

White Paper: Delaying the Automatic Delivery of Windows XP Service Pack 2 for Windows XP Using User Manager Pro

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Written by Philip Lieberman (phil@liebsoft.com)
Lieberman Software Corporation
<http://www.liebsoft.com>

Abstract

This white paper gives step-by-step instructions on using User Manager Pro to make the necessary changes to inhibit the installation of Microsoft's Service Pack 2 for 120 days to all desired machines in one operation.



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1. Background

Microsoft's delivery of Service Pack 2 for Windows XP on August 16, 2004 via Automatic Update provides many desired security enhancements for home users, but can also wreak havoc in a networked environment where the effects of the service pack can be catastrophic in a matter of minutes of its installation.

The primary downside of the service pack for sites that network their systems is the total removal of the ability of domain administrators to administrate their systems remotely. Microsoft's workaround for this problem is the creation of security policies that punch holes in the firewalls to allow the administrators access. The problem with this strategy is that it assumes that the administrator will already have such a policy in place prior to the automatic installation of Service Pack 2, or have a remote agent already in place on managed systems which can "call in" to a central server for configuration updates. If such a policy or agent is not in place prior to installation of SP2, the Windows Firewall default configuration will block all incoming RPC attempts, and all control of the systems is lost until the administrator pays a personal visit to each system or a new policy is pushed/pulled into the machine.

There have also been some reported hardware compatibility issues with XP Service Pack 2 (some estimates place the number of systems which will have problems as high as 50%), so the automatic push and installation of the service pack may leave a large number of systems in need of significant manual intervention to restore operation.

Many customers are not prepared for the automatic installation of XP Service Pack 2, and are seeking a temporary reprieve from its possible side effects. To address this need, Microsoft has published a web page to deal with this requirement:

<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxpro/maintain/sp2aumng.msp>

2. Solution

Microsoft has provided a registry key/value pair that can be modified on each machine to inhibit the installation of the service pack for an additional 120 days to give the administrator enough time to evaluate SP2 and plan for its deployment. This change will prevent Windows Update from installing SP2 automatically, while allowing the system to still receive other updates.

The change to each machine is as follows:

- 1) Go to the key:
HKLM\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate
- 2) Add the DWORD value:
DoNotAllowXPSP2 and set it to a value of one (1)

The link to a resource package from Microsoft that provides a script driven program to make the change as well as a policy template can be found via the following link:

<http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=33517>

If you already have purchased a copy of User Manager Pro from Lieberman Software Corporation, you can implement this registry change to delay the application of the service pack in just a few minutes. The following section describes how to push the registry change using either a REGEDIT file you can create, or by specifying the registry key and value to modify directly. Both methods perform the same change and the choice of which to use is by your personal preference.

3. Mass Management via User Manager Pro from Lieberman Software

Performing this registry change via User Manager Pro can be performed as follows:

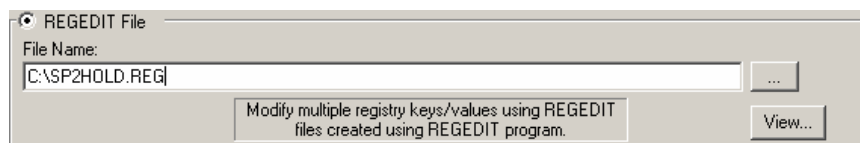
Method #1: Using a REGEDIT5 file

- 1) Create and save a text file called: SP2HOLD.REG and place the following lines in it:

Windows Registry Editor Version 5.00

```
[HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate]
"DoNotAllowXPSP2"=dword:00000001
```

- 2) Within User Manager Pro, open an existing group of systems, or create a new group and populate it with Windows XP systems (if you need help with this, contact sales@liebsoft.com or contact your sales rep for assistance).
- 3) Sort the systems in your group by clicking the "Version" column header.
- 4) Highlight all of the systems that indicate that they are running "XP".
- 5) Click on the "Reg Edit" button on the main dialog or right-click and select "Registry Keys/Values..." from the context menu.
- 6) Click on the radio button: "REGEDIT File" and fill-in the path with the SP2HOLD.REG file.

