



Core blimey

Terence Green is pleasantly surprised by a common code base which brings OS/2 and Windows closer together, finds ways of making Warp run more smoothly and does his bit to revive the true spirit of Christmas.

In my first OS/2 column, I wondered why OS/2 general business applications were so slow in arriving and why developers appeared to lack interest in a reliable, field-tested 32-bit operating system. Having suggested that OS/2 Warp would be

seen in a more favourable light once Windows 95 had been shipped, I reckoned that 32-bit Windows 95 applications would be easier than 16-bit Windows 3.1 applications to port to 32-bit OS/2 Warp.

Only weeks later, an answer has arrived. A Lotus and IBM co-development called the Developer API Extensions for OS/2 (DAPI) will enable developers to create applications for OS/2, Windows 95 and Windows NT using a common code base that encompasses about 80 percent of the development effort.

Daffy about DAPI

The possibilities became clear in October when I watched a Beta demonstration of the next version of Freelance Graphics for OS/2 and talked to Greg Schumacher, senior manager for advanced technology at Lotus.

Schumacher says the Freelance code is actually 99 percent Windows 95 code re-compiled for OS/2. The magic that makes this work is DAPI, which was announced back in May (prematurely, it appears, given how long it is taking to finalise). DAPI makes the commonality usable where Windows and APIs are alike in all but name and adds APIs to OS/2 where it lacks some Windows features.

At the time DAPI was announced there was an incorrect suggestion that it was "OS/2 Warp supporting Windows 95". IBM was content to let that impression be given but DAPI looks like being a lot more useful than the ability to run Windows 95 applications on OS/2 Warp.

Many think that OS/2 won't survive if it can't run Windows applications. This is nonsense. The Win32 API for Windows 95 and OS/2's 32-bit API have much in common because they share common roots, but it's where they differ that developers can innovate and users can

Three Christmas wishes

What I'd most like for Christmas is for BT to provide every school with a free connection to the internet. Then for myself I would like a new home computer and a ThinkPad 755CX.

My first wish was actually written before the Labour Party conference but I'm not prescient — it's an old idea. It's about a sense of community and about giving as well as receiving; best of all it's about children, which is what Christmas is all about — remember that baby in the manger?

Deregulated communications infrastructures around the world that were built by public subscription are becoming cash cows for speculative shareholders. By giving kids access to a worldwide information resource, the telecommunications carriers won't simply be paying back the community input that built their profit engine — they'll be giving kids the chance to tap into a far bigger resource than any school library can deliver. They'll also be fostering generations of adults who'll deliver a far bigger payback for the carriers than the couch potato video viewers and home shoppers they seem to be banking on now.

Ignore those who say that the internet will lead to information overload — we've been brought up on centuries of minimal-content information streams, restricted by class or censored by government. Are we subject to good decisions as a result? Yugoslavia, Mururoa? The former British Rail? The Ozone hole? Doubly ignore the idiots who warn you about porn on the internet



— they'd just prefer you to read their who's shagging whom columns in the tabloids.

Wish number two is for a new home computer because my old one is wearing out. It only has a 486 processor, admittedly a 66MHz DX2, and 8Mb RAM which I'm beginning to find constricting. It's not enough to run any of my three favourite operating systems — Windows 95, OS/2 Warp Connect, Windows NT Workstation; 16Mb sounds about right. And while I'm about it, I might as well ask for a Pentium 100, a PCI bus, and a 1Gb hard disk.

My third wish is for an IBM ThinkPad 755CX. The ThinkPad is one of the best notebook computers I've seen. The design is great and the infra-red ports for LAN and printer communications are a terrific idea. But the best part of the ThinkPad is the Mwave Digital Signal Processor. Think of it as a second processor. It's a multimedia processor, a telephony processor, and it will soon be a voice recognition processor. At the moment you need a VoiceType adaptor to handle voice input, but next year IBM will ship software that lets the Mwave do what the VoiceType adaptor does now.

All the Mwave's cleverness is controlled through software and being a CPU in its own right, it leaves the ThinkPad's Pentium largely free to handle other computing tasks. As a telephony device, the Mwave delivers a 14.4Kb/sec fax/modem, a speakerphone, and an answerphone. With no more than a software upgrade, the modem will soon do 28.8Kb/sec.

Tips & Tricks

Tip of the month if you use Warp Connect is to dump UltiMail Lite. IBM has. It will be replaced by cc:Mail from Lotus. In the meantime, try out Post Road Mailer (see illustration). This is a neat shareware mailer that supports POP3 and SMTP and costs \$50 for a single user.

You can find the Post Road people and more information at <http://www.aecon.com/innoval/index.htm>

Another good tip is to download the latest IBM WebExplorer 1.03 from <ftp.ibm.com> in the pub/WebExplorer directory. It's heaps better than the previous version, has a newsgroup manager, and text and in-line pictures now stream in much faster than before.

Are you having trouble running Windows or DOS applications in Warp? Do they sometimes appear to start but then remain dormant? Try tuning your settings. Right-click on the program icon of the DOS or Windows application in question, open the Settings menu option, go to the Session notebook page and select the Settings icon. Make sure that the settings below are set, save them, and try running the program again.

DOS memory settings:

```
DOS_HIGH = 0n
DOS_UMB = 0n
EMS_MEMORY_LIMIT = 0 or 2048
DPMI_MEMORY_LIMIT = 64
XMS_MEMORY_LIMIT = 4-10Mb
```

DOS video settings:

```
VIDEO_FASTPASTE = 0n
VIDEO_WINDOW_REFRESH = 5
```

Other DOS settings:

```
HW_ROM_TO_RAM = 0n
IDLE_SECONDS = Max (60)
IDLE_SENSITIVITY = Max (100)
DOS_FILES = 50 (or more)
```



Post Road Mailer 1.03 in action — a nice piece of work and far easier to get to grips with than UltiMail Lite.

Are you having difficulty installing OS/2 Warp? Does it fail to complete the install process? Disable any Shadow RAM in the BIOS. If that fails, try disabling the secondary memory cache too.

Some motherboards have poor memory logic or timing; OS/2 uses all the memory to its limit and will stress out cheapo designs.

If you have an AMI BIOS, disable "hidden refresh" and "fast decode enable". *Never mix and match RAM* — it's asking for trouble. Three-chip and 9-chip SIMMs don't work well together. All RAM modules should be of the same type and speed, preferably 70ns or 89ns for 486s.

perceive the merits of each platform.

When an operating system hosts foreign applications it does so at the level of the lowest common denominator. Take Windows 95 applications running on Windows NT. Windows NT supports Unicode so making software international is much easier to manage. Windows 95 doesn't. Windows NT supports local security. Windows 95 doesn't. So you can develop a single application which runs on both platforms passably well but exploits the best features of neither.

It is better to develop a core code base that is compatible with both Windows 95 and Windows NT. Then you add the bits that allow the Windows NT version to exploit all Windows NT's capabilities — robust multitasking, Unicode, security. To the Windows 95 version you add all the flashy multimedia elements that Windows 95 can do now while Windows NT can't.

This way you get two applications that exploit their native OS but you don't have twice the work. DAPI lets developers put most of their effort into producing the core code. The rest of their work goes towards making sure that they fully exploit the capabilities of each platform.

Lotus is developing SmartSuite this way, instead of as before having two separate platform teams developing distinct applications and trying to keep them in sync, which as we know didn't work.

With luck we should see SmartSuite for Windows and SmartSuite for OS/2 converged by mid-1996. ■

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