Erik Stevenson

We need to consider how to involve Tandy in these processes more if possible. He makes excellent points here.

From: Tandy Trower
To: Bill Gates
Subject: RE: What does synergy mean?
Date: Monday, May 09, 1994 2:45PM

First, thanks for the reply. These days I haven't been as certain that anyone thinks I should be trying to play the "UI conscious" for the company. I must at admit that sometimes I get so little positive feedback about doing this that I feel may be no one considers it valuable and that I should just ignore things.

Second, I still think that as long as we continue to think of "app vs system" UI, we are wrong-thinking and we have missed the big picture. The goal should be a seamless interface and until we realize that, we are not going to deliver the kind of quality of interface we are capable of.

Third, I hope you understand that I am not suggesting that every novel idea in Office needs to be in the shell. You are also right in that there are lots of good areas where our apps have appropriately innovated ahead of our system software. For example, things like tooltips (or even the use of toolbars) and wizards. Additional utilities are also OK also. However, fundamental interfaces and operations need to consistent. Do you really think that it is good idea for users to get one type of property sheet on a document from the shell and another from the app? Or that shell links are called "shortcuts", while when they are embedded in an document they are called "links"? I hope not.

Further, does it seem like the right thing for Office guys to focus on photo-realistic icons in their title bars, but ignore the design aspects about making title bar icons interactive (support drag-and-drop and pop-up menus)? Do you really think a Office title bars rendered as color gradient is significant enough to warrant the message it conveys (every app should do their own title bar pattern)?

Again, this is not an appeal that Office should just share all of its innovations with Chicago. It is a suggestion that I don't believe that either group (systems or apps) really thinks about how to create the most successful user environment. Are the two groups working together on how to solve the MDI transition or on how to create a good general purpose object browser?

All of this also make it very hard to write the UI guide for Chicago. Do I write that executing a Save command results the "standard" file Save dialog or do I write it displays the property sheet for the document? Those are pretty different conventions. You once remarked whether Systems was trying to make our apps look bad. When they depart from the normal conventions and want to keep those proprietary, it makes that impossible to resolve.

A couple of months ago, I enumerated a number of key areas, basic user operations where we need to have a consistent set of designs; i.e., creating new objects, browsing for objects, displaying properties on object, etc. (And even though the forum wasn't appropriate to express them, I DO have recommendations there.) If we proceed with trying to work through these in the same way we did the transfer model we are likely to end with a very muddled interface. Before we try to get too innovative, let's agree on what the basic model is.