To:        Tom Lemberg
cc:
From:      Said Mohammadioun
Date:      09/17/91 03:56:39 PM
Subject:   Microsofts new style guide

Tom, this is some stuff for your files.

Richard,
Are they asking for comment?  We should be very vocal about our objections not so much on its bias
toward MS apps, but on the grounds that MS does not need to dictate all these details.  Most of these
should be left to developers choose and for the customers to decide what the standard should be: voting
with their $'s.

To:        Don Casey
cc:        Alex Morrow, Frank King, AI-ESC, AI-PSC, AI-TSC, Richard Wolf
From:      Richard Wolf
Date:      09/11/91 07:03:09 PM
Subject:

This memo lists and briefly describes items in the draft *Microsoft Style Guide for Windows* that are
biased toward Microsoft applications. Individually, none of the items are major changes. They are a
collection of small arbitrary decisions without clear user benefit that taken together give Microsoft an
advantage because most of their applications already conform.In the few cases where aspects of the style
guide have not already been implemented by their current apps, it seems reasonable to assume that this
behavior is implemented in forthcoming versions.

There are two issues about the document itself. The document is not structured as a normal style guide
with levels of conformance clearly spelled out. The document does not clearly distinguish between
requirements and recommendations, so it is difficult to determine what is merely a suggestion and what is
a required aspect of the user interface. This would make it difficult for ISVs and customers to clearly
gage conformance, which would be especially troublesome to the extent that the style guide becomes a
procurement document. The document is not organized as a reference manual so it is difficult to use.
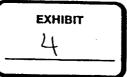
Second, the style guide provides little or no indication of future object oriented user interface directions
that Microsoft is developing, including property sheets, direct manipulation, pop-up menus, and notebook
techniques. Essentially, current and somewhat arbitrary GUI practices of Microsoft applications are being
set up as detailed standards while Microsoft works on new approaches that obsolete these standards.
Microsoft has privately disclosed to Lotus some elements of their intended direction.

I have copies of the document for anyone who wants to review it in more detail.

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The list is organized in two parts, first items pertaining to behavior, then items pertaining to appearance.

**Behavior**

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## Icon palette

The style guide essentially describes the tool bar from Excel and Word and uses pictures from Word (although MS claims they want to find more neutral pictures). Configurability is not discussed - it is not prohibited, but considering its importance to users and many vendors, not only Lotus but also WordPerfect, it is not even mentioned. Icon palettes are by design either fixed or moveable, and implicit in the design is the assumption that this is not a user configurable setting (like in Lotus apps). Control over the appearance of the icon palette is placed on the View menu (if the palette is fixed) or the Window menu (if the palette is moveable), which is unworkable given user configurable icon palettes and inconsistent with Lotus applications. Moveable icon palettes are required to have a miniature title bar to allow the user a convenient means to reposition the palette, which is a good idea, but there is no system support provided to help implement it (note: most MS apps have fixed icon palettes, so it is not yet an issue for them). Finally, buttons on an icon palette are required to show the state of the selection, e.g., a *Bold* button should appear depressed when bold text is selected. This is a good idea, but not done in Lotus apps because of performance concerns.

## Selection of text blocks in graphics

The document requires text blocks in a graphics region to be selected in a manner employed only by Excel and Power Point and not in any other major spreadsheet or drawing application (e.g., Houdini, Freelance for Windows, Micrografx products, or Aldus Persuasion). According to the style guide the first click on a text block selects the block as a whole and the second click (note: not a double click) selects text within the text block and positions the insertion point. Most other apps use an explicit mode that is entered by choosing a text tool from a tool palette or a mouse double click (like Houdini).

## File Open Mail and File Send Mail

The document requires access to mail to be placed on the *File* menu in the form of two commands, *Open Mail* and *Send Mail*, which reflects the MS mail product on the Mac and their probable intentions for Windows, not a concensus on good design.

## Text search and substitution

The text search and substitution command is split into two separate commands and dialog boxes, called *Find* and *Replace*, like Excel and Word, rather than one command and dialog box called *Find*, like Rockport, Houdini and some other apps. There is no clear user benefit for requiring two commands. Note, however, that other apps such as WordPerfect split this command into two commands. Also note that Word calls these commands Search and Replace, so MS can claim that its apps have to change as well.

## Spelling checker

A standardized spelling checker is proposed which looks like the Word spelling checker. Although it may eventually be appropriate to standardize this facility, having Microsoft do it now seems arbitrary rather than necessary since spell checking is still considered a differentiating feature of an application.

## File Open

This is a new dialog box for Win 3.1. No app has shipped it yet, although Visual Basic includes the new style of list box controls that are needed to build this dialog.

## File Save As

This is another new dialog box for Win 3.1. It has some problems involved with greying out the list box choices so its design is questionable. No one has shipped it.

## Borders

Another new standard dialog. It's design is questionable and in any event this should be considered the domain of the application, not a system standard. While all apps would have to change their current implementation, MS apps probably have a head start.

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### Character properties (Font)

Another new standardized dialog that requires some changes for everyone. There are some design issues with respect to ATM vs. TrueType in this dialog box. Rockport would have to change more than most, due to its slotted font model.

