

file 4

evolution

Ask your average palaeontologist about evolution and he'll enjoy a good hour or two picking the bones out of the mysteries of the past. Explaining the future however is not so easy. We can always look back at problems and say what we could have done to prevent them. Evolving is about survival of the fittest and strongest and death to the weak. In terms of a computer industry, this is a whole new ball game.

Take for instance Microsoft. Their sheer size is monster-like. It gobbles up everything in its path. Those who cannot see the danger are usually swallowed up and carry on as normal, unaware of their 'distant' control. But David killed Goliath with a pebble and a sling. The US DOJ could very well be that David and Goliath story, but they're not. Microsoft's David is Microsoft themselves.

Over the years, peoples' devotion has lead them up the wrong path. Microsoft gave them what they think they wanted (million files and extensions included). But somewhere along the line Microsoft decided it was going to be Microsoft or nothing. They began to eat fellow competitors. They made manufacturers follow Bill Gates' guidelines. "The People want Microsoft. That's all you shall give them. All new PC's will have Windows and Internet Explorer and nothing else. Disobey us and we'll make sure you'll regret it." But the people weren't stupid (a lot were blind, but not stupid). Introducing the Apple Clan.

Apple in comparison is a pebble on Microsoft's beach. But without that pebble, Microsoft will just be that little bit too big. That's why we had that little golden fob off. Not good will, but essential to remain unmonopolistic and a way to get Microsoft onto Macs. And even though Apple treats its users with contempt at times, it's the Mac they stick around for. Apple is becoming like Microsoft in terms of Evolution. They want to be big. So they swallow up the competition. Slay workers. Tighten the rules. The people remain ever loyal. Want tech support? You've got 90 days from the minute the box arrives at your premises. Whereas Microsoft are now doing their best to be the opposite. Hard done by (DOJ), "we're only giving people what they want," regardless of the expense to others.

As Mac users, we just have to face facts. A lot of people love their PC's as much as we love our Mac's. They love having MS-DOS/Windows 3.11/NT/95/98. Love Microsoft and you're supported by the majority of the world. Bill will tell us what to do and how to do it. He'll keep giving us upgrades we can't afford not to buy, he'll make sure everything will have Microsoft stamped on the side from BT to the Post Office to the Elephant Man's remains. Yes, Microsoft has become so evolved, fanatics believe the world could not survive without them, citing them as being the only innovative and necessary solution around.

But hey, here comes Steve Jobs. He's friends with Bill. He wants Bill's power. To get that power you have to be like Bill. Buy, buy, buy. Sack, sack, sack. Tighten, tighten, tighten. Promise, break, promise, delay. Support, more support, more money for support. Developers and consumers alike are taken for granted. Yes, good products are being made and users are loyal, but how much longer can we be patient. When can we walk into any shop and pick Photoshop for MacOS off the shelf? It'll never happen. PC World, Dixons et al don't want Mac's on their shelves, they want Microsoft. The machine is well and truly fed and there is no high street alternative to compete.

Too long has passed since a cheap alternative Mac was available. Apple can wave goodbye to the lower end market (and PDA's). The iMac is too late for new customers and too different. It's a whole new set of technologies which still have no wide peripheral support (as yet). It needs to be at least £700 including VAT to be considered seriously. And available to Joe Public at their convenience, that is high street convenience. A good product, a massive evolutionary step for Apple, high risk and bad timing.

Still, Evolution is good. It brought us G3's. iMac's have potential with current Mac fanatics. But Apple needs to show its users that it's looking after them. Show us adverts proclaiming Apple is here for good. Send registered users regular updates with what's happening. When someone asks for a spec sheet, send one. Stop stepping on the fingers of those who've kept Apple above the flood water for so long. If evolution in the animal world was compared with Apple, it would be a giraffe!

Apple has defied the odds many times over. Mostly down to its dedicated user base, but still it has pulled through. With the right advertising and tempting products aimed at 'new users' rather than the converted, there is no reason why it shouldn't be upwards all the way from now on. The Apple evolution takes a step forward.

No company is perfect, Apple or any other for that matter. So as long as there are good products at affordable prices out there, there should be plenty of space for a good number of monsters to evolve and compete in without having to resort to eating the each other.

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