

DR-DOS 6 RUDE Q&A
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Q. What do you think of DR-DOS 6?

A. DR DOS is not DOS, the standard that the industry has come to trust and rely on.

It appears that DRI is attempting to catch up to MS-DOS 5. Most of their new features such as the task swapper, undelete, improved memory management, new disk caching, etc., look an awful lot like the features in MS-DOS-5. Even the significant price drop (from \$199 to \$99) seems reactionary.

But DR DOS is not "DOS." DRI didn't implement all the MS-DOS APIs nor all the function calls. While DR DOS does run many MS-DOS applications, our own review suggests that it has a significant compatibility problem with a range of the leading applications and utilities.

Q. IBM and DRI say DR DOS is the definitive DOS in the marketplace? What do you say to that?

A. The facts speak for themselves. MS-DOS has 70 million users and DR-DOS has a small fraction of that. Software vendors test against MS-DOS, which isn't true with most companies and DR DOS. 140 PC manufacturers have committed to MS-DOS 5; they account for more than 90 percent of the machines shipped. The assertion isn't based on fact.

On top of that, DR DOS is not "DOS." DRI didn't implement all the MS-DOS APIs nor all the function calls. While DR DOS does run many MS-DOS applications, our own review suggests that it has a significant compatibility problem with a range of the leading applications and utilities.

Q. IBM is bundling DR DOS. What do you think of that?

A. It is unfortunate that IBM is trying to force users onto a non-standard DOS. Our own review of DR DOS suggests that its compatibility is a significant problem with a range of the leading applications and utilities.

MS-DOS is the operating system that all DOS application vendors test against and support. It's the one customers

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have come to trust.

MCA, OS/2, the Apple alliance, and now DR DOS are all attempts by IBM to return to a pro-PC proprietary world. One of the many things we have learned is that our success with MS-DOS is tied to how we made it an open industry standard. Our customers and industry partners tell us they don't like this proprietary approach.

Q. IBM says it will include DR DOS technology in OS/2 in order to offer a better DOS than DOS. What do you think about that?

A. We are very skeptical. Our internal tests show that 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 thought IBM learned this lesson with us with MS-DOS 4. It was a hard-learned lesson for us, one that prompted us to put MS-DOS 5 through the largest beta test in the history of the PC industry.

Q. Why are you responding this way? Microsoft's never offered a bootable version to the public before.

A. IBM's support of DR DOS makes their commitment to MS-DOS suspect. Yet customers and the PC industry have invested 10 years and billions of dollars building an open MS-DOS standard. Customers for new IBM PS/2 machines need to know that MS-DOS will be readily available to them, from a vendor that will aggressively support it.

It is also important to note that this bootable version will operate only on IBM PS/2s, so it will not affect the business of other PC manufacturers.

Q. PC manufacturers are upset about this move by Microsoft. What is your response to them?

A. Actually most understand why we made this move and are enthusiastic supporters of the MS-DOS standard. In fact, the open MS-DOS standard has been key to their success and since this bootable version will work only on IBM PS/2s, this move should not affect the business of other PC

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manufacturers.

IBM's apparent strategy of attempting to introduce another operating system into the DOS market would be extremely detrimental to customers, software vendors and hardware vendors. We strongly believe that, given a choice, IBM customers will prefer MS-DOS.

- Q. A lot of people think that DR DOS is the technically superior DOS. What do you say to that?
- A. DR DOS asserts their technical superiority by pointing to certain of their features which they obtained from third parties. MS-DOS 5 technical superiority comes from its greater reliability and excellent memory management - features that are at the core of the MS-DOS operating system, which we believe make MS-DOS 5 technically superior.
- Q. Why do you say that DR DOS is not DOS? It runs DOS applications,
- A. Our tests show that DRI didn't implement all the MS-DOS APIs nor all the function calls. It is another operating system that runs DOS applications just like Xenix or OS/2 2.0 do. While DR DOS does run many MS-DOS applications, our own review suggests that it has a significant compatibility problem with a range of the leading applications and utilities.
- 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. One of the many things we have learned is that our success with MS-DOS is tied to how we made it an open industry standard. Novell has publically indicated that they plan to tie future versions of DR DOS to NetWare. Our customers and industry partners tells us they don't like this proprietary approach.

For the current products, 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 many reasons not to

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

A. We believe our memory management is superior. MS-DOS 5 is smaller under 1 megabyte, works better with the leading third party memory managers, provides much more memory for DOS applications under Windows and, as opposed to the DR DOS approach, provides better safeguards to minimize risk to end users

Q. What about this new compression, that sounds neat.

A. Compression is technology that often creates incompatibilities because it manipulates the hard disk in a low-level way - one mistake and your hard disk data is destroyed, yet DRI got their implementation from a little known company with an unproven track record. Problems discovered in our internal tests and DR's own CompuServe confirm that DRI's may not have made the best choice.

Q. Will I or can I get MS-DOS for other new machines from Microsoft?

A. No. For the last ten years, it has been very successful for the industry, pc mfgs, customers and Microsoft to ensure users get MS-DOS through their PC Manufacturers. It only makes sense that users get their operating system when they buy their machine. However, we are also dedicated to ensuring customers can get the ms-dos operating system from a vendor who will support it aggressively. As IBM is now the only major PC manufacturer whose support MS-DOS is suspect we are providing these new products ourselves through the retail channel.

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