DBUG

DATACAD BOSTON USERS GROUP

BSA A Committee of the Boston Society of Architects

March 8, 1989

Dear DataCAD Users,

Enclosed are copies of two letters:
1. Microtecture February 24, 1989 from Daryl Ferguson CEO (recieved March 1)
2. Sigma February 27, 1989 from Kenneth Ledeen President (faxed March 6)

These letters are in response to the Petition previously sent, and in response to the following five requests for commitment from Sigma. The requests for commitment were made during a phone discussion with Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Ledeen.
1. Continued Support and Updating of DataCAD DOS version.
2. Existing programming staff retained to work on DATACAD.
3. 50% or more of new company's sales budget devoted to DATACAD.
4. 50% or more of new company's programming budget devoted to DATACAD.
5. An 1989 effort to impliment DATACAD on OS/2.

Additionally we requested that these commitments be written into the agreement (a bit like asking for the moon!).

After reading Mr. Ferguson's letter, I have no doubt that Microtecture will continue to support and update DOS and to impliment an OS/2 version if the company remains independent. I know that the DataCAD programming staff is in full support of an OS/2 version and has worked with OS/2 over the last year and is quite excited by its potential, and the new features that can be offered to the user.

Mr. Ledeen's letter which is critical to us if the Offer is approved, indicates a strong belief in DATACAD, a primarily market-driven philosophy, and some questions regarding implimentation of OS/2 which are reasonable to ask before embarking on an OS/2 development program. I will comment on these questions later. Mr. Ledeen's "market-driven" philosophy means that with our continued support and continued strong sales it is inevitable that there will be DataCAD versions for both DOS and OS/2. While Mr. Ledeen has not committed to the five requests, I believe that the inherent characteristics of the program and strong sales will assure Sigma's commitment to the program.

Let me respond to a few of the questions Mr. Ledeen has posed regarding OS/2:
1. DataCAD 3.6e runs on 80286 ATs and 80386 machines. Existing 80286 and 80386 machines with a 40mb hard disk or greater, 3mb of memory or greater (most already have 1mb) will run OS/2 Software. Upgrade cost would be less than $1600. I am sure that most will agree that the DOS version should continue to be fully supported and updated. In support of Mr. Ledeen's statement that "ability to address a broad range of operating environments is an important component of a business success", I believe that a DataCAD OS/2 version is a natural for a full product line.
2. A. Real Mode It is possible that DataCAD would run under a "DOS" window in OS/2. The program would not be using many of the features of OS/2 and the benifits might not be great enough to merit the change to OS/2 under these circumstances.

Write Care of
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B. Virtual Mode with "port" from DOS If the OS/2 product is a "port", certain portions of the memory management code must be rewritten. Rewrite of these sections will gain important advantages due to the elimination of the 640K barrier with greater speed and better access to memory without software overhead such as Diskcaching and Virtual drive utilities. Also 80386 machines will use full 32 bit computations. Additionally the user will be able do multitasking through the OS/2 windows feature.

C. Virtual Mode with rewrite of Code The program would be rewritten, probably in "C" language which is specifically suited to OS/2, and would take advantage of the full range of OS/2 features including separate program "threads" allowing the program to internally do a number of activities at the same time such as update .asv file, rewrite screen, change menu, and prompt user for input, all at the same time! Also, outside executable programs will be able to run from within DataCAD. In addition to the elimination of the 640K barrier as above, multitasking and a new graphical interface would also be feasible. There would be significant speed enhancement and additional improvements in an already excellent user-interface.

D. Which way to go? Without being a programmer or having all of the facts it is difficult to determine what is the best route, but there are good reasons not to simply follow Item A, and some compelling reasons for Item C simply because it is the "best" technically. I personnally hope that Opath C will be selected. I believe Eric Smith is in favor of path C but obviously there are other factors which are involved.

3. These are all excellent questions but are really part of the planning and "architectural" process at the early stages of the project. We users have always been actively involved in giving suggestions for improvements and I'm sure we will continue to do so. This is one of the reasons the product is so easy to use. I believe initial thoughts at Microtecture are that it could take less time for a rewrite than it would take for a "port" with some rewrite.
4. Two different environments at Microtecture are not needed, a machine configured to run OS/2 can also be booted up to run DOS with a simple batch file, or a "DOS window" can be used. Yes additional support personnel may be needed as use of OS/2 expands. I believe Microtecture has been working with OS/2 for over a year and some programming and experimentation has been done.
5. Ask the users about suspending development on DOS and I believe the answer is no, besides OS/2 is needed to "cover a broad range of platforms".

One can make the argument that the DOS version of DataCAD is excellent as it exists so why embark on developing OS/2? With the very large new generation programs such as Lotus, Dbase IV and Word being big and cumbersome with manuals encompassing a full cubic foot of space and taking more time to program than expected, the virtue of simplicity and ease of learning becomes compelling. The DataCAD programmers should be convinced that the OS/2 version will be remarkably better, even easier to learn and there should be clear plans and realistic schedule for development. So I in many respects I agree with Ken Ledeen's planned approach regarding OS/2. I believe the answer, if we are going to fully use current and new hardware is that OS/2 is in DataCAD's future.

Please discuss these issues with fellow users, test the statements made above with your knowledge of OS/2, draw your own conclusions and write Microtecture and Ken Ledeen. Let them know we are a part of this equation.

Sincerely,
Rick Gleason

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