From: Will Poole
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2003 5:19 PM
To: Joe Belfiore; Mark Weinberg; Chris Jones (WINDOWS); Rogers Weed
Cc: Rick Thompson; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Amir Majidimehr; Dave Fester
Subject: RE: Windows Media Center Edition Release Plans (Long)

I like the thinking in these plans; the look reasonable and in sync with both near/mid term customer needs and our LH Wave release plans as we know them today. I've made a few points re your MCE plans below, followed by a paragraph rekindling the annual release idea we've talked about in the past, with action item for Rogers to coordinate a discussion with others to make a proposal at WCBLT.

1. Any plan that does not include a sim-ship of Slalom (however you want to define it from feature perspective), whether decoupled on disk 2 or in any other form, is a non-plan. LH needs the full weight of our development/marketing efforts and commensurate OEM / partner commitments. That will not happen if there is a LH+N-months delay for the Slalom feature set. I am OK with the concept that Joe proposes below that you will scope features back to keep in sync with a LH release that is in Apr 05 vs. one that is later and gives you more time.

2. Things are obviously problematic if we push LH beyond August 05 – what do our consumer OEMs who need the new feature support for BTS/holiday 05 do if we don't release then? Seems you need to be considering what the plan would be if LH ships between Sept 05 and Feb 06. If it ends up on a March -> Aug 06 schedule, then you end up getting Slalom into 06 holiday (and maybe BTS) but have nothing in 05. Choice then would be to do yet another minor and decoupled CD2 release in 05, reducing investment in Slalom, or toughing it out until LH.

3. I really think you should scope Symphony to absolutely make April 04 so you make back to school. Spending the day with HP yesterday made it clear to me yet again that all of our consumer OEMs (and their channel partners) put huge efforts into aligning product releases for BTS – there would have to be a VERY compelling reason to miss it in 04. The paltry # of student users we have for Freestyle shows the impact of missing BTS last year.

4. As you get harmony/symphony further defined, I'd like to understand how our other OOBs & consumer releases will line up and benefit the MCE effort. For example, what are the plans for release testing and synergy with the next version of Plus, Media-2-Go, Mira, Jawad's networking OOBs, etc. ? I don't think you should worry about this too much until after we get the high level LH Wave plan booked (in next few weeks) But once it is determined, we should be able to provide a rational lineup from now to LH of all of the consumer-direct and consumer OEM offerings coming from Windows.

Maybe it is time for us to again look into formalizing a plan for ONE annual decoupled (OOB / CD2 style) release of consumer value from all Windows groups, in the form of MCE / Pro SKUs delivered the consumer OEM-only channel? Idea would be to continue to pour more value into the pro sku(s) where we still have lots of revenue upside by improving mix, giving new computer sales an edge during the "off years" between big wave releases, and then folding the value into the big Pro upgrade product that would come out with the LH/BH wave releases, driving greater upgrade revenue in fulfilling pent-up demand for the value that was promoted via OEMs in the off years. Since we are getting pretty close to doing this anyhow based on the plans you outline below, I'd like to see the idea carried through and discussed at WCBLT.

Rogers, can you get a small group of mkting and product leaders assigned to put this together?

Thanks

-----Original Message-----
From: Joe Belfiore
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2003 5:51 PM
To: Chris Jones (WINDOWS); Mark Weinberg
Cc: Rick Thompson; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole
Subject: RE: Windows Media Center Edition Release Plans (Long)

Not exactly... The releases aren't "coupled" (as in they *must* ship at the same time and you have to schedule them that way), rather they have the initial assumption of shipping on the same date. The component decoupling allows for us to fail to hit (or choose not to hit) our dates and for the entire LH wave to not be negatively impacted. The decoupling of our bits provides an insurance policy to LH "main" release-- If we don't hit our ship date, then it doesn't impact LH. If we do hit our ship date, then we get all the benefits of added schedule flexibility *and* still being part of the wave (both amplifying it and benefiting from it)

Just think of this as us taking the advice you gave us below-- we have the schedule flexibility to pick a schedule, and the RTM date we pick is the same RTM date as LH. The releases are all pretty similar:

Harmony   July 03   ~ 1 year dev cycle (features, stabilization,ship)
Symphony   April or July 04   ~ 1 year dev cycle
Slalom   April (or later?) 05 ~ 1 year dev cycle -- start with assumption that it's April because LH is. If LH slips, we're in great shape because we get more time. If LH doesn't slip, then we either do less features and ship the same day or suffer the consequences of missing the big part of the wave. (by default, we choose the former.)
                In theory, this one has significant features relative to others because some % of the work started 2 years early instead of just 1.

From: Chris Jones (WINDOWS)
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2003 4:32 PM
To: Joe Belfiore; Mark Weinberg
Cc: Rick Thompson; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole

Then I really do not understand the "decouple" thing – effectively you are saying that your are coupled to Longhorn but just want more schedule flexibility. Is that right?

