



► Fearing Microsoft

Richard J. Cichelli, SCS President

There is only one company every newspaper should fear: Microsoft. There is only one thing Microsoft fears: Linux®.

I fear Microsoft.

My wife and I own Software Consulting Services, LLC (SCS). SCS provides applications to newspapers. Over the years, we have created application development tools for database-oriented publishing systems. Our tools allow us to be platform-neutral. SCS applications run the same on various platforms: Linux/Intel®, Unix®/Intel, Sun® and various Win32/Intel combinations. Newspapers have heterogeneous computing environments with Unix, Linux, Macintosh and Windows servers and workstations. They like systems that play nicely together.

Why do I fear Microsoft? According to the trade magazine *CRN* (January 11, 2002), late last year a memo under the name Brian Valentine, a Microsoft employee, suggested that Microsoft would reconsider how it "partnered" with ISV/VAR (Independent Software Vendors/Value Added Resellers) who had identical offerings on Microsoft and non-Microsoft platforms.

The clear implication was that those of us who offer true platform independence would somehow be penalized. At a meeting of newspaper vendors last month, Microsoft spokesperson Mark Kapozynsk confirmed Valentine's memo as reflecting a Microsoft policy. He implied that, in choosing "partners," Microsoft has a right to expect exclusivity.

I resent the Microsoft notion of partners. They supply operating systems which I buy and resell with my applications. I'm comfortable being a customer, but the loyalty they expect for being their partner goes too far. Are they saying "Sell only for the Microsoft platform or we will hurt you"? Some partner.

My wife is the only partner I know. We accept each other's faults. As a Microsoft customer, shouldn't I expect fewer faults and more robust technology?

Software Consulting Services, LLC
630 Selvaggio Drive, Suite 420
Nazareth, PA 18064
Sales: 1-800-568-8006
Fax: 610-746-7900
E-mail: sales@newspapersystems.com
www.newspapersystems.com

Mark now denies that he ever said anything like this, despite the presence of more than 30 witnesses. On a side note, Be Inc. has been reported as suing Microsoft, saying "Microsoft harmed Be through a series of illegal exclusionary and anticompetitive acts designed to maintain its monopoly in the Intelcompatible PC operating systems market" (*Wall Street Journal* February 20, 2002). Be is filing claims "with federal court in San Francisco that Microsoft struck deals with personal-computer makers barring them from installing more than one operating system on computers they sold."

AOL Time Warner has filed a similar suit concerning the Netscape® web browser.

Now Mr. Gates is making a new commitment to security. I suppose I should be reassured, but I'm not.

Will Microsoft use its security initiative to take away freedoms in the name of security? Is Passport as innocent as they claim it is? Would they encrypt interfaces to make them more secure or simply less open? Will they make it impossible to share documents among platforms? Would they further restrict the Microsoft software you buy to use only on Microsoft operating systems or provide OS support solely for applications from "certified Microsoft partners"? Think about it. Your choices may soon be further limited.

Should newspapers be afraid? Newspapers gather and disseminate content. It's where they add value. Consider the music business. Would you rather manufacture CD drives or sell music CDs? It's an "operating system vs. content" issue and Microsoft's monopoly gives them a powerful upper hand to go into any endeavor they choose, especially providing content.

No company or industry on earth is safe from a company that accumulates over \$1.5 billion cash per month and sees software as warware.

What else besides freedom of choice and privacy are at risk?

Linux...now there's a reliable, secure operating system supported by a friendlier community.