



January 6, 2012

Windows 8's New "Toy-Like" Security Option Gives Businesses Cause for Worry

By Brandy Courtade

Microsoft's new password option for Windows 8 was recently revealed. The father of RSA's SecurID token, Kenneth Weiss, found it "cute" and didn't think it was "serious security." Microsoft is certainly making it hard for IT pros to take them seriously with this move--which is potentially fatal since Windows does best in the enterprise space. To say the least, Windows depends on its enterprise clientele.

Windows' New Password Option Is "More Like a Fisher-Price Toy"

To log in, you have to touch specific points in a certain order on a picture. It is easy to see why Weiss would say, "It's more like a Fisher-Price toy than a serious choice for secure computer access." He sees one obvious problem: It's too easy for a potential hacker to record the movement required to log in by watching a person actually log in, which is why the traditional password system displays your password in uniform dots. This isn't the only potential issue. Whisper Systems, which specializes in mobile security, has a tool that changes the Android login from the rows of dots you have to slide your finger across in a specific pattern to one column. Why? Because if a thief steals your device, he can use the finger smudges on the screen to decipher the pattern. This same issue could apply to the new picture password feature.

However, it's only an option. Microsoft will offer an alternative--the traditional login system, according to [Infoworld](#). Weiss argues that businesses might be interested in Windows 8 because it aims to improve security and power efficiency and to unify with ARM processors so it will run more smoothly with tablets and other computers utilizing ARM.

Why These Arguments Are Insolvent

First, if Microsoft is really trying to improve on security, their picture password choice was a bad move, as Weiss states himself. Secondly, if they're offering the traditional login option, which businesses would likely choose, what was the point of picture passwords? All around, Windows 8 is

clearly made to make Microsoft competitive in the tablet market, so it's possible they just wanted to do something "fun" to add to the tablet experience. But in the enterprise space, "fun" isn't what sells, and if you're like many IT pros at small and midsize businesses (SMBs), you're not happy when the line between consumer and enterprise IT becomes blurred, as discussed in another [Infoboom](#) article.

That being said, Microsoft isn't making it easy for SMBs that want a piece of the tablet movement. SMBs plan on being involved, but many are leaning toward the iPad, which already dominates a large portion of the consumer tablet market. Windows tablets have a good shot at gaining a customer base, but only if Microsoft sticks to its strength, that is, business. True, this is just one mistake, but if this is indicative of future developments, they're not going to win businesses back from Apple this way. As an IT pro, do you want a consumerized Windows tablet? Isn't one of the most prominent perks of Windows its enterprise environment, its legacy productivity suites? If your SMB is one interested in tablets, you'll want to keep your eye on Microsoft's next moves.

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