From: Joe Belfiore
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2003 11:01 AM
To: Chris Jones (WINDOWS); Mark Weinberg
Cc: Rick Thompson; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole

We absolutely intend to ship Slalom same day as longhorn... whether or not LH slips. You're preaching to the choir on the benefit of being part of a massive windows wave... absolutely not something we would want to miss taking advantage of.

The 1st order thing that scales here is the # of features in Slalom... if LH ships on time, then Slalom has fewer features than it would if LH were a summer 05 release. Since we will start Slalom work early (during harmony, not even counting the work that's already happened), we expect that slalom will have at least as many features as any of our other yearly releases, even though a LH ship on-time would have a smaller time window between symphony and slalom.

From: Chris Jones (WINDOWS)
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2003 10:10 AM
To: Mark Weinberg
Cc: Rick Thompson; Joe Belfiore; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole

Great – thanks. I support this plan though I do think for your business you should really look hard at what (if anything) it will mean to miss the Longhorn window and related marketing, launch, and excitement activities. I would be willing to bet that you are hedging a little and think that Slalom will be done at the same time Longhorn is because you think Longhorn will slip. I don't know whether this will happen or not – if it does, do you have a contingency plan (e.g. Symphony 1.1 with Longhorn) or are you willing to just take the consequences?

Please make sure that when you send out any email that these points are clear, particularly outlining that you are going to drive requirements into Longhorn on the Longhorn schedule, that there are folks who are going to be 100% focused on Longhorn (people in Harish's team), what components are Symphony, and the commitment to make sure upgrade works.

-- Chris

From: Mark Weinberg
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2003 10:03 AM
To: Chris Jones (WINDOWS)
Cc: Rick Thompson; Joe Belfiore; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole

Thanks for the reply.

To your first point...We are fully committed to driving Media Center requirements on core Longhorn components in the M5 timeframe. We need this to ensure a killer Slalom release in '05. We have a few resources working on this now as well as a few more rolling off of our Harmony release. This is not easy for us – we're stretched on resources and we are in the final push on Harmony - but we absolutely understand the importance of doing the work and are committed to it.

As for our core deliverables, Symphony will not have an impact on DennisFl's or BillPa's ability to meet their Longhorn commitments. We are structuring the feature set to minimize (if not eliminate) any Symphony work required by Harish's teams. Any work that we would even consider would be front-loaded Longhorn work (e.g. PM work to ensure decoder and driver vendors have high def working in 2004 – good for Longhorn in 2005). For the core TV components (DVD subtitling and ms-dvr file playback), we are committed to delivering those components in the M6 timeframe. There is some risk here but it is mostly due to dependencies these components have on other components (e.g MF decoder) and the Harmony schedule – not Symphony.

To your second point... Symphony is about "CD2" components (ehshell, ehrec, ehtray, etc.) – same as Harmony. We have no intention of making changes to core OS components. We will make feature tradeoffs to avoid that. We will fix bugs in core AVDG components and make the minor modifications to the stream buffer engine to support high def (which will likely be bug fixing since it mostly works already) but that's it. We're still working on the specific feature set for Symphony. I will send you an update once that is flushed out.

To your last point . No question about it - we need to nail all Longhorn upgrade scenarios. For OEMs shipping Symphony, they will move to Slalom. For Symphony end users the solution is a bit more complicated. At a minimum, they must be able to upgrade to Longhorn and have their Symphony experience work as expected. We'd obviously prefer to have a solution in place that allows them to upgrade to Slalom (if the Slalom bits are not part of Longhorn premium). If a user purchased a Media Center, they are going to want to upgrade to the latest and greatest version of Media Center (Slalom). We have to solve these problems independent of a Symphony release as the same problem exists for Harmony customers. These issues will be addressed over the coming months during our M0s for Symphony and Slalom.

Appreciate the feedback Chris. I'm confident that we are going to succeed on both of these releases.

-----Original Message-----
From: Chris Jones (WINDOWS)
Sent: Wednesday, April 16, 2003 2:28 PM
To: Mark Weinberg
Cc: Rick Thompson; Joe Belfiore; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole
Subject: RE: Windows Media Center Edition Release Plans (Long)

Thanks for looping me in, sorry for the delay.

First, under any plan any requirements you have on core components (or deliver of core components) needs to be synced with Longhorn. In addition, the Longhorn release has dependencies on deliverables out of the eHome team. In particular this means that I expect the platform people on Harish's team (audio, real time, etc) to be fully on the Longhorn schedule. Let me know if this is not your expectation – this is a deal breaker for me. I want to make sure this is clear in any email that goes out.

