

Buy Microsoft!

Heaven knows we are no fans of Microsoft's trading practices or software. Just look at the last entry under the Error Correction heading in our sidebar... But there is no comparison between what Microsoft does and what the European Commission does. The bottom line is that Microsoft uses creativity to produce products which people freely buy, use intensively, and then freely choose to upgrade repeatedly. The EC uses force to take people's money to fund their enormous salaries and ruinous subsidies, and to make monumental nuisances of themselves.

Their latest stunt, namely to impose a record €497m **fine** on Microsoft, for the crime of Trading While Rich, is both unjust and economically harmful.

We have no way of making our opinions felt, or even known, by this behemoth. So all we can do in protest is show the other behemoth a little solidarity by giving it a free advertisement: **Buy Microsoft Software!**

Wed, 03/24/2004 - 19:36 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permlink](#)

Trading While Rich - arguments?

While admitting that imposing a half-billion fine for integrating a media player into Windows does sound a little overkill (provided I know neither the details of this trial case nor the actual multimedia companies profits involved) I nonetheless don't understand your arguments. In particular, "Trading While Rich" sounds cynical to me. There is no need to remind me that *stronger people are always righter*. In return, I ought to tell you n-th time that freedom of establishing a monopoly has nothing to do with the economical freedom and economical prosperity. If americans are so strong (and, therefore, morally right) what happened to them when it was brought to their attention that that are not free to buy a PC without Windows on it anymore? Sorry for the such a violent argument.

The bottom line is that Microsoft uses creativity to produce products which people freely buy...

by a reader on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 09:52 | [reply](#)

Trade and freedom

Indeed, we most go after wicked companies that force us to buy things we don't want by integrating different parts into one product. Just as it is wrong to sell a PC with Windows, or Windows with a media player, it is wrong to sell cars with wheels and tires and an engine and houses with windows and doors and floors. All integrated products should be forbidden and it should only be allowed to sell the smallest parts, like screws, tires, bricks and buttons. And we should put anyone into jail who would offer the service of putting those parts together. That's what freedom is about.

Henry Sturman

by **Henry Sturman** on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 10:01 | [reply](#)

owned!

applause for henry

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 10:48 | [reply](#)

A better alternative to government imposed sanctions

Microsoft strategies for lovers of freedom and justice

by a reader on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 17:30 | [reply](#)

Freedom and Justice?

That all of those non-MS alternatives exist is proof that Microsoft is not inhibiting freedom. And, I haven't heard a persuasive argument that Microsoft has done anything unjust.

Anyone, who wants to, can try to compete with Microsoft. But, people who want governments to intervene with voluntary trade to help assure the success of Microsoft's competitors are supporting something very different from freedom and justice.

Gil

by **Gil** on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 18:59 | [reply](#)

Freedom

That all of those non-MS alternatives exist is proof that Microsoft is not inhibiting freedom.

No it doesn't. I can create a much longer list of non-MS alternatives that no longer exist at all. Does just the mere existence of this other list provide proof that Microsoft is inhibiting freedom? Neither list provides "proof" either way.

And, I haven't heard a persuasive argument that Microsoft has done

anything unjust.

Read Judge Jackson's **Findings of Fact**. The interesting part starts at the bottom of page 40 in the section "Microsoft's response to the browser threat".

This is not a company competing in the market by providing it's customer with better choices (i.e. more freedom). This is a company that competes by inhibiting its customers choices to its products. Microsoft is the master at inhibiting our freedom to ensure that their products remain the only choice.

But even if you remove Microsoft's business practices, their products still inhibit your freedom. You do not have the freedom to make a copy of their software and give it to someone else. Nor do you have the freedom to modify, enhance, or just fix out right bugs in their programs. This is not a moral criticism of Microsoft, they are entirely within their rights to put whatever restrictions they want on the terms of the purchase of their products. It is merely a statement of fact of the way that proprietary software in general inhibits your freedom.

