

Microsoft to choose Rhapsody?

"Cook, or get out of the kitchen?" That's the dilemma Microsoft faces with Rhapsody -- and the solution might shock the hell out of the industry.

Let's imagine you're Bill Gates, and you've committed a largeish pile of cash and a very public promise to keep developing software for Apple platforms. You've also hired a hundred or so developers to let you do it.

Now here's your dilemma: Do you develop Office for Rhapsody?

This turns out to be a really interesting question: If you don't do it, you're going to lose Mac market share to Rhapsody developers, and you've just committed \$150 million to that market, which isn't chicken feed. You would lose control of market for the only viable competition to your bread-and-butter operating system. You also have a strong incentive to keep the mac market viable to stave off the Justice Department.

But if you're going to develop for Rhapsody, there is no sensible way to do it except to use Apple's Yellow Box class library. And Yellow Box is the best class library around. Much better than Microsoft's own libraries. And it runs on NT and Windows 95. So once you've developed Office for Rhapsody, you can just flick a switch and compile Office for NT, Office for Windows 95, and Office for MacOS. Not to mention Office for Solaris and for anything else Apple ports Yellow Box to.

But then why bother maintaining independent development efforts for those other platforms?

Microsoft could actually save a lot of money by adopting Yellow Box, bundling the class libraries for it with Windows, and gaining a serious boost in development efficiency from Rhapsody's amazing development tools and only needing one development team for all these platforms. But it's just not in Microsoft's blood to depend on a technology owned by another company.

Adopt Yellow Box or abandon Rhapsody. Cook, or get out of the kitchen. That's the interesting dilemma. Now

what will Microsoft do?

I have no inside information, but just perhaps, you should look out for an announcement soon about Microsoft taking a major interest in Yellow Box. There are a number of ways they could do this: a big increase in their stake in Apple; moving Yellow Box to an independent company owned part by Microsoft, part by Apple; or who knows what else.

If this happened, the effects on the industry would be astounding: Yellow Box will move to the centre of the computer industry, and Rhapsody will suddenly look like a serious player. Apple and Rhapsody would be a new option for business, and the whole computer industry gains a standardisation in APIs which would make Sun's standardisation ambitions for the Java Virtual Machine look lame. Not to mention that this standardisation would boost the efficiency of the entire computer industry in an amazing fashion.

Interesting thought, isn't it?

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Guyren Howe is an internet user and an aspiring computer author. He's got his finger on the pulse of the computer industry, which is especially noteworthy, since industries are not organisms, and therefore do not have pulses.

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