

Much has been written about Microsoft vs. Apple and Vista vs. OS X... but what does it all really mean? Apple has done a ton of OS X maturization over the past years. Where has it lead them? Where are they headed?

For corporations to adopt Apple in the office space a number of things need to happen. There are many small businesses that are Apple based and it appears to be a nice Niche for them. The primary niche, is likely the ease of setting up machines and connecting them.

The environment created by OS X makes things quite easy to setup, network and share services and devices such as printers and hard drives. The examples are true that when you connect a Mac to a Windows network, things basically setup themselves, assuming of course the Windows network is friendly to foreign machines be they OS X, Linux or Windows based. Experienced Windows administrators can do the same for a Windows environment as well. For the novice, however, to us, OS X is easier.

Of course, there is the most widely used office application, Microsoft Office. It's available for the Mac and runs quite well on that platform. Without getting into a feature for feature comparison, the perception has been that MS Office was not happy on Macintosh platforms. Apple's recent ad campaign specifically mentions MS Office several times to help drive home the point that it's compatible and runs well on the Mac. We can certainly attest to that.

With the back end server advancements of Xserve and Xserve RAID Apple has also found a workgroup storage niche. Does it directly compete with EMC and other large storage systems, no... but it does provide some very powerful storage performance with a starting pricetag of under \$6,000. Small businesses can now setup a rather powerful storage environment, email, website hosting, printer serving for about \$10,000. It was not long ago when 10K would only get a couple of smallish servers. Now, with Apple's offering that gets you a quad ZEON server and about 1 terabyte of storage. [Oracle](#) has adopted such an environment throughout their own organization. That being said, it's important to note that Larry Ellison does sit on Apple's Board of Directors.

So, with Apple's advancement of technology, what's holding them back? Today, there remains a shortage of highly available people as with the Microsoft environments. Let's face it, when approximately 90% of all purchased computers out there are Microsoft operating system based, there tends to be a large number of people who know Microsoft technology. This could be one of largest barriers for Apple to enter the corporate marketplace.

One of the other arguments has always been that there is more software available for Microsoft Windows based computers, than for Apple Macintosh. Leaving gaming out of it, quality needs to be the key. There are software applications in the OS X world that will let you do anything that you can do in the Windows/Vista world. Sure, the choices are less, but functionality is key here. We have not found one task that absolutely requires Microsoft Windows that cannot be accomplished in a compatible way using Apple Macintosh comptures, and remain compatible.

The move of the Macintosh platform to Intel as weights in heavily. In the past, if a user needed to run a progam specific to Windows, they needed a windows machine. That is no longer the

case. The Intel based Macintosh computers can run Windows as a sub-process or by rebooting the machine. So now, Macs have MORE software available to run than Windows machines do. This is an interesting, major shift from the past.

What about viruses? Apple fanatics state that Apples are not susceptible. Worms? People don't talk about them too much. They differ in how they propagate themselves. They are less known and stoppable just the same. The fact is that there are far more viruses for Microsoft Windows machines than for Apple OS X machines. In part, this is likely due to the number of target machines. A hacker is likely to put more effort into the largest installed base out there to take maximum advantage of their work. Apple pales in comparison to total machines out there. OS X is also more inherently secure than Microsoft Windows is. This is likely to change with Vista however. We firmly believe that Microsoft is fed up and tired with this issue and will make primary changes to the fundamentals of the underlying security systems to fix this, such as moving security closer to the core of the operating system rather than bolting it on top.

Does Apple want this market? This is the biggest question of all. It's clear that Apple sees Microsoft Office as a valuable part of their future, as they continue to parade Microsoft in their MacWorld addresses each January. This, however, is likely aimed at the consumers who need to bring work home. Indeed, with binary compatibility, most office work can be brought home and successfully completed.

Is Apple ready for the corporate world? In several engagements we have recommended a serious look at Apple technology. Companies with large installed bases obviously have a much harder decision to move into the Apple world. For new companies, the ability to get started quickly, with an interface that is easier to learn and become productive is a major plus that could even turn into a solid competitive advantage.