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## Video monitor upgrade: a tale of two operating systems

I've changed the video monitor for my primary home workstation (Dell Dimension 8200 with 64 MB nVidia GeForce2 video card) several times. This was never more than a few minutes work, just unplugging and plugging a few connectors, until the most recent change. A neighbor offered to give me a 19" Dell P991 monitor, vintage 1999, which has a larger display than the 17" monitor I had been using. After the switch, I first started my current favorite Linux distribution, Ubuntu 6.06, on my multiboot workstation, and everything was fine. Contemporary Linux systems store information about the video monitor (type, resolution options, etc.) in a configuration file, `xorg.conf`, generally located in `/etc/X11`. There are various ways to update the information. For Ubuntu, a Debian-based system, executing the following command at a command prompt:

```
"sudo dpkg-reconfigure -phigh xserver-xorg"
```

does it. (Information about the syntax of this command was contained in the `xorg.conf` file.) Fedora Core, Mandriva, and openSUSE have desktop GUI mechanisms for changing the monitor information. In summary, all of the various Linux distributions on the multiboot workstation (some current, some out-of-date) worked just fine with the new monitor.

Windows XP, Service Pack 2, also is on the workstation. Windows Update had provided at least one and possibly two updates to the video card driver, most recently in 2004. Windows appeared to be starting correctly with the new monitor, showing the Windows XP splash screen, and then the screen went blank and the startup process halted. This was puzzling because I had just seen the monitor work with the video card under Linux. I won't describe the long sequence of frustrating events that then unfolded for several hours, while I tried many things such as switching back to the previous monitor, none of which allowed me to start Windows XP normally. During this period, I went through many cycles of Windows XP in safe mode and saw a few blue screens of death. The main reason why I'm posting this writeup online is that it might help somebody else in a similar situation avoid wasting as much time as I did. The solution for me was: **getting the most recent Windows XP driver for the GeForce 2 card (vintage August 2006) from the nVidia website, starting Windows XP in safe mode, installing the driver, shutting the machine down (not a warm reboot), and then restarting Windows XP.**

It is troubling that a Dell Dimension 8200 system purchased in 2002, running a vintage 2001 Microsoft operating system that had subsequently provided several driver updates to the video card, choked when a vintage 1999 video monitor was connected to it. Consider this tale to be a counterexample to the notion that system changes always are easier with a Microsoft system than a Linux system.