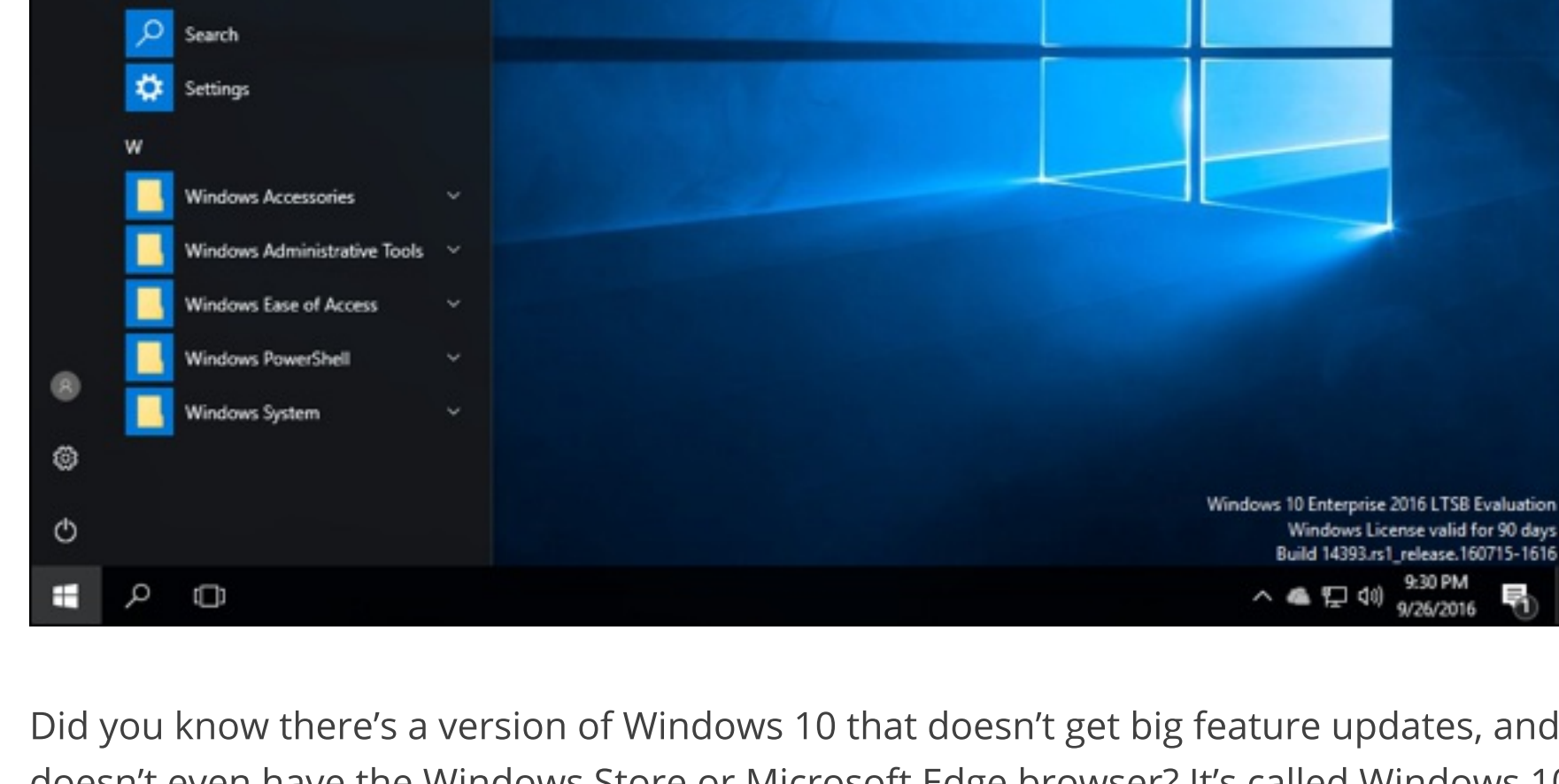
