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Subject: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [Ultrax](#) on Sun, 19 Nov 2017 08:41:28 GMT

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What was OS/2 anyways? Was it intended to replace Windows, for home users, or for workstation use? As far as I know, it was a commercial failure.

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Subject: Re: OS/2: What was it anyway?

Posted by [zero](#) on Sun, 18 Nov 2018 22:19:07 GMT

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Ultrax wrote on Sun, 19 November 2017 08:41: What was OS/2 anyways? Was it intended to replace Windows, for home users, or for workstation use? As far as I know, it was a commercial failure.

It was intended for all three, plus server, originally. IBM was never any good at marketing its personal computing products, and most disasterously so it was with OS/2.

When the OS/2 project originally started in conjunction with Microsoft in the late 1980s, it was intended as a complete replacement for DOS and Windows, which was then in its completely unuseable infancy and viewed as a stop-gap really. However, after version 1.3 of OS/2 - the last 16-bit version - MS withdrew from the project and IBM went fully 32-bit with OS/2 2.0.

From early on, one of the most wide-spread adoptions of OS/2 occurred in the banking sector, accounting for the largest slice of the ABM/ATM sector, where its successor is apparently still used to some extent. The consumer sector didn't really show much uptake until Warp 3 came along in 1994. Marketing aside, the two biggest factors working against OS/2 were IBM's continuing support for running DOS and Windows 3.x from within OS/2, and - to some extent also as a result of this - the failure to get sufficient numbers of larger developers on board and major apps ported to native OS/2.

Furthermore, OS/2 was hamstrung by IBM's inability to decide exactly what sector should be the main target of the OS. By the time Merlin was in development IBM's personal computing division (which was in charge of OS/2 development) was already in the process of being dissolved. When Warp 4 finally reached the market in 97, it was already pretty much dead in the water, and IBM eventually decided to discontinue it and produce a derivative for the emerging commercial online market, e-commstation.

If handled properly and marketed properly, OS/2 could have killed off the infant Windows 95 and even NT 4, as well as any remaining MacOS support, and both MS and Apple did perceive it as a major threat. (Hence also MS's financial support for Apple at the time, which coincided with Steve Jobs and NeXT - effectively - buying out and bailing out Apple which was on the verge of bankruptcy already.)

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