Ubuntu 10.01 (Correction .04) may be the replacement you are looking for

™With word circling about the confusion on Windows™ 7 OEM end user license, some may be desiring to go with Windows™ XP. Though you may be allowed another chance at their "downgrade" rights.

There may, however, be another replacement that you hadn't considered. And it is free.

I recently purchased a new MSI motherboard and had some other computer components laying about.

Ubuntu now has Version 10.04 on their web site available for download. Unless you have a solid connection, I recommend obtaining a copy from one of their outlets. The disks run about $4.99 and most have free shipping.

A Little History

I was impressed with Ubunutu until about version 8. I was able to restore older computers to usefulness, but then Ubuntu started getting too demanding for older machines.

I do not know how 10 will work on older machines. I haven't tried it. Since I had the dual-core board and was waiting for parts, I decided to test it.

Installing

Ubuntu has narrowed the questions for installing to about six questions. Unlike Windows™, you do not have to have an internet connection, because you do not have to go through the Windows™ permission slip process. However, to upgrade and get the system working to par, you will.

I pieced together a test machine with the parts I had lying around. I tried to install Ubuntu and got an error message. I was frustrated, but I did make two copies of the ISO that I downloaded, so I tried the second. It installed fine.

The first thing that I noticed was the wireless in the top panel. I needed that to connect to the Internet, but it wasn't connecting. I checked the hardware and it did recognize my cheap RelTek 8185 based wireless card. I was used to the other OS informing me with that annoying little cartoon balloon that there were wireless connections available.

I suddenly realized another advantage of Ubuntu. It does NOT keep giving you annoying balloons telling you that it demands that you do things. Aha! One more advantage to Ubuntu!

I clicked on the wireless icon and got the menu. There I found the wireless connections available. I selected one, entered the code and *voila*! I was connected.

The second problem that I encountered was the video player included with Ubuntu. It would not play DVDs. It gave me an error message and, after following the links, I found that they cannot include certain packages in the initial install due to legalities. You have to download and install those packages. After doing so, video DVDs played just fine.

Another advantage to Ubuntu is that there are a myriad of software packages that you can install for free. Simply click on Applications and go down to the last item on the menu to install.

There is a Synaptic package install that you get to through the Administration section, but I cannot remember the exact procedure to get to it. I do not have Ububuntu up right now, but you can find it. You can re-install packages and add other programs not available through the other Ubuntu install.

One thing to remember is that you get what you pay for. For support, you may have to dig for hours through support sites to find your answers. If you are good at search engines and can apply just the right keywords, you may find what you need with the first shot.

I recommend trying it by itself and not installing it on your Windows™ machine right away. It takes some getting used to, but once you get the hang of it, you might find it useful to have at least one separate Ubuntu machine available for use.

They do have antivirus software available, but generally Linux machines are attacked less than the other OS. Corporate machines using Linux are attacked, so if you are using it for business, make sure you understand the security before putting it online for your business.

Linux is OpenSource, so there are thousands of developers around the world looking to close any loopholes left open. There are some, but Linux has less open areas than the other OS.

There are hundreds of Linux *distros* out there besides Ubuntu. Ubuntu is Debian-based and the easiest that I have found to work with when switching from Windows.