

Recent district court Microsoft decision ends an era



MIKE WENDLAND

PC MUCKE
No matter how you cut it up, Microsoft's glory days are over.

Gone for good. And while most legal experts think the company will fare better in the appellate courts than with District Judge Thomas Jackson, the drizzle and drab of a protracted legal battle over the breakup order will continue to chip away at the corporation's power and profits.

More importantly, say many of the telecommunications industry movers and shakers I talked to this past week while covering the huge SUPERCOMM exhibition in Atlanta, the breakup order also breaks Microsoft's concentration and momentum.

When the decision came down ordering the breakup Wednesday, there was a wave of buzzes, rings and digital tones echoing through the Georgia World Congress Center. Executives from the telecommunications industry and technology leaders attending the conference were beeping, paged and called. Wireless phones went up to every-

one's ears. It seemed to me that few people seemed surprised. But I saw a lot of head shaking. People at the conference were clearly not happy to hear the breakup order.

One CEO of a medium-sized networking corporation told me that while he was no fan of Microsoft he fears a chilling effect throughout the whole high tech industry. The bloom has gone off the new economy, he said, explaining that the dominance of Microsoft software makes most tech firms reliant on the company and thus now confused about future upgrades and software compatibility.

As for Microsoft itself, there was almost pity.

"I've had probably two dozen Microsoft people send me their resumes in the past two weeks," said one exec. "And these are top level people. There's going to be a massive brain drain because all those options (paid Microsoft employees) are now worth drastically less than they were before."

And that, in the long run, may hurt the company more than the breakup. The most valuable asset any high tech firm has is its people. How willing Microsoft's talented workers will be to remain during the uncertainty of the next couple of years will be as important to the com-

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pany's future as the legal appeals.

Disputes must end

One of the key movers and shakers I got a chance to button-hole for an interview was William J. Kennard, chairman of the FCC.

Amidst all the hype about DSL and broadband access at the show, I wanted to see if Kennard was as concerned as many of the Detroit callers are to my radio show about the difficulty of getting DSL.

The chairman said the Detroit problem was not unique and that competitive disputes and technology snafus affecting the rollout of high speed DSL Internet access across the nation must end.

Kennard said complaints about DSL installation delays and configuration problems from frustrated consumers and business users are coming into the FCC in increasing numbers. He said a number of those complaints seem to be "turf problems" in which the telephone monopolies are intentionally dragging their feet in releasing and activating DSL service to third party suppliers.

Kennard warned that unless the telecommunications industry quickly deals with the difficulties, pressure from the public may force regulatory actions. The public, said Kennard, is clamoring for broadband access and the industry needs to be more responsive.

Mobile revolution

Wireless phones will soon outnumber fixed phones. In fact, according to EDS Chairman Dick Brown, who keynoted a session at SUPERCOMM, already fifty percent of the world has never heard a dial tone.

By 2002, wireless phones will number 1 billion, compared to the 800 million hardwired fixed phones today. Brown told SUPERCOMM attendees that the new trend is "info-communications." It's perhaps best being seen in the convergence of Internet technology from the home

and office and ... thanks to wireless technology ... to the automobile.

A new wireless subscriber is added every ten seconds today and Brown says the new digital economy means that consumers expect to be able to do everything they now do on a stationary device or desktop computer on a portable or mobile device.

Brown says when the history books are written, people will call this new technology age the "mobile revolution."

Along those same lines, I heard a lot of talk by technology analysts in Atlanta about the aggressive use of the Internet by Detroit automakers, particular General Motors and its high tech "e-GM" division, which just announced plans that learning

allow consumers to watch their cars being built online, through Web cams.

As one analyst told me: "Detroit is driving development of a huge segment of the Internet these days and may eventually be to the telecommunications industry what Silicon Valley is to the dot com industry."

Mike Wendland covers the Internet for NBC-TV Newschannel stations across the country. He is the author of a series of Internet books. You can reach him through his Web site at <http://www.pcmike.com> and hear him Monday through Friday at 6:28 p.m. on NewsRadio 950, WWJ, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 4-6 p.m. on TalkRadio 1270, WXYT.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

Items from the Observerland area for the Business Calendar can be sent to: Observer Newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48160 attention: Renee Skoglund. Call (734) 953-2128.

TUES, JUNE 13

CAREER WOMEN

The West Suburban Chapter of National Association of Career Women will meet 11:45 a.m. at Ernesto's Restaurant, 41661 Plymouth Road, Plymouth, Cost. \$18 for members and \$22 for non-members. For more information, call Tracey Huff (248) 347-3365.

WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS

The National Association of Women Business Owners Greater Detroit Chapter will hold their monthly breakfast meeting 8-9 a.m. Tuesday at Cleary College, 3601 Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor in the Student Lounge. The speaker is Leslie Resnick of Whompy Web Designs. No cost. Call Jennifer Rice at (734) 668-7030.

INVESTMENT SEMINAR

Learn how to eliminate taxes on your investments and guarantee retirement income by attending a free seminar, "Investing Smart for Today's Tax Environment," offered by PaineWebber 9:30-8:30 p.m. at AmeriSuites, 19300 Haggerty Road, Livonia. Reservations required. Call (734) 953-8937.

WED, JUNE 14

WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS

The National Association of Women Business Owners will meet 7:45-9 a.m. at Border's, 34300 Woodward, Birmingham for networking and presentations by member business. No cost. Refreshments available for purchase. Call Gail Parker at (248) 352-7368.

THUR, JUNE 15

BUSINESS WORKSHOP

The Service Corps of Retired Executives will offer a business plan workshop 8:45 a.m. to noon at the One Stop Capital Shop, 2051 Rosa Park Blvd., Detroit. Topics include financial statements, example business plans, sources of held. \$40 per person. Call SCORE at (313) 226-7947 weekdays between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to register.

LIVING TRUST SEMINAR

Everything you wanted to know about trusts versus wills. A free seminar, "Living Trust & Wealth Preservation," is offered by PaineWebber 6:30-8:30 p.m. at AmeriSuites, 19300 Haggerty Road, Livonia. Call (734) 953-8937.

FRI, JUNE 16

WOMEN BUSINESS WORKSHOP

The Service Corps of Retired Executives will offer a workshop for people thinking of opening a business 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$40. Call (313) 226-7947 weekdays.

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IDENTISTRY

For The 21st Century
by Herbert M. Gardner, D.D.S.

MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

While previous studies have shown that all types of stress may weaken the immune system, new research indicates that the way in which we deal with financial stress impacts our dental health. According to a study published in the *Journal of Periodontology*, subjects who employed emotion-focused coping skills (dental or financial problems) when handling money matters were more likely to develop periodontal disease than those who used problem-focused coping (reorganizing conflicts and dealing with them actively). It seems that by getting your finances under control, we also may be going our teeth and gums a favor.

This column on financial stress affects has been brought to you in the interest of better dental health. At LIVONIA VILLAGE DENTAL ASSOCIATES, we discuss all the treatment options available, and our recommendations are always in the best interest of our patients. We feel a deep responsibility and commitment to provide excellent care with state-of-the-art technology. Good dental health is no accident. We're located at 19171 Merriman Road. Please call 478-2110 to schedule an appointment for high quality dental care. Let us help you keep your teeth for a lifetime. Smiles are our business.

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