Note that none of those non-MS alternatives inhibit your freedom in this way.

by a reader on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 20:15 | [reply](#)

Freedom and Justice

Competing vigorously (but not fraudulently) and exploiting competitive advantages and enforcing property rights is not inhibiting freedom or violating justice. Freedom and justice don't entail having your dreams come true regardless of the facts of reality.

It sounds like your problems are with property rights, not Microsoft.

I started to look at the findings of fact (from the man thrown off the case for unethical behavior and clear anti-MS prejudice), but I didn't see anything new or unjust. Can you tell me what specific action that Microsoft did what was unjust? I don't mean something that was tough or an aggressive business practice, but a violation of other people's rights.

Gil

by **Gil** on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 21:56 | [reply](#)

Back to freedom.

I am willing to accept that whether or not Microsoft's business practices can be interpreted as unjust versus very aggressive is very debatable. I do see both sides of the issues. IMO, the behavior in this recent The New York Times article is unethical, unjust, and immoral (sorry, free subscription required):

Newly Released Documents Shed Light on Microsoft Tactics

I do not have any problems with property rights. I already stated, "This is not a moral criticism of Microsoft, they are entirely within their rights to put whatever restrictions they want on the terms of the purchase of their products." I agree that they have such rights.

What I said is that the rights Microsoft asserts with regards to its products (which in this case is actually deals with copyrights, not property rights), does place a limit on our freedom of what we can do with that product. This is completely independent of Microsoft's business practices, they could be the perfect corporate example of proper behavior, yet such actions still result in the same restriction of our freedoms.

Let me repeat. Microsoft is entirely within their rights for imposing such restrictions, just as I am from restricting complete strangers from trespassing on my property. But let's be clear, both scenarios are in fact inhibiting the freedom of others, both scenarios are less than a completely non-coercive situation.

The freedom being referred to in the title of the original article I linked to is *this* freedom. Our freedom to do what we want with the software on our computers. The products referenced in that article give you this freedom, whereas Microsoft's products restrict this freedom.

by a reader on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 23:23 | [reply](#)

subject lines now have a max length that's pretty short

a reader is right that just as a list of failed companies wouldn't prove microsoft evil, a list of active ones does not prove it innocent.

on the other hand, i read the entire section about microsoft and the browser threat. the gist of it is microsoft didn't give certain technical specs to netscape, and offered some deals that would suck for netscape. as to the deals, so what? now, in a better society, any company trying to sell an OS but hiding tech specs from developers they don't like, wouldn't sell many copies once that got announced on the news. but microsoft is not to blame that our society is sufficiently bad to buy windows anyway. they figured out how much shit most people wouldn't mind. somewhat immoral, but *shrug* perfectly legal, perfectly just, as it should be.

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Fri, 03/26/2004 - 23:49 | [reply](#)

Definitions

If Microsoft did violate confidentiality agreements then I agree that's immoral. I know that this has been alleged many times, and perhaps it has happened, but I know that Microsoft officially

strongly discourages such activity and will fire employees who are

found guilty of such actions.

Aside from that, you (Reader) seem to be using the expression "inhibiting freedom and justice" to mean that they do things that you don't think are in your (or others') best interest, or that don't allow you (or others) to do whatever you want with Microsoft's products. This usage is very different from mine.

Physics and morality place limits on your actions. Calling this inhibiting your freedom seems strange to me, and calling it unjust seems even worse.

Why not just say you don't like some of the things that Microsoft does?

Microsoft's behavior is not up to you, and I suspect that this is a very good thing for the world. Microsoft has a tremendous record of success and productivity that greatly surpasses that of its competitors and critics who offer it unsolicited advice.

Microsoft's aggressive practices may not make us happy, but I think we agree that they tend to be within their rights. What's clear to me is that the EU's actions (and the US DOJ's before it) are unjust and immoral. I think **The World** is right to recognize and condemn these actions.

