

Can Linux improve ATM security?

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While ATM security is not necessarily "life critical" as with many other industries (think transportation, medical and some industrial applications) there are certainly financial and identity theft risks associated with these devices.

Plenty of info is available on the web regarding various ATM attack vectors, estimated number of annual hacks and the cost to the industry. The question we will ponder here is very specific: Would replacing the Windows operating system in an ATM with a Linux-based one improve security? Most experts believe the answer is yes.

Today's ATM looks much like a personal computer on your desk. It runs the world's most popular desktop operating system ? Windows ?on the world's most popular hardware: Intel motherboards.

But therein lies part of the problem. Being "most popular" means there are few barriers to keeping the bad guys from simulating the internals of a typical ATM. This fact alone makes Windows more prone to attack than alternatives.

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