### Print dialog

This is a new dialog standard. It looks like Word's print dialog. Excel, Lotus apps, and most other apps would require changes.

### Window menu

The style guide recommends one *Arrange All* command that tiles the windows over separate *Tile* and *Cascade* commands (which are secondarily recommended) even though CUA 2.0, the Windows Program Manager and the Windows File Manager use Tile and Cascade. Excel and Word use *Arrange All*.

### Samples in dialogs

Samples (WYSBYGI) of impending changes in dialog boxes are recommended and are already in Excel. They are also included in AmiPro but not in Word.

### Macro record

The standard commands on the macro menu include *Record*, which assumes that the user must explicitly turn on the recorder, unlike the 1-2-3 design.

### Multiple instance

Multiple instances of an application are generally recommended and additional files opened from the file manager are to be opened in another instance of the associated application. Excel supports multiple instances, as does AmiPro. Word, Rockport, and Freelance for Windows do not.

### MRU List

A list of the most recently used files should displayed at the bottom of the File menu. This is a good idea that is already in Excel, Word, and AmiPro, but is too detailed and arbitrary for inclusion in a standard.

### Repeat (last action)

It is recommended that apps include a Repeat (last action ) command in the Edit menu. Excel and Word already do this.

### Double clicking split box

Double clicking the split box should split the active window in the middle or remove a split if the window is already split. Word does this but not Excel (yet).

### Resizing multiple draw objects

When the user selects multiple draw objects, all objects are to be resized proportionately and not to change relative position. Excel works like this, but Rockport and some other Windows apps do not. Note that Houdini does work like this.

### CTRL key to lock down a drawing tool

Holding the CTRL key while selecting a drawing tool locks down that tool so it repeats (puts the system in a mode). Excel and Powerpoint already do this and Lotus apps do not.

### Radio button double click

Double clicking on a radio button is recommended as an accelerator to close a dialog box. Excel and Word already do this, but Rockport does not.

### Drag split bar

It is recommended that the user can drag the split bar (as well as the split box) to adjust a split. No major apps do this yet.

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### Status bar display

Control over the presence or absence of the status bar is to be on the View menu, if the app has a View menu. Word does this and Excel does not have a View menu.

## Appearance

### Push button arrangement in dialog boxes

Two styles of push button arrangements in dialogs are allowed, push buttons in the upper right (like Excel, Word, and many other Windows apps) or push buttons along the bottom (like the Windows Program Manager, File Manager, and the system supplied applettes). Rockport style push buttons in the lower right, which are also employed by WordPerfect and some other Windows apps, would not be allowed.

This is a good example of a case where two inconsistent approaches are arbitrarily incorporated into the spec simply because Microsoft has not been able to arrive at internal agreement, yet a third approach is discarded because Microsoft has no stake in that approach.

### Macro pull-down menu

Apps that support macro writing and/or recording are to have a *Macro* pull-down on the menu bar. Excel and Word already do this, but Rockport does not. This may be a problem for many apps that can not give up the menu bar space. Some vendors, including WordPerfect, do have a separate macro pull-down.

### Cascading menus

The style guide recommends that cascading menus should be avoided whenever possible. Rockport , Notes, Houdini, and many other vendors apps have a few. Word and Excel have none.

### Unfolding dialog boxes

Dialogs with an *Options*>> button that expands the dialog to reveal additional commands are the recommended but not required method for dealing with progressive disclosure. This technique is used in Word and Excel.

### Multiple selection lists

The style guide specifies a new style of list box for multiple selection lists that places a check box graphic preceding each position in the list. Notes has this functionality in its views but does not use a check box. Moreover, there is no system support for implementing these lists w/check boxes and it is reportedly difficult to implement.

### Split box appearance

The split box is the box that a user grabs with the mouse to split a window. The style guide specifies that it look like the Excel and Word versions, a black rectangle, rather than the more informative Rockport version.

### Mode indicators in status bars in all caps

Mode indicators in the status bar are arbitrarily required to appear in all caps, like Excel and Word, rather than in a more readable mixed case like Rockport and AmiPro.

### Dialog titles

The document specifies that dialog titles should not include the path name of the command that invoked the dialog, like we internally agreed to do for all our apps.

### Selection highlight is not user configurable

The feedback highlighting for a selection is always black as in Microsoft apps, rather than user configurable as in Rockport.

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## Worksheet titles

should be called Freeze Panes and should be provided independent of window splits. This feature is not yet in Excel but would require 1-2-3 to change.

## Minimized windows represented as icons in MDI

In an MDI minimized document windows should be represented as icons. Rockport does this, but Notes does not. Microsoft apps do not provide minimization of document windows (which is allowable in the style guide) so they don't run into this issue.

## Size box

The size box, a little box at the lower right of a window, should not be used by an app because it is reserved for some unspecified system use. Word is the only application I know that will have to change.

## Menu changes on shift key

Apps should avoid changing menu items when the shift key is held down. Excel does this and so will require a minor change, but I don't think many users even knew about it.

## Printer Setup becomes Print Setup

An arbitrary minor wording change which hits everyone equally.

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