Dave McClure • Oct. 23, 2013

From the Bleeding Edge Blog.

Like most other people, I have suffered for more than a year as Microsoft flailed and flopped and twisted and ambiguated, but enough is enough.

So here is a memo to Microsoft: if you don't stop chasing shiny baubles and start paying attention to your core businesses, you will soon be consigned to the trash heap of technology. I know that seems hard to believe, when the stock is trading at decent prices and dividends are up. But the sales figures are telling a different story, and the revolt against your latest products continues unabashed.

I run a business and a busy life. I don't have time to figure out your failures. And neither do most accountants and tax preparers, who are less than 90 days from the start of tax season.

You have two core businesses:

1. **Operating Systems, in which you have a long and honorable tradition of excellence.** Sure, you have suffered a few disasters – Windows 9X and Vista come to mind. But Windows XP and Windows 7 are relatively well-regarded and stable systems. So what convinced you it would be a good idea to flop Windows 8 on the table like a dead, stinking fish and arrogantly declare that users adapt to it or else? Windows 8 has the most confusing, incomprehensible and dysfunctional user interface of any operating system ever. After a year of trying to figure out how to do things that used to be intuitive and having trouble even getting to basic menus, I am ready to uninstall and go back to Windows 7.
2. **Office Productivity Suites, a class of software you created and have dominated for more than 25 years.** I remember using the first version of MS Office in 1990,

and marveling at the way the applications worked together. But the iteration of

of the Microsoft bashers. But I am watching even the most hardcore Microsoft enthusiasts gasping like goldfish out of the bowl trying to find a reason to be happy about the last year of its products.

So here is my list of the top 10 things Microsoft needs to change immediately:

1. **Get out of the hardware business.** You aren't particularly good at hardware, and even when you are you fail to recognize how to promote the products properly. Microsoft Natural Keyboard? Brilliant...now hard to find, and no back lighting. Microsoft WebTV? Poor marketing equals poor sales. X-Box might be an exception, though I have to say that at a price of $500 most families (and the kids/geeks who actually use gaming consoles) will balk at the new X-Box One. Forget Bibles and guns – families in the heartland will cling desperately to their X-Box 360s. And what on earth made you waste millions of dollars trying to get into the cell phone industry, which is arguably the most brutal industry on the planet? As for the tablet industry, there are more than 30 different tablet brands on the market. Beyond the iPad and the Galaxy 2, can you name any of the others? Neither can anyone else, including your brand.

2. **Introduce a new user Interface for Windows 8.** Frankly, most people use their computers for both personal and business use. And we don't have the time...don't want to take the time...to figure out this blocky, metro-sexual, guess-how-to-get-it-to-do-anything interface. We have lives and businesses to run. Just make it easy and familiar to use again, and Windows 8 –which under the hood really is a decent operating system – will skyrocket.

3. **Make the central menu easy to use.** Okay, I get it that you do not want a file manager or a start button, or anything like the old desktop. But for God's sake, put labels on the buttons. Make the desktop easy to configure. And stop pretending that we are all going to run out to replace our monitors with some ghastly touch

screen. I don't need the start button back. I just need not to have to use four steps

device, and the whole thing is a confusing mess. I know, you just hated to see all that revenue going to Apple and Google. But if you couldn't do it better and bolder, you should not have done it.

6. **Get SkyDrive to work properly.** Cloud computing is the present of the computing industry (not necessarily the future, given that the industry moves in cycles). But if you can't get it right, you don't have a future. SkyDrive is sloppy, does not synchronize properly and is frustrating to use. No, I don't want to uninstall and reinstall it again. I want it to work with Windows 8. And if it does no synch automatically or offer backup, why should I bother with it? And why is SkyDrive the default for storage of my documents in MS Office? Those documents are personal and private. If I wanted the NSA to have them, I would upload them directly to the NSA.

7. **Make Outlook work the same in all versions.** And make it synchronize from desktop to Outlook.Com without losing data. And tell us what the heck EAS is, and how to make it work. No help files, no information, no tech support...and just for giggles, try a Bing search for "Outlook 2013 won't synch." You'll get a ton of information on how to synchronize the calendar and contacts...in Outlook 2007. To date, Outlook has deleted half of my contacts, most of my calendar entries and many email entries. My contacts won't categorize, and won't alphabetize within categories. Did anyone beta test this application?

8. **Fire your glee club and hire tech support people.** Adding insult to injury, if your Microsoft products don't work as advertised there is no one to turn. You can pay for tech support, at an hourly rate three times what you paid for the software to begin with. The Knowledge Base is woefully out of date. User groups are clogged with problems no one has answered...or answers from Microsoft people who gleefully say "Thanks for bringing this to our attention..." dated two years ago.

9. **Get your programmers to work fixing things.** Get rid of the foosball tables, scratch the latte machines, and close the social clubs. Re-task the programming

staff to actually fix products instead of dreaming up new ones. Their future

products that work, just like your marketing copy says they will work. Be innovative? Sure. But on your time and your dime, not mine.

Some will believe that I am being over harsh toward Microsoft and its products, but I just opened my Outlook 2013 to find that my Notes have disappeared. Gone, for the first time in more than 7 years. Where to, I have no idea. And with a business to run, I don't have time to go looking for them, or to figure out why Microsoft has again failed.

Thank God I backed them up on Google.

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