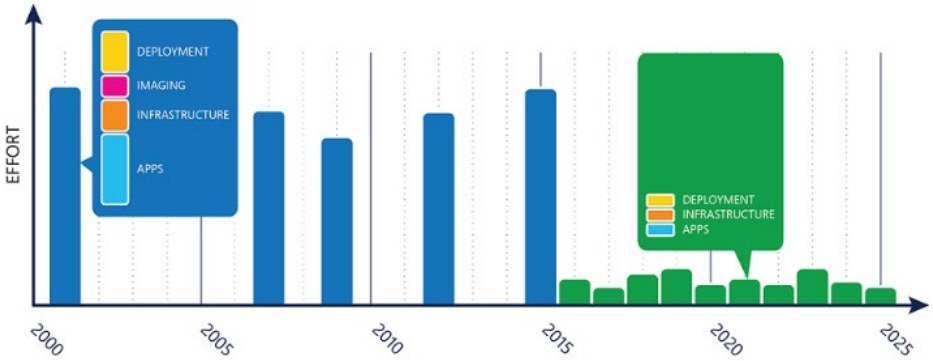
Promise and perils of the modern desktop lifecycle

When Microsoft released Windows 10 in 2015, they introduced the Modern Lifecycle Policy for Windows and began to align support for their flagship Operating System with subscription service offerings such as Office 365. The crux of this change was that Microsoft began releasing Windows feature updates twice per year and simultaneously shortened the support term to a maximum of 2 ½ years. This in contrast to the previous maximum of 10 years.

In place of the longstanding approach to desktop management, which generally involved a new deployment every three to five years, the Modern Lifecycle Policy demanded a much more frequent refresh rate. Analysis by Helient® and other experts determined that an annual refresh would strike the best balance between the proven stability of a release and the extent of its support timeline. Microsoft canonized this approach in their guidance:



Microsoft recommends an annual Windows 10 update cadence
(Source: https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/deployment/update/waas-servicing-strategy-windows-10-updates)

In reaction to the new Windows lifecycle and other market trends such as mobile applications, SaaS, cloud services, emerging cybersecurity threats, and the consumerization of IT, the majority of Windows application software vendors also began to modernize their own lifecycle management processes. To keep up with the accelerating pace of Windows releases and compete for top-tier technical talent, these vendors dramatically sped up their own development cycles and shortened the duration of support for any given software release. The number of vendors that began releasing quarterly or even monthly feature updates skyrocketed:

Product	Releases
Adobe Acrobat DC	15
Cisco Jabber	7
Cisco WebEx	12
Google Chrome Enterprise	8
iManage DeskSite	5
Litera Change-Pro	6
Litera Metadact	7
Microsoft Teams	35
Zoom Desktop	27

Releases of major applications for the year ended August 2020

These sweeping changes to the prevailing cadence of business software release schedules completely upended the desktop management lifecycle within the enterprise. Despite this furious new pace, every corporate Windows desktop update still had to undergo extensive compatibility assessment, QA testing, and issues resolution by IT before it could be safely rolled out. And with up to 60% of applications needing upgrades in tandem with the new OS deployment, these changes presented IT departments with a permanent and substantial increase in the time and effort required to perform OS and application upgrade work each and every year.

IT operations had no choice but to adapt to this tempo while trying to preserve the productivity of the business and protect their users and their team from the risks of the new break-neck pace. This was an unprecedented challenge, and it required a whole new way of approaching desktop delivery.

A revolutionary solution born of a proven process

HeliX is a complete solution that addresses all the challenges of the modern desktop lifecycle. With each turn of the HeliX wheel, and at every point in between, your business benefits from the process and methods Helient has perfected as a project-based consultancy.

We have built this mastery of our craft into the HeliX App and its companion service for continuous delivery to you. Your HeliX Subscription includes these essential services allowing you to conquer the modern desktop lifecycle!

Discovery and Design

- Conduct Windows and Office interactive design sessions
- Provide in-depth review of major new OS features and options
- Discuss, decide, and document configuration of settings and features

Application Inventory and Audit

- Refresh application catalog and lifecycle status
- Verify OS and integrated applications support
- Finalize target versions and pre-requisites

Refresh your Microsoft Deployment and Endpoint Management System

- Verify your MECM, MDT, or Intune health and upgrade status
- Upgrade MECM or MDT to the latest compatible release

Configure new OS Features and Settings

- Apply desired configuration settings per approved SDS
- Enable or disable features, functionality, and applications

Refresh Package Library, OSD Task Sequence, and Desktop Images

- Sync App packages and Windows 10 OS Deployment task sequences
- Update driver repository (physical and virtual)

QA and Issues Remediation

- Perform full application QA testing and hardware benchmarking
- Deploy Beta, Release Candidate, and Pilot desktops for testing
- Remedy critical issues uncovered through IT, SME, and Pilot testing

Ongoing Maintenance and Operation Intelligence

- Continuously package and synchronize new App Releases
- Deliver news, information, and lifecycle alerts about your OS and Apps