Likewise, I think it's perfectly within your rights to avoid Microsoft's products; but wrong to imply that they are acting immorally by invoking "freedom and justice". I also happen to think that you're making a mistake to encourage others to follow your lead, if you think that the tech industry (and everyone it affects) would be better off if Microsoft were made to fail. I think it would be much worse off.

Gil

by **Gil** on Sat, 03/27/2004 - 09:55 | [reply](#)

EU's Microsoft Inquisition

The EU's Inquisition of Microsoft is so ridiculous that it baffles the mind. The EU's ruling, once you take away the legal jargon, basically says that Microsoft is responsible for producing too good of a product, and that other companies that don't produce products that are as good as Microsoft's are being unfairly discriminated against because these other company's products aren't good enough to be sought after by users/consumers.

Ask yourself this question. Why do the computer companies include Microsoft with the purchase of their PCs? I'll tell you why, because their PCs wouldn't sell if they didn't include Microsoft's Windows. It's a very simple fact of supply and demand, and no sane PC manufacturer is going to SUPPLY PC's that only offer Linux as the OS because there is no DEMAND for PC's that only offer Linux as their OS. Granted, there are quite a few Linux users, but they comprise less than 1% of new PC buyers (probably because these users are usually computer geeks who prefer to make their own PCs

from parts they buy at discount suppliers such as Price Watch...like me!).

Once again, the EU's whining about something because their countries' companies can't come up with anything to rival Microsoft. So instead of trying harder to make a better product (thus, "raising the bar" so to speak) they prefer to drag down the competition so that their sub-par products can get a "fair share" of the market. If an End User can't figure out how to send email attachments, much less load the appropriate drivers for a software application to run on a Windows platform, then they probably shouldn't be using that application in the first place and should stick with the Windows application that came with their PC (that's why Windows is so successful...because even a complete idiot can point and click on the GUI button prompts that have made Windows so popular). Yet, somehow the EU thinks that this ease of use is a bad thing and that because Microsoft has made PC usage so easy for PC users that they have broken some law of conduct that makes it unfair for other software vendors who's products aren't as easy to use on a Microsoft Windows OS. That's the kind of logic that led the French Vici Government to adopt the "Victory through Surrender" approach to German aggression (and the Spanish government's current terrorist's puppet regime).

Hey Europe, get off the government dole and produce something! If you have to fine someone/something, fine yourselves for not having an original thought in the last fifty years! If I were Bill Gates, and who knows maybe I am, I'd pull any distribution of new Microsoft Products from Europe and make them come up with something on their own (and I wouldn't give them access to the billions of lines of code developed by Microsoft software engineers). I'd make them start from scratch, and if they stole any of Microsoft's code then I'd sue them!

by a reader on Sat, 03/27/2004 - 19:02 | [reply](#)

The difference is that PC is not produced by MS

Adn if I wat intel PC with Linux on it I shouldn't have been forced to pay for Windows

by a reader on Sun, 03/28/2004 - 20:56 | [reply](#)

Missing the point

Microsoft - and I must say I abhor EU and EUNUCHJS and EUROCRAPPERS and all they stand for - engaged in PREDATORY MONOPOLISTIC practices! Not only in EU, but in the US and, indeed worldwide. All what was said above it's very nice, but nobody noted the MEGA COSTS for millions of users and companies because of this predatory behaviour. Just think back 10 years, and tabulate losses through viri, worms. Hell - just think about the man-years lost through rebooting every day, at least once, to keep the beast alive! Ask the South Koreans if they are happy with Microsoft, after loosing like 3bln last year through use of Windoze. MS uses a big

part of its profits, just like the tobacco companies, to hire the best lawyers to avoid law-suits. I predict, just like the tobacco companies, this is FUTILE. Once there is a breach Bill will be much poorer and MS price on NYSE 5 % of what it's now. In the previous comments I discern lack of knowledge about

1, what LINUX is, can do, how MARVELOUSLY stable it is (I write this cmnt. of course on LINUX MANDRAKE!)

