Teresa Jennings

From: Jonathan Lazarus
To: Dave Seres
Cc: Doug Henrich
Subject: FW: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks
Date: Tuesday, October 12, 1993 11:49PM

Would you like to draft a concise reply please...

From: Mike Maples
To: Jonathan Lazarus; Pete Higgins
Subject: FW: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks
Date: Monday, October 11, 1993 6:06PM

do they exist and how bad are these differences? how did they happen?

From: Collins Hemingway
To: Jonathan Lazarus; Pete Higgins
Cc: Beverley Flower; Marty Taucher; Monica Harrington; Marianne Allison
Subject: OLE issues that could hit in coming weeks
Date: Thursday, September 30, 1993 6:18PM

Though we've made significant progress in bringing systems and apps
together on OLE 2.0 issues, based on a lot of hard work on both sides, there remain a couple of issues that
could come back to haunt us with the public and press:

1. OLE 2.0 spec: The apps division's implementation of OLE 2.0 in Office has
a number of inconsistencies with the OLE spec. Many of the discrepancies
have been resolved by systems changing "required" approaches to
"recommended" approaches in the spec, but many small differences remain. Many are obscure or fairly
trivial, but taken as a whole they could seem significant.
It's hard to say what a user would note or worry about, but there are
several things that reviewers will probably note. And ISVs could complain
that MS told them to do it one way but then our own apps guys did it
another, and thus we got some kind of "secret advantage." Any
"conspiracy"-leaning reporter could make hay of this, since it will be
virtually impossible to explain what is and isn't compliant, or why. Shades
of the "undocumented API conspiracy."

The logical response is: OLE 2.0 is complex technology, and all apps (ours
and others) are making their first implementation of it. Given all the things
an apps developer has to worry about with a new release, it's not surprising
there could be minor differences; and we'll clean them up over time. The
key thing is that MS apps support OLE 2.0 and implement the key features
per the spec, and MS IS COMMITTED TO BE FULLY COMPLIANT
WITH THE SPEC as we move forward. (I personally don't care if this
means changing the spec or changing the apps, but the spec has been out to
a lot of people for a long time, and it will be transparent to the ISV
community if we change very much in the spec just to suit MS apps --
such an action would generate Front Page controversy. A ticklish situation indeed.)

PR recommends that someone sufficiently high in the systems and apps organizations be named to
reconcile this for future product releases -- and that they are empowered to make OLE compliance work
across the board in MS apps. We recognize that these are tough issues to resolve, but these loose ends
tend to create unnecessary controversies that waste far more time than it would take to fix it -- and have
the potential to damage MS's image in the meantime.

2. Bugs. We've already had a couple of instances where a bug in an app has
manifested itself during an OLE operation. This makes sense, if you figure
OLE operations are complex and they "stress" apps in ways they are not
normally stressed. (One of these involved a bug in a non-MS app; the

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other involved Excel and Word, when their betas got out of sync.) It will not take too many of these before the impression is, "OLE is buggy." And an ISV, given the choice between saying his product is buggy or OLE is buggy, will quickly claim OLE as the culprit. Similarly, if ISVs generally do a poor job of implementing OLE, it could take the rap rather than the ISVs. We have developed a Reviewer's Guide for OLE 2.0 -- with a lot of good input from apps -- to help guide reviewers through these shoals, but the biggest issue will be cross-app testing of interoperability and OLE. OLE-oriented testing must be a major component of testing for Office as products approach final. Testing has to be absolutely hard core. If MS apps break each other via OLE, then we get a triple whammy: OLE is buggy; our apps are buggy; if MS can't make it work, who can? Our competitors on both apps and systems will take our scalps.

(Tim Satalich has put together a detailed doc on current discrepancies between Office and OLE 2.0 for those who need to follow up.)