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Dell may offer Linux as alternative to Windows

Tue Mar 6, 2007 9:02 PM ET

BOSTON (Reuters) - Dell Inc. <DELL.O> is considering offering the Linux operating system as an alternative to Microsoft Corp.'s <MSFT.O> Windows on its personal computers, a Dell spokesman said on Tuesday.

The PC maker said it received more than 100,000 customer requests for Linux in a "suggestion box" posted on Dell's Web site less than three weeks ago.

"We are listening to what customers are saying about Linux and taking it into consideration," said Dell spokesman David Lord. "We are going forward. Let's say, 'Certainly stay tuned.'"

Linux is an open-source operating system that is generally available for free and can be used to run most computers, including Dell's PCs.

Dell does not break out how much it charges for Windows when it calculates the cost of a computer system, but a basic upgrade version of the software generally retails for \$99.

The only operating system that Dell currently offers on its PCs is Windows, with one exception, Lord said. It sells high-end Linux desktops designed specifically for use in oil and gas exploration, he said.

Making Linux available on other Dell PCs has been the top request since the Web site was launched on February 16, according to data posted on the site, as of Tuesday evening.

The second most popular request was that Dell offer another popular free software title, OpenOffice, which competes with Microsoft Office programs including Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

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