# Product Activation: Transitioning from Test to Production

Many customer deployment scenarios begin with testing on an operating system acquired through an MSDN [[1]](#footnote-1)subscription. Once the test is successfully executed, the decision may be made to simply move these systems from the development/test environment into production. Some of you may be wondering whether or not that is possible from a licensing standpoint, or what that means for product activation. MSDN licenses are not intended for use outside of [development and testing](http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/subscriptions/cc150618.aspx). It is okay to move systems to production, provided you have a [license](http://www.microsoft.com/licensing/default.aspx) to cover the production use. But what about activation? This blog lists some of the more common transition scenarios and how to handle them.

Because there are many different options for product editions, product key types and activation methods, we focus here on Windows client and server licenses sold through volume licensing (that use [volume activation](http://technet.microsoft.com/volumeactivation)). This includes the following operating systems: Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows Server 2008, and Windows Server 2008 R2. Occasionally you may have OEM or retail systems in your development/test environment, and do not want to switch them to volume activation in your production environment. These scenarios also are included.

The volume activation options for a production environment are [KMS or MAK](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=155926). When transitioning systems, important variables to consider are whether you have proper [licenses](http://www.microsoft.com/licensing/default.aspx) and whether the bits (i.e. the build type) used in dev/test are capable of being activated using volume activation.

The table below describes the various source environment characteristics, the corresponding activation options in a production environment, and any action required to activate the systems. Following the table is a diagram that displays the various options.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Development or Test Environment Characteristics** | | | **Production Environment Options** | | **Action Required for Activation** |
| Build Type | Activation Method | Key Type | Build Type | Activation Methods |  |
| Volume | MAK | MAK | Volume | MAK or KMS | MAK: No action required  KMS: Install a KMS client setup key\*\* and activate with a KMS host |
| Volume | KMS | Pre-installed\* | Volume | MAK or KMS | MAK: Install a MAK and activate  KMS: No action required |
| Volume | Not activated | Not applicable | Volume | MAK or KMS | MAK: Install a MAK and activate  KMS: Activate with a KMS host\* |
| OEM | OEM | OEM-provided | OEM | OEM | No action required |
|  |  |  | Volume | MAK or KMS | MAK: Install a volume build and then activate using a MAK  KMS: Install a volume build and activate with a KMS host\* |
| Retail | Retail | Retail | Retail | Retail | No action required |
|  |  |  | Volume | MAK or KMS | MAK or KMS: Convert the retail build to a KMS or MAK client\*\*\* |

\* By default, volume builds of Windows are designed for KMS activation, and come with a KMS client setup key installed.

\*\* Manually install the KMS client setup key, or use the free Volume Activation Management Tool (VAMT)[[2]](#footnote-2), the recommended choice. The keys are part of the tool and it is easy to discover the target systems and change the key automatically. If you are manually installing the key, they can be found in the Volume Activation [Technical Reference Guide](http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ee355153.aspx#EFAA) for Windows 7 and Windows Server 2008 R2, and in the Volume Activation [Deployment Guide](http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc303280.aspx#_KMS_Client_Setup) for Windows Vista and Windows Server 2008.

\*\*\* See [Converting Retail Editions to Volume Licensing Activation](http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc303280.aspx#_Converting_Retail_Editions)



**More Information**

For more information about volume activation and implementing KMS and MAK, visit the Windows Volume Activation TechCenter at <http://www.technet.com/volumeactivation>. For guidance on activation in a development environment, read the whitepaper [Windows Activation in Development and Test Environments](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=155223) or download it [here](http://download.microsoft.com/download/3/2/C/32C1F191-8205-4E97-BF0F-F1675BB6B160/Windows%20Activation%20in%20Dev%20and%20Test%20Environments.docx).

1. This blog does not consider subscriptions acquired through the [MSDN Academic Alliance](http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/academic/bb250625.aspx), as there are different license rights covering use cases beyond test/development. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. VAMT 1.2 is part of the [Windows Automated Installation Kit](http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?familyid=696DD665-9F76-4177-A811-39C26D3B3B34&displaylang=en). VAMT 2.0 is a [standalone download](http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=183042), with expected release mid-April 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)