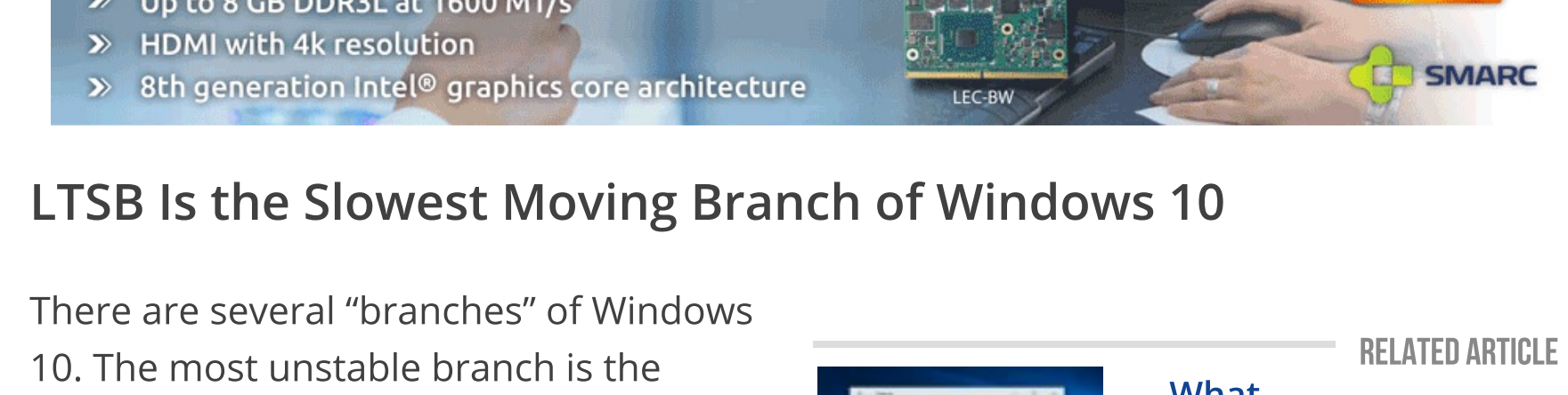


