

Why Microsoft® Windows® Certification?



Making Broadband Manageable: Be Empowered.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is for ILECs, CLECs and ISPS who are deploying PPPoE in their networks. Fine Point Technologies' WinPoET product is the only PPPoE subscriber management solution on the market which is certified by Microsoft. This certification ensures good compatibility and design, and therefore minimizes the telco or ISP's support costs, enhances subscriber satisfaction, and increase sales. Other benefits include leveraging the massive Microsoft and Windows advertising. This white paper explains how to leverage this opportunity and associate their products with the best-in-class offerings.

THE POWER OF CERTIFICATION

Branding is critical to consumer choices. Kleenex™ and tissues. Campbell's™ and soup. Calvin™ and jeans. Microsoft™ and software. Consumers buy what they know and trust. This is especially true for the shopper in the often-daunting world of technology. And there is no more respected name in today's industry than Microsoft.

Consumers are overwhelmed by the array of technological choices. How are they to know which version to buy? Which brand is better? Or even, quite simply, which option will run on their PC? In today's technological environment it is ever more critical to have the assurance of Microsoft certification.

Fine Point Technologies, Inc. offers a solution for the service provider who wants to distinguish their product from the masses in two ways. First, by leveraging the massive marketing power and brand influence of Microsoft, the service provider's product can stand out from any other. Second, the service provider knows that WinPoET (and the MacPoET solution for Macintosh) are the industry standard for PPPoE deployment. No other solution has been deployed so broadly worldwide with over 3 million installations to-date.

LEVERAGE MICROSOFT'S MARKETING SPENDING

In the first year of release, Microsoft spent more on marketing Windows XP than it has ever before spent on a new product. And Microsoft's explicit goal with this launch is to create a better user experience and to solve usability issues in personal computing.

"One of the key things that we've given the top priority is improving the PC ecosystem, making it so the chance of people running into surprising error message or problems with interoperability, between the hardware and the drivers, and the applications, has gone down very, very dramatically."

- Bill Gates

Thus, Microsoft is effectively doing free marketing for any service provider which leverages products with the Microsoft logo. And there is no reason why a service provider working in the telecom space would not leverage this connection and this free marketing spend. Moreover, when a company like Microsoft announces and intention to focus upon customer experience, the world listens. And a telco and ISP has to grab this opportunity.

Increase Subscribers by Attracting the Early Adopters

By creating a more subscriber positive experience, a service provider can attract new users who have never used a PC or the internet before. Simultaneously, being compatible with the latest and greatest versions is critical for a service provider who wants to sell to cutting edge users.

With WinPoET's Windows XP compatibility, early adopter and techies will gravitate strongly to any products carrying that logo. Those users will be up and running faster, with less effort. Most importantly, Windows XP is the most reliable Windows operating system to date, with:

The proven code base of Windows 2000.

A System Restore feature that enables users and administrators to restore a computer to a previous state without losing data.

Elimination of most scenarios that forced users to restart their computer in earlier versions of Windows.

Protection of core system files from being overwritten by application installations.

Increase Subscribers by Reducing Subscriber Frustration, Attracting the Novice Users

Internet subscribers have a growing frustration with faulty systems, incompatible programs and the like. Installed applications and hardware should work smoothly with the operating system. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Poorly designed device drivers and incompatible software cause recurring problems. A bad driver can prevent a printer from working, or even cause driver conflicts which can lead to system instability, sub-par performance and systems crashing. With a compatible driver, the end user simply waits a few moments as the driver installs, and then the printer works smoothly.

Often poor design practices are at work: applications and hardware may not have been developed according to common industry standards or recommended best practices. In some cases, the original version of the application may work fine, but because of its poor design, problems can occur in versions created for newer operating systems.

And all this is very costly. Microsoft spends tens of millions of dollars fixing hardware and software compatibility problems. Most of this spend is directly to address driver-related issues to make applications work. Microsoft can afford to spend this, but can you?

Producing a Better Product: Driver Signing

Microsoft certification means even more than unparalleled brand recognition; it means that you are getting a better product. Certification is not simply about marketing, but also the real value of the certification and test process. Offering your subscribers the best service available ensures the reduction of future repair and customer service costs.

Because, through the course of the Microsoft certification, WinPoET has been thoroughly tested driver signing plays a critical role in capability. Driver signing is a multistage process in which device drivers are verified. For a driver to earn this certification, it must pass a series of compatibility tests administered by the Windows Hardware Quality Labs (WHQL). Due to stringent WHQL standards, using signed drivers typically result in a more stable system. Microsoft digitally signs drivers that pass the WHQL tests and Windows XP Professional performs signature detection for signed device categories, such as the following:

- Keyboards
- Hard disk controllers
- Modems
- Mouse devices
- Multimedia devices
- Network adapters
- Printers
- SCSI adapters
- Smart card readers
- Video adapters

WinPoET passed the test for both Windows XP and Windows 2000, as they are individual suites of testing procedures. The WinPoET driver is faster and will load WinPoET even more quickly on both newer and older operating systems. This minimizes the time it takes an internet subscriber to get online, as well as streamlining their disconnection process. This means increased subscription revenues and decreased servicing costs for the internet service providers using the solution.

