



So Windows 2003 Professional turned out to be a pipe dream, faster than we could get [used to the idea](#) being a reality it was played down/denied by Microsoft and all the knowledge base articles were removed to be corrected. It turned out to be an oversight. Well, we aren't ones to give up so easily at Neowin, so we have put together a guide that turns **Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition** into what we would rather call **Windows 2003 Professional**.

Why, I hear you scream? Well, there's only one simple answer for that, because its newer than XP! 😊

What you need to get started

Before we start grab the following

- [Microsoft DirectX 9 Web Setup](#)
- The [Microsoft Java VM \(build 3809\)](#)
- The latest version of [Windows Messenger](#) or [MSN Messenger](#) (your choice)
- The latest version of [Xteq XSetup](#) (optional)
- The Neowin [uxtheme.dll Patcher](#) for build 3765. Here is a [BACK-UP uxtheme.dll](#)

Pre Setup Notes

I won't go into creating a guide to setup Windows 2003 because its basically the same as Windows XP with a few small changes which I will run through here quickly. During setup you are asked to specify the Client Access License (CAL). If you are installing Windows Server 2003 to use as a workstation leave this setting at its default. Like Windows XP Professional you are prompted for the same things like joining a Domain or Workgroup, if you are familiar with Windows XP Professional setup then Server is no different with the exception of CAL configuration and the setup UI is grey instead of blue.

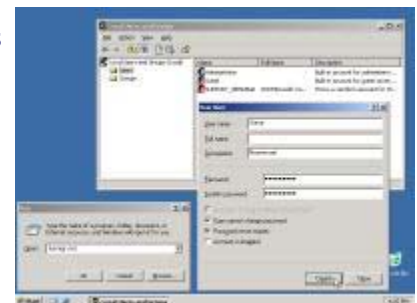


When setup completes (costing the same amount of time as a typical XP install) you will be prompted on first boot to activate Windows in the same manner as XP. So as you can see, many aspects of the setup are the same. The changes begin here...

Post Setup

The first thing you can do is disable **Manage Your Server** (pic). There is no persistent nag screen in Windows Server 2003 like there was in Windows 2000 Server to setup a "Server Role" which is also a direct result of the new Server "Lockdown" initiative where a Security Lockdown Wizard determines what the Server may or may not do. Default is as it should be, Locked down.

Then you should create a user account immediately. Leave the Administrator account in its default state and create your user name using these steps: (as shown in this pic) Click Start > Run > Type **lusrmgr.msc** Select and Right Click on the "User" folder and select **New User**. Create your user account, Click **OK**. Double click on your new user account > Select **Member of** tab > Click Add > Advanced > Find Now > Double click the first entry, it should say **Administrators** > OK > OK and close User Management.



Log out, Login to your new account.

Disable the Shutdown Tracker

Before we start installing Drivers and Applications that more often than not require a reboot, lets disable the Server Enabled "Shutdown Event Tracker" this will enable you to reboot or shut down without being asked to submit a reason. Which is what we want for a Workstation configuration.

Click Start > Run > Type **MMC File > Add/Remove Snap-in...** Add > Group Policy Object Editor > Add > Click **Finish** and Close then **OK**

Navigate through > Local Computer Policy > Computer Configuration > Administrative Templates > and select the **System** folder

Double Click **Display Shutdown Event Tracker** and select **Disabled**. **OK > File > Exit**



Now you won't be asked why you need to reboot or shut down the system, just like in Windows 2000 Professional. 😊

At present there is no Fast User Switching and Welcome Screen that can be enabled or used as it was simply not included with Windows Server 2003. (Power users usually turn it off anyway) Maybe someone will make a program that emulates or adds it later. If such a program becomes available we'll update to reflect this.



Disable Internet Explorer Hardening

When you open Internet Explorer in Windows Server 2003 you will see it in a new locked down state called **Internet Explorer Enhanced Security Configuration**, (pic) set at this level means you can't do much at all on the Internet as everything from untrusted domains is blocked regardless. We can disable this so we can download the programs we need to continue.

In Internet Explorer > Click Tools > Internet Options > Security Tab and move the slider from High to **Medium**. If you are an advanced user you can set this to whatever level best suits your needs, Medium is the default setting for IE on a workstation and sufficient for most users.

You will be prompted about lowering the level of security as a precaution select Yes if you wish to be able to access the Internet via IE.

With Internet Explorer configured for the Internet you can now download [Windows Messenger](#) that integrates into Windows Server 2003 in the same way as Windows Messenger does in Windows XP. Using Windows Messenger enables your .NET passport to be saved in your user account which in turn logs you onto all passport sites automatically (pic) or you can also choose to use [MSN Messenger 5](#) if you prefer a more stand-alone client. Both work and see Windows Server 2003 as Windows XP (at present).