# Windows 10 Without the Craft: Windows 10 LTSC (Long Term Servicing Branch), Explained

by **Chris Hoffman** on July 10th, 2017



Did you know there's a version of Windows 10 that doesn't get big feature updates, and doesn't even have the Windows Store or Microsoft Edge browser? It's called Windows 10 LTSC, short for Long Term Servicing Branch.

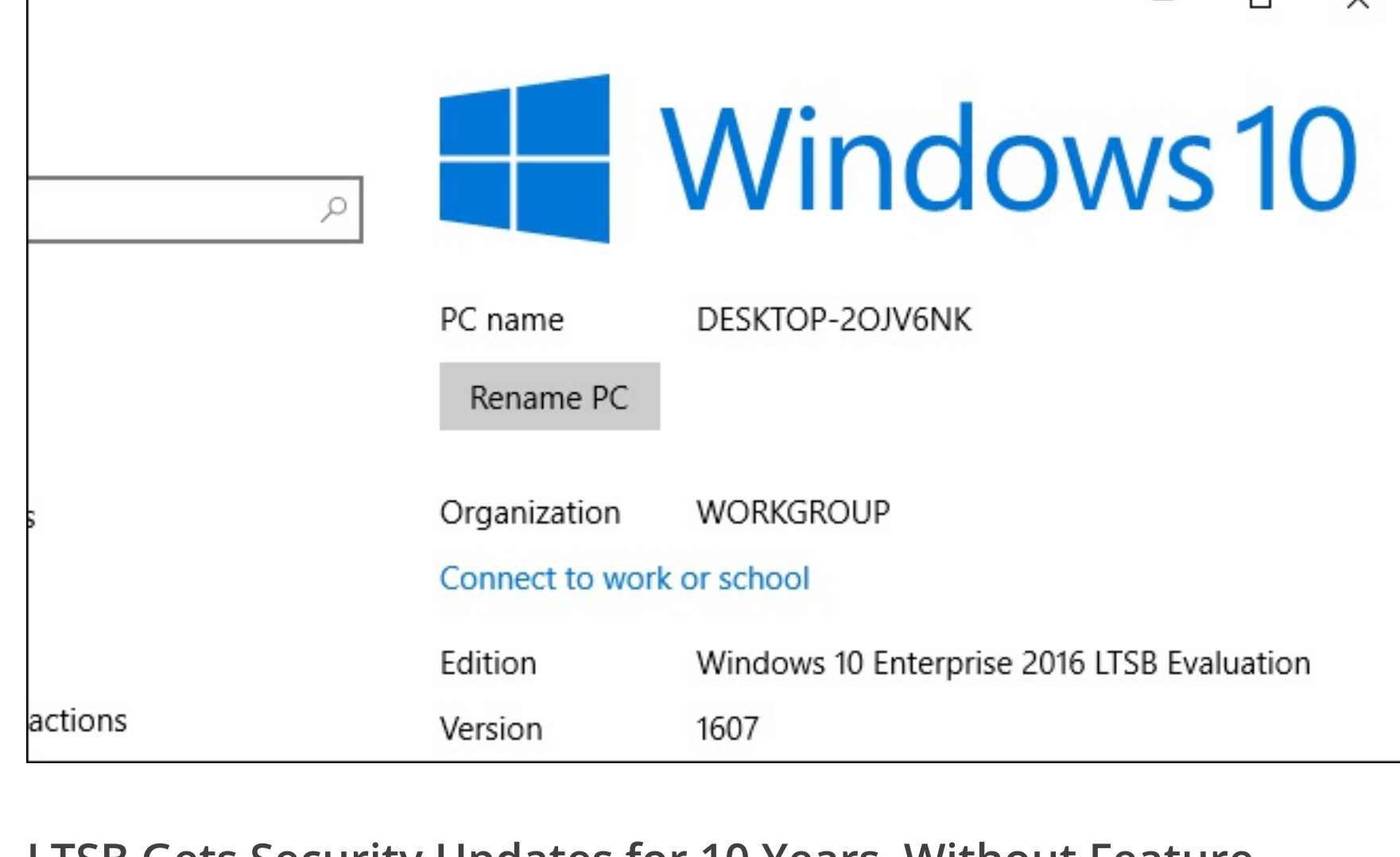


## LTSC Is the Slowest Moving Branch of Windows 10

There are several “branches” of Windows 10. The most unstable branch is the [Insider Preview version of Windows 10](#). Most Windows PCs are on the “Current Branch”, which is considered the stable branch. Windows 10 Professional users have the option to “[Defer Upgrades](#)”, which puts them on the “Current Branch for Business”. This branch will only get new builds of Windows 10, like the [Anniversary Preview](#), a few months after they've been tested on the “Current Branch”. It's like the stable, consumer branch—but slower moving.

But businesses don't want all their PCs to constantly get big updates, even if they are delayed a few months. Critical infrastructure like ATMs, medical equipment, and PCs that control machines on a factory floor don't need whizbang features, they need long term stability and few updates that will potentially break things. A PC operating medical equipment in a hospital room doesn't need new Cortana updates. That's what Windows 10 LTSC—the “Long Term Servicing Branch”—is for, and it's only available for the Enterprise edition of Windows 10.

While this is a branch of Windows 10, you can only get it by installing Windows from Windows 10 LTSC installation media. You can get other branches of Windows simply by changing an option within Windows 10 itself, but that isn't the case here.



## LTSC Gets Security Updates for 10 Years, Without Feature Updates

Because the LTSC version is designed for stability, it's updated very differently from other builds of Windows 10. Microsoft will never publish a feature update like the Anniversary Update or [November Update](#) for Windows 10 LTSC. These machines will get security and bugfix updates through Windows Update, but that's it. Even when Microsoft releases a new version of Windows 10 LTSC with new features, you'll have to download new Windows 10 LTSC installation media and install or upgrade from the media. Windows 10 LTSC will never be automatically updated with new features.

