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FROM: Mariann Allison/Waggener Edstrom
DATE: June 9, 1992
SUBJECT: Applications Issues for 1993
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① *new apps*
② *how to leverage PR opportunities*
③ *product vs. family or campaign*
HP CLON

*USABILITY
OLE
INTEROPERABILITY
PROGRAMMABILITY
USER COST & SUPPORT
O/S RESPONSIBILITY*

This memorandum summarizes some concerns, opportunities and issues as we move into PR planning for desktop applications. A thorough discussion of these will help drive a desktop plan. Our target for completion is in three to four weeks.

1. Platform Issues/Opportunities

We have noted before that Microsoft's "corporate image" seems to be tied up in its systems business. Indeed, it is true that the Windows strategy, since it is "the farm," will be a key focus of the press in the next fiscal year. The applications group has said publicly it will aggressively exploit systems advances (even if they are on the Macintosh platform). Yet, we have competitors who make the same claim. It seems Lotus is the most aggressive - they were out with OLE in Notes and have been showing "multimedia" 1-2-3. If we want to take this challenge in the next year, this will mean articulating a message of Microsoft applications incorporating technology by including and showing examples, including:

- Pen support
- Windows NT, including RISC (we have been demoed - should we make this a "campaign"?)
- Multimedia extensions
- Sparta
- Palmtops
- APIs and services such as OLE, ODBC, MAPI
- OO Basic

It seems we give lip service to leveraging the system developments, but I am not sure that we have made a general perception of Microsoft applications exploiting systems developments a PR objective; we've always said it in the context of an individual product. In addition, some of our examples haven't been very compelling. For instance, our support for Pen in Excel is sort of ho-hum (or maybe it is how we present it: see "Commitment to Coolness" below.) One difficulty is that the press is interested in systems changes ahead of the market (i.e., before customers care), so there isn't always bandwidth or interest in getting PR devoted to them before they are delivered because we can't say, "this will help you sell more product today." There is also the issue of dealing with expectations that Microsoft would support systems developments (because we are Microsoft), while for our competitors it is "news."

*OLE
ODBC
OO BASIC*

We should decide which technologies we want to be associated with in advance and develop cross-application mini PR plans to communicate them. For instance, let's think about how we can make ODBC a win across applications, not just for Cirrus. We can even take small instances, like the Word guys who were out last week showing Multimedia Word, and make them into statements of directions for the whole division. They will have more impact that way and be more newsworthy. In addition, we have an opportunity to translate APIs and techno-babble (i.e., the way APIs are explained to a developer audience) into a vision that relates to end-user benefits.

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2. Workgroup

I believe workgroup computing will continue to be a big focus for the press next year. The Workgroup Applications division will be announcing multiple products this year, the beginning of our 1-2-3 knockout of Notes (the final piece of which won't be delivered until Cairo.) We can't be left behind. Specifically, we need to:

- Be able to articulate (and ideally show) how our spreadsheets, word processors etc., will evolve or are evolving to meet the needs of workgroups. "Send Mail" is not necessarily enough. I expect Lotus to convince a core group of influentials that workgroup-enabled applications need a more ground-up approach. We have already begun to see this with Chronicle. Because Chronicle is positioned as a "workgroup feature" (whereas Scenario Manager really is not), I predict that Lotus will get a lot of credit that will irritate us. Who knows where Borland will be on the ramp. Note that we may not have promises to make, but we need to have thought of it - for instance have some compelling usability data about the core needs spreadsheets or word processing workgroups.

Need to Market

Leverage Sparta. This is potentially a very cool release of Windows for a certain market segment. We want to be "the apps" for Sparta and should think about how we should position this way. It's unclear to me if we are doing anything special to take advantage of it.

- Help the Workgroup Applications division evangelize MAPI. This is turning into a very nasty API war, and we should be able to articulate why MAPI is the best approach and FUD VIM and Notes. This could begin with an in-house training session with WGA. This includes support for great demos of Mail, Bandit and Calvin and Hobbes as they are rolled out this year.

