

[The following is another example of the visions presently employed to envision the future networks, operating systems, and document - application relationships. Exciting news, innovative design, limits and pitfalls. Perhaps just another reminder of how far we still are from "real" Object-oriented Operating Systems Software. All highlighting is mine.](#)

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PC Expo Comments ----- by Bill Seitz --seitz@mindvox.phantom.com

I attended PC-Expo in New York earlier this month on its first morning, since I wanted to hear Chairman Bill's oratory. Am I the only one who finds it embarrassing that kick-off presentations for major industry conventions are used for mere PR pimping? No grand visions, just "here's why my company is better than everyone else's company." Gates is hardly unique in this regard - it's a tedious invariant. Still, Bill did (inadvertently) make some interesting comments. To wit:

* [Applications push the operating system to improve.](#) This has certainly been the Microsoft synergy game, and is a clear admission that there is serious interaction between the two sides of the Microsoft empire. It's also just one approach. Consider Apple's strategy that the OS pushes the hardware; this justifies Apple's unwillingness to license the MacOS to other hardware platforms, since it would dilute their control over hardware, losing the control over the design and evolution process. It also points out how helpful Claris could be to Apple if Claris were a more effective organization. Is Claris held back for fear of harming the third party developers Apple relies on, or is there another explanation for Claris's problems? [Some Claris products are pretty good, but nothing pushes the envelope other than ClarisWorks.](#)

* [Operating systems are moving from being application-centric to document-centric to eventually object-centric \(where an object is seen as simply part of a document that can be consistently manipulated by a toolset\).](#) This is where everyone is going. It's just a question of who gets there quickly enough to build momentum, and whether the advantages of such a system can be sold to the public as added value (witness the oft-repeated banality about how "Apple has less justification for their high prices now that Windows makes Intel machines almost like Macs"). By the way, this comment was in the context of Bill's OLE 2.0 demo, which will supposedly be out this year, and which Microsoft will push across platforms.

* [Applications must internally support workgroup coordination.](#) By this Bill meant they must support the delegation of updating pieces of a given document. This sounds to me like something that should be part of the object-centric OS.

* Cross-application, and maybe cross-platform scripting languages will become increasingly important, as [OS objects can be hooked together with greater ease](#). This may not be called application development, but at least can be considered application customization, and must be viable at least for power users. Visual Basic will be coming to the Mac in all Microsoft applications next year. [And will compete with AppleScript, Frontier, and a host of other scripting languages that are rumored to arrive soon, all compliant with Apple's Open Scripting Architecture. -Adam]

* [Applications must provide intelligent assistance \(agents, wizards\) to help users with complex tasks.](#)

Multimedia was one of the Expo's running themes and had its own area (granted, it was the dungeon room). This theme seemed driven largely by New Media magazine, which had sponsored the InMedia awards for best interactive products. There were a number of machines set up with vendors like Newsweek Interactive and Nautilus. Multimedia still looks like an exciting area, but one with serious pitfalls. Newsweek, for instance, provided still photos and videos for the two stories specifically created for each issue, but only gives you the text of articles for the paper edition's back issues on the disk, and all because they haven't bought the electronic rights to the photos they print! Another theme was clearly the PDA ruckus, what with Casio's Zoomer, Apple's Newton, Sharp's Wizard/Newton, and AT&T's EO. They all try to depend on handwriting recognition, but I was unimpressed by the accuracy of any of the systems; they all added support of an onscreen keyboard as a backup. All these booths interested passersby (especially Apple's), but that doesn't mean that a huge yawn won't follow the product introductions (or more likely, loud gasps as people see the price tags). I see the Mac market as being the most open to this, as we are already the most involved in open communications systems (email, file sharing, etc.). Given their size, the units will be the most expensive DayTimers in existence if they can't easily tie into desktop systems. This requires not only hardware and OS support for moving info, but application support for import, export, and synchronization of data."