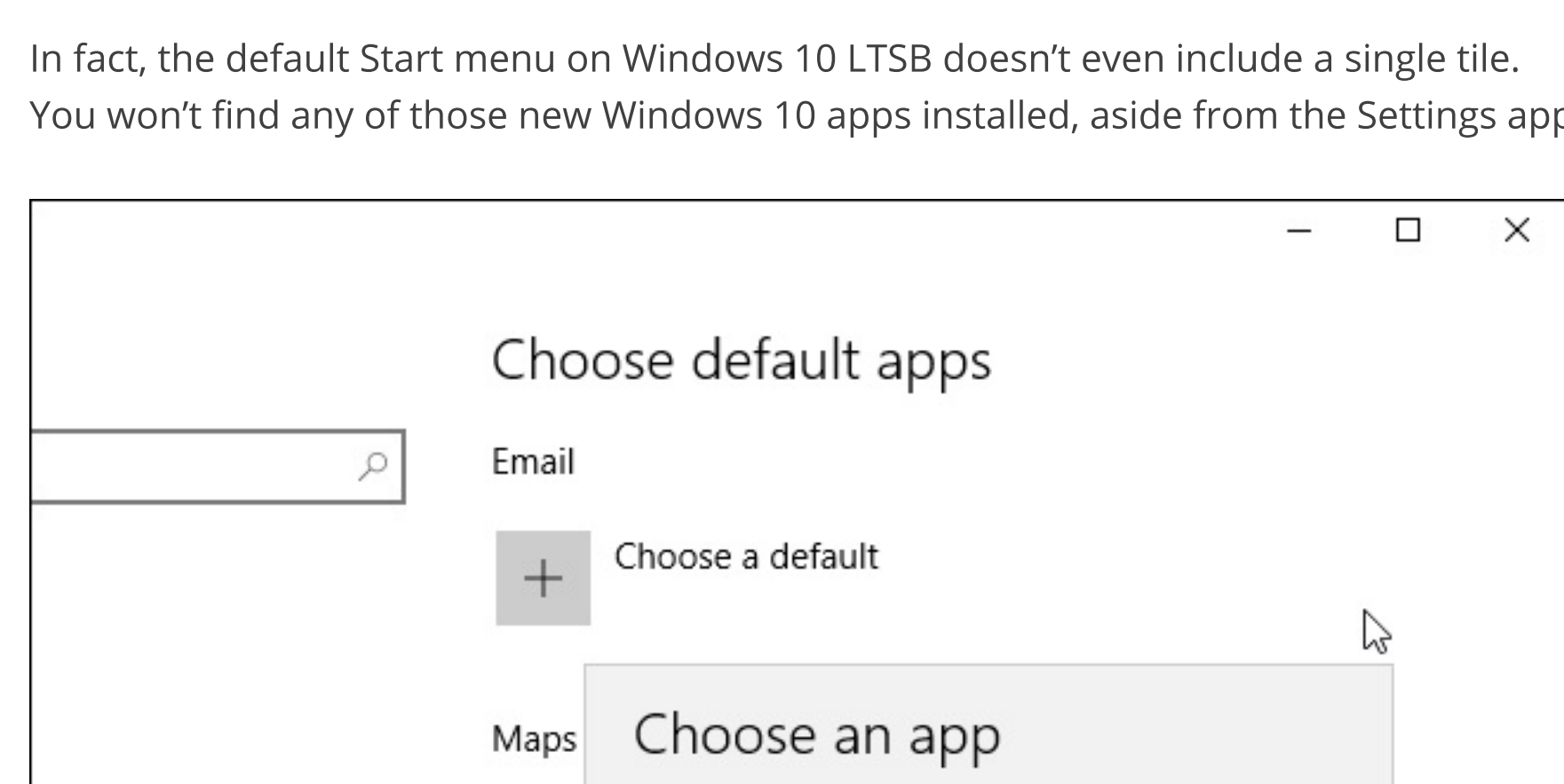
According to official documentation, Microsoft will typically release a new major version of Windows 10 LTSC every two to three years. That's what the documentation says, anyway—the current version of Windows 10 LTSC seems based on the Anniversary Update, so Microsoft is seemingly still changing its plans. You can also choose to skip releases—every version of Windows 10 LTSC will be supported with security and stability updates for ten years, according to Microsoft.

In other words, as [Microsoft's documentation](#) words it, “The LTSC servicing model prevents Windows 10 Enterprise LTSC devices from receiving the usual feature updates and provides only quality updates to ensure that device security stays up to date.”

## LTSC Doesn't Include the Store, Cortana, Edge, and Other Apps

Windows 10 LTSC omits a lot of the new stuff in Windows 10. It doesn't come with the Windows Store, Cortana, or Microsoft Edge browser. It also omits other Microsoft apps like Calendar, Camera, Clock, Mail, Money, Music, News, OneNote, Sports, and Weather.

