

## Windows XP Product Activation

I hate to beat a dead horse, but I really hate product activation. As most of you can imagine I install more than a normal amount of hardware. Heck, I swap hardware that I have no plans on using just so I can see how it performs. Well, last night my luck ran out. After my latest motherboard swap my legitimate retail copy of Windows XP wouldn't reactivate on the internet. The page on the screen suggested I purchase another COA (Certificate Of Authenticity). After all, I was past my limit with this one, so I must be stealing something, right? This is where it starts getting frustrating. Microsoft's action here is not in line with their claimed intention of preventing casual copying; it's more in line with badgering its legitimate customers to purchase additional COAs so they can avoid this hassle I was going through.

So I decided that I would try Microsoft's phone activation and see what that was all about. After I got through to their site I was instructed by a machine to enter the 54 digit! code on my screen. Try doing that at 2 o'clock in the morning in the dark while half asleep. The voice menu then instructed me to hold because it couldn't authorize my product activation. You see, I was over the limit again. After listening to a nice disclaimer about how my call may be monitored or recorded I finally got to speak to a real live person.

After I explained to her I had just completed a motherboard swap and now I couldn't re-activate Windows I was then instructed to read that nice long 54 digit! code off my screen. After reading my number she began to ask me questions like was this the first time I had tried to activate Windows? Was I running this copy of Windows on more than one machine? HELLO... I just spent five minutes explaining to you my situation. Did you completely ignore everything I just said, or what? This person was even less helpful than the voice menu!

I was put on hold once again. When the operator returned I was given a 43 digit! code to enter into my screen. I doubt that the codes which the government uses to secure its nuclear weapons are that long! Fortunately I was lucky enough to be able to keep up with the number she was quickly rattling off and managed to finally reactivate Windows XP. By now I am starting to get angry, so what does the rep do? She cuts me off in mid-sentence, thanks me for calling Microsoft and then hangs up on me. Does anyone here think that this sort of behavior against your legitimate paying customers is warranted? Bill, if someone happens to forward this to you and you really don't know why it is that Windows piracy is running rampant, call me and I will be happy to tell you.

You might think that after reading this little rant that I hate Windows XP--heck, that I hate Microsoft, even--but that's the funny thing: I don't. I have used Windows all the way from the beginning and IMO Windows XP is a great product, by far the best Windows yet. I don't know, however, if it can survive all the boneheaded Microsoft business decisions.

IMO this is why Linux keeps gaining market share--not because it's free, or because it's trendy, or it's anti-establishment--but because I don't have to spend 20 minutes on the phone in the middle of the night with some operator who constantly puts me on hold, doesn't listen to what I say and has me give her 54 digit codes multiple times, gives me a 43 digit code and then hangs up on me while I am still talking. Maybe I am not the richest man in the world, but I am still pretty sure that's not how you treat your customers and run a business.

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