

Table of contents

Microsoft debuts NT 3.5.....	1
New NT, New Prices.....	2
NT finally becomes what it ought to be.....	3
MOTOROLA PORTS WINDOWS NT 3.5 TO PowerPC SYSTEMS.....	6
Windows NT 3.5 hits market.....	8
As NT 3.5 ships, update on deck: Vertical Office suite, Resource Kit also due this fall.....	10
Daytona is up and running in some agencies.....	12
NT is souped up, but watch for speed bumps.....	15
A Day of Reckoning.....	18
Microsoft set to ship NT 3.5; will bolster push into enterprise with SMS release.....	21
MICROSOFT RELEASES WINDOWS NT SERVER 3.5, WINDOWS NT WORKSTATION 3.5 TO MANUFACTURING.....	24

Microsoft debuts NT 3.5.

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Full text: At Windows World in Dallas, Microsoft Corp. president Bill Gates announced Windows NT 3.5, now called "Windows NT Workstation" and "Windows NT Server. Microsoft intends to clarify the NT line by offering the Workstation as a solution for users who require extra security and memory protection. The Server has vastly improved performance over version 3.1, using 4 to 6M less memory, according to Microsoft.

NT Workstation 3.6 offers memory protection for Win16 applications. One demo depicted a Win16 application purposely generating a GPF (general protection fault), while another Win16 app, Microsoft Word 6.0, ran alongside. The GPF didn't affect the Word app, since Win16 applications now run in separate address spaces. Windows NT Server 3.5 offers an IPX Stack, which lets it function as a NetWare server. This is accompanied by a Migration Tool for NetWare, which aids network administrators by copying user accounts and files from NetWare servers to a Windows NT Servers, while maintaining network security.

Microsoft seeks to address the question, "Why bother with NT Workstation when Chicago (Windows 95) is just around the corner?" In fact, several critical components are missing from NT Workstation which will be in Windows 95, including support for DOS and Win16 device drivers. Both operating systems are full 32-bit implementations with multi-protocol support for TCP/IP, IPX/SPX and NetBEUI transport protocols. NT Workstation does offer the Win16 memory protection as well as C2-level security and automatic recovery features not included in the Chicago feature set.

Many showgoers in Dallas were floored by NT 3.5's display of network prowess. One senior consultant called it "the best networking on the market by far." The demonstration showed an NT Workstation communicating in simultaneous sessions with two Novell servers, an SCO UNIX server, a Windows NT server and an Internet node.

NT Workstation 3.5, priced at US\$319 (US\$99 for NT 3.1 upgrades), should be available by the time you read this. Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052, (206)882-8080, fax (206)883-8101.

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New NT, New Prices

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Full text: MICROSOFT CORP.'S pricing scheme for Windows NT 3.5, unveiled Sept. 21 with the product's launch at Windows World in Dallas, shows that the software giant is becoming more savvy about marketing enterprise technology.

'The most important piece of our company's future is NT,' says Microsoft chairman and CEO Bill Gates. 'We've got \$500 million invested in the NT family.'

Microsoft's new version of NT should rouse interest in the operating system, which has lagged in the market, at least by the vendor's standards. NT 3.5 is a better product than its predecessor, NT 3.1 - faster, smaller, and with better connectivity to Novell Inc. NetWare and TCP/IP networks.

NT 3.5 comes in two versions: NT Workstation, which costs \$320, and NT Server, which costs \$700 per server and \$40 for each PC linked to any NT server. That's a switch from Microsoft's pricing scheme for the server version of NT 3.1, which cost \$1,500 and offered an unlimited number of free client connections.

Microsoft is trying to steer customers toward using NT Server on networks. For example, the unlimited peer-to-peer networking capability in NT 3.1 desktop is restricted to 10 peer connections in NT Workstation 3.5. Users wanting more connections have to use NT Server 3.5. The kicker: Upgrading from NT 3.1 desktop to NT 3.5 Server costs only \$149; to NT Workstation, it's \$99.

Perhaps Microsoft's most aggressive marketing move is a package of server -based applications called Back Office, which includes the SQL Server database, SNA Server host connectivity software, Systems Management Server network software, and an electronic-mail system. Back Office costs \$2,200 per server, or \$3,250 less than buying the products separately.

Still, like NT Server, the real cost of Back Office is in client connectivity. It costs \$300 per PC to access Back Office. 'Given NT's capabilities, the pricing sounds reasonable, but it is substantial,' says David Passmore, president of Decisis Inc., a consultancy in Herndon, Va.

'What it basically comes down to is simplified licensing and tighter integration,' says Gates. Both AT&T Global