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Longhorn: An OS That Just Works

July 2004



One of the central tenants of Longhorn design is that the operating system should make the computing experience as easy and seamless as possible for users. Ideally, users should not even be aware of the operating system because it "just works" as a natural extension.

Longhorn will help deliver this seamless user experience in four major areas:

1. Deployment and Servicing;
2. Reliability;
3. Performance, and
4. Security and Privacy.

Deployment and Servicing. Longhorn will make it easier than ever to install and deploy new applications and new application services without the need for reboots that interrupt the user's work. The installers used in Longhorn will utilize new APIs (application programming interfaces) that will dynamically detect files that need to be updated as part of the installation, but are already in use by other applications or application services. Only those running applications and services will need to shut down, rather than requiring a reboot of the entire system and all its programs. Following installation, the new APIs will then restart those closed applications and services, restoring their state and the data they need.

Reliability. Longhorn will include the software equivalent of a flight data recorder that will preserve information about system events that occurred in the last 30 seconds to a minute. The operating system will automatically monitor this data and take action, where possible, to improve its own reliability. In the event of an application shutdown or system crash, developers can use this information to determine what went wrong and prevent future problems. Longhorn will also help users identify, and recover from, the most common types of hardware failures.

Performance. To provide faster and more consistent performance, Longhorn's SuperFetch capability will automatically load the data most likely to be used into random-access memory; there it can be accessed far more quickly than from the hard disk. New CPU scheduling and disk I/O mechanisms will make optimal use of system resources to maintain the best possible user experience -- even when running demanding multimedia applications.

Security. Longhorn will reduce the threat from new applications or application components with Application Impact Management. The underlying technologies will either block new applications from making irreversible changes, or record the changes that are made to make it possible to undo them. By protecting the integrity of operating system files and the operating system registry, Longhorn will make for a more secure, reliable computing experience.

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Taken together, these features will allow users to focus on the work they are doing, rather than the operating system that is running their applications.

Have a question? Want more information? Contact the writers and editors at oemedit@microsoft.com.

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Last Updated: July 5, 2004



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