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Windows Serves Up Security, Reliability, and Lower TCO

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Whether in small or midsize businesses (SMBs) or the largest enterprises, IT professionals face numerous obstacles in the ever-expanding, ever-changing e-commerce environment: Providing appropriate access while maintaining tight security; maximizing reliability for networks, websites, and business-critical applications; and providing an integrated, scalable infrastructure while keeping TCO down. All in a day's work, right?

Microsoft aims to give beleaguered IT staff a better shot at keeping up with technology demands with their server platforms and server-based building blocks. And according to recent surveys conducted by industry research firms such as The Yankee Group (2005 North American Linux and Windows TCO Comparison, Part 1, April 2005, by Laura DiDio) and IDC (Viewing the World Through New Windows: Comparing the Operational Costs of Windows Server 2003 with Those of Windows 2000 Server and Windows NT Server, January 2005, by Al Gillen, Dennis Byron, Charles J. Kology, Mark Levitt, and Randy Perry) IT professionals and analysts alike are impressed with Microsoft's efforts.

[Heightened Security](#)

The Yankee Group survey respondents rated Windows servers twice as secure as those from the prior year: In the 2005 survey, Windows achieved an average security rating of 7.6 (on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most secure). By comparison, the survey's average Linux security rating is headed down, from 9.2 in 2004 to 8.3 in 2005. The survey also reported that IT administrators reduced the time they spent on Windows patch management by 50% - 80% - and at no incremental cost - due largely to Microsoft's decision to ship patches on a monthly rather than a weekly basis and provide the Windows Server Update Services for free.

IDC notes, in the study referenced above, that Microsoft poured millions into improving product quality during the development of Windows 2000 and into Windows Server 2003, including raising code development standards, reducing OS vulnerabilities, and tightening application installation procedures to prevent substandard drivers and DLLs from destabilizing the OS itself. And while the IDC study found only a slightly lower TCO in the security workload from Windows Server 2000 to Windows Server 2003, the report noted: "IDC does not believe that the slight TCO cost advantage [that] Windows Server 2003 has over Windows 2000 Server fully reflects the security improvements inherent in Windows Server 2003. Microsoft has paid considerable attention to security with Windows Server 2003. Users need to factor in the level of security when looking at both operating environments."

The next-generation Windows server, code-named "Longhorn," and due out in late 2007, will boost Microsoft's security standards even further. "Longhorn" includes Microsoft's Network Access Protection (NAP), a new policy enforcement platform that ensures better protection of network assets. The platform will allow administrators to create customized policies to validate computer health before allowing it network access or communication capabilities. It also gives administrators the option to automatically confine noncompliant computers to a restricted network until they become compliant, and automatically updates computers to ensure ongoing compliance.

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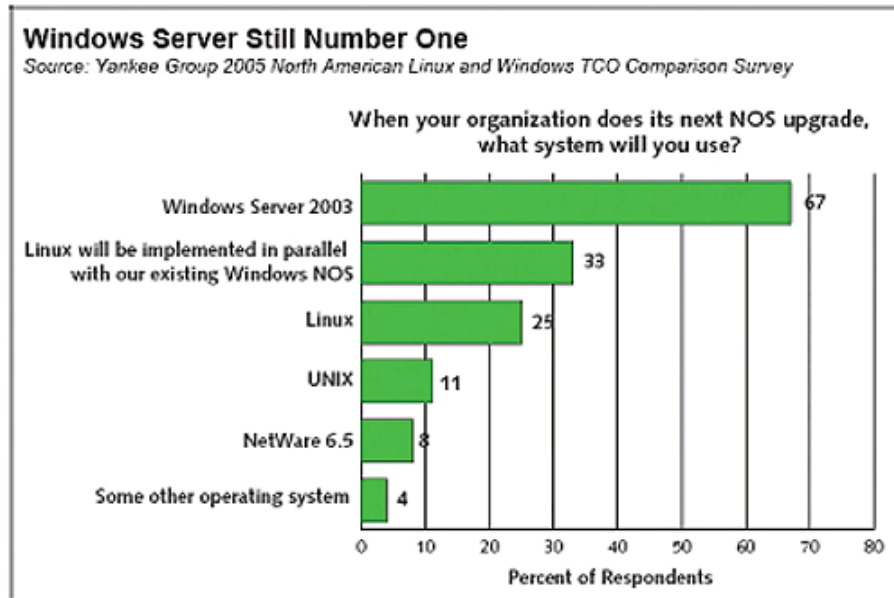
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Increased Reliability

Dynamic e-commerce, a global business presence, and new communication methods that make remote access a snap – today’s technology requirements create new opportunities for moving businesses forward, as well as new complexity and challenges for IT professionals. The 21st-century business environment demands 24x7 access, the ability to remotely connect with business-critical information, and the scalability to quickly add users or computing muscle.

An overwhelming 88% of corporations report that Windows Server 2003 provides performance and reliability levels that are equal to or better than Linux in comparable usage scenarios, according to the Yankee Group (up 12% from a similar survey done only a year prior). And the same survey reported that Windows servers recover from security attacks a full 30% – nearly four hours – faster than similar Linux servers.

Lower TCO

Of course, increased security and reliability go a long way to decreasing TCO – less time spent combating security issues and recovering from downtime means lower costs overall. Microsoft, with 73% of the total server market, can also boast a larger pool of IT professionals with deep experience managing Windows OS platform and products, leading to the development of best practices for operations and deployment and fewer tech support calls.

