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Vista worries cause businesses to consider Macs and Linux

Nov. 19, 2007

KACE, a systems management appliance company, announced on Nov. 19 that its new survey revealed that 90 percent of the Windows users are concerned about migrating to Vista, and that 44 percent would consider deploying Macs or Linux-based systems to avoid Vista migration.

While Microsoft claims that [Vista deployments are increasing](#), analysts, such as Forrester, observe that business Vista adoption has been going extremely slowly and that [Linux is becoming a serious contender for the enterprise desktop](#).

KACE, which focuses on system management rather than having its own dog in the desktop operating system wars, sells system administration appliances that run on FreeBSD. Its appliances can be used to manage both desktops and servers running Windows, Linux, Solaris and Mac OS.

In response to concerns about unwanted complexity to their heterogeneous IT environments, 44 percent of respondents reported they would consider deployment of alternative operating systems, such as Macintosh and Linux, to avoid migrating to Vista. A mere 13 percent see their company moving all its desktops to Vista. Of those who consider using alternative operating systems, 89 percent said it would be beneficial to use a single systems management interface to manage all types of operating systems in their environments.

In a [follow-up story](#), in [eWEEK Careers](#), Howard Graylin, a senior technical analyst in Ridgeland, Miss., echoed the concerns of many IT staffers when he said: "Personally, I'm dreading the amount of time it'll take to upgrade each machine from a hardware standpoint—adding memory or whatever—and from an operating system upgrade. It's just time consuming."

Many IT professionals are so concerned about the problems with working with Vista that they'd rather give an entirely different operating system a try. The [online survey with 961 respondents](#) (PDF Link) was commissioned by KACE to gather data about the perceived impact of Vista on IT and specifically their operating system adoption strategies.

The survey group was not self-selected. Instead, an independently selected group of IT professionals from small, midsize and large organizations were e-mailed and invited to participate in the Web survey in November 2007. The 961 participants were not compensated for participation, and represented a wide range of IT functions including hands-on professionals, team managers, and business owners with many participants indicating they had multiple roles within their organization.

The research showed that IT departments of all sizes have grave concerns about deploying Vista, and are even choosing to deploy alternative operating systems. This has led to a new set of challenges, such as the difficulties derived from managing multiple operating systems and a lack of familiarity with non-Windows alternative operating systems.

Still, 44 percent are considering switching from Windows to an alternative. The most frequently mentioned Windows replacement was Macintosh with 28 percent. Red Hat Linux was cited almost as frequently, with 23 percent. SUSE Linux was cited by a further 18 percent of participants and other Linux platforms were chosen by 9 percent of participants. Four percent of participants were unsure of which operating system they would be most likely to choose.

One reason for this surprisingly large number is that virtualization is viewed as a key enabling technology for a switch away from Windows with 67 percent of participants reporting that the use of virtualized environments has made it easier to implement alternative operating systems.

Virtualization through programs like [VirtualBox](#) and [Virtuozzo](#), the widespread adoption of Xen as the basis for virtualization systems from everyone from Red Hat and Novell to Oracle to Microsoft and VMware have all made alternative operating systems much more approachable to Windows users.

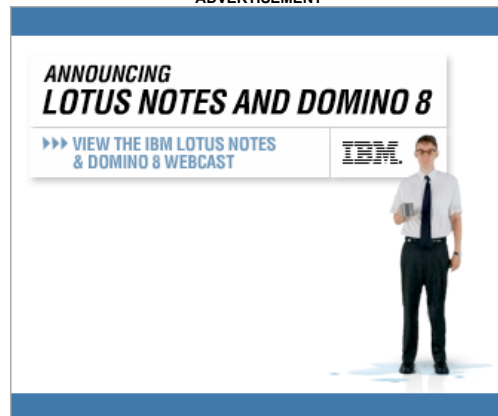
"Microsoft, up to this point, has been fighting an uphill battle with Vista largely due to software compatibility and stability issues which are scaring off IT departments from deploying it," said Diane Hagglund of [King Research](#), which conducted the survey for KACE.

"These same IT departments are evaluating alternative methods in order to stave off Vista deployment, but instead are facing new challenges related to managing heterogeneous environments. The added cost and time spent on deployment and education of alternative operating systems have brought to light the importance of systems management devices that deliver a single interface for diverse operating systems."

The bottom line is that 90 percent of participants are concerned about migrating to Windows Vista. Fifty-three percent have no plans, even with [Vista SP 1 in sight](#), to deploy Vista at all and only 13 percent expect they will eventually be fully deployed on Vista. Indeed, far more companies—44 percent—are considering Mac OS

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