

Teresa Jennings

From: Jonathan Lazarus  
To: Paul Maritz  
Subject: FW: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks  
Date: Tuesday, October 05, 1993 10:24PM

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From: Doug Henrich  
To: Collins Hemingway; Jonathan Lazarus  
Cc: Alistair Banks; Tim Satalich  
Subject: RE: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks  
Date: Tuesday, October 05, 1993 3:03PM

I think we are exposed here too. The challenge is that we can not affect change in word/excel at this point. We do not want to lay down and accept their (Apps) guidelines (and they do not completely agree with each other). So we should just push ahead with out Systems guidelines, take our hits, sponsor more ole-a-thon like events, pro-actively define a message for responding to these hits in the press. Timsat can help drive this.

I think we need to look at a CIL like concept. We need to cover these issues in detail at the PDC.

Talking to press about OLE 2, usually raises the need for MS to take an aggressive stance on UI guidelines. I think Paul and Pete need to know we are exposed, but unfortunately, I have no great solutions.

From: Jonathan Lazarus

From: Collins Hemingway  
To: Jonathan Lazarus  
Subject: FW: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks  
Date: Monday, October 04, 1993 2:52PM

i've not seen anything from you or pete on this. should i assume it's in good hands? should i forward to paul and maples? i'm very concerned these OLE discrepancies will come back and haunt both systems and apps.

From: Collins Hemingway  
To: Jonathan Lazarus; Pete Higgins  
Cc: Beverley Flower; Marty Taucher; Monica Harrington; Marianne Allison  
Subject: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks  
Date: Thursday, September 30, 1993 6:18PM

Though we've made significant progress in bringing systems and apps together on OLE 2.0 issues, based on a lot of hard work on both sides, there remain a couple of issues that could come back to haunt us with the public and press:

1. OLE 2.0 spec: The apps division's implementation of OLE 2.0 in Office has a number of inconsistencies with the OLE spec. Many of the discrepancies have been resolved by systems changing "required" approaches to "recommended" approaches in the spec, but many small differences remain. Many are obscure or fairly trivial, but taken as a whole they could seem significant. It's hard to say what a user would note or worry about, but there are several things that reviewers will probably note. And ISVs could complain that MS told them to do it one way but then our own apps guys did it another, and thus we got some kind of "secret advantage." Any "conspiracy"-leaning reporter could make hay of this, since it will be virtually impossible to explain what is and isn't compliant, or why. Shades of the "undocumented API conspiracy."

The logical response is: OLE 2.0 is complex technology, and all apps (ours and others) are making their first implementation of it. Given all the things

an apps developer has to worry about with a new release, it's not surprising there could be minor differences; and we'll clean them up over time. The key thing is that MS apps support OLE 2.0 and implement the key features per the spec, and MS IS COMMITTED TO BE FULLY COMPLIANT WITH THE SPEC as we move forward. (I personally don't care if this means changing the spec or changing the apps, but the spec has been out to a lot of people for a long time, and it will be transparent to the ISV community if we change very much in the spec just to suit MS apps -- such an action would generate Front Page controversy. A ticklish situation indeed.)

PR recommends that someone sufficiently high in the systems and apps organizations be named to reconcile this for future product releases -- and that they are empowered to make OLE compliance work across the board in MS apps. We recognize that these are tough issues to resolve, but these loose ends tend to create unnecessary controversies that waste far more time than it would take to fix it -- and have the potential to damage MS's image in the meantime.

2. Bugs. We've already had a couple of instances where a bug in an app has manifested itself during an OLE operation. This makes sense, if you figure OLE operations are complex and they "stress" apps in ways they are not normally stressed. (One of these involved a bug in a non-MS app; the other involved Excel and Word, when their betas got out of sync.) It will not take too many of these before the impression is, "OLE is buggy." And an ISV, given the choice between saying his product is buggy or OLE is buggy, will quickly claim OLE as the culprit. Similarly, if ISVs generally do a poor job of implementing OLE, it could take the rap rather than the ISVs. We have developed a Reviewer's Guide for OLE 2.0 -- with a lot of good input from apps -- to help guide reviewers through these shoals, but the biggest issue will be cross-app testing of interoperability and OLE. OLE-oriented testing must be a major component of testing for Office as products approach final. Testing has to be absolutely hard core. If MS apps break each other via OLE, then we get a triple whammy: OLE is buggy; our apps are buggy; if MS can't make it work, who can? Our competitors on both apps and systems will take our scalps.

(Tim Satalich has put together a detailed doc on current discrepancies between Office and OLE 2.0 for those who need to follow up.)