

From: John S. Howell, Jr
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/25/02 11:26pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Attn: Renata B. Hesse
Antitrust Division, U.S. Department of Justice
601 D Street NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20530-0001

January 25, 2002

RE: MICROSOFT ANTITRUST CASE - PUBLIC COMMENT for the DISTRICT COURT TO CONSIDER

I am an avid computer hobbyist and software entrepreneur that started in the 1970's, years before Microsoft's name was well known. I have carefully watched, and dealt with Microsoft since they were a tiny company, and I believe this gives me a somewhat unique perspective on Microsoft and their competitors.

The products I have licensed from Microsoft include programming languages like BASIC, Visual Basic, and "C", operating systems like MS-DOS and Windows, and productivity tools like Word, Excel, Outlook e-mail and PowerPoint. I have also licensed software products from Novell, Apple, IBM and others.

More than all of the others combined, the Microsoft products have benefited my business and my personal life in many, many positive ways. >From the very first purchase I have found Microsoft products to be of unusually high quality, often innovative, extremely useful, and perhaps above all, a tremendous value for the money. The company is usually very easy and straightforward to deal with.

My company started with IBM, Novell and Microsoft as suppliers. Although we initially favored IBM and Novell products, over the years, we valued Microsoft's more than the others -- I believe mainly because Microsoft seemed to understand the technologies and tradeoffs better than their competitors, and were able to consistently produce superior products at a very low price, which made them a lower risk, and a better supplier to us.

One of my concerns with this case is that the complaint against Microsoft originated not with individual consumers, or with Microsoft's partners, but with Microsoft's unsuccessful competitors. These failed businesses must not be allowed to set the rules for the markets in which they failed.

I purchased Microsoft products for my business over their competitors because they were able to consistently provide the best balance features, ease of use, and performance, AND make their products available at extremely attractive prices. Over the years, I have witnessed many hundreds of other business people make their own independent evaluations that resulted in the same conclusion -- Microsoft's products were overall better than the competitions -- and so they purchased them.

I resent any characterization by the government that Microsoft's customers are 'helpless victims' who cannot choose software. Nothing could be further from the truth. More than almost any other type of product I have found that buyers of computer products seek the advice and comment of others before making a purchase.

I also do not believe the government should have any say in what software I should run on my computer, and I resent the idea that a successful business and a successful product should be a threat to anyone.

I believe it is a dangerous policy for politicians to protect some businesses from others. Continued application of the antitrust laws against successful businessmen can only lead to corruption and economic disaster.

And lastly, I believe Microsoft should have the right to its own property, and that it is the government's job is to protect this right, not to take it away.

Sincerely,

John S. Howell, Jr
Naples, FL