

OS makers: Security is job No. 1

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The new generation of OSes includes improvements aimed at keeping data more safe. Microsoft, long the target of hackers' efforts and resulting customer ire, has promised anti-spyware and other tools in the upcoming version of Windows, code-named Longhorn. And while they aren't as aggressive about marketing their security efforts, Apple Computer and Linux-seller Novell recently released updates with an eye to stronger defenses.

That doesn't mean companies aren't still serving up other advances, such as smoother collaboration or more-comprehensive search. But given home PC owners' growing worries about security, OS makers are aiming to prove they are trying harder to prevent software vulnerabilities and protect against outside attacks.

"The OS makers know that their futures depend on the trust that buyers have with their products, and buyers aren't trusting computers today," Forrester Research analyst Ted Schadler said. "We know that people are downloading less music, shopping online less and steering away from online banking because of security fears."

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