Windows 8 marks the end of an era and the beginning of a new one, Gartner says-- closing the WinNT era and kicking off one where the new WinRT (Windows Runtime) dominates.



In other words, the king is dead... long live the king?

Not that Win32 will go away too soon, mind. A combination of the WinRT programming model, a new UI and legacy WinNT support should allow users to continue running Win32 programs alongside WinRT apps for at least the next 10 years.

Gartner says "Windows 8 is the start of Microsoft's effort to respond to market demands and competitors, as it provides a common interface and programming API set from phones to servers. It is also the beginning of the end of Win32 applications on the desktop." While Microsoft will continue supporting Win32, it also encourages developers to start writing WinRT applications.

The analyst also describes the Windows 8 upgrade as a technology shift-- one that has not happened for Microsoft's client OS since the move from DOS to Windows NT technology. The shift to WinNT started in 1993 and took 8 years, ending with the Windows XP launch.

Desktop PCs will also become "less strategic over time," as users start shifting their computing needs towards mobile devices-- devices mostly coming from non-Microsoft vendors. Meanwhile server-based computing (SBC) or hosted virtual desktops will address enterprise Win32 computing needs.

"Microsoft needs to move to a platform that enables a new type of application, and embraces new types of user experiences," Gartner concludes.

Go Gartner Says Windows 8 Marks the Beginning of the WinRT Era