

Microsoft's Hunt for Security

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[Microsoft's acquisition of FrontBridge](#) this week follows a long string of buyups by Microsoft, all with seemingly little aim or reason except that they are all security-related. Obviously security has been a large issue for Microsoft for quite some time, but many are wondering exactly what the megacompany is doing and what its focus is. Buying companies and their security programs would be a quick fix, allowing Microsoft to adapt the technology it acquires to Windows; however, no news has come out detailing exactly how this will happen.

Windows Longhorn, now named [Windows Vista](#), at least as it has been shown to the press and consumers, has changed form more times than one could count, and some would say that form was never officially defined. Interesting communications tools and features (such as a DVD-only boot mode for laptops running Vista and more integrated connectivity with cell phones and their ID chips) have been mentioned, but what exactly will set Vista apart from XP, which consumers are on the whole content with? Very little is known, and apparently Microsoft knows about as much as the public does.

What occurs to me is that this is the 'same old' from Microsoft: instead of starting at the core of a system when attacking a problem, they'll grab modules and tack them on, hoping that one, or a combination of many, will do the trick and fix the security holes. Don't get me wrong: modularity is what programming is all about. But sometimes the kernel is where the issue needs to be addressed. If these technology acquisitions help Microsoft create a better, safer, simpler Windows, then I'm all for it. But such is not the history of Windows.

What also has me thinking is the nature of all these acquisitions. Possessing security implies possessing control over a situation or event, and all the technology Microsoft is buying point toward being able to control user activity, gain knowledge about users, and manipulate systems according to their whims. Not a problem when motives are pure, but what about tying this in with advertising? Seems the technology could be easily converted to serve other means and desires of Microsoft.

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