2, history of MS - the years of "WAPORWARE" (eg. a small co., like CARLSBAD with their compression SW is WIPED OUT by MS promising MONTH-AFTER-MONTH "better solutions", after few months the targeted co. folds - NO SALES - everybody waits for "superior" product from MS)

I've been with the PC's since 1976, and IMHO we would've been much better off if MS was cut down to size in the US years ago.

MS is bad news for freedom and capitalism!

Oldo, Bhaktapur, Nepal

by a reader on Mon, 03/29/2004 - 06:40 | [reply](#)

bzzzzt. try again.

ummm, just calling someone "predatory" is not case closed. you have to say exactly what they did and why it's wrong.

u gave an example about MS promising upgrades then taking 4ever. well, so what? if everyone wants MS products so much they will wait 4ever instead of buying from someone else ... well how do u get from there to something illegal?

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Mon, 03/29/2004 - 11:35 | [reply](#)

It's a bit strange

It's a bit strange. Someone in this thread says they use Linux but the evil Microsoft monopoly forced them to buy Windows. Another person says they build their own PC but the evil Microsoft monopoly stops them *buying* one unless they buy Windows too. Well, those two people should get together and prove each other wrong.

Meanwhile, I use a Mac on which I run the Mac OS. I could run Linux if I wanted, or even Microsoft Virtual PC with Windows. Somehow the evil Microsoft monopoly failed to stop me doing all that. What's the definition of monopoly again?

Now here I am depriving everyone in the entire world of their freedom to be 15th on this comment thread. I have established a monopoly on it! Will the EU come and fine me too?

by a reader on Tue, 03/30/2004 - 06:07 | [reply](#)

Will the EU fine you?

Whether or not the EU will fine you depends on a very important matter of principle to them.

How much have you got?

Gil

by **Gil** on Tue, 03/30/2004 - 17:09 | [reply](#)

Sorry, Microsoft is corrupt...

Yet another example of business as usual within Microsoft:

Microsoft behind \$12 million payment to Opera

Microsoft purposely made it so Opera, a competing browser, would display messed up pages when viewing MSN. This is not a case of Opera not working correctly. If Opera identified itself to MSN as IE, then Opera could display the generated pages just fine. But if Opera identified itself as itself, then MSN generated a *different* set of pages which made Opera display the site with errors.

The only explanation that I can conclude for MSN generating different pages for Opera than IE was to make it appear that the Opera browser was faulty. Note that this occurred at the same time both Opera and IE were competing for contracts in the embedded browser market (such as PDAs and cell phones).

by a reader on Tue, 05/25/2004 - 18:37 | [reply](#)

corrupt?

It says: "Opera has accused Microsoft of deliberately breaking interoperability between its MSN Web portal and various versions of the Opera browser--charges that the software giant has repeatedly denied."

Well, suppose Microsoft did do this. What exactly is corrupt about "breaking interoperability" between one's own web site and someone else's browser?

Un-public-spirited, definitely. Ungenerous, probably. Mean, maybe. But corrupt? How? And why on earth should doing a thing like that be against the law?

I don't use MSN or IE. Do you? If so, why don't you stop? If not, what are you complaining about?

by a reader on Tue, 05/25/2004 - 19:51 | [reply](#)

Yes, corrupt.

They did not just "break interoperability". If the entire web site was

designed such that IE worked fine but Opera had problems, I would call that "breaking interoperability". However, what MSN was doing was detecting when the Opera browser was accessing it and then feeding only it a set of pages designed specifically to break it. If Opera fooled MSN into thinking it was IE, then Opera displayed the IE generated pages without a hitch. Here is a technical explanation of what MSN was doing:

Why doesn't MSN work with Opera

It was if and only if the browser was Opera that MSN would feed it the faulty web page. If Opera identified itself as an unknown browser such as Oprah, then MSN did not send it the faulty page. At the time, Microsoft denied any problem on their end and claimed Opera was not standards compliant, and Microsoft continues to deny any fault.

