Excel 95 Product Plan

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Introduction

Excel '95 is the Chicago version of Excel that will ship in March of 1995 with the other Office '95 apps. The goals of Excel '95 are:

- Chicago

- Discoverability

- Maintain category leadership

- Workgroup

Our development goal is to keep the development team small and focused. Excel '95 will implement parallel development for the first time, and to minimize the reintegration costs with Excel '96 the feature set is contained in well-defined areas. Architectural features are not planned for '95. The criteria for new features is to get high bang for the buck.

Platforms

Excel '95 will only ship for Chicago and NT Intel. The same EXE will be used for both Chicago and NT with Chicago-specific features only available when running on the Chicago platform. There will be no Mac release, no 16-bit Windows 3.x release, nor any RISC NT releases (at least in-house releases).

Feature Areas

Chicago

For many users, Chicago features will be the reason to upgrade to Excel '95. Excel '95 must be the best Chicago spreadsheet in performance and integration with the shell and environment.

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Excel '95 will do the standard Chicago changes to account for the new visual look. We will integrate with EMS and the Chicago shell as a part of the Office family. We will also be spending a considerable amount of time on performance tuning and 32-bit optimizations, with a goal of at least as fast as Excel 5.0 on Windows 3.x.

Discoverability

·A common complaint about Excel 5.0 is that it suffers from feature overload. Our own research and IV data confirms that most of the functionality of Excel goes unused. The Discoverability features in Excel '95 will make the existing power of Excel accessible to the average user, and it will provide a friendlier way to interact with Excel.

Excel '95 is relying on the Discoverability features produced by the Office team for general help and user assistance. To take advantage of these features we plan to completely restructure and rewrite portions of our documentation.

Excel '95 is also adding new features to call out existing Excel functionality and make it easier to use or find.

Maintain Category Leadership

To win the reviews in '95 Excel will add targeted high-visibility features. The goal of these features is to complement the focus on discoverability and get the biggest bang for the development buck. Examples include AutoComplete and AutoQuery.

Excel '95 will also be improving core areas where required to maintain our leadership, for example speed and performance, file import and export, and programmability.

Workgroup

Excel '95 will largely rely on the Office workgroup features. Excel is committed to OLE Properties and integrating with EMS. The exact feature set for integration is not yet determined, but candidates are: DocObjects, InfoCenter, Post to EMS/Notes, and Office Projects.

Schedule

Excel 95's schedule is synched with the other Office '95 applications. Currently known dates are:

Date	Description
5/1/94	Start Development
11/16/94	Code Complete
12/14/94	Beta I
1/25/94	Beta II
3/22/94	RTM

We are anticipating 3 development milestones of approximately 5 weeks apiece.

Competitive Situation

By Tim Lebel, Excel Marketing.

Main Challenges:

Novell - just when we thought Borland was on the ropes, Novell comes to the rescue. Novell could re-energize Quattro Pro, bundle it into a credible suite, wreak havoc with our margins, and build better links into Netware.

Commoditization - even if Novell raises the price of Quattro Pro, a lot of damage has already been done to value.

Best of breed - our margin of victory has not been universally big in press reviews, and the results of the late shipment/out of review cycle have diminished our equity.

Workgroup - lotus is successfully minimizing our platform advantage using notes and making workgroup functionality a decision criteria

Smorgs - this is the biggest opportunity we have to grow our business in 95 (detailed report available)

Integrated - the integrated category threatens to erode market potential by shrinking category size. this is feature "saturation" and system requirements threat.

Competitive Overview

Competition is now stronger than ever. Lotus has finally emerged with a credible GUI spreadsheet in the form of 123r4 for Windows and strategic acquisitions have helped Lotus build a viable suite offering in record speed. Notes has provided Lotus new momentum in the enterprise and they are using it successfully to minimize our platform-control advantages and create new criteria for purchase decisions. Borland's aggressive pricing behavior has posed a serious threat to category profitability for all participants. And just when we thought Borland was on the ropes, Novell comes to the rescue. Novell could re-energize QP, bundle it into a credible suite, wreak havoc with our margins, and build better links into Netware. Claris has come from nowhere to challenge both MacExcel and MacOffice, and the integrated category as a whole threatens to erode category-specific desktop application sales. Strong and persistent competition can be expected from each of these companies for the foreseeable future.

