



...from the publisher

Does it seem like Microsoft is getting just a little bit **too** big?

Worse: does it seem as if some of the most influential computer publications are in its pocket?

Recent events suggest that Microsoft is abusing its position as the provider of the computer world's de facto standards in operating systems and environments. It's always been our position that the existence of a "Chinese Wall" between Microsoft's applications and systems developers was not important, and that they were being unfairly maligned in the press and by the government because of their phenomenal growth. I hereby recant that position.

Microsoft has been accused, now, not only of allowing the various development arms of the company to cross-pollinate (OK), but also of withholding information about certain Applications Programming Interface calls from the rest of the development community (NOT!). There's been a book published on the subject, and the weekly trade papers serving this industry used the issue to fill their front pages for several weeks. Amazingly, the conclusion reached by *InfoWorld*, *PCWeek*, and others has been that the API calls Microsoft is using that are undocumented and thus not officially available to other developers, are insignificant. We should let this pass.

I don't think so.

In letting Microsoft off the hook, these parties are missing a bigger picture: there are developers out there who have approached Microsoft about particular problems that they have encountered programming for *Windows* that don't seem to be encumbering the behemoth from Redmond. We'll respect their anonymity, since there's a fear of retribution. On a couple of occasions that we know of, other developers have been told point blank by Microsoft that the information they seek will not be shared. No material competitive advantage? Hardly.

OK: the FTC may have been right after all; Microsoft may need to be broken up, for the good of all. Reopen that investigation, boys.

Why isn't the rest of the computer press, almost certainly the most influential distribution channel of critical business information today, calling this accurately?

William Zachmann, a longtime columnist for Ziff Davis' magazines, is about to end his affiliation with that organization, and in a very public explanation of why, he's said it's because his superiors ordered him to take a softer stand on Microsoft. Mr. Zachmann and I agree on very little that we write about, but see things identically here: Microsoft is getting **dangerously** influential.

I don't want to see Microsoft stop doing business, and no one I know begrudges Mr. Gates his wealth. We do need to examine their business activities closely, though. If Microsoft manages to put out the best software in the industry only by making it difficult for others to do business, then they obtain something we outlawed in this country a long time ago. The word is spelled M-O-N-O-P-O-L-Y.

E. Jeffrey Yablon, Publisher

In my June editorial, one of the products I commented on was Powersoft's *Tame*. I made a mistake by referring to *Tame* as having been developed outside and bought by Powersoft immediately before releasing the version of the product that was reviewed. In fact, *Tame* was developed and distributed by Powersoft from its inception, but the latest version was the first one in commercial release.

Also, for the record, my comments may have appeared to imply that *Tame* was unusable. In fact, I meant to point out that the product was simply too thinly documented as to be used comfortably by the wide target market that Powersoft claims for *Tame*.