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NT 5.0 becomes Windows 2000

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Microsoft has changed the name of its Windows NT 5.0 platform to Windows 2000, with the intent to make it Microsoft's mainstream operating system for both consumers and businesses in the new millennium.

"The biggest reason for the name change is that Microsoft has realized it has a lot of brand recognition in the Windows brand, but not a lot on the NT brand," said Michael Silver, senior research analyst for Stamford, Conn.-based Gartner Group Inc.

"So it lets Microsoft use the Windows brand more strongly for its commercial and consumer operating system, and it starts making NT the obvious successor for Windows 9x."

Erik Moll, Microsoft Canada Co.'s product manager for Windows NT Server, confirmed Silver's thoughts.

"Right now there's Windows 95, Windows 98, NT Workstation and NT Server," Moll said. "So by bringing it all under one umbrella -- Windows 2000 built on NT technology--it's going to be the mainstream operating system as we move forward."

Right now the Windows 9x line is aimed more at consumers and NT is aimed at businesses. However, Microsoft intends to eventually merge the two operating system lines into one, Moll said. But for now, NT 4.0 and Windows 98 will remain as they are, and NT 5.0 will simply be renamed Windows 2000, he said.

A future version of the Windows 2000 line built on NT technology -- Windows 2005, for example -- will become the successor for both Windows 2000 and Windows 98, Moll said.

Silver said the compatibility problems between applications that run only on one or the other operating system probably won't matter by then.

"By 2000 and something, a lot of those issues go away," he said. "The software gets so old that people don't use it, or they're retiring it for Y2K purposes. And the drivers become..."

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