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Priority: Normal
TO: Jake Winebaum
TO: Steve Wadsworth
TO: Eric Aledort
Subject: Active Desktop

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I have been thinking about the value to us of this deal and am beginning to question how much of the Kool-Aid we are drinking given what we are getting.

Andrew and the guys were up at Microsoft and learned a great deal about the effort which will go into our creating a channel and into our incorporating Dynamic HTML into our sites. While Microsoft has said that Dynamic HTML is just HTML with some extensions, it turns out that it is more like C++ or Java than HTML. The production process is going to involve more engineers than HTML programmers and will take a lot longer (at least initially). Additionally, there is minimal documentation and there aren't any authoring tools. Most of the work our engineers were able to do was done by looking at sample code and rewriting it. Consequently, producing the channel is going to take a big effort on our part.

Also, Microsoft showed screen shots of the current channel implementation, which had the channel bar on the right of the Active Desktop. The current channels include MSNBC, MSN, AOL, PointCast, DOL and Time Warner, plus some category channels (News, Sports, etc.). The channel icons were 32 x 80 pixels. This is good news. The bad news is it looks like it will be very easy for the user to add or delete channels by simply dragging icons on or off the channel bar. Anyone can create a channel and a desktop component that will launch their channel. That component could be incorporated into a banner ad and then blasted across the Web so that users would be able to download a new icon right onto their desktop which they could then add to the channel bar. I'm just not sure there's as much value as we thought in being in a default position.

Finally, the download of IE is 11 MB at a minimum. That means about 2 hours to a 28.8 modem user. Until this thing ships in the box, I'm not sure how many home users are going to download IE.

All this fuels the non-exclusive fires...

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