To purposely cause a competitors product to fail and then to deny that you were the cause of the failure is well beyond un-public-spirited, ungenerous, or mean. It is dishonest and deceitful. It is yet another example of the core corruption of Microsofts business practices.

I do not use either MSN or IE and I am not complaining. I am stating that I think Microsoft is corrupt and needs to be identified as such.

by a reader on Tue, 05/25/2004 - 20:37 | [reply](#)

Libel

To accuse Microsoft of corruption, and of purposely doing things one has insufficient evidence of (that has been denied), seems at best irresponsible and at worst libelous.

I'm not sure what's happening in this case, but I know that ASP.NET can generate different HTML based on the detected browser type. This is a feature intended to ease development. It's an attempt to make things work well in all browsers; not to fail. The problem *is* that many browsers are not standards compliant and adapting code to handle each one's incompatibilities can be a lot of work.

Now, it might be that Microsoft made mistakes when generating Opera code (perhaps they misinterpreted a bug, or the bug was fixed, or they just did it wrong...). But it takes a fanatical conspiracy theorist to conclude that they must have intended for visitors, to a site that they hope to reap large ad revenues from, to have a bad experience in the hopes that they'll want to switch to Microsoft's free browser.

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Thu, 06/03/2004 - 16:31 | [reply](#)

Corrupt I say!

I'm not sure what's happening in this case, but I know that ASP.NET can generate different HTML based on the detected browser type. This is a feature intended to ease development. It's an attempt to make things work well in all browsers; not to fail. The problem is that many browsers are not standards compliant and adapting code to handle each one's incompatibilities can be a lot of work.

These days, all browsers with the exception of IE attempt to be standards compliant. I realize that way back when Netscape ruled before IE that it did add many non standards compliant features, but that was a long time ago. Currently, I am not aware of a single browser (again except IE) that does anything beyond what the W3C standards dictate.

These days web sites have to worry about two classes of browsers, IE which makes no attempt to keep with the latest W3C standards and the rest which do.

Can you provide any references to these non-IE browsers that are not standards compliant?

Now, it might be that Microsoft made mistakes when generating Opera code (perhaps they misinterpreted a bug, or the bug was fixed, or they just did it wrong...).

As the above linked article explains, the problem was MSN sent the Opera browser a style sheet with the following code:

```
ul {  
margin: -2px 0px 0px -30px;  
}
```

The problem is the "-30px" value which explicitly instructs Opera to move list elements 30 pixels to the left of its parent. This was the only thing wrong and caused all lists to look like they are misaligned. Opera has never had any bugs or problems with aligning list elements in the wrong place. This is not a complicated piece of html or code to have accidentally made a mistake with.

If Opera identified itself as IE, then this "-30px" value did not occur and Opera displayed the IE compatible pages just fine. If Opera identified itself as some random, unknown browser, then this "-30px" did not occur and Opera displayed what must be the default pages just fine. It was if and only if the browser said it was Opera that this extra "-30px" showed up and Opera dutifully complied with exactly what it was told to do.

But it takes a fanatical conspiracy theorist to conclude that they must have intended for visitors, to a site that they hope to reap large ad revenues from, to have a bad experience in the hopes that they'll want to switch to Microsoft's free browser.

I agree if the point was to try and get personal computer users to

switch back to IE then this would be a fanatical conspiracy theory. But this was not the reason.

The reason is because at the time the two companies were (and still are) competing in the embedded browser market. Microsoft was trying to scare companies considering contracting with Opera Software instead of Microsoft for the use of their browser in cell phones and PDAs. It did this by making it appear that Opera was flaky at times and could not render sites properly that other browsers could.

Microsoft was just doing business as usual when trying to take over a new market.

by a reader on Fri, 06/04/2004 - 01:15 | [reply](#)