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Subject: DR DOS response
Date: Mon Sep 09 15:13:41 PDT 1991

Today Digital Research announced DR DOS 6. The new version was actually much less than we expected - it is essentially DR DOS 5 with a few more utilities. Even the initial first look from PC Week seemed to raise compatibility concerns. I will forward the press release under separate cover but below is the general PR response. More details to come as soon as we look at the product.

Please forward to your team:

General response:

1) We haven't seen the product, so can't comment on it directly.
2) But from what we have read in the trade magazines it would appear that they are attempting to catch up to MS-DOS 5. Most of their new features such as the task manager, undelete, improved memory management, new disk caching, etc., look an awful lot like they are trying to catch up to our feature set. Even the significant price drop (\$199 --> \$99) seems reactionary.

But I don't think they have caught up yet. I believe that we remain much stronger in key areas like memory management and compatibility. This is crucial because compatibility and memory management define the core of DOS. Almost everything else can be bought from utility vendors and bundled.

We believe compatibility will continue to be an issue for DR DOS with version 6. We did not hear much information about the product during the beta test cycle which indicates that the product was probably tested with a small number of users. Given the tens of thousands of dos applications and the multitude of pc configurations out there it is unlikely the product has been sufficiently tested. We learned this lesson with MS-DOS 4 and put MS-DOS 5 through the largest beta test in the history of the pc industry.

Their catch-up attempt is not surprising given our success to date - well over 1 million copies of the Upgrade have been shipped and around 140 PC manufacturers worldwide, representing over 90% of pcs shipped, have committed to MS-DOS 5.

Q. What about their use of memory? DR DOS claims to get well over 600kb free, even on 8086 and 8088 machines

A. What's really key is the amount of memory between 0 and 1 mb. Previously, their solution was inferior, but I haven't seen this version so I can't say.

The free memory numbers quoted by DR DOS tend to be under

non-standard configurations. For example, they quote their 286 numbers on the West and Leap chip sets (10% of 286 base) and 8088 numbers require 8088 pcs with a memory board supporting the LIR 4.0 standard. Very few users sport this configuration.

Q. What about this new compression, that sounds neat

A. From what we hear DR DOS acquired this technology from a small little known company. Compression is technology that often creates incompatibilities because it manipulates the hard disk in a low-level way - one mistake and your hard disk is toast. This is an example of why we think customers will be concerned about version 6's compatibility.

Q. Do you think that Novell's resources will help DR DOS be successful?

A. (jokingly).. Digital Research has always been a competitor as has Novell, we now have one less competitor.

MS-DOS has been the standard for 10 years and we have learned a lot in that time that has helped make MS-DOS 5 so successful. Novell's purchase of DR DOS and the resources they bring to bear still do not change the fact that there is no compelling reason for customers to switch and in fact many compelling reasons for customers not to.

Issues to bring up if given the appropriate opening:

1. Future DR DOS incompatibility with Windows - KEY here is not to say we will purposely prevent compatibility w/DR DOS. But if given the chance it is OK to say the truth - that we only test windows

on Microsoft supported operating systems, so there's really no way to know in the future what will work and what will not. Moreover as we move forward, ms-dos and windows will have increased synergy, as we've demonstrated with ms-dos3 and win3.0.

2. The DR DOS product seems more like a 5.1 release than a 6.0. It is really DR DOS 5.0 with a few more utilities.

Liz/Carrine/Brad

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