(Click on a thumbnail for a larger image)



Enable Hardware Acceleration

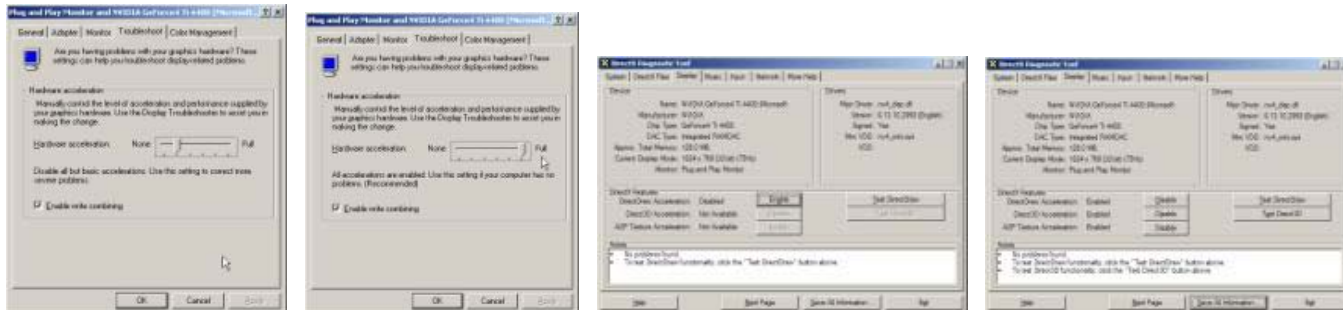
By default Windows Server 2003 is hardware acceleration disabled for graphics cards, meaning only 2D and limited 3D capability is there. We can enable all this painlessly and without much effort. You will still be required to install 3D enabled drivers (like ATi Catalyst or nVIDIA Detonator drivers) for Windows 2000/XP. These can be installed on Windows Server 2003 but only **after** hardware acceleration is enabled will they work (and display the 3D related tabs in display properties).

In [this image](#) you can see the default setting for the hardware acceleration, to change it to [this](#) follow these steps:

Right Click on desktop > Select "Properties" > Select "Settings" tab > Click "Advanced" > Select "Troubleshoot" tab and move the **Hardware Acceleration slider** all the way to **"Full"** > **Click OK > OK**

That's not all, DirectX (8.1) DirectDraw, Direct3D and AGP Texture Acceleration is also disabled by default on Windows Server 2003. ([pic](#)) to enable:

Click Start > Run > Type dxdiag & enter > Select Display tab > Click Enable on all Acceleration options > **Click Exit**



(Click on a thumbnail for a larger image)

The result is Hardware Acceleration and DirectX enabled for Windows Server 2003. as you can see in the above pic I still have the default Microsoft drivers installed for my GeForce 4 Ti4400, so unless you had been previously prompted to reboot now is a good time to install those Detonator drivers (version of your choice) for Windows 2000/XP. If you use another type of card your 3D enabled drivers can be installed now. (Please remember that the latest Detonator drivers require DirectX 9)



Enable Services and Audio

Now its time to enable the **Themes** service which allows you to select the Windows XP "Luna" themes from Display Properties.

To do this: Click **Start > Run > type services.msc & Enter > Look for the Themes service > Double Click it > Set the Startup dropdown to Automatic > Press Apply > Now you can press Start > Click OK**



Themes are now enabled 😊 While we are here lets enable **Windows Audio**

Look for the **Windows Audio** service > Double Click it > Set the **Startup dropdown** to **Automatic > Press Apply > Now you can press Start > Click OK**



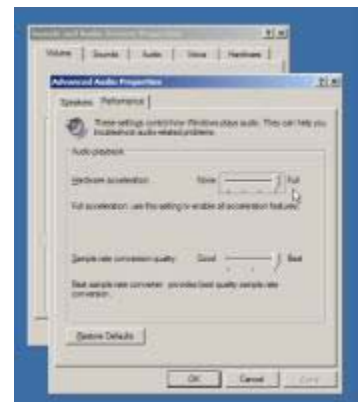
While we are in the Services console, here are the services I manually disable because I personally have no need for them.

- Automatic Updates
- Computer Browser
- Nvidia Driver Helper Service
- Remote Registry
- Secondary Logon
- Task Scheduler
- Windows Time

The annoying Messenger service (what spammers have started to use to relay ads to the desktop) is disabled at default already, amazing stuff!

Audio is now enabled in Windows Server 2003, That just leaves us to enable Hardware Acceleration for Audio in Windows (used for EAX and A3D)

Click **Start > Control Panel > Sounds and Audio Devices > In the Speaker Settings** section click **Advanced > Performance** tab > Move the **Hardware Acceleration slider** to **Full > Click OK > OK**



If you still don't have sound you may have to manually update your drivers from the device manager. This is the best way because packaged drivers (like Liveware) can't be installed on Windows Server 2003 from the setup.exe



Advanced Configuration

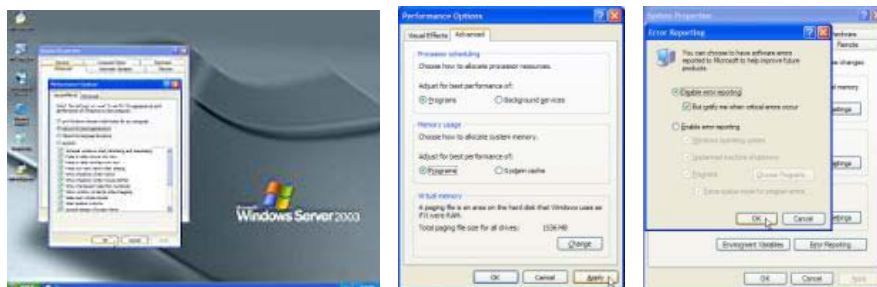
As you can see in the following screenshot I have now enabled Luna and am using the Default (Blue) theme.

