Should I buy a PC or Mac?

November 25 2009, By Craig Crossman

Q. Our 6-year-old PC computer is dying a slow death and we are considering moving to a new iMac but have a few concerns. First, of all, we have several Word documents on our disk drive now that we want to keep and add to as well as many pictures that will be kept as well. What capabilities are available to transfer these files to an iMac? Is there a Word program for Apple? Finally, do you think our decision to change to Apple is the way to go, overall?

A. The question of whether to buy a [Windows](#) PC or an [Apple](#) Macintosh has raged on throughout the decades. Entire books have been dedicated to the topic along with countless stories that have debated the subject in just about every type of publication that remotely has anything to do with computing. You can't even turn on the TV these days without seeing [Mac](#) vs. PC commercials. So I can assure you that the answer to your seemingly simple question won't be definitively answered in this short column. That's mainly because your question is actually a rather complex one and in the world of computing it's right up there with "What is the meaning of life?"

That said, let me highlight what experts typically point out regarding each platform.

On the Windows side:

There are many more PCs running Windows than any other personal [operating system](#). Because there's strength in numbers, more software is written for Windows so you will be able to find virtually any application

you need. There are more games for Windows, more business applications written for it, scientific software, you name it.

There are more hardware devices made for PCs. These include video cards, networking products, even exotic peripherals. Bottom line is that if you are a hardware or software developer, you want to make it available to the largest audience and that is still, hands down, a Windows PC.

Windows computers and products cost less than Macs. Apple owners will argue that two systems comparably equipped will be more evenly priced but I've seen some pretty cheap PC configurations out there that are hard to beat. Of course Apple pundits will further argue that you get what you pay for.

On the Macintosh side:

The hardware as well as the operating system is made by Apple. This means that Apple has control over what goes into their computer. Since developers have to follow some very strict Apple guidelines in order to make sure their products comply, you can be fairly sure that whatever you plug into or load onto a Mac is just going to work right out of the box. I'm not implying that Windows products don't work out of the box. They usually do but because Mac products have to be more compliant with each other, that results in a better user experience when adding something new to the system.

There's a lot less malware (viruses, spyware, etc.) for the Mac. It's not necessarily that the Macintosh operating system is so invulnerable to these kinds of attacks. The same reasoning that works for those software developers I mentioned earlier also goes for those who want to rip you off and write these nasty programs. There are many more Windows PCs out there so writing malware for that platform gives you the biggest bang

for your efforts.

As to your other questions, Microsoft makes their Office suite of programs available for the Mac and everything you created on the Windows version is completely accessible on the Mac side. In fact, you can run Windows itself on the Intel-based Macs. You also have the ability to run both Windows and the Mac OS at the same time and even move and run files seamlessly between them.

So to your last question, whether to move from your old PC to your Mac. A new PC will come with Windows 7 installed so you're going to have to learn a newer OS anyway. Why not visit an Apple store if there's one in your area or if not, it's a great reason to plan a little fun trip. After all, you're going to be spending another six (or more) years with your new computer so invest a little time in making the choice. Get some hands on time with a Mac at the store. Ask more questions. Then make your choice. Whatever your decision, it's going to be a big, powerful and fun step up from what you have now.

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(Craig Crossman is a national newspaper columnist writing about computers and technology.)
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