In fact, the default Start menu on Windows 10 LTSC doesn't even include a single tile. You won't find any of those new Windows 10 apps installed, aside from the Settings app.



## Microsoft Doesn't Want You Using Windows 10 LTSC

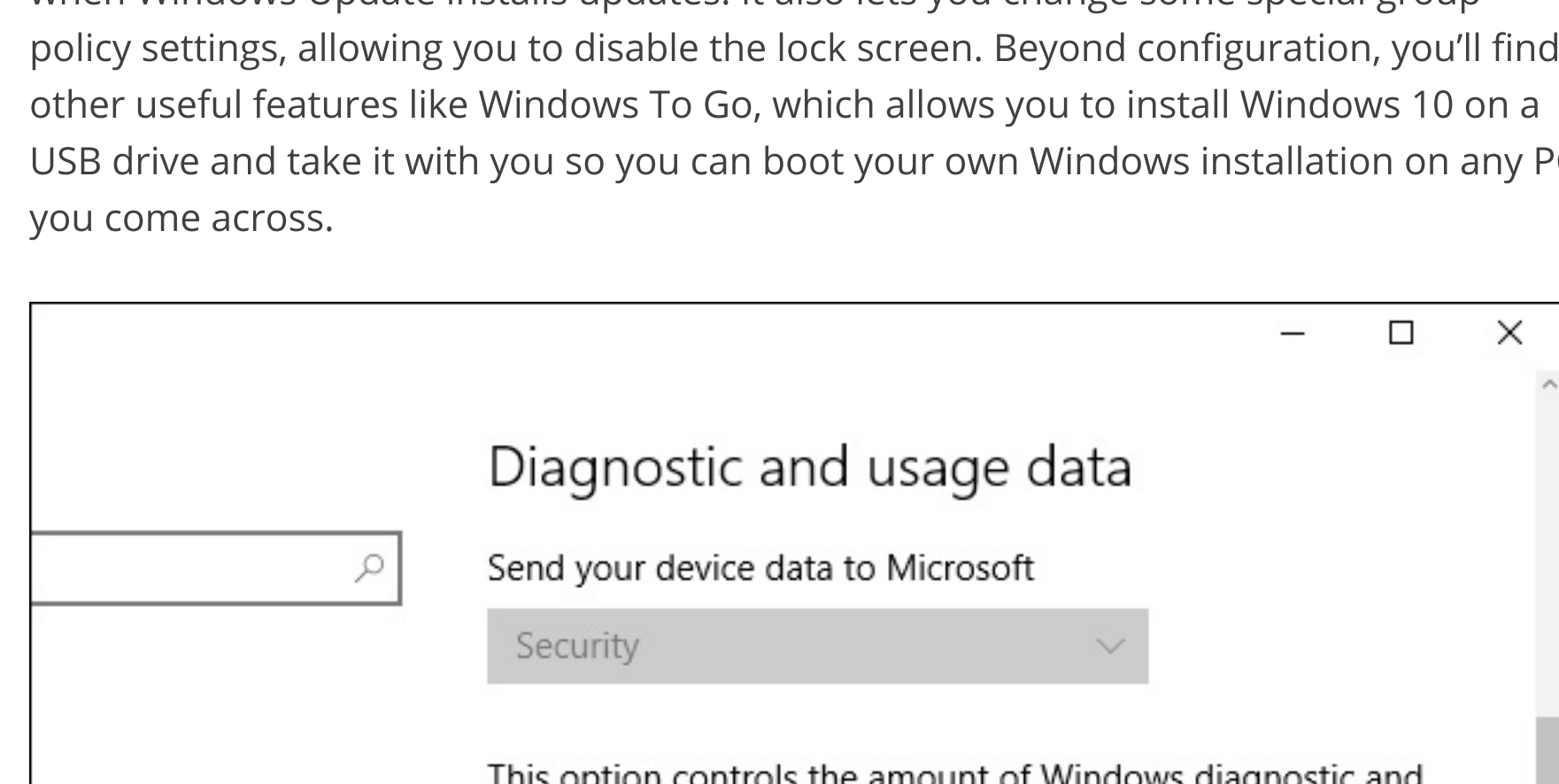
Microsoft doesn't want people using Windows 10 LTSC on general purpose PCs, though. As Microsoft puts it, “LTSC is not intended for deployment on most or all the PCs in an organization; it should be used only for special-purpose devices. As a general guideline, a PC with Microsoft Office installed is a general-purpose device, typically used by an information worker, and therefore it is better suited for the [Current Branch] or [Current Branch for Business] servicing branch.”

