From: Bill Gates
To: Tandy Trower
Cc: Mike Maples; Paul Maritz
Subject: RE: What does synergy mean?
Date: Monday, May 09, 1994 12:18PM

The area you are touching on is a very tricky one. Basicly it comes down to: to what degree should good ideas from our office group be sold as part of chicago instead of office? I am afraid my answer to this doesnt come out as black and white as you suggest in your email. UI doesnt change fast enough because of user resistance and implimentation time to just say that every good UI idea from Office should be given away to Chicago.

Some of what you describe may in fact be going too far. However a lot of what you describe I view as very healthy - a chance to prove out some new concepts with Office which may eventually be put into Windows itself.

I think these areas will require Paul with help from Mike and I to continute to rdirve things.

I think we miss even more by not sharing code between our various things like not using Windows dialogs and using SDM instead. And not having great international text subroutines in Windows that all of our applications can use. This is obvious low hanging fruit we are working on.

To some degree one of your informal roles is to be the voice of conscious for user interface actitivities. When you see things getting to out of whack sending mail to me or seeing me or the same for Paul or Mike is very appropriate. However I dont see it as a clear back and white philosophical issue.

Your playing this role is very important for Microsoft even though it may seem hopless and painful a lot of the time.

From: Tandy Trower
To: Bill Gates
Subject: What does synergy mean?
Date: Monday, May 09, 1994 11:25AM

Even though we have a lot of very smart people around here, I don't think we understand what it means to work together synergistically. My specific example is the relationship between Office and Chicago. Now I know that the Office and Cairo guys have been comparing notes based on their contextual inquiry work, and that's good, but I don't see this attitude shared on the nearer term work. Further, my experience has been that once it comes down to actual implementation such sharing of design objectives does not always carry through.

In the Office 95 specs, there is an interest in establishing "brand" identity; however, I think the approach in doing this is flawed. There seems to be a desired to embrace the minimal Chicago UI, and change fundamental parts of the core UI. It ranges from changes to the appearance of the title bar to replacing the Chicago "Start" menu, not just appending to it, but revising it in a way that transforms it into a radically different design. This goes beyond the scope of simple embellishments.

Now don't get me wrong, it isn't that I don't like some of the design work that Office is proposing, it is just that the attitude that it is designed to be an Office-specific feature. If photo-realistic icons are a good way to display icons, we should try to do it everywhere. If Office has a better way of laying out the property sheets of documents, why aren't we doing that everywhere, rather than leaving our poor customers scratching their heads why they get certain information when invoking properties from the shell and invoking them from within the app gives you another. I thought our objective was to make the interface more seamless, NOT introduce new ones.

Yes, I think it is appropriate for Office to provide some distinctiveness, but this can be done within the constraints of the over UI. I think people are missing the point. The objective should not be to provide Office with an identity that is uniquely different from the Chicago, but to demonstrate that Office is the best client of the Chicago; that is the first and best adapted to the transition toward more document-centric interface. We seem to be forgetting things we have learned in the past. Our sucess, for example, on the

Macintosh, was by being early and figuring out how to best leverage that platform, not by coming up with our own UI.

By designing Office to depart from the basic look and feel of the shell, we are doing two things wrong. First, it is an indictment on the Chicago's design. If Office has to depart from the basic UI, it must not be good enough. Second, we put ourselves on the same playing ground as our competitors. Instead the design goal for Office and Chicago should be that the two look like "hand-in-glove", made for each other, expertly crafted to work together. Instead, with the present tactics, Office isn't doing anything more than a competitor can do.

An argument against the approach I propose is that it means that other ISVs can catch up. This is true if you consider the UI a static process. But it isn't. UI design should be constantly evolving. This transition to more data-centered interface is just an obvious event along the way. It isn't the end point. Likewise, we should not let our success with the "suite" oriented design lull us into thinking that is all that there is. We need to keep pressing onward. That means that if we are always striving to be the first candidate of leveraging every major shift in the UI, it will be very difficult for competitors to keep up.

Long term, I think that we are going to have to change our UI design process. We've tried the "cooperative" committee approach (design meetings between Office and System people) and I am not convinced of its results. The design need to be done by a group who can represent the design objectives of both apps and systems and make commitments that will be implemented.

In short, I really don't think we understand what the meaning of "synergy" is. Synergy is the "combination of actions or operations" such that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. More specifically, this means that Office should not have some minimal level of Chicago consistency and then add its own look and feel, but should be the ultimate example of a great Chicago app. I don't think we are there.