Second, I want to know specifically what is going to be shipped in Symphony and Slalom. What components are included? Is it just eshell.exe? Or more than this? If it is just things that have no dependencies from the rest of the OS and are components then I understand how to make this plan work. If not then again I have a big problem with it.

Third, I want to make sure that you and team are signed up to support a Longhorn upgrade from Symphony or Harmony; and signed up to support having Symphony work in Longhorn. Two reasons for this·
   a)   OEMs shipping Symphony will want to move to Longhorn quickly.
   b)   Users who have a machine with Symphony or Harmony will want to upgrade.

If the answers to all these questions are yes, then I am ok with the plan. If no, then I am not OK with it and want to revisit it.

Can you let me know?

Thanks — Chris

From: Mark Weinberg
Sent: Wednesday, April 16, 2003 12:12 PM
To: Chris Jones (WINDOWS)
Cc: Rick Thompson; Joe Belfiore; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Will Poole

I've got mail ready to go to my team and folks are chomping at the bit to start executing on this plan (including communication to external partners). I very much want to get your feedback before moving forward. There are a lot of complex issues involved with these decisions and I don't want to jump the gun. However, I need to make a call now and go. I plan on making the announcement EOD tomorrow and calling the plan booked. Please feel free to give me any and all of your feedback before then or let me know if you want to get together to discuss in person.

To summarize:

- Harmony ships in August 2003
- Symphony ships in 2004 (RTM still TBD)
- Slalom ships in sync with Longhorn (out-of-band)

-----Original Message-----
From: Mark Weinberg
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2003 6:22 PM
To: Chris Jones (WINDOWS); Will Poole; Rogers Weed
Cc: Rick Thompson; Joe Belfiore; Kevin Eagan; Harish Naidu; Sriram Rajagopalan; Molly Scoville Rhoten; Joe Peterson; Iain McDonald; Jack Mayo; Christopher Vaughan
Subject: Windows Media Center Edition Release Plans (Long)

I wanted to bring you up to speed on a few things regarding our release plans for Windows XP Media Center Edition. As you know, we are currently planning a release of Media Center in Q3 of this year (codename **Harmony**, RTM – 7/29 (US), 8/12 (Intl)). It's going to be a great release for us and I'm hoping you've been able to run the latest beta (Beta 2 is coming on 5/12) Recently, we've been starting to take a harder look at our release plans for the next couple of years and things are starting to solidify to the point where I wanted to share with you what our current plan of record is (as well as solicit feedback). We've already sync'd up with some key folks outside of our team and brought them up to speed on these plans After reading thru this, if you'd like to have a follow up meeting to discuss this in person, just let me know and I will S+ something.

Symphony (2004) Plan

We believe it is very important from a business, strategic and momentum perspective to do a release of Media Center Edition in 2004 (codename **Symphony**) Some of the factors that led us to this conclusion include:

- We've received feedback from some our **key OEM partners** wrt features that they need/want that we are not able to deliver in Harmony due to time and resource constraints. They are "disappointed" when we tell them they'll have to wait until 2005. Some examples include: multiple TV tuner support, high-definition TV, wireless Bobsled, premium TV content, etc. (features that our Linux-based competitors will likely have in 2004)

- **Supporting additional locales** not currently on the Harmony supported list is strategically important. We've built a ton of excitement around Media Center and are getting a lot of requests for the product in other countries. Without a Media Center product, OEMs look elsewhere for solutions (typically Linux-based solutions).

- A release in 2004 fills the gap between Harmony and Longhorn creating the **excitement and momentum** we need for a product in its early stages of life (as well as generating some general excitement for Microsoft in 2004).

- A few strategic feature enhancements that push the value of Media Center Edition PCs further into the **living room** (either the experience is remoted to a companion Bobsled device or OEMs design and build form factors appropriate for the living room). This is a key goal for this product in the mid to long term.

- Continuing to improve the **performance and stability** of the product is super important as we strive to encroach on the Consumer Electronics space.

- Releasing C-Cool v2 (based on Symphony) helps to continue the (hopefully strong) momentum we will generate in China with C-Cool v1 (Harmony) and Rabbit PC v1.

The above list isn't by any means definitive but it gives you a feel for why we think it is important to do a release in 2004. I believe the same logic will still hold true in 2005, 2006 and possibly 2007 and I believe our team has the skill, drive and talent necessary to deliver these releases. It is going to be important for this product to release yearly for the next couple of years as we continue to build momentum and start getting some key strategic wins in the Home space The mechanics and RTM date of the release in 2004 as well as the themes, features and scope still need to be figured out. We will obviously try to sync up the RTM for Symphony with XPSP2 (or a different interim release in 2004) if we can as it provides a much cleaner install for our OEMs (as well as bringing in all the goodness from a Service Pack release). If that doesn't prove to be viable, we will pursue a similar release mechanism that we have in place for Harmony. Symphony will be the last Media Center release based on Windows XP.

