

From: Michael Sweetman
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/25/02 1:15am
Subject: Proposed Microsoft Settlement

Dear Sirs,

I wish to voice a couple of concerns I have about the proposed settlement of the Microsoft Antitrust Case. I have a number of concerns about Microsoft's conduct in the past and I am very concerned about the direction the company's business practices are taking.

I was, and still am, a frequent user of Microsoft's spreadsheet program Excel. The program release Excel 97, was a remarkable piece of work for it's time, and is still an impressive program. However, subsequent releases of the program have included only marginal improvements. This can be evidenced from Microsoft's publicly expressed concerns that the pace of upgrades for the Office Suite is slowing. Microsoft's proposed solution to this problem is subscription licensing, in other words, you pay for upgrades, whether they improve the software or not. Any other company would have their sales associates laughed out of business with tactics like this. However, the Microsoft Office format has become a de facto standard, and no business can afford to be without it. I am very concerned the pace of innovation with this product will slow even further, even as the cost of the software rises.

My next concern is with Microsoft's refusal to institute a volume licensing scheme for home users. I have a large family, and I it is near necessity for every child from middle school on to have their own computer for their school work. To achieve this, I have either purchased, or salvaged 5 low grade Pentium computers. However, these machines did not come with an operating system. Including sales tax, a legal install of windows on these machines would cost over \$1000. This price has no reasonable correlation to the use that these machines receive. Therefore I found it necessary to use the Linux operating system for these machines. However, this is not a viable alternative for families that do not have a resident engineer, as Linux requires a great deal more technical proficiency. I believe that this practice has kept used computers from becoming a low cost alternative to a new computer for many low income families.

Finally, I want to express my absolute outrage over the OEM volume licensing agreements. Excel is the ONLY Microsoft product that I use. However, since Microsoft refuses to port it Linux, I also must have

a copy of windows. However, now that I have this, I have no more desire to purchase a computer with Windows. It is however, impossible to purchase an Intel compatible PC without Windows pre loaded from any major manufacturer. This leaves me with no alternative, but to build my own system. I am forced to deal with poor quality, short warranties, and poor service in order to buy a computer without paying Microsoft's exorbitant licensing fee. It's not much I'm asking for, just the choice to buy Dell, for instance, with Linux; but Microsoft has

precluded this. For all the talk of their freedom to innovate, my freedom to chose, and to contribute to the fastest growing alternative operating system is severely curtailed.

In closing, I urge you to take strong action against Microsoft, in order to restore competitiveness to the computer marketplace. I realize that breaking up the company is probably an impractical solution, but that doesn't matter, because a better alternative exists anyway. That lies is Microsoft's vast collection of intellectual property. The purpose of IP protection is to ensure that a wide variety of artist and scientific works become commercially available. Protection of Microsoft's IP is at this point is having the opposite effect. I believe that forcing Microsoft to disclose selected portions of their source code for various programs will have the effect of causing viable and inter operable alternatives to Microsoft products to come to the marketplace.

Sincerely,
Michael Sweetman