

OEM Vista Downgrade Terms

Contributed by Administrator
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Is it possible to downgrade an OEM version of Windows Vista to Windows XP Professional? This question arose after deploying two new Lenovo Thinkpad T61 Laptops in my (2003) Active Directory environment at work. The answer is yes. You can legally downgrade an OEM version of Windows Vista** to Windows XP Professional, but there are terms and restrictions governing the circumstances. Quoting the Microsoft Downgrade Chart:

OEM downgrade rights for desktop PC operating systems apply to Windows Vista Business and Windows Vista Ultimate as stated in the License Terms. Please note, OEM downgrade versions of Windows Vista Business and Windows Vista Ultimate are limited to Windows XP Professional (including Windows XP Tablet PC Edition and Windows XP x64 Edition). End users can use the following media for their downgrade: Volume Licensing media (provided the end user has a Volume Licensing agreement), retail (FPP), or system builder hologram CD (provided the software is acquired in accordance with the Microsoft OEM System Builder License). Use of the downgraded operating system is governed by the Windows Vista Business License Terms, and the end user cannot use both the downgrade operating system and Windows Vista Business. There are no downgrade rights granted for Windows Vista Home Basic or Windows Vista Home Premium.

Thankfully, my situation was accommodated by these terms/restrictions. We are an end user of the Volume Licensing agreement, and the OEM versions I'm downgrading are Windows Vista Business. I had already joined these suckers to the domain and configured Office 2007 on each one when the employees changed their minds, but it could be worse: I could have to purchase additional volume licenses.** Only Windows Vista Ultimate & Windows Vista Business are covered by the terms and restrictions mentioned in this article. No other OEM versions of Windows Vista are covered by the Downgrade Terms listed above.