaction model between auditors. Auditors can now post messages in online discussion forums, upload and download audit work programs, checklists, surveys, questionnaires and other audit related material in warp speed. Small one-person audit shops can now communicate with others and feel like they are not paddling upstream with one oar when it comes to having access to audit resources. My vision of an online information communication network for auditors has become a reality with AuditNet® as the foundation.

The AuditNet® Monograph Series or AMS provides auditors with guidance on different aspects of the audit process and other relevant topics to help them do their jobs. New auditors will seek these guides to learn some of the basics of auditing while experienced auditors will use them as a review. Each guide focuses on a specific subject.

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*PC Profile is Australia's ONLY anti-piracy (self-help / non-policing) advisory service and solutions provider based in Adelaide, Sth Australia email: [pcprofile@internode.on.net](mailto:pcprofile@internode.on.net)  
<http://www.pcprofile.com>*

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If you have an idea for additions to the AMS please send a proposal via email to [editor@auditnet.org](mailto:editor@auditnet.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	2
Is Your Number Up?.....	4
Cheap XP anyone?.....	4
The Most Obvious Step .....	4
Are you A Serial Offender? .....	5
How Do You Find The Serial Number? .....	5
What Will Happen If You Don't Bother To Check? .....	6
How does Microsoft "know your number"? .....	6
The Impact on Your Organization? .....	6
What steps do you need to take to overcome this risk? .....	6
Microsoft XP Service Pack 2.....	6
Other Issues to Think About – .....	7
Unauthorized Software .....	7
The Bottom Line Message? .....	7

### Is Your Number Up?

Microsoft Windows XP has been around for some time now and Microsoft has been shipping Service Pack 2 for XP. There has been lots of press and publicity about its release and the need for sites to embrace the Service pack as a means to protect themselves against security issues.

Some of you may have already discovered the hard way that it has caused some significant disruption to your systems for technical reasons!

The problems relating to user horror stories have been aired in the press and at technology web sites regarding program compatibility issues, hardware compatibility issues, driver compatibility issues and so on. Many sites have had difficulty in recovering their systems after installation or have had the dreaded BSOD (blue screen of death) experience.

There are some other unacceptable problems that have been occurring that aren't getting as much visibility that need to be aired and considered by those in the audit profession.

Have you seen this message yet?

**The Product Key used to install Windows is invalid. Please contact your system administrator or retailer immediately to obtain a valid Product Key. You may also contact Microsoft Corporation's Anti-Piracy Team by emailing [piracy@microsoft.com](mailto:piracy@microsoft.com) if you think you have purchased pirated Microsoft software.**

### Cheap XP anyone?

If you "just happen to be" one of the many organizations who have taken advantage of the significant numbers of e-mail and Internet offers being made over recent months for heavily discounted versions available for prices anywhere between \$US 5 and \$US 50 per copy then you will be in for a nasty surprise!

It is known that there are substantial numbers of illegal copies of XP in service and they may have been slipped under your watchful eye, by staff who have without authority loaded a copy to your office systems. Think it doesn't happen?

Think again. The "Pirates on Parade" pages at the various Anti-Piracy police sites illustrate (name and shame) any organizations who are caught "short licensed" and some of these had copies of XP on their systems.

There are some steps you need to take NOW to make sure your systems are ready BEFORE you install Microsoft Service Pack 2.

### The Most Obvious Step

Conduct a FULL audit of all PCs to establish what is actually installed on each PC. Be careful to ensure the electronic inventory is cross matched to Proof Of Purchase records.

For those that have identified that Microsoft XP is installed then you need to take the following additional steps which are critical if you have doubts about the "authenticity" of the origin of the software.

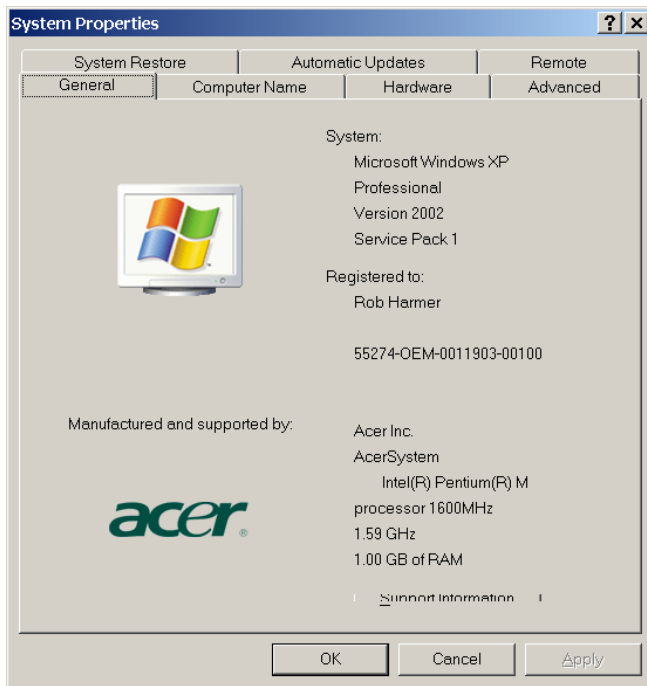
## Are you A Serial Offender?

The key test Microsoft uses to derive the warning message shown at the opening of this article was derived by checking known ranges of serial numbers “in the wild”.

### How Do You Find The Serial Number?

#### Step 1 – Check your serial number on your PC

To do this, for each PC - Click **Start**, right-click **My Computer**, and then click **Properties**.



Then on the **General** tab, under **Registered to**, note the number that is listed. **Do this for EACH PC!**

#### Step 2 – Check your serial number to this list!

The following list of serial numbers is known to be an illegitimately published/acquired set of serial numbers where X is an integer.

