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Windows 95 Y2K fix was kept from users

May 3, 1999

Web posted at: 11:28 a.m. EDT (1528 GMT)

 by *Julia King*

(IDG) -- For almost a year, Microsoft Corp. withheld from its 125 million corporate users of Windows 95 the information that a software patch was in the works to make the desktop operating system fully year 2000-compliant, a Microsoft official confirmed last week.



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"I don't want people taking action based on Microsoft thinking about doing something," said Don Jones, year 2000 product manager at Microsoft. "Until I'm 100% sure that we're going to provide an update or fix, I don't want to tell anybody," Jones added. "People will spend millions of dollars, [implementing strategies based on such information], and the last thing I want to do is spread fear, uncertainty and doubt in their minds."

One company now gearing up to spend millions on an upgrade from Windows 95 to 98 -- based at least partly on year 2000 concerns -- is Electronic Data Systems Corp. Until mid-March, EDS officials believed -- like all Windows 95 users -- that Microsoft wouldn't make Windows 95 fully year 2000-compliant. At best, they were told, Windows 95 would be "compliant, with minor issues."

Jones' comments are the latest in a series of clarifications, memos and statements to emerge from Microsoft since March 29, when Computerworld ran a front-page story about EDS's about-face plan to migrate 100,000-plus desktops from Windows 95 to 98.

Previously, EDS planned to stick with Windows 95, but it changed course on Microsoft's advice to the company, according to an internal memo by former CIO Gary Rudin, who abruptly resigned from EDS on March 31.

Microsoft denies

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But then and now, Microsoft officials [Fusion audio primers](#) insist they never advised EDS or any other corporate customer to remain on Windows 95 or to upgrade to Windows 98 for year 2000- readiness reasons.

So why would the CIO of EDS send out a memo saying as much?

"You'll have to ask Gary [Rudin]," Jones said. "It's certainly not our policy. We do recommend that people go to the latest versions of our operating system, but not for year 2000 reasons."

Rudin didn't return telephone calls last week.

Also, following the March 29 story about EDS, Microsoft issued an internal market bulletin to its sales staff to eliminate what it described as "confusion" generated by the Computerworld story.

Among other things, the bulletin told salespeople that "the Computerworld article is very misleading," and despite the article's suggestions, "Microsoft's position on Windows 95 Year 2000 compliance has not changed."

Yet under a section titled "Facts Regarding... Year 2000 Compliance," the company tells its salespeople that "Microsoft is providing a software update for Windows 95 to resolve the outstanding minor issues."

When questioned by Computerworld reporters, Microsoft officials couldn't specify any incorrect or misleading information in the March 29 story.

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