
Subject: Re: Mac OSX

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 10 Oct 2001 23:41:59 GMT

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Randall Skelton (rshkelto@atm.ox.ac.uk) writes:

> There are alternatives. I'll admit that none of them can compete with the
> wide cross-platform support that IDL has enjoyed over the years but it
> looks like RSI's cross-platform marketing approach has vanished.

Gentlemen,

I am sympathetic. I really am. I especially dislike the cheesy way this whole decision was announced. It denotes a lack of...well, respect...for the people who really do pay the bills it seems to me.

And from what I hear at least half the folks at RSI are sympathetic. I don't think this was a unanimous decision, not by a long shot. But I don't think scientists are running the company anymore. And I don't think the people who made the decision really stopped to consider the--for lack of a better word--cultural significance of a decision like this.

Quite frankly, losing a platform like the Mac matters to a lot of us, whether we use a Macintosh or not.

But given all that, I don't think this decision will be changed. I don't know the leadership at RSI, or anything about them, but I don't expect them to change their mind for this reason.

The Mac right now, today, is not a serious scientific computing platform. I know, I know. MacOSX is going to change all that, etc., etc. But I don't believe it. And I doubt the folks making this decision at RSI believe it. Not when perfectly good systems can be had for no more than \$3000.

Many of us using Windows today were once Mac users. Why did we switch? I switched, because practically everyone I knew was using a PC. And because the software I wanted to use ran better on a PC than it did (if it was available) on a Mac. Is that going

to change in the next year? The next two years? I seriously doubt it. RSI is recognizing a trend that has been going on for a long time. The Mac may be the cat's meow in desktop publishing, but it is never going to capture enough scientific computing market share to drive software development on that platform. That is an economic prediction, not an indictment of the Mac's number crunching capabilities.

And I am sorry to see the whole "Alternatives to IDL" thread appear again. We hashed this whole thing over several months ago. Yes, there are alternatives to IDL. But let's be honest, most of them suck in one way or the other. None of them, *none* of them, are going to capture more than an extremely small fraction of IDL users.

I really hate to be cynical on a newsgroup I love so much, but I don't believe the majority of the people beating their chests now will really leave IDL. Too many colleagues, too much invested, too easy to buy a new Dell machine and carry on. And you will end up needing the new feature IDL has added that is not available in whatever the alternative de jour is that you decided to use as a protest.

Yes, send your letters and e-mail. Yes, make your feelings about this decision known to the people who made it. Maybe it will cause them to consider more carefully the next time they make a decision like this. Yes, explore alternatives to IDL, if you must. But in the end, you have to realize that this is how things are in the real world. We don't always like it, I'll grant you that. But sometimes we have to accept it. Sometimes that is the best alternative of all.

Sadly,

David

P.S. I just saw that sales of Eastman Kodak were 3.5 billion last quarter. Do you really think a loss of a couple hundred thousand dollars of revenue from disgruntled customers matters to them? This is just the price *we* pay for a corporate culture.

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