

Letters to the Editor

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less important. As this happens, the dependence on a particular machine architecture will be broken. Perhaps we will see Windows (or Presentation Manager or Motif) on other than Intel architectures (and other than on DOS). From the user perspective, a consistent user interface and available software is the goal, not the underlying operating system or the underlying hardware.

Should OS/2 or Windows win? Neither! The end user should win. If this means that both conservative IBM and visionary Bill Gates both loose to something like POSIX, I'm sure they'll both survive anyway. If companies want to ship quality products, the product needs to support end-user goals, not some marketing agenda. And as for companies seeking an implementation strategy? Encapsulate the system interface as much as possible since it is likely that none of today's operating systems will actually be the desired implementation environment in 5 years. Since software costs so much more than hardware, it only makes sense to plan on porting to other operating systems during the useful life of the software system.

Rob Moser



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Dear Geoff:

I always look forward to reading your SAAge articles, but your January article "Hedging Your Bet on OS/2 and Windows" really got my attention. It appears that perhaps you were wearing your Big Blue sunshades when this article was written!

The overall tone of your article was that OS/2 and Presentation Manager represent the true religion and that Windows 3.0 is an annoying diversion. I got the distinct impression that you were advising SAA Age readers not to stray from the true path of OS/2 and Presentation Manager.

I'd like to take the opportunity in this letter to disagree with what I think are your conclusions and, to point out why the vast majority of users are, in fact, choosing Windows over Presentation Manager and will continue to do so in the future.

Early in the January article you state that "Microsoft clearly does not understand...corporate America...a shift in direction from OS/2 and Presentation Manager to a new and improved DOS and Windows has implications...into the billions of dollars..." Geoff, why should Microsoft keep bearing a standard that no one is saluting? Of course,

they're going to "shift direction." If a finger must be pointed, it should be at IBM for continuing a hard sell of a product the users don't seem to want. For well over 90% of all PC users, a migration to the DOS Windows 3.0 environment is much more natural than moving to OS/2 and Presentation Manager. After all, given the choice, no one really wants to move from an operating system whose documentation is one inch thick (DOS) to an operating system (OS/2) whose documentation is five feet thick!

Since 1987, IBM's attempts to position OS/2 as the replacement for DOS, have been stymied by the fact that the installation, support and hardware requirements for the OS/2-Presentation Manager combination are viewed as overwhelming by DOS platform users. A good example of this, Geoff - the other day I was speaking with the Senior Vice President of a local software firm who said that selling OS/2-based tools was analogous to trying to sell a dead dog as a pet! A little sick humor, but it does illustrate the temper of the user community.

In your January article, you correctly point out the tragedy in designing OS/2 Version 1 for 16-bit workstations (the 80286). I think we all now agree that a 386 is the minimum processor for running either Windows 3.0 or OS/2. As a matter of fact, with the impending arrival of the 32-bit Version 2 of OS/2, I'm quite certain that it won't be long before the 16-bit Version 1 will just fade away. Thus, I question your comment "...IBM is committed to making Windows applications run in the DOS compatibility box." Almost everyone I know agrees that the OS/2 Version 1's DOS compatibility box has not performed well. Things do not work in a completely clean environment and one has to deal with annoying things like a lack of printer drivers, problems not encountered in DOS. So, given that Version 1 may enjoy an early death, it seems silly for IBM to expend additional effort to ensure that Windows can run in its compatibility box. Remember, Microsoft has promised a Windows compatible layer on top of Presentation Manager. This will allow Windows 3.0 applications to run unmodified on OS/2 Version 2. For OS/2 Version 3 (Microsoft's new technology), Windows applications and the Windows API will be supported as a native environment.

You go on to mention that OS/2 Version 3 will compete head-on with UNIX. I certainly agree with the statement, but we've replaced the "will" with "does." As we at Digital Consulting have been advising our clients since 1987, OS/2 does not, has not and will not position up against DOS. In reality, it positions against UNIX as a sophisticated, multi-tasking, operating system for those in need of such an environment.

Geoff you then state that "it's time to recognize that

OS/2 is rapidly becoming the corporate operating system of choice for the programmable workstation." Although IBM certainly wishes it were true, I'm afraid I must disagree. As you yourself stated, Windows 3.0 in five months sold ten times as many copies as OS/2 had sold in four years. The fact of the matter is, Windows 3.0 (now) and Windows 4.0 32-bit (later) will become the corporate operating system standard for both networked and stand-alone PC's over the next several years. It is true that within the IBM SAA environment, OS/2 Extended Edition functions such as database and communication managers are not likely to be available early for Windows. But, outside of true blue SAA shops, very few will use OS/2 at the client workstation level within the next four years. In fact, what you can count on happening, is the combination of DOS and Windows being rewritten and enhanced to pick-up most of the functionality (even, believe it or not, at the server level!) of OS/2 Version 2. Microsoft itself has even admitted that the technology basis for OS/2 is seriously flawed and will be completely redeveloped for OS/2 Version 3.

So, contrary to the tenor of your article, I believe that Microsoft is not and will not be very interested in future evolutionary developments in OS/2 Version 2 technology. I even believe that OS/2 Version 2, along with Version 1 as I previously stated, is a good candidate for becoming an abandoned operating system. If it doesn't become abandoned or supplanted by Version 3, there's a good chance that it will become IBM proprietary over time.

Of course, forecasts on marketplace acceptance and operating system futures are by nature highly speculative. However, I think there is nothing speculative about a forecast that Presentation Manager will disappear as an interesting GUI for most users except SAA shops. Presentation Manager is limited by the lack of receptivity for its underlying OS/2 platform. Ultimately, the thing that will make or break it will be the number of successful applications developed for it. At the present time, that number is meager and not likely to increase significantly. Our customers have consistently told us that the principle issue holding back their migration to SAA is the requirement for OS/2 and Presentation Manager. If IBM were to extend the SAA specifications to include a Windows based environment, I'm quite sure that the overall acceptance of SAA would be much greater than it has been to date. After all, if IBM can adopt Netware, why not Windows 3.0?

It is my opinion that a customer committing to a Windows API environment will be a winner. At the current time, under Windows 3.0, applications will run on top of DOS. At a later point, those applications can migrate to Windows 4.0 32-bit which will have much of OS/2's

power including the high performance file system and true priority driven multi-tasking. Subsequently, that user will be able to take his/her application and run it on top of OS/2 when requiring a more powerful, integrity rich environment than DOS can provide. (See the table below on Windows Futures.)

My final thought: Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against OS/2. It has matured into a fine development platform and not a bad environment for the server in database Client/Server computing. It's just that at the workstation/client level, which your article addresses, the OS/2 environment is not as desirable for most people as the DOS Windows environment. IBM, long a savvy marketing organization, will sooner or later follow the masses onto the DOS/Windows bandwagon, trundling its much smaller, but much fancier, OS/2 wagon alongside.

Geoff, thanks for listening to these comments and let's keep the exchange of ideas going.

*Sincerely,
George Schussel
Digital Consulting, Inc.*

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Windows Futures

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|------|---|
| 1991 | Q1 - Object Linking and Embedding |
| | Q2 - WIN3.1, HPFS, Long Names, Fonts,
Network Improvements |
| | Q3 |
| | Q4 - Pen Extensions, Handwriting |
| 1992 | Q1 |
| | Q2 - WIN 4.0 32-bit, True Multitasking,
Network Extensions |
| | Q3 |
| | Q4 - Native WIN in OS/3 v3 |
| 1993 | Q1 |
| | Q2 |
| | Q3 |
| | Q4 - WIN 4.0, Object Oriented File System |

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