And each successive generation of Windows Server – from NT to 2000 to 2003 – has 11 reduced server administration and lessened downtime by significant margins in most workloads, including Web, file, print, security, and email, according to IDC. For these workloads, the TCO comparison of Windows NT Server with Windows 2000 Server shows a reduction of 23% - 58%; and in the comparison of Windows 2000 Server to Windows 2003 Server the TCO declined anywhere from 3% - 48%, depending on workload. The largest absolute dollar savings are realized in the Windows currently holds sway with 90% of the market) before 2010.



What's Ahead for Windows Server

It's clear Microsoft continues to take the threat from Linux and other competitors seriously, and will fight to retain its market share. In addition to the new NAP platform discussed above, planned improvements in the next-generation "Longhorn" server include updates to the IIS process model, which plays a central role in integrating Web platform

technologies and will help administrators maximize control over network/Internet interfaces. “Longhorn” also offers significant improvements in availability and flexibility, such as new deployment options that offer more flexible and cost-effective methods for your environment, redesigned clustering capabilities that offer greater availability in the event of a hardware failure, and new solutions that allow remote users to more securely and seamlessly access resources. InfoWorld’s Tom Yager notes [Longhorn Beta 2 is an Impressive Package, June 2006], “Longhorn Server’s overall emphasis on consolidating and simplifying deployment and administration and on making key features accessible to developers and admins at scales greater and smaller than those offered by Windows 2003 Server, stand out as impressive.”

“Longhorn” will include Windows Server hypervisor-based virtualization, an efficient form of virtualization that communicates directly with a processor instead of going through an operating system. Virtualization is a key technology for reducing the cost and complexity of IT management, allowing multiple operating system instances to run on a physical server simultaneously. And Microsoft announced in July that they are cooperating on the development of technology to provide interoperability between Xen-enabled Linux and the new Windows Server virtualization – so the “Longhorn” server will provide a flexible virtualization solution across hardware infrastructure and operating system environments for cost-saving consolidation of Windows, Linux, and Xen-enabled Linux distributions. Microsoft is betting that playing well with others, and making IT administrators’ lives easier in the process, is a winning strategy.

Windows Server 2003 Highlights:

- Windows Server 2003 R2 simplifies remote management, improves identity and access management, reduces storage management costs, provides a rich Web platform, and offers cost-effective server virtualization.
- Windows Small Business Server 2003 offers a complete and affordable network solution including operating system, collaboration and storage tools in a single package for small groups of users.
- Windows Storage Server 2003 R2 offers a superior price-to-performance ratio, enhanced manageability, and increased productivity for file sharing, storage consolidation, replication, and backup.

SQL Server 2005 Boosts Security, BI, and Development Flexibility

Microsoft’s SQL Server 2005 offers impressive functionality and new features that will have IT professionals looking forward to the upgrade. Like SQL Server 2000, Microsoft’s SQL Server 2005 is available in a number of editions for various environments. The Standard Edition is aimed at small or midsize businesses (SMBs) and includes the core functionality needed for noncritical e-commerce, data warehousing, and line-of-business solutions. The Enterprise Edition is the most powerful, offering the highest levels of scalability and availability with the complete set of enterprise data management and business intelligence (BI) features. The line also offers editions for developers, mobile data management, and also a Workgroup Edition for smaller organizations or workgroups within larger entities.

Microsoft has put significant work into its next-generation data management and analysis solution, and it delivers increased security, scalability, and availability. Notable features include SQL Service Broker, which provides an asynchronous application framework. “[Service Broker] enhances scalability by enabling your system to handle more traffic logically than it can handle physically...Adding easily-configured asynchronicity to the data layer of an enterprise system is a boon to developers and opens up huge possibilities for Web apps...Service Broker alone is a reason to consider upgrading to SQL Server 2005,” notes Tech Republic’s Scott Robinson [10 Things You Should Know About SQL Server 2005 Features, August 8, 2005].

Enhanced security features with SQL Server 2005 include database encryption, more secure default settings, password policy enforcement, granular permissions control, and an enhanced security model. Other new features include SQL Server 2005 Management Studio, which provides a single user interface for previously separate applications with different interfaces, and lets administrators control both SQL Server 2000 and SQL Server 2005 databases. Business intelligence is built right into SQL Server 2005, enabling users to get valuable data analysis from enterprise systems more easily, and ensuring that the data is available to those making business-critical decisions. While BI was part of the SQL Server 2000 Enterprise Edition, the UI was not integrated, so users had to become familiar with yet another interface.

VARBusiness’ Carolyn A. April notes, “Solution providers...give [Microsoft] high marks for innovation in the VARBusiness State of Technology survey. Nearly one-third of respondents dubbed the company the most innovative in BI, followed by Business Objects and Oracle.” [Analysis: Business Intelligence Goes Mainstream, July 21, 2006.] SQL Server 2005 also includes features that developers will find handy, like enabling the storage of XML fragments or documents, and the capability to develop database objects such as stored procedures, functions, and triggers using C#, Visual Basic, or any Microsoft .NET language.

SQL Server 2005 also includes features that developers will find handy, like enabling the storage of XML fragments or documents, and the capability to develop database objects such as stored procedures, functions, and triggers using C#, Visual Basic, or any Microsoft .NET language.

“It looks like SQL Server 2005 is ready to hold its own against Oracle and DB/2 for the enterprise. It is also significantly cheaper than either Oracle or DB/2 no matter how you measure the cost (whether it’s per processor or per seat).”

[10 Things That Will Convince You to Upgrade to SQL Server 2005, March 13, 2006]

- Arthur Fuller and Stephen Giles
- Tech Republic