

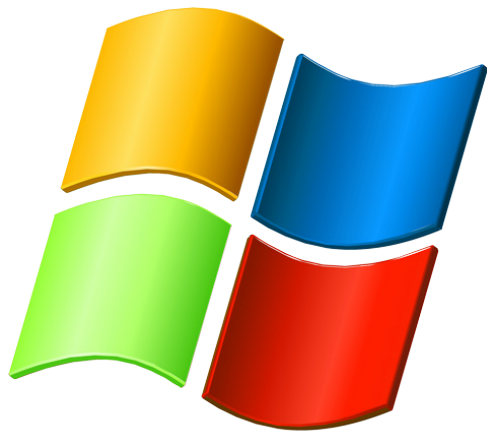


Operating Systems: Similar but Different

TODAY'S OPERATING SYSTEMS HAVE MORE THINGS IN COMMON THAN FANS OF ANY SYSTEM WOULD LIKE TO ADMIT. THE BIG THREE ARE WINDOWS, OSX, AND LINUX.

My alter ego (the one that writes TechByter Worldwide every week) spent some time thinking about operating systems this week. I had just bought a Macbook Pro because I wanted to start offering some coverage for the Mac. I purchased my first Mac in 2000 when I was in New York City to attend PC Expo. From that time on until about 2010, I always had at least one Mac.

But still I'm mainly a Windows user and TechByter Worldwide is a Windows-centric program. In 2010, one of my daughters accidentally killed the Mac and I didn't replace it until now. Starting in the mid 1990s, I've usually had at least one system that runs Linux.



Operating systems seem almost to be more about attitude than technology. Windows wants users to do things its way, but (sometimes grudgingly) allows the use of other tools and methods. Apple (unless you know the ways of Unix) smilingly refuses to do anything that's not the way Apple wants it to be done. Linux is like a friendly



neighbor who'll happily loan you the tools needed to install a 220-volt outlet for your new stove and assume that you know enough to shut off the power first.

I've also seen operating systems compared to toasters. The Windows toaster looks great, but sometimes it just won't make toast. Then you have to unplug the toaster and plug it back in. The Mac toaster has no settings or controls. It looks very stylish, but it can use only bread bought from Apple dealers at ten times the cost of regular bread. The Linux toaster requires you to enter the command `toast -verbose -breadsize 50132 -eject -o z3321 > /dev/toast`, but when you do, the toast is perfect.

The Choices

THE THREE PRIMARY CHOICES YOU HAVE ARE FROM MICROSOFT, APPLE, AND THE OPEN SOURCE COMMUNITY.

Microsoft's operating system has 80% or more of the desktop market so you'll find one or more applications for Windows regardless of what you want to do. Windows was introduced as a graphical environment for DOS in the mid 1980s and became a true operating system in 1995.

Because there are so many Windows users, you can always find someone who can help with problems. Starting with Windows 7, the operating system has become more secure and offers numerous built-in functions and utilities.

Apple's Macintosh OS dates to the mid 1980s. Surprisingly, at late as System 9 (the precursor to OSX), Apple's operating system had extremely limited memory management. OSX is based on Berkeley Unix, which means that it was network ready from the beginning and offers strong file and directory security.



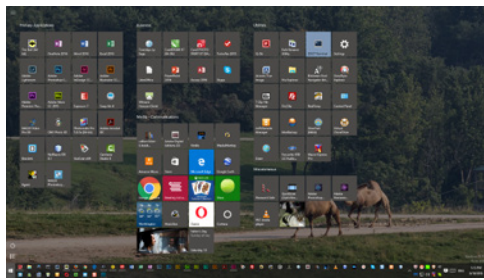
Linux is free, so you can download, modify, and redistribute it without cost. Linux is based on Unix and was written in 1991. The majority of servers that power the internet run Linux, but

it is more complicated to set up and manage, in part because there are dozens of Linux variants. In general, commercial software doesn't run on Linux systems and open source applications that perform functions similar to those provided by commercial software usually aren't as robust.

One More Analogy

CONSIDER OPERATING SYSTEMS AS AIRLINES.

Windows Air: The terminal is pretty and colorful, with friendly stewards, easy baggage check and boarding, and a smooth take-off. After about 10 minutes in the air, the plane explodes with no warning whatsoever.



Mac Airlines: All the stewards, stewardesses, captains, baggage handlers, and ticket agents look the same, act the same, and talk the same. Every time you ask questions about details, you are told you don't need to know, don't want to know, and

would you please return to your seat and watch the movie.



Aero Linux: Disgruntled employees of other airlines build their planes and ticket counters. They charge passengers a small fee to cover the cost of printing the ticket, but you can also download and print the ticket yourself. When you board the plane, you are given a seat, four bolts, a wrench, and a copy of the SEAT-HOWTO manual file. The planes are usually on schedule, but customers of



the other airlines are confused and say, "You had to do what with the seat?"

So no operating system is really "better" than any other operating system. The right operating system is the one that's right for you. If you're a programmer, Linux could be the best choice. Game creators often prefer Windows machines and Windows is found throughout businesses, large and small. Graphic designers generally prefer Macs, but Windows systems compete well in this area.

PS: Chrome

THERE IS ONE OTHER OPERATING SYSTEM THAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER.

Google's Chrome OS is a simplified operating system that's little more than the Chrome web browser, a few desktop applets, and some browser apps. Other than Chrome and Chrome apps, there's nothing else.

Chromebooks are small, light, and inexpensive. If all you need is email and a web browser, Chrome could be a good choice. Security is good on these systems, too, and some desktop-like applications are available for word processing, spreadsheets, and the like. Just keep in mind that a Chromebook can't run desktop programs. Ω

Big Weather from The Weather Company and IBM

THE WEATHER COMPANY WILL IMPROVE THE PRECISION AND ACCURACY OF FORECASTING WITH DEEP THUNDER.

The objective is to combine hyper-local, short-term custom forecasts developed by IBM Research with The Weather Company's global forecast model.

Deep Thunder will also use historical weather data to train machine learning models that will predict the actual impact of weather.

The Weather Company analyzes data for locations worldwide, using more than 100 terabytes of third-party data every day. The primary difference between the Weather Company and the US National Weather service is that the commercial enterprise takes a world view, while the NWS view ends at the Canadian and Mexican borders. Weather Underground also has a network of

more than 195,000 personal weather stations that provide data each day.

The Weather Company's regional models provide updated guidance every three hours and have been developed by IBM Research so that they can be customized for business clients to zero in on "hyper-local" forecasts (0.2 to 1.2 mile resolution). These localized forecasts take into account relevant environmental data such as vegetation and soil conditions to better understand the impact of a weather system. The Weather Company plans to integrate this capability and broaden access to it on a global scale.

The Weather Company delivers up to 26 billion forecasts daily. The new system will be able to assess the validity of insurance claims related to

weather damage and should help utility companies prepare for storm damage do that they can plan for how many repair crews would be needed, and where.

Head of science and forecast operations, Mary Glackin, says the new forecasting model will help users understand the impact of weather and determine appropriate actions. Ω



n-Lighten.us
Division of William Blinn Communications

179 Caren Ave., Worthington, Ohio 43085
614/859.9359 • www.n-lighten.us