Like Windows XP, Windows Server 2003 is set to "Let Windows choose whats best for my computer" on the Visual Effects tab. I set it to "Adjust for best appearance" which looks the nicer and well, my PC doesn't suffer from it. To do this:

Right Click My Computer > Select Properties > Select Advanced tab > Click first Settings button > and on the Visual Settings tab select what best suits your needs

Before you click **OK** also configure the Processor scheduling and Memory usage options, at default Windows 2003 Server is configured to be just that, a Server. If we want to run applications as a Workstation **this tab** will enable that.

Default options are set for Processor scheduling to Background Services and Memory usage is limited to System Cache, what is good for a Server but not for a Workstation.



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Change Processor scheduling to Programs > Change Memory usage to Programs > Click OK >

While still on the Advanced tab you can also choose to disable **Error Reporting**. To do this:

Click **Error reporting** in the **Startup and Recovery** section of the **Advanced** tab and set to **Disable error reporting** (be sure that the "But notify me when critical errors occur" is checked) Click OK > OK



Windows Media Player 9

Windows Media Player (build 2991) is shipped with Windows Server 2003 but its hidden away in the Start menu, to enable Media Player:

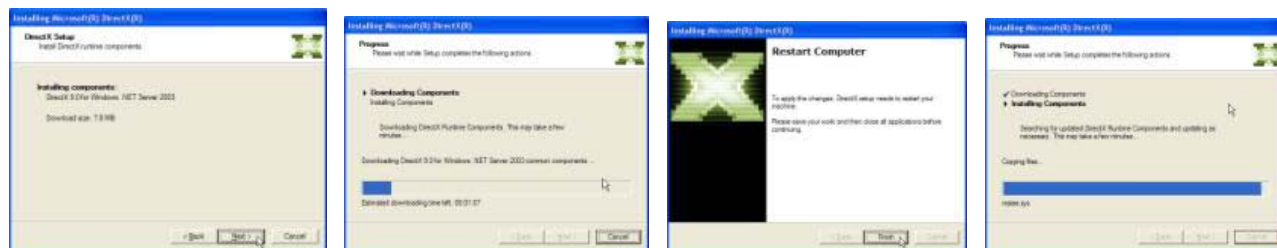
Click Start > Programs > Accessories > Entertainment > Windows Media Player

You will be presented with the **Welcome to Windows Media Player** screen. When filling in the tabs that are displayed, don't forget to check the **More Options** tab that allows you to add a Quick Launch icon so you can access Media Player directly from the Quick Launch area. Clicking finish will enable Windows Media Player 9 in Windows Server 2003.



Installing DirectX 9

Windows Server 2003 is shipped with DirectX 8.1 so to enable the latest driver and card potential you will need to update to DirectX 9. Microsoft have continued the trend from Windows 2000 Server where the DirectX runtime can be installed on both Client and Server versions of Windows. So using the [DirectX Web Setup](#) from Microsoft we can update all the components as shown in this [pic](#). A typical update is about 8mb, although [the name](#) still needs to be updated on the installer the whole thing is quick and painless and [installs](#) without a problem. A [Reboot is required](#) which brings me to my next and final Workstation conversion, The Neowin uxtheme.dll patch.



(Click on a thumbnail for a larger image)

Neowin is proud to be able to deliver a patched uxtheme.dll that enables you to use any 3rd party visual style to install follow these steps:

1. Download the [Neowin uxtheme.dll Patcher for build 3765](#)
2. Run the Patch overwriting uxtheme.dll in dllcache. You will get an error if you attempt to patch the uxtheme.dll in System32.
3. Reboot to Safe Mode Command Prompt Only (using F8 while booting)
4. Type **ren C:\WINDOWS\System32\uxtheme.dll C:\WINDOWS\system32\uxtheme.bak** and enter
5. Type **copy C:\WINDOWS\System32\dllcache\uxtheme.dll C:\WINDOWS\system32**
6. Reboot Windows.

Note: replace C:\WINDOWS with your drive and WINDOWS folder name where applicable.

Conclusion

With Server now looking more like Windows XP you could go on to apply more tweaks and enhancements which can be done using [Xteq XSetup](#) as shown in [this pic](#) XSetup configures Windows Server 2003 just as it would any NT enabled Windows OS so who needs TweakUI for Windows XP that won't even run on Windows Server 2003 while we have this neat application!

I hope this guide has been of some help to you and I will be sure to update it when I am able to easily swap the Boot screen for something that looks more like Windows 2003 Professional and who knows, someone might have a way to reactivate a Welcome Screen that we can add here in the future. For now Windows Server 2003 is "Workstation enabled" the rest is up to you, because after all only advanced users like to play with Server versions right? 😊

