

# Mac's Boot Camp spawns security worries

May 17 2006

---



Growing up, we looked forward to the idea of increased responsibility. Once these responsibilities had been bestowed upon us, we wondered what the hurry to grow up had been about. Apple Computer may be finding itself in a similar position where security is concerned.

Having caught wide attention through the public beta release of its Boot Camp software, which allows users to install and run Windows XP on its current Intel-based computers, the firm has also been placed under the expectation of supporting Microsoft's operating system in addition to its own Mac OS X operating system software.

The end result has become that much more confusing to the end user.

In Apple's most recent security patch, the third one of the year, the company sent out a variety of fixes geared towards ensuring that malicious code couldn't be activated through programs and that other software could handle malformed data without crashing. The fixes, which amounted to a hefty 12 to 28 megabyte download depending on which version of the Mac OS X operating system was being used, provided pre-emptive fixes to problems that had yet to be exploited on a wide scale.

Prior to this, Apple has experienced only two security-related incidents this year. In February a Trojan horse program capable of limited self-replication was encountered for the platform. The program was reported to have affected only a handful of users according to security firm Symantec. More recently, half a dozen zero-day bugs had been released over the Internet. Although the bugs were discovered by security researcher Tom Ferris and did almost no damage, they directly targeted specific vulnerabilities within the Mac OS X operating system.

Through the addition of Apple's Boot Camp technology, which is available as a downloadable public beta with no official support from either Apple or Microsoft, Mac users could face the security chores inherent with the Windows operating system. Despite increased system stability, regularly released security updates and better anti-spyware efforts, the Windows operating system is currently host to more than 100,000 viruses, Trojan programs and other bits of malware. The Windows operating system controls more than 90 percent of the current market share and has historically been targeted by users looking to test its strengths and weaknesses.

Apple is expected to increase its focus on Boot Camp and perhaps make it an integral part of its Mac OS X 10.5 operating system, due for release later this year.

Although the current Macs are capable of running Windows XP, Apple Computer will provide no official support, nor has any official collaboration been declared between Apple and Microsoft to optimize the Windows operating system for the hardware, according to Anuj Nayar, Apple's PR manager for Mac OS X, Server and Storage products.

"Apple's not going to take responsibility for Windows security," said Michael Gartenberg, vice president and research director with Jupiter Research. "If you run this, you need to pay attention to Microsoft Windows security updates."

Gartenberg went on to add that maintenance of both operating systems was possible, but updates would need to be downloaded and suspect programs and documents needed to be paid attention to, as with any other computer.

"Licensed OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) are certified to run Windows. At the end of the day, Microsoft won't worry about Apple customers," Gartenberg said. "If you run Boot Camp, you have the wherewithal to get it running, but Apple won't take your calls for tech support."

Even with official support for the Windows operating system lacking under Boot Camp, users can still receive help through channels such as tech-related Internet forums and via Microsoft's support systems, which provide a limited period of free technical support before the user needs to pay per instance.

From Apple's end, the purchase of a new Macintosh will entitle the user to a limited amount of technical support. Purchase of an AppleCare plan will extend this up to three years and allow for more extensive aid when required.

Running Windows XP via Apple's Boot Camp technology requires the user to purchase a copy of the operating system, which extends certain license and support rights to the user. Provided the user inquires as to the operating system the company supports, official technical support for the software can be provided from a software end, though hardware-specific questions won't be answered and users may have to look elsewhere for answers to these concerns.

*Copyright 2006 by United Press International*

Citation: Mac's Boot Camp spawns security worries (2006, May 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-05-mac-boot-spawns.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.