

Donna Poreda

From: Paul Maritz
To: bradc; bradsi
Subject: FW: MS-DOS 6
Date: Wednesday, June 02, 1993 8:33AM

As we discussed in hallway yesterday, I am in favour of doing an update. Bradc - you should get bradsi and I together and take us thru all the issues carefully, but on balance it is the right thing to do.

From: Brad Chase
To: Brad Silverberg; Mike Maples; Paul Maritz
Cc: Bill Gates; Brad Chase; Jeff Raikes; Mike Appe; Patty Stonesifer; Steve Ballmer
Subject: MS-DOS 6
Date: Thursday, May 27, 1993 10:59AM

We have completed the thorough analysis of the PSS data. This was achievable by implementing a more detailed call tracking system, including PSS technicians completing detailed reports for serious customer problems.

First an update on the product/situation. We have still found no major bugs. Customer satisfaction done via a projectable study is good (not fantastic) at 91%. There is a large number of very dissatisfied customers though. The InfoWorld stuff has hurt. It has led to many articles throughout the industry and nonindustry press and there is, I believe, a perception among even many general users that the product is buggy. Though our sell-thru is still well above the ms-dos 5 upgrade it is 25% below where it would be if the sales curve were the same shape as the one for the ms-dos 5 upgrade.

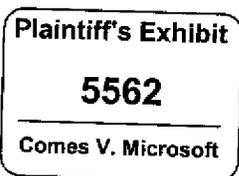
The current number of US MS-DOS 6 Upgrade customers losing data (full or partial) is about 3/1000. I do not know how to define acceptable but this feels much too high to me. This number includes customers who lose data b/c of crosslinked files, a number that may be no different than ms-dos 5 but is something dbospace users are more aware of b/c we automatically report it when we detect it. With any other version of ms-dos you essentially have to run chkdisk (which few people do) to know you have cross-linked files.

We have a meeting set-up with you to review the data and recommendations. About 40-60% of the problems are either things we will never be able to fix (for example, we can't do anything about the person whose hard disk is about to go bad and they run defrag or dbospace and it is the catalyst that sends the disk to harddrive heaven) or problems that defy explanation even given our considerable research.

So, the net net is that we believe that we can make reasonably safe and low risk changes to MS-DOS 6 that will eliminate 40-60% of the data loss problems. For example, we can add a tool that surface scans your disk to look for bad sectors and will not let you compress your drive if it finds any, we may be able to (depending upon speed impact) checksum dbospace.bin buffers to make sure that data is not damaged before being written to the disk (this can be caused by bugs in 3rd party software for example), we can default to more conservative settings with memmaker, we can turn write-behind caching off by default. We can also be more aggressive reminding customers to use the new back-up and av tools to protect key data.

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With this data I now think we should do a MS-DOS 6.0a. The objective is to reduce data loss problems and help customers. If we do do it I think we can use it to try and help turn around the bad perception that exists. I have discussed this with the PR team and they agree. This would help not just for the Upgrade but also importantly help keep our OEM position strong given upcoming IBM and Novell competition.

However this is a very costly perhaps multi-million \$ decision (at least in the short run) and thus I want to discuss this with you before officially proceeding. We currently have about 8-9 weeks of Upgrade inventory in the channel in the US. Time estimates for completing the work will be done by Wednesday but I think it will come in at 8-12 weeks since we need to do especially careful testing. We will manage inventory closely with Mikeap and the subs but b/c of all the press if we do a 6.0a we will have to come clean and announce it when we ship. We will have the cost of product returns, shipping update disks to customers (we may be able to charge shipping for some or most), and the cost of having the team work on 6.0a instead of ms-dos future work.

Also we will do everything we can to keep this a secret (hence pardon me for stating the obvious but pls do not forward this mail or discuss even the potential of 6.0a with anyone that does not absolutely have to know we are considering it) b/c if the 6.0a rumor gets out early that will cost us even more.

Finally, since we will not solve every data loss problem, if we do a ms-dos 6.0a we have to be very careful to position it correctly or we may get all the articles (or at least IW articles...) saying we did a 6.0a and still the product is bad and buggy.