Subject: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by David Fanning on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 18:46:18 GMT

Hi Folks,

I was waiting for my coffee water to boil so I thought I
would take a quick look at the ol' book bidness on Amazon
to see how I was doing.

Yikes! 7924th most popular book! I mean, this is like
Kurt Vonnegut territory!

Despite the fact that there *has* to be something wrong
with these numbers (or Oprah would have already called,
I'm sure), I wanted to alert you that Amazon is offering
a special deal. Get both Liam's and my book and save an
additional 5%. What a deal!

Bogus numbers or not, I just wanted to let you know
(again) how much I appreciate everyone who has bought
a book. It is very, very encouraging (if you take my
meaning).

Best Regards,

David

--
David W. Fanning, Ph.D.
Fanning Software Consulting
Phone: 970-221-0438, E-mail: david@dfanning.com
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: http://www.dfanning.com/
Toll-Free IDL Book Orders: 1-888-461-0155

Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Randall Skelton on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 20:23:32 GMT

Any comments from a long-time RSI man regarding the dropping of Mac OS X?
I seem to recall you warning of some changes when Kodak took over.
Nevertheless, you've been rather silent on this point.

Oh yes, given the lack of Macintosh support in future IDL releases, I have
one, slightly used, copy of your 2nd ed. book that I am willing to sell.

Cheers,

Randall

On Tue, 9 Oct 2001, David Fanning wrote:

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>
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> would take a quick look at the ol' book bidness on Amazon
> to see how I was doing.
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> Best Regards,
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> David
>
> --
> David W. Fanning, Ph.D.
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Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Pavel A. Romashkin on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 20:56:09 GMT
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Randall Skelton wrote:
>
> Oh yes, given the lack of Macintosh support in future IDL releases, I have
> one, slightly used, copy of your 2nd ed. book that I am willing to sell.

Hey, the drop in economy should not provoke a chain reaction. Don't
contribute to the collapse by dropping the prices, now. Used or not,

sell it at the face value. The contents are worth it.

Cheers,
Pavel

Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by David Fanning on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 21:01:53 GMT
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Randall Skelton (rhskelto@atm.ox.ac.uk) writes:

> Any comments from a long-time RSI man regarding the dropping of Mac OS X?
> I seem to recall you warning of some changes when Kodak took over.
> Nevertheless, you've been rather silent on this point.
>
> Oh yes, given the lack of Macintosh support in future IDL releases, I have
> one, slightly used, copy of your 2nd ed. book that I am willing to sell.

"Slightly used"!? You must not write many IDL programs.
Mine is dog-eared. :-)

I haven't been silent, I've just been biting
my tongue. I think this is just about exactly
what you can expect when large corporations
start to make decisions. There is no question
it is a good business decision, if you are
considering just the ins and outs of money.
There are, quite frankly, not very many Mac
users. And I don't even think Apple believes
the Mac is going to be a big scientific computing
platform.

When things are flush, it is no problem doing
fringe projects. But things are not flush at
Kodak, not by a long shot. I wouldn't expect
more platforms to bite the dust, but I do
expect more products to fall into disfavor.
Who is using River Tools anyway?

Anyway, I think this is probably a sad day
for Dave, Ali, and the other good guys at
RSI, for whom money was never the most
important thing. Their number one goal--
always--was producing quality software
for scientists. I'm glad I'm not there
anymore.

Cheers,

David

P.S. Let's just say I have the same feeling
in the pit of my stomach as I did when Office
Depot came into town and put all those
Stationary stores out of business. :-(

--
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Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Mark Hadfield on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 21:25:03 GMT
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From: "David Fanning" <david@dfanning.com>
> When things are flush, it is no problem doing
> fringe projects. But things are not flush at
> Kodak, not by a long shot. ...

I don't know about Kodak, but I have always thought the RSI division must be
rolling in money, given how much my employer pays them on my behalf every
year. But perhaps I'm naive.

Mark Hadfield
m.hadfield@niwa.cri.nz http://katipo.niwa.cri.nz/~hadfield
National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research

--
Posted from clam.niwa.cri.nz [202.36.29.1]
via Mailgate.ORG Server - http://www.Mailgate.ORG

Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by David Fanning on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 22:09:33 GMT
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Mark Hadfield (m.hadfield@niwa.cri.nz) writes:

> I don't know about Kodak, but I have always thought the RSI division must be
> rolling in money, given how much my employer pays them on my behalf every
> year. But perhaps I'm naive.

While it's true that the material cost of producing
software is well under a $1 (oh, maybe $5 when you
throw in the box), that is a long way from the true
cost. And I would be shocked to learn that maintenance
and technical support fees actually cover the costs
of these two necessary functions.

