

At this point, it should be noted that although the invention has been described with reference to a specific embodiment, it should not be construed to be so limited. Various modifications may be made by those of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure without departing from the spirit of the invention. Thus, the invention should not be limited by the specific embodiments used to illustrate it but only by the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. In a computer comprising a basic input-output system (BIOS), one or more auxiliary programs, and an operating system separate from the one or more auxiliary programs, a method for booting the computer, comprising:

executing the BIOS;

executing one or more of the auxiliary programs, wherein control is transferred from the BIOS to one or more of the auxiliary programs;

saving, by the one or more of the auxiliary programs, a set of environmental settings that define a current environment for the computer;

determining by the one or more of the auxiliary programs whether to continue booting the computer;

in response to a determination not to continue booting the computer, continuing to execute the one or more of the auxiliary programs without executing the operating system;

in response to a determination to continue booting the computer, performing the steps of:

(a) restoring, by the one or more of the auxiliary programs, the set of environmental settings;

(b) terminating execution of the one or more auxiliary programs; and

(c) executing the operating system, wherein control is transferred from the one or more auxiliary programs to the operating system without rebooting the computer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein determining comprises:

initiating a countdown;

monitoring for user input; and

if any user input is detected prior to expiration of the countdown, concluding that booting of the computer should not continue.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein determining further comprises:

if no user input is detected prior to expiration of the countdown, concluding that booting of the computer should continue.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein determining further comprises:

rendering a graphical user interface (GUI) to a user to solicit input from the user.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the GUI comprises a graphical representation that the user can select to specifically indicate that booting of the computer should continue.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the graphical representation comprises an icon.

7. The method of claim 4, wherein the GUI comprises a graphical representation that the user can select to invoke a functionality provided by the one or more auxiliary programs.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the graphical representation comprises an icon.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein the GUI comprises a display of the countdown.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether to continue booting the computer comprises:

initiating a countdown;

monitoring for user input;

if any user input is detected prior to expiration of the countdown, determining whether the user input specifically indicates that booting of the computer should continue; and

unless the user input specifically indicates that booting of the computer should continue, concluding that booting of the computer should not continue.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein determining whether to continue booting the computer further comprises:

if no user input is detected prior to expiration of the countdown, concluding that booting of the computer should continue.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein determining whether to continue booting the computer further comprises:

rendering a graphical user interface (GUI) to a user to solicit input from the user.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the GUI comprises a graphical representation that the user can select to specifically indicate that booting of the computer should continue.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the graphical representation comprises an icon.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein the GUI comprises a graphical representation that the user can select to invoke a functionality provided by the one or more auxiliary programs.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the graphical representation comprises an icon.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein the GUI comprises a display of the countdown.

18. A computer, comprising:

one or more processors;

a basic input-output system (BIOS);

one or more auxiliary programs;

an operating system separate from the one or more auxiliary programs,

wherein the BIOS comprises:

one or more instructions for causing the one or more processors to execute, during a booting process, one or more of the auxiliary programs, thereby causing control to be transferred from the BIOS to one or more of the auxiliary programs without rebooting the computer, and

wherein the one or more auxiliary programs comprise:

(a) one or more instructions for causing the one or more processors to save a set of environmental settings that define a current environment for the computer;

(b) one or more instructions for causing the one or more processors to determine whether to continue the booting process;

(c) one or more instructions for causing the one or more processors to continue executing the one or more of the auxiliary programs without executing the operating system, in response to a determination not to continue the booting process;

(d) one or more instructions for causing the one or more processors to restore the set of environment settings; and

(e) one or more instructions for causing the one or more processors to execute the operating system, thereby causing control to be transferred from the one or more auxiliary programs to the operating system without rebooting the computer.