3. Consistency

- Applications appearance/behavior. We are getting dinged for lack of consistency among applications, and I fear when Cirrus ships the noise will get louder. Lotus appears to be getting a ton of credit, but when you talk to editors, they know it is a superficial thing. We are not perceived as even superficially as consistent as we could be. (This is one of those things that it is hard to argue about: if an editor has an experience where our applications were not consistent, it is difficult to tell him that he's not entitled to that opinion as a user.) We should consider taking Chrissy out to visit editors who complain about this the loudest and articulate what his group is doing and talk about why consistency is an evolving thing, full of trade-offs and difficult decisions, but we understand and listen. I think this may help but it will not go away.

Timing should be important. As is the case.

- Programmability. This is an area where we could be more consistent and that has gotten less attention from the press (I think we can expect Borland to "help" call this to press attention.) We know our macro language approach is not consistent across applications, but even if we had a consistent way of talking about what kinds of development people would do with different applications and tools and share the same matrix among ourselves, we would be doing better. The other issue is deciding when is the right time to indicate when our approach will change and evolve toward OO Basic and leverage this as an applications-wide win or, at worst, a neutral. This is something I want to help drive as part of the Solution Builders.

Technology should be introduced as part of product PR. This should be part of product PR. Campaign should encompass all PR

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Other Consistency Issues. Some of these relate to simple information sharing, like all saying the same thing about Notes, or talking the same time frame for NT applications. But they also relate to anticipating different policies or procedures and at least rationalizing: for instance, Cirrus will have different support policies than other desktop applications.

4. Usability

This is a huge win and we will continue to work it. I expressed concerns in the trip report I wrote about the usability tour (i.e., desktop applications will have a good story, but other products at the company will make it harder to articulate this as a corporate commitment). Also, usability is a goal as well as a process, and not every product group defines it in the same way. We should ensure that we're doing a good job communicating what we are saying about it so we can keep it a strong and consistent statement. Otherwise, it sounds like motherhood and marketing speak, and the systematic, sort of "patented process" idea we want to communicate is lost.

I think this relates to work among PR teams, as well as an internal education you guys could do within Microsoft about the benefits and also the definition of usability. (I am very big on this as a potential focus for tools group to grab onto.)

I really like the concept of usability across applications, and I know Microsoft is researching this. I think we may have some potential for PR for the line when we look at the results of this.

OLE 20

5. Data Access

I referenced ODBC above, and I think there is an opportunity to lead the charge here - clearly data access is an area where Borland will try to dominate. I frankly believe we are vulnerable until we have ODBC implemented in our applications (i.e., I think Q+E will not cut it. We will watch Borland be the "natural inheritor" of this until ODBC comes along and part of this is because by adding in Q+E we don't appear to have a solution, only a stop-gap, no matter how good). I think the coolness of universal data access isn't really understood by the press because it has become such a hackneyed, over-promised claim. We should think about the right time and place for the greatest demo of data access ever seen, and make sure we support it like crazy. The key is not to "leave this" to the Cirrus guys, but reinforce it as a family thing and even promote a vision of data access from within non-database applications.

6. Macintosh

I'm aware that there is renewed commitment to this business and a realization that status quo will not help us maintain share. Mac commitment is a difficult thing to articulate in the PR world since editors look for specific instances, i.e., investments in this platform over and above what we do for Windows. There is not a lot of evidence for this, and this will dilute our efforts in PR since editors want substance to demonstrate change. Assuming the lawsuit gets settled in FY '93 we have an opportunity to make a "renewed commitment" effort that projects a positive tone and could be leveraged for customers. In the meantime, we do have a Macline PR effort (kicking off with the Apple/Microsoft event in the Bay Area), so this isn't to say that we aren't working the issue. However, next fiscal year, Microsoft will provide lots of "real" news that subtly, or not-so-subtly, works against the very messages we are trying to project about the Mac. I did a memo for Karen Meredith and Marty that goes into some of these issues.

Charge? or just educate them about what we're doing?

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7. No News and Showing Leg

"No news" is an overstatement of the situation we face next year for desktop applications. In fact, we have a number of "traditional" news opportunities to feed the trades such as .1 release of Excel, Mac versions of Project, Powerpoint, etc. However, we do not have a major launch that "proves" we are pushing an applications category forward. We can get some leverage from VB 2.0, Cirrus, etc., to piggyback for the family, but I want to discuss the right time to begin showing sneak previews of Word for Windows 3.0, Excel 5, etc. There is a lot of noise from competitors, and we should discuss the positive impact that a front-page story with a screenshot of Word for Windows 3.0 might have at the right time. I am saying this because we have a track record of having our schedules under control (at least in most instances), so I believe we don't risk getting ourselves into the Lotus release 3 or Borland situations.

do apps backlog after first of the year?

