



From: Steven Sinofsky
Sent: Saturday, December 05, 1998 4:39 PM
To: Bill Gates; Bob Muglia (Exchange); Jon DeVaan
Cc: Paul Maritz
Subject: RE: Office rendering

Office does not love DAV. In fact we, I, didn't want to support it at all, but the Exchange team delivered our abstraction layer (the derivative of OLEDB that works against FrontPage). It was not something we needed, and several times pushed back since it made the FrontPage case we cared most about more complex and inefficient. I personally think this is an area that has been oversold as a benefit and in terms of interoperability. In essence, this is a proprietary protocol for us anyway since we are re-building MAPI on top of it. Nevertheless, Office 2000 will be able to save/load against FTP, FrontPage, SMB, and the Exchange/IIS DAV server. But DAV servers (to the extent they really exist) do not support any of the richness we have with FrontPage 2000's server extensions such as link fix up, checkin/checkout, page themes, site statistics, etc.

For me, DAV is a case where Microsoft is out there leading with the newly proposed (by Microsoft) but yet to be implemented "open" standard. In contrast, HTML is a case where we are dealing with an installed base and standard that already existed and our conflicts are how to work within that environment.

For all practical purposes, Office 2000 requires Windows and IE. We started the project trying to be *great on all browsers, and even greater on Internet Explorer* (from our vision and presentation we did for you), but the momentum inside the company essentially prevents that message from making it through development. Only the most basic rendering works in other browsers—IE is required for:

- PowerPoint (the default output is IE only, and that is essentially IE5)
- Access Data Pages (IE5)
- Web Components (IE5)
- Reasonable performance in Excel (due to big tables and the IE5 support for a predefined table width)
- Word and PowerPoint output tons of stuff that only looks good in IE due to the shared line layout code and bugs in other browsers implementation of CSS (which is essentially an IE-specific feature)
- HTML email essentially requires Outlook Express or Outlook
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to name a few. I think these are enough to convince people that Office requires IE in a proprietary way and that if you want to exchange documents, the odds are your recipients won't be happy with anything but IE.

On top of that, we have dozens of features in the product that require IE4 and many that require IE5 -- this is in order for them to run at document creation time.

I totally understand where you're coming from, but in trying to decide what to do it isn't that black and white for me based on the experiences I've had personally with people. We have talked about this a lot and I really do need your help. If Office documents can only be rendered in it is a complete non-starter with customers. This is not a religious issue, but just a practical one.

If Office documents only render in IE then there is zero chance that anyone will be able to use Office to create documents that will be shared outside an environment with the standardized Window browsers (intranet perhaps, but only perhaps given the time to migrate and the minority of Win 3.1, etc.). Personally I put pictures of a trip out on sinofsky.com that were made with PowerPoint 2000 and got a dozen messages from friends and family (including a webtv person) saying they could not see the pictures. Everything I've posted here at the business school has been "recalled" by me because students were not able to read it (all sorts of combinations of OS/browsers).

No area of the product has received more skepticism and push back than our HTML output—from reviewers, analysts, and beta customers. The other night I attended a 500 person Office 2000 event in Boston (the "Team Web Tour"). The whole presentation was in IE and every time the browser was shown hands went up to ask "what about non-IE browsers?". Finally the demonstration showed powerpoint 2000 in IE which is "awesome" output—then showed the non-IE output and it was just ugly (didn't scale, fixed size slides, no slide show view, no DHTML, etc.). I thought the audience was either going to get up and walk out in disgust or rush the stage in protest.

Again, I really understand the business issues and strategic issues. I think we're just faced with the reality that if we require IE for rendering as an explicit choice (that is when you load a page it just says "You're not running IE") then we are just saying that Office's HTML is a demo feature and not for practical use. If we didn't have HTML support in Office 2000,

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then I'm still convinced we would have been working on a release that customers would have viewed as utterly irrelevant--creating web documents is what people need/want to do: with Office or without Office. That's the catch-22 I feel we're in. Unless things change a lot, my feeling is that an upgrade to Office 2000 is already in jeopardy with customers that do not use IE and any higher level of requirements will drive our upgrade changes way down.

I think this knob will continue to turn **even more** towards IE over time as Windows/IE continues to achieve success. I suspect that each release of Office will continue to require more and more of IE. But in order to even be in the consideration set we will have to have some amount of downlevel support that customers will tolerate if they want to exchange information in a professional manner.

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Gates
Sent: Saturday, December 05, 1998 12:44 PM
To: Bob Muglia (Exchange); Jon DeVaan; Steven Sinofsky
Cc: Paul Maritz
Subject: Office rendering

One thing we have got to change in our strategy - allowing Office documents to be rendered very well by other peoples browsers is one of the most destructive things we could do to the company.

We have to stop putting any effort into this and make sure that Office documents very well depends on PROPRIETARY IE capabilities.

Anything else is suicide for our platform. This is a case where Office has to avoid doing something to destory Windows.

I would be glad to explain at greater length.

Likewise this love of DAV in Office/Exchange is a huge problem. I would also like to make sure people understand this as well.

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From: Bill Gates
Sent: Saturday, December 05, 1998 5:09 PM
To: Steven Sinofsky; Bob Muglia; Jon DeVaan
Cc: Paul Maritz; Eric Rudder
Subject: RE: Office rendering

I think the current support we have is just right for both technical and business reasons.

Its right for technical reasons because the team worked hard to support old browsers as much as they could.

Its right for business reasons because it supports competitive browsers but with a clear benefit for people who use our browser (particularly IE 5).

What I trying to say is that looking forward we should not do heroic things like add new capabilities to the standards to help Office.

We should look at even patenting the things that we do add to help Office.

I need to lean more about this whole DAV thing.

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