User Platform Selection

There are three realistic options for user platform selection today; Microsoft Windows, Apple OS-X, and Linux. The ranking below is based solely on the opinions of our analysts and their research results. A lower ranking is better (1st, 2nd, 3rd) in each category.
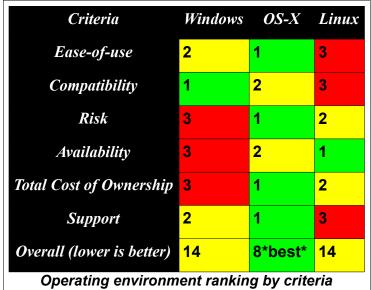
Ease-of-use: Average users use it with minimal effort and support, and it works without looking anything up.
Compatibility: It works well for average users on a daily basis for things they do.
Risk: Malicious things don't happen in normal use to average users.
Availability: Useful work can be done most of the time the computer is on.
Total cost of ownership: Over the life of the system, the total out of pocket cost the user pays, for the amount of useful work done.
Support: On the standard manufacturer support contract, the user spends less time, effort, and frustration before the problem is favorably resolved.

Criteria	Windows	OS-X	Linux
Ease-of-use	2	1	3
Compatibility	1	2	3
Risk	3	1	2
Availability	3	2	1
Total Cost of Ownership	3	1	2
Support	2	1	3
Overall (lower is better)	14	8*best*	14

Operating environment ranking by criteria

Windows is so insecure that most normal users cannot realistically use it for more than a few days on the Internet without it being broken into and exploited by malicious attackers. The applications and operating system crash a lot, is hard to configure and use in changing environments (like wireless access points and plugging into different networks), manufacturer support contracts are expensive and most people go to independent contractors who have limited in-depth understanding. It is also the most popular environment on the planet, which is why most vendors try hard to be Windows compatible.

Linux is relatively safe in that it is rarely broken into in normal user uses, but configuration is a nightmare, ease of use is poor, and support is complicated. It almost never crashes, but it is not very popular or consumer friendly. It has an enormous amount of software available for it for free, but most of it is not what most users use most of the time. It also has for-fee software compatible or reasonably so with other platforms, but you can't buy Microsoft Office for it.

OS-X is almost never broken into in normal user use, it is relatively easy to use, and very easy to configure. It almost never crashes, but you have to reboot for most updates, and it is well supported with the standard Apple Care program. It also runs almost all of the free software that runs under Linux, albeit with some extra effort. It does run Microsoft Office but it is better to run Office under a virtual machine in OS-X. It almost always connects to wireless and wired access points with minimal effort and it helps nicely when it has a connection problem.

We are not dogmatic about technology. We have no deeply held beliefs about any company or operating system, and our views have changed over the years as the operating environments have changed. Nobody is paying us or otherwise remunerating us for our points of view. If you had asked two years ago, we would have told you something quite different, and in two years things are likely to change again as will our opinions, based on those changes.

> *Apple running OS-X is the clear operating environment of choice today for most normal users and most businesses, especially for notebook computers.*

So now that we have told you this, you probably have some objections to overcome. Here are the most common ones and how we were convinced along with most other industry analysts to go to Apple for our use.

But my software requires Windows: You can run Windows and Windows applications within the Apple platform using emulation software from either VMware (fusion) or Parallels. We prefer VMware. In addition, most of the most commonly used Windows-based applications have versions for OS-X. You can also use the Remote Desktop Connection to connect to Windows servers for Windows applications and this is commonly done. You can run many Linux applications in OS-X natively and Linux itself will run in VMware. You get all of the advantages of Apple without giving up very much at all. And don't listen to the folks who say the performance isn't very good in the emulators. It's just fine for almost everything most people do. Get 2 Gig of RAM and a 120 Gig or larger hard drive.

But my company won't support it: They will. There is more or less a revolution going on from the bottom up and top down within companies of all sizes. Windows is easier for current computer support people and Linux is better for computer wizards. OS-X is better for users and executives, and users and executives are the reason computers are there.

But I have to make sales presentations and our customers run Windows: Apple OS-X also runs Windows and you can do your Windows-only sales presentations from there. It's even better than that. For canned demos, you can prepare the Windows virtual machine so it erases all of the changes made during each presentation. Then, when the Windows machine gets a virus from being on the client network, you can reboot it and your demonstration will work the next time exactly the same way it did when you configured it.

But the boss said no! Sorry, we cannot help you there. Give a copy of this article to your boss, explain that the company might save a lot of money and eliminate the vast majority of problems they are having with computer support, and that it won't interfere with the way you do business at all. Other than that, you will simply have to wait for a better boss.

But... Rest assured that for every objection you can find, there's a rational answer that, while imperfect, is good enough. User platform selection involves tradeoffs. Like everything else, you have to make decisions based on the facts on the ground today in your specific situation. In our view, the tradeoffs today for most people say to choose OS-X.