7a. Commitment To Coolness

This is a way of saying that we have work to do in showing our applications in the coolest possible way (this is not a revelation, I know.) It is always hard to project a tone like "Borland is bad for doing washes on the back walls of their charts because this is irresponsible and gratuitous coolness." Sometimes we get out-cooled, but often our stuff just isn't presented with coolness in mind. We can step up to the coolness challenge and do just as well. I am raising this because we don't have "new" applications to show off in 1993, so I think we will need to focus on never making our current applications look tired as we show them in different ways this year. For instance (dare I say it?), maybe we replace Exotic Excursions with a new set of demo files?

7b. Preference/Momentum and the press

I know the preference message is a key one for FY '93. We will support this marketing objective with PR, but I want to be clear that preference and momentum, in and of themselves are not news (I maintain there is a difference in the systems marketplace because platform momentum is like an economic indicator: it is data that other companies will use to make business decisions). This means we may NOT be able to get the "let's get a story on April 17 that says we are the preferred word processor" (unless we were to get radically aggressive about marketshare and release numbers...) However, we can work toward a longer term objective of having Word "thought of by press" as the preferred word processor or Excel as a "hot" spreadsheet - with evidence of this "creeping in" to coverage over time rather than appearing as a news story with a headline.

let's figure out how to make them news

There is a temptation to make the press an extension of our marketing programs. I believe we are not always educating marketing as to a reasonable behavioral outcome of a PR campaign. It may not always be reasonable to expect the press to 1) recommend to readers that they should drop their current product and move to a Microsoft product; 2) write a story essentially repeating Microsoft ad copy about, say, the Word challenge. The press will resist being asked to "help us with our marketing programs." We can, however, set objectives that support the marketing ones to provide this information in a form that is palatable to the press

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8. Strategy

I know the division is still working on the best possible articulation of an applications strategy. I see the press wanting to hear us talk about what desktop computing will be like in five years, followed by a series of commitments we will make across applications that will result in this. The biggest difference will be that this will be top-down when it seems that today we sort of "sum" the efforts of the individual groups and look for common threads and extrapolate. I think Lotus is saying very clearly what their applications strategy is. They are not necessarily clear about their spreadsheet strategy. I don't think the press has a sense of either from Microsoft.

9. Bandwidth of Editors

This is an issue that affects all of Microsoft, not just desktop. Marketing is probably already sick of hearing PR talk about how we are inundating the press with too much stuff. This, in fact, is input we have received directly from the press. We are sending so many press releases that we are actually devaluing the medium.

- Many times we are sending editors five or six press releases in a single week. We then give the editors no help in determining which is the priority communication (in fact, we may have multiple people calling the same editor) and no one announcement gets the attention it deserves.
- We encourage editors to stop paying attention to our communications because they can't take it all in and figure they will find out some other way how important it really is (i.e., from another editor).
- We fragment our messages and affect our ability to communicate a few strong, consistent messages.
- We contribute to bad will and the general sense that Microsoft is a propaganda mill.

A major commitment we will make in the next fiscal year is to educate clients about what we do and how PR fits into overall marketing programs. I propose to do this by doing an "activities analysis" of the press much the same way as you have done with your customers and show marketing where we make editors' jobs harder and where we can make them easier. We need to put the press at the center of our public relations efforts again and remember what an important set of relationships they are and treat them accordingly.

It is a fact that product messages that would be significant from a smaller, focused company are getting obscured because Microsoft has so many products and so many messages. This particularly affects products like Project. Therefore, we need to be very creative about how we work with editors, and make sure that our communications always provide value to the editors, not just placate a product manager! Our mandate from Jeff/Steve is to reduce fragmentation and do a better job leveraging messages across groups. We fully understand that this means PR has to work harder to resist the cookie cutter approach, but we will also need the support of management in prioritizing and focusing our efforts.

What does this mean? Still need to provide PR support for small products.

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