Ensuring a Better Product: Digital Signatures

A Microsoft Corporation digital signature indicates that a driver file is an original, unaltered system file that Microsoft has approved. Windows XP Professional can warn or prevent users from installing unsigned drivers. If a driver is not digitally signed, the user receives a message that requests confirmation to continue. Microsoft digitally signs all drivers included with the Windows XP Professional operating system CD. When downloading updated drivers from a manufacturer's Web page, always select drivers that are signed by Microsoft. Windows XP Professional provides the following tools to help your subscribers identify digitally signed files:

- File Signature Verification
- Driver Signature Checking

- System Information
- Device Manager
- DirectX Diagnostic Tool
- Hardware Compatibility List

Increase Sales with Brand Recognition

The presence of a logo that includes one of the world's most recognizable brands assures consumers that they are buying a known quantity when they purchase a product with the logo. Which product would you buy? A product with a logo which has proven compatibility, or one without such visible assurances.

Your brand gets:

- A visible link to one of the world's most recognizable brands – in a relevant context
- A clear notice to competitors – your product is certified and theirs is not!
- Your product will work with the latest Windows technology

HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR MARKETING MESSAGE WITH MICROSOFT CERTIFIED WINPoET

By meeting both Microsoft's rigorous standards, and leveraging the WinPoET standard, a service provider does more than ensure a good user experience. Service providers know that they will have fewer support calls, fewer truck rolls, and a far better subscriber experience. Net, net: reduced churn.

The certification logo tells the subscriber that your software and service offering:

- Will not interfere with other applications being used.
- Will install and uninstall smoothly, without unnecessary reboots.
- Will not cause the user's computer to crash.
- Will not overwrite files that are needed by the operating system.

Offering Service while Minimizing Subscriber Care Costs

Service providers have to offer the best care for their subscribers that they can. Yet for their own bottom line, these costs must be minimized. Can you afford not to use the only product with the Microsoft logo? To stay competitive in the marketplace today, you need every advantage you can get.

"Microsoft and our associates are committed to delivering a set of amazing new computing experiences that will set a new paradigm for PC users around the world."

- Steve Ballmer, CEO, Microsoft Corp.

With Fine Point Technologies' WinPoET software, a service provider can be sure that any subscriber has the best PC experience possible. No other software provider can say this. If you were to deploy another brand of PPPoE subscriber management, the poorly designed hardware and/or software can have massive negative ramifications in terms of a poor user experience. This leads directly to increased support costs for both the early adopter and the novice users. And as always, Fine Point can offer their exceptional solutions for the same low price point.

Simply stated, the Windows certification logo tells users that the software will run correctly. This means two things for the service provider. First, with its focus on quality, the logo gives customers a simple message: the logo means a good experience. This directly leads to greater sales. Second, this reduces customer frustration and thereby cuts the number of support calls. This means a reduction in your operating costs. What do increased revenues and lower costs mean? Profit.

ABOUT WINPOET

Based on the Point-to-Point Protocol over Ethernet (PPPoE) standard, WinPoET provides streamlined Internet service management functionality. WinPoET includes improved support for Windows XP with redefined Dynamic Service Selection (DSS) capabilities and a new graphic user interface (GUI) to ensure ease of implementation.

WinPoET/MacPoET's enhancements extend to the service provider's back end. Fine Point externalized the WinPoET desktop and system tray icons, making the product's already-exceptional customizability even more intuitive. Fine Point Technologies can deliver a customized version of WinPoET/MacPoET with the client's logo, messaging and tailored options, in even less time. This enables faster revenue-realization as the service providers achieve more rapid time-to-market for their product.

WinPoET is now available in five languages: Spanish, Portuguese (Brazilian), German, French, and English. The Company's solution for Macintosh™ will also be available in these same five languages allowing the company even greater international scope, regardless of computer operating system. Moreover, Fine Point Technologies has the capability to efficiently translate its solutions into any language or character set in a matter of days, unlike competitors who often take weeks for the same adaptation.

Dynamic Service Selection

Internet-based services are typically delivered after a series of information exchanges, or "handshakes", between a user's PC and the service provider's back-end systems. Often, end-users have no choice in the selection of services contained in the standard "handshake," effectively reducing the ability of service providers to deliver additional benefits – for additional revenue – to their subscriber base. With today's announcement, service providers who distribute WinPoET can now provide multiple value-added services on-demand to consumers over a single Internet connection, including streaming video, VPN, voice-over-IP and subscriber billing applications. Ultimately, WinPoET with Dynamic Service Selection lets service providers and telecommunications companies leverage existing infrastructure to provide additional revenue, without the cost of deploying additional lines.

From an implementation standpoint, Dynamic Service Selection enables a service provider to "flip a switch" on their network and offer additional services and service level agreements (SLAs) to their subscribers. Seamless and transparent to the end-user, the allocation of new service capabilities is completely automated, and is triggered by a simple opt-in subscriber request, effectively eliminating the need for reconfiguring each subscriber's equipment.

Supported Systems

Fine Point Networks, is also releasing MacPoET v3.1, a newly optimized version of the PPPoE management system for Macintosh supporting OS 8.1 through OS 9.22. WinPoET 6.0, (as in all previous versions of WinPoET,) will support Windows OS 95, 98, 98SE, ME, NT, 2000, and XP.

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