

From: Mark Berger
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 9:41pm
Subject: US vs. Microsoft

Dear sirs,

I am a programmer with seven years of experience in the software industry. Up until recently I have been a Microsoft fan and supporter. I still make my living using Microsoft products and developing solutions based on their operating systems and development tools. As is happens, that is exactly why I am writing to encourage you to seek additional concessions from Microsoft.

For the first time in my career as a Visual Basic programmer I have become aware of the treadmill that Microsoft has put under me. In my current project I have hit a bug in Microsoft's ADO library (code library that allows access to databases) that has existed since the inaugural versions of the library three years ago. Here i am, seven versions of that library later with the bug still there and no possibility of it ever being fixed. Why? Because the ADO library is about to go away and be replaced by ADO.Net. The same bug may be there....but to even determine that I will have to upgrade all my development tools and operating system.

Obviously, this fact, in an of itself, is no crime. All software has bugs.

This will by my last Microsoft based development project. I write this email using Sylpheed email client on my Slackware linux box. There are other ways of doing development that will avoid these Microsoft problems and I will pursue them.

This particular bug has a long history. The newsgroups are full of comments, complaints and requests for help in dealing with the problems it creates. Microsoft ignores them. This is my real proof of the *fact* of a Microsoft monopoly. I have never been a victim of any of the security snafus for which Microsoft products are known. I was not even convinced of their monopoly status during the trial. It is this particular bug that has opened my eyes and made me reevaluate the evidence.

The solution proposed by Microsoft, donating computers and software to schools is one of the most brilliant marketing strategies they have come up with to date. Schools are traditionally Apple users. Microsoft would gain an incredible advantage with this solution.

So what is the solution.

I still don't know if I can endorse the breakup of the company. As bad as Microsoft has been, I fear the government more. I think the forced breakup of a company is worse than their monopoly.

The perfect solution in my mind is to force Microsoft to publish all of their current code under a modified GPL (Gnu Public License). Microsoft could have special permission to continue to develop this code base independantly, outside of the publishing requirements of the GPL. All other developers would then be able to continue development of the same code base...but they would be limited by the GPL and forced to release their code. Microsoft would be allowed to continue the development of proprietary code....but a single snapshot of that code would be revealed publicly. Developers could fix the bugs and security problems that Microsoft has ignored while Microsoft could continue to create their Dot.Net thing.

Maybe some fine tuning of this idea would be best....maybe release the source code for Windows 2000 and previous. If Windows XP is really that great then Microsoft should have no difficulty maintaining their place in the market.

My two cents. Do not reward them for their actions.

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