We've discussed this plan with JoePe, IainMc and others and they agree that our approach for the Symphony release makes sense. We are going to make every effort to ensure that this release does not require additional cycles from other teams that are 100% focused on Longhorn. We believe that we can meet the needs of our customers and partners as well as achieving our business and strategic objectives without negatively affecting the progress being made by other teams on their Longhorn deliverables. We're also working collaboratively

with the leaders on the Windows Release Team on how Symphony might complement other efforts that are currently being considered for 2004.

Slalom/Longhorn (2005) Plan

As part of our planning for Longhorn, we've been working with JoePe, IainMc, JackMayo and others to rationalize (a) the early code complete and other milestone dates for the Longhorn project against (b) our other releases and need to do a steady stream of customer and partner benefit – and we collectively have come to the conclusion that we need to ship our 2005 release (codename **Slalom**) Out-of-Band (OOB). This approach would mean that we would continue on our current path of having enough schedule flexibility around milestones to enable us to iterate rapidly and deliver more benefit and value, i.e. the code complete date for our vertical components that have no other dependencies can be later. This does **not** mean that we won't ship on the Longhorn RTM date; that would still be our target.

This approach takes advantage of the fact that many of our components do not require the same long lead times as other Longhorn components and allows us to optimize our schedules accordingly (ultimately resulting in maximum value and consumer excitement for the Longhorn wave). We are revisiting whether some of our current "CD1" components are really core or should be moved to "CD2" (allowing further flexibility). For the remaining core "CD1" components, the current schedules do make sense and we are committing to hitting the M5 and M6 dates We are also doing some significant up front planning and development work so that we can drive appropriate requirements on the Longhorn team necessary to make Slalom an absolutely killer product. We do recognize the difficulty of doing this but believe we can do it effectively and deliver on our commitments.

Some of the benefits/issues with the OOB plan include:

-    Enables us to provide the most customer and partner value in both 2004 and 2005; keeping us competitive with Linux-based devices in this timeframe.

-    Enables us to do more Longhorn specific work to contribute to the big wave in 2005 (WinFS, Media Foundation, etc.).

-    Implies that Media Center value-add will be available only in a Longhorn Media Center Edition SKU. This decision can be reevaluated over time as progress is made on both projects. If execution is going well and we think it makes sense to bring the Media Center bits back into other SKUs, we can obviously do that It is precisely this initial decoupling though that allows us the flexibility to add the maximum value possible to the product as well as reduce the risk on the Longhorn side.

-    Introduces the question of how we ship Retail, System Builder and/or IHV hardware bundle SKUs of Media Center Edition. We are working these issues with KevinE and Rogers.

Slalom Plan – Additional Detail (release options we considered)

Some of the thinking that went into our Slalom release plan is described below, i e. options we considered ultimately resulting in the OOB plan...

1. Ship Harmony bits in Longhorn (which means no new real excitement for Media Center for 3 years) and do not do a Symphony release in 2004 Next big release for Media Center would be post Longhorn (2006). This is the only way we can hit the currently established Longhorn code complete date of August 2003 and is a non-starter for both Media Center and Longhorn.

1. Ship Symphony in 2004 but ship Harmony bits in Longhorn. We hit the Longhorn dates but this is even wackier than option 1 since we'd ship a worse version of MCE in Longhorn than we shipped in Symphony (similar to the old DirectX model). Another non-starter – included for thoroughness

1. Ship Slalom bits on our schedule into Longhorn (creates risk for Longhorn due to dependency and schedule inconsistency but is a good, integrated Longhorn/MCE story – implies a level of schedule flexibility that we do not currently have).

1. Ship Slalom bits Out-of-Band with Longhorn.

For all concerned, it has become clear that only options 3 and 4 are viable. In our collective opinions, **option 4** is the best one for our teams and Microsoft. It allows us to maximize the number of features (and excitement) our team can contribute to the big Longhorn wave without adding the additional risk to the core Longhorn project schedule inherent in option 3. It allows us to commit to a schedule that both teams believe in as well as allowing us to ship a quality Symphony release in 2004

Summary

This is the current plan of record for Windows Media Center Edition releases:

Harmony RTM – August 2003

Symphony RTM – April (or August) 2004

Slalom/Longhorn RTM – April 2005

Excalibur RTM – 2006 (right now acting as our Blackcomb bucket)

It's starting to get important for us to be able to communicate this plan broadly (both internally and externally). It's a lot to digest from a piece of mail (and I certainly don't want you to have to type up all of your thinking on these topics). As I mentioned above, if you'd like to have further discussions on this plan in person before we start executing on it (and start communicating it), please let me know and I will S+ a meeting.

-Mark