

Help! XP Pro Upgrade Disables PC if loaded over Unactivated XP Home

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We have a three week old laptop which came with WinXP home. The owner asked me to upgrade it to XP Pro so we could join it to our company's domain.

Yesterday I used our XP PRO Media, keycode and one of our Open Licensing Licenses to start the upgrade. The installation froze 5 times (no mouse, hard drive access, keyboard, etc.). Each time I had to cycle the power button to break the lockup. Each time Setup recognized that the installation was incomplete, and resumed. But it always hung up, usually in a different place. Finally, I got through the install. I arrived at a login screen and was able to logon, but then a blank desktop with the following message: "Windows Product Activation -- A problem is preventing Windows from accurately checking the license for this computer. Error Code:0X80004005". If I shut down, it just starts the install/freeze/reboot/freeze cycle over again.

A support person said the problem is that the XP home never activated. And you cannot install Pro over an unactivated version of Home even if you have a valid license and keycode. (I don't know if the box never activated, and didn't think to check before I started the upgrade. It never occurred to me that I would have to verify this, because I had a license and a keycode.) He also said I must reformat the drive and reinstall. I don't WANT to format (because I will have to reinstall extensive application software and user accounts), but if I have to, I will. But the WinXP CD won't allow me to do it anyway! The tech could not tell me if I could boot the laptop from a DOS disk and do a format.

Meanwhile, Microsoft's Activation Group tells me Open License media and keycodes cannot be used to upgrade XP Home. And they cannot "activate" the Home installation, unless I can get them information off the drive. Catch 22.

This is another case of Microsoft mistreating paid customers in the interest in stopping piracy. Shouldn't the installer have left me a way to backout to XP Home if it detected the Home installation had not been activated?

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Shouldn't Microsoft have warned me before doing the upgrade, and damaging our entire installation?

Anyone know how I get around this problem? Is there a way to force it to go out and activate?

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