If your Windows XP Product Registration number matches any of the numbers in this table you may be a victim of software piracy and will find that the Service Pack will not install at all. A list of some (not all) of the codes known to exist is shown in the table below.

XXXXX-640-0000356-23XXX	XXXXX-640-2001765-23XXX
XXXXX-640-643718x-23XXX	XXXXX-641-309376x-23XXX
XXXXX-642-064580x-23XXX	XXXXX-642-464364x-23XXX
XXXXX-643-334701x-23XXX	XXXXX-644-081772x-23XXX
XXXXX-644-451265x-23XXX	XXXXX-644-874896x-23XXX
XXXXX-644-933704x-23XXX	XXXXX-644-962396x-23XXX
XXXXX-645-833254x-23XXX	XXXXX-645-994962x-23XXX
XXXXX-646-031843x-23XXX	XXXXX-646-104081x-23XXX
XXXXX-646-105103x-23XXX	XXXXX-647-318838x-23XXX
XXXXX-647-592029x-23XXX	XXXXX-647-677834x-23XXX
XXXXX-648-301691x-23XXX	XXXXX-648-819992x-23XXX
XXXXX-649-106765x-23XXX	XXXXX-649-941392x-23XXX
XXXXX-650-292312x-23XXX	

List derived from; <http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=326904>

## What Will Happen If You Don't Bother To Check?

When you install Service Pack 2 you "may" be greeted with a message if your software is not legal, as follows;

**The Product Key used to install Windows is invalid. Please contact your system administrator or retailer immediately to obtain a valid Product Key. You may also contact Microsoft Corporation's Anti-Piracy Team by emailing [piracy@microsoft.com](mailto:piracy@microsoft.com) if you think you have purchased pirated Microsoft software.**

### *How does Microsoft "know your number"?*

They use a "back-to-base authentication method" to validate what is on your PC to their master list during the update.

For some time now, Microsoft and their anti-piracy team have been aware of a range of product registration and serial numbers that have been made publicly available by the hacker and cracker community. Some of these have been offered freely amongst chat rooms, others have been offered by sale of "so-called" original (OEM) software via e-mail and Internet sites.

These e-mail and Internet sites all claim to offer legitimate version OEM software shipped direct from US to your door.

This is why we believe for some sites that **"Your Number is UP!"** as we know that many sites "can't refuse the temptation" of a bargain basement price for software!

## The Impact on Your Organization?

If you see the above message when installing Service Pack 2 –

- you are stuck with an unsupported illegally acquired (or you thought it was legal) version of XP and
- you now have NO UPGRADE path for service packs and fixes.

The risk and vulnerability for your organization is very large.

### *What steps do you need to take to overcome this risk?*

1. Contact the vendor who supplied you with the software in the first place and demand a legally licensed version of the software.
2. If they refuse then contact Microsoft and the Anti-Piracy team at [piracy@microsoft.com](mailto:piracy@microsoft.com)
3. **BUY legitimate versions of the XP operating system for the total numbers of PCs affected and then install them immediately – DO THIS NOW!**

## Microsoft XP Service Pack 2

Microsoft has already indicated that existing applications that run on XP "may not" work once the service pack is applied and installed. This is due to new security features (we've all been demanding improved security so don't bleat about this now!) You can find out more here and we urge you to start doing your homework, if you haven't already!

<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxppro/sp2preview.msp> and  
<http://communities.microsoft.com/newsgroups/default.asp?icp=xpsp2&slcid=us> and  
<http://www.computerworld.com.au/index.php?id=852020221&eid=-255> (you may have to cut and paste these long links)

## Other Issues to Think About –

Other software vendors may well (some have already) adopt the same approach of building up a list of known serial numbers that are “in the wild” being used by the hacker and cracker community as a means to circumvent product activation codes etc

This means you may face some challenges that will tax the efforts of the Help Desk and IT department, BUT if you have legally acquired software from authorized vendors you should have nothing to fear! What about other “un-authorized software”?

### **Unauthorized Software**

This isn't an issue that's going to go away in a hurry, but the activation of the Service Pack on XP will certainly bring it to a head for you much quicker and crystallize some actions! The issue of software piracy has been around for years and it may be affecting your organization in ways you hadn't expected!

Using illegal software and installing unauthorized software may already be costing YOU an “arm and a leg”!

The issue of Service pack 2 being installed on your systems will certainly cost you a lot more if the software that you have installed already is NOT legitimately acquired.

### **The Bottom Line Message?**

Microsoft XP Service Pack 2 will cause for some sites some unexpected issues that will have far reaching impact on their organizations as disruption to day-to-day activities occurs! Take action now to avoid risk! The fines for being caught out are VERY substantial and the “published values” are around 1/4<sup>th</sup> the FULL cost of the expedition of discovery and defence you might find yourself caught up in!

### **Other Articles -**

We have some other links relevant to the issue of “un-authorized software” located at our web address at <http://www.pcprofile.com>

If you want to know more about **HOW you can REDUCE your RISK TODAY**, please contact us at the address below.

PCProfile has been helping organizations in Australia and overseas to reduce their risks in the area of managing unauthorized software since 1991 - see <http://www.pcprofile.com> for more details

This article written for [AUDITNET.ORG](http://www.auditnet.org) by: [PCProfile](http://www.pcprofile.com) and published in Nov 2004 by Rob Harmer Consulting Services Pty Ltd PC Profile is Australia's ONLY anti-piracy (self-help / non-policing) advisory service and solutions provider based in Adelaide, Sth Australia

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PCProfile offers AUDITNET readers a 20% discount on audit software tools that are designed to make the whole process faster and reduce your risk.

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