LTSC is only for rare mission-critical devices. “It's more important that these devices be kept as stable and secure as possible than up to date with user interface changes,” explains the documentation. You might want your desktop PC to stay as stable and secure as possible without user interface changes, but Microsoft doesn't want to give the average Windows 10 user this option. Microsoft wants your PC constantly updated with new features.

## It's Windows 10 Enterprise, and That Gives You More Control

Because Windows 10 LTSC is only available for the Enterprise edition of Windows 10, you also get [all the Enterprise-only features](#) you can't get on the Home and Professional editions of Windows 10.

The Enterprise edition gives you more control over [telemetry data sent to Microsoft](#) and when Windows Update installs updates. It also lets you change some special group policy settings, allowing you to disable the lock screen. Beyond configuration, you'll find other useful features like Windows To Go, which allows you to install Windows 10 on a USB drive and take it with you so you can boot your own Windows installation on any PC you come across.

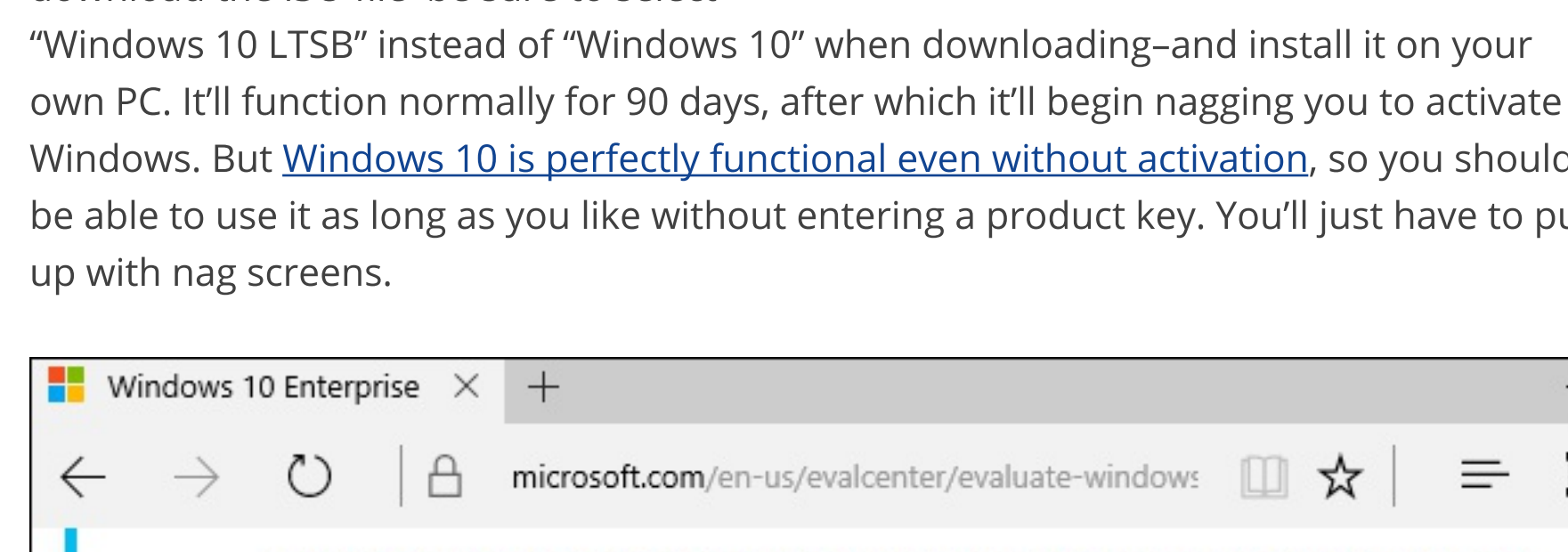


## How Can I Get It?

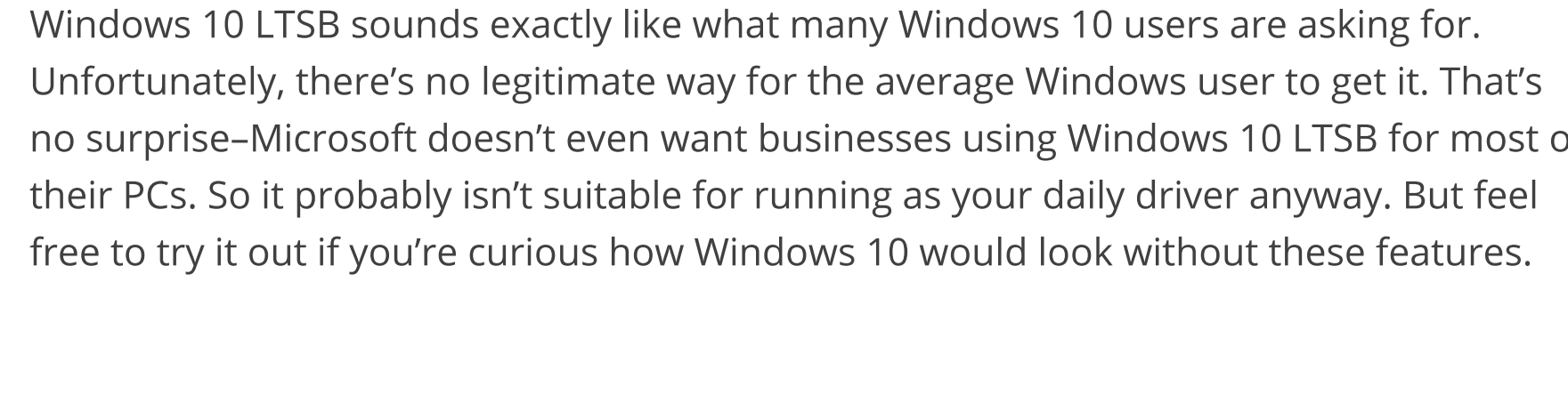
Sounds pretty good, right? Unfortunately, as we said earlier, Windows 10 LTSC is only available as part of Windows 10 Enterprise. And Windows 10 Enterprise is only available to an organization with a volume licensing agreement, or through a new [\\$7 per month](#) subscription program.

