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Oh No, Not Microsoft!

by Pamela G. McIntyre

As hard as I tried not to write this column about InterSystems' acquisition of Micronetics, there was a comment in the Threads column that struck a chord with me. It was with regard to the potential for the eventual purchase of InterSystems by Microsoft. Whether or not there is any truth in that statement, I find it frightening. While I do like Microsoft products—the integration and compatibility—I have no love of Microsoft as a company.

It may be my own bias against the Goliaths of the world and my natural sympathy for the underdogs, but I dislike being dictated to. I grew up with DOS and command lines. It wasn't easy to learn, but I never forgot my lessons. I was dragged kicking and screaming into the world of Windows. I didn't like it then and I'm still not fond of the interface.

All that aside, the real issue is one of choice, or rather the lack of it. I cannot purchase a piece of software, anywhere, that is not for Windows. My customers use it, my friends use it, my vendors use it. I do not have a choice! If I am going to remain in business, I need to be compatible with other systems.

I am also concerned about everyone jumping on the Microsoft bandwagon. This is a very big house of cards. What if it falls? We would do well to remember that Rome was not built in a day, but it burned to the ground in a big hurry. If Microsoft should fail for some reason, there are thousands of businesses that would go down with it. This is not unlike the defense industry. How many businesses grew out of a need for a strong defense only to disappear with the downsizing of the Defense Department and the fall of communism in the former Soviet Union?

What's happened to free enterprise? What's happened to creativity and innovation? How much can the computer industry continue to grow if it is dominated by a single operating system? It's too confining, too limiting. What is not being invented or developed because everyone has decided to conform to a single method, process, or idea?

This country was built on competition and free enterprise. We know it works but it is not without its price. If you can stand one more cliché, there's no such thing as a free lunch. Those of you who are willing to work, to commit, and to take a chance, have a chance—a good one. But you've got to stop counting on someone else's ingenuity. You may not be able to control what Microsoft does, but you can control how you respond to it. That choice is yours. **M**

Welcome to Viewpoint. The opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of MTA. Guest writers and responses to columns are welcome and will be printed at the discretion of MTA. Email: MTA@mtechnology.org
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