Product Competition

Excel 95 will face strong competition for best of breed status. Excel's market reputation has already suffered due to the late arrival of Excel 5.0 - a number of reviews used Excel 4.0 and were lost as a result. Both Lotus and Borland cleverly capitalized on this transition with press releases claiming victory and obscuring the fact that Excel 4.0 was used in comparison.
The latest reviews with Excel v 5.0 have clearly helped. We have won all head to head reviews that included Excel 5.0. But damage has been done and our margin for victory with Excel 5.0 is still too close for comfort. We have begun to lose in important areas such as workgroup and charting, and have lost our edge in overall ease-of-use. Where

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Excel was once the unanimous choice in head to head comparisons, it now enjoys a "qualified" endorsement. Even in reviews where Excel wins, the margin is sometimes *not great enough to prevent an endorsement of Borland as a "best value" alternative or to not suggest Lotus 123r4 as the logical choice for DOS 123 upgraders.*

Borland now claims to have shipped more than 1 million new copies of Quattro Pro 5.0 for Windows and DOS in the last 6 months. According to an InfoCorp study commissioned by Borland, 41% of these buyers said the Quattro Pro was the first spreadsheet they had ever purchased. Borland may indeed be expanding the category and capturing a larger share of new license purchases. Novell's ownership could eliminate the "security" doubts about Borland, expanding potential in the enterprise. Similarly, Lotus' new found vitality makes Lotus 123r4 for Windows is well positioned to capture a larger portion of the expected upgrades from 123 for DOS users. Our own research indicates that Lotus has an active installed base of at least 8 million users of 123 for DOS and that as many as 2.4 million of these users will be moving to a Windows-based spreadsheet in the next 12 months. Such competition targets two potentially large sources of revenue that Excel has successfully captured in the last few years.

Potential Strategies	How to Win Against
Business/Marketing	**Business/Marketing**
Tactical release of 123r4.x in Q294	Retain Windows Leadership - first, best on Chicago
Opportunistic release of 123 DOS - synch w/ DOS 123r4.x in Q294	Grab % of remaining switchers (SMORG locus)
Discontinue Mac releases	Protect against installed base migration
Synch all platform releases on v 6.0 in 95 (Win16/32, OS/2, DOS)	Neutralize Notes FUD factor - short term
Continue to use Notes as "Trojan Horse" into the enterprise	Leverage EMS, Chicago and Ren to win on WG
Tout better understanding of workgroup needs	Entrench 3rd party development using VBA
Notes, Scenario Manager	Use discoverability as lever into new user markets
Continue combative, high frequency advertising	Better leverage MS marketing resources (SP, channel, etc.)
Tighter cooperation w/ IBM, Novell	
Aggressive upgrade pricing to installed base of DOS 123 users	
Aggressive OEM efforts	
Bundle Notes licensing	
Product	**Product**
Leverage Notes	Chicago first mover
More consistent implementation of F/X across SmartSuite	Claim the highground in Workgroup
Position Notes as the ultimate OLE container app	Support Notes F/X - cheap version in short term
Add Publish and Subscribe support	Better Notes F/X using docprop, import Views in med term
Import Notes Views, add Notes Templates (Expense Report, etc.)	EMS open/save as, browsing, OLE properties
Copy cool and cheap XL features and More....	Ren Integration - list analysis, to do integration
SmartFilter, SmartFill, SmartDrop/Plot, SmartTotals (Row and Column)	Routing, Tracking, Collection, Consolidation, Analysis, Revision
Visual Auditing	Multi-User WorkBooks, Annotations, User Level Security
@Function, Logic, Formula, CrossTab, other Wizards?	Build lead in hard to copy areas (VBA, MultiUser WBs, PivotTables)
InfoBox editing from Improve	Design for installed base as a unique segment
Add more @Functions	Redefine Best as "Most Useful"
Adopt AMI's UI, extend across SmartSuite	fundamental improvements in SS creation and usage
Extend Version Manager technology	Printing, Charting, Formulas, Formatting, DocWizards
Build in Collect and Copy	Unify, humanize and rationalize user assistance
Cheap Modeling aka Poor Man's Pivot	one place, one face, no trace
MultiUser Workbooks	Revamp UI to be lighter, more engaging, fewer controls, easier navigation
Enhance Presentation and Formatting	Exploit VBA app development in SMORG acct.
Integrate Improv/123 - might be forced to punt Improve	Office Consistency and Integration
Add Common Macro Language across SmartSuite (LotusScript)	Extend usage of ATP to replace SAS, other statistical software
Add OLE 2 support	

Changes

8-Apr-94   Updated from previous product plans and removed   russellw
redundant information included in the individual
spec documents.

8-Apr-94   Added competitive analysis from TimLe   russellw