Officially, if you're part of an organization with a volume licensing program, you're free to install Windows 10 Enterprise LTSC instead of Windows 10 Enterprise on your PCs.


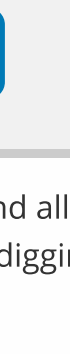




Unofficially, any Windows user can get Windows 10 LTSC if they want. Microsoft offers ISO images with Windows 10 Enterprise LTSC as part of its [90-day Enterprise evaluation program](#). You can download the ISO file—be sure to select “Windows 10 LTSC” instead of “Windows 10” when downloading—and install it on your own PC. It'll function normally for 90 days, after which it'll begin nagging you to activate Windows. But [Windows 10 is perfectly functional even without activation](#), so you should be able to use it as long as you like without entering a product key. You'll just have to put up with nag screens.



Windows 10 LTSC sounds exactly like what many Windows 10 users are asking for. Unfortunately, there's no legitimate way for the average Windows user to get it. That's no surprise—Microsoft doesn't even want businesses using Windows 10 LTSC for most of their PCs. So it probably isn't suitable for running as your daily driver anyway. But feel free to try it out if you're curious how Windows 10 would look without these features.



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is a technology writer and all-around computer geek. He's as at home in the Linux terminal as he is digging into the Windows registry. Connect with him on Twitter.

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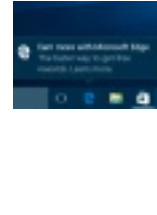
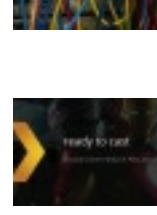

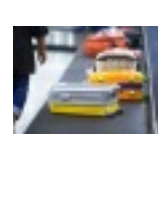




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