From: Matt Lindauer
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/20/02 5:09pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Honorables,

It has come to my attention that Microsoft has recently acquired fundamental patents for 3D graphics technology and techniques from SGI. This is a dangerous situation, as it grants Microsoft significant leverage over the independent 3D hardware manufacturers who are currently supporting the only rival to Microsoft's Direct3D graphics API, OpenGL.

Microsoft has in the past worked to delay and distract advances in 3D graphics technology, such as in the abortive "Fahrenheit" plan with SGI in the 1990s. During that period, SGI was transitioning from selling Unix-only workstations to begin selling workstations running Microsoft's Windows NT. At the same time, OpenGL was gaining on Microsoft's Direct3D in terms of features, hardware support, and developer support. If SGI wanted to sell NT boxes, SGI would have to agree to the Fahrenheit plan. The perfectly timed Fahrenheit deal slowed that advance of OpenGL by, among other things, reducing SGI's active promotion of it, and allowed Microsoft's Direct3D to gain a strong lead.

Yet OpenGL support still survived due to the interest of software developers and the support of third party 3D hardware manufacturers. This latest move by Microsoft to acquire core 3D technology patents would finish the hatchet job, granting Microsoft the power to force third party 3D hardware manufacturers to drop support for OpenGL, and ultimately stifle competition and innovation in the marketplace.

Please do not let this come to pass.

Thank you,

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