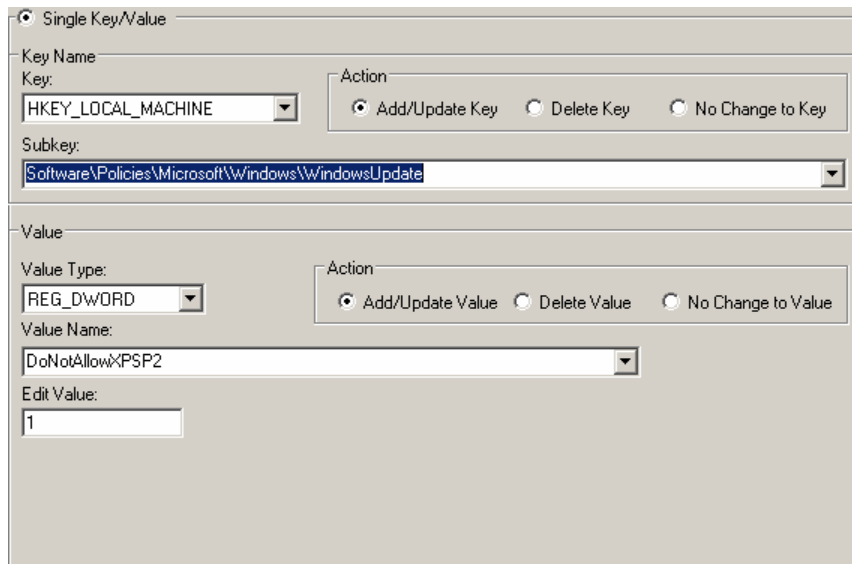


- 7) Click on the "Apply" button and the change will be applied to all of the highlighted systems in a just a few moments.

Method #2: Direct Registry Value Modification

- 1) Within User Manager Pro, open an existing group of systems, or create a new group and populate it with Windows XP systems (if you need help with this, contact sales@liebsoft.com or contact your sales rep for assistance).
- 2) Sort the systems in your group by clicking the "Version" column header.
- 3) Highlight all of the systems that indicate that they are running "XP".
- 4) Click on the "Reg Edit" button on the main dialog or right-click and select "Registry Keys/Values..." from the context menu.

- 5) Click on the radio button: "Single Key/Value".
- 6) Set the Key to: **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE** via the drop down.
- 7) Set the Subkey to: **Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate**
- 8) Set the Value Type to: **REG_DWORD**.
- 9) Set the Value Name to: **DoNotAllowXPSP2**.
- 10) Set the Edit Value to (decimal value 1): **1**.



Single Key/Value

Key Name

Key: Action: Add/Update Key Delete Key No Change to Key

Subkey:

Value

Value Type: Action: Add/Update Value Delete Value No Change to Value

Value Name:

Edit Value:

- 11) Click on the "Apply" button and the change will be applied to all of the highlighted systems in a just a few moments.

Logged Results

All operations via User Manager Pro are logged locally to confirm the success or the failure of applying the registry change. Below is an example log for the change operation on a single system.

```
***** User Manager Pro - 5.04 (040701)
***** Start time: 8/13/2004 10:50:24 AM
***** Executed on: INTEL3000 By: INTEL3000\Administrator
---- Running Remote Registry Write Cycle ----
[INTEL3000] Operation success: Create/Update Key -
Key:HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate:
[INTEL3000] Operation success: Create/Update Reg Value -
Key:HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate
ValueName:DoNotAllowXPSP2
...Done...
***** Elapsed time: 1 seconds
No Errors Recorded
```



If any of the remote systems fail to take the change, User Manager Pro will create a background deferred processing job that will automatically retry the failed systems every 5 minutes until the change is applied.

Notes

The change described above will only prevent Windows Update from installing SP2 automatically, and only for 120 days (after which time Windows Update will ignore the registry key). It will not prevent users from downloading and installing SP2 themselves, and there is no documented way to extend the time period for which Windows Update will not automatically install SP2.

If you need to prevent the installation of SP2 on your XP systems for a longer period of time, there is other functionality in User Manager Pro which can help. Talk with your sales manager about our cratering feature, and its ability to stop viruses and other malware.

4. Summary

The release of Microsoft's Service Pack 2 for Windows XP promises a significant improvement in workstation security for home users, but its premature application in a server based network environment without sufficiently tested policies could cause major disruptions in overall operations. The ability to defer the application of this service pack for an additional 120 days can provide administrators with the breathing room they need to successfully integrate this service pack into their organization.

For those customers that do not have User Manager Pro already, it can be downloaded from www.liebsoft.com and used on ten (10) machines for 30 days in evaluation mode.

Please feel free to contact us for technical questions on this process whether you are a customer or not.

Voice: 800.829.6263 (USA/Canada) Voice: (01) 310.550.8575 (Worldwide) Fax: (01) 310.550.1152 (Worldwide)
Web: www.liebsoft.com Email: support@liebsoft.com