While I don't expect to see David Stern in a
soup-line anytime soon, I don't think the money
he made is anything like what most of the people
complaining about maintenance costs *think* he
made. :-)

Cheers,

David

P.S. Let's just say that what *really* gets my
goat is what the Lucent Board of Directors paid
Richard McGinn after he ran that company straight
into the ground!

--
David W. Fanning, Ph.D.
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Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Noam R. Izenberg on Wed, 10 Oct 2001 11:29:23 GMT
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David Fanning wrote:

> I haven't been silent, I've just been biting
> my tongue. I think this is just about exactly
> what you can expect when large corporations
> start to make decisions. There is no question
> it is a good business decision, if you are
> considering just the ins and outs of money.

I don't think I agree there, but then I'm not up on all the resources needed to make IDL OS-X go.

From what I could gather, RSI had one full time programmer working on it. That for say 2 years, plus
associated hardware, software and overhead can't possibly be more than half a mil. Probably much
less if overhead is reasonable.The loss of present and future Mac business from people cheesed off
by the decision will cost them more than that. The collateral loss of cross-platform utility of IDL
will cost even more. And the reputation hit will take a while to recover from. The gain of mac
customers and loyalty by a notoriously loyal Mac community would more than offset the cost. Add to
that the fear to be instilled in other "marginal" platforms and this has Bad Business written all
over it.

> There are, quite frankly, not very many Mac
> users. And I don't even think Apple believes
> the Mac is going to be a big scientific computing
> platform.

It is around here. Still the minority, but then we have even fewer SGI's

Noam Izenberg

JHU/APL Space Dept.

Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Stein Vidar Hagfors H[1] on Wed, 10 Oct 2001 18:51:32 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

David Fanning <david@dfanning.com> writes:
[..]
> I haven't been silent, I've just been biting
> my tongue. I think this is just about exactly
> what you can expect when large corporations
> start to make decisions. There is no question
> it is a good business decision, if you are
> considering just the ins and outs of money.

Maybe, at least in the short run, if your assumptions are that you
lose zero PC/Linux/Sun/whatever license buyers in the process. I
believe that to be a very wrong assumption.

> There are, quite frankly, not very many Mac
> users. And I don't even think Apple believes
> the Mac is going to be a big scientific computing
> platform.

Maybe, maybe not. Depends on whether you classify fancy image

processing, GIS applications, medical imaging as "scientific computing" or not. No, it's not numbercrunching on mathematical models, but it's certainly computing, and quite scientific!

> When things are flush, it is no problem doing
> fringe projects. But things are not flush at
> Kodak, not by a long shot. I wouldn't expect
> more platforms to bite the dust, but I do
> expect more products to fall into disfavor.
> Who is using River Tools anyway?

I've always wondered about that... :-)
They're probably all Mac users :-(

--
 -- --------------
Stein Vidar Hagfors Haugan
ESA SOHO SOC/European Space Agency Science Operations Coordinator for SOHO

NASA Goddard Space Flight Center,   Email: shaugan@esa.nascom.nasa.gov
Mail Code 682.3, Bld. 26, Room G-1, Tel.: 1-301-286-9028/240-354-6066
Greenbelt, Maryland 20771, USA.   Fax: 1-301-286-0264
 -- --------------

Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Joseph B. Gurman on Wed, 10 Oct 2001 22:50:22 GMT
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In article <MPG.162d13b126369e769896f9@news.frii.com>,
david@dfanning.com wrote:

[snip]

> I haven't been silent, I've just been biting
> my tongue. I think this is just about exactly
> what you can expect when large corporations
> start to make decisions. There is no question
> it is a good business decision, if you are
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> Kodak, not by a long shot. I wouldn't expect

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> Anyway, I think this is probably a sad day
> for Dave, Ali, and the other good guys at
> RSI, for whom money was never the most
> important thing. Their number one goal--
> always--was producing quality software
> for scientists. I'm glad I'm not there
> anymore.
>
> Cheers,
>
> David
>
> P.S. Let's just say I have the same feeling
> in the pit of my stomach as I did when Office
> Depot came into town and put all those
> Stationary stores out of business. :-(

   I agree that this is a sad day, and that the good guys probably
think thaty this, not too put too fine a point on it, sucks. I'm almost
sad I have no Kodak stock to sell.

   There are plenty of Mac users of IDL. Undoubtedly not as many as
Windoze users, or Solaris users, but more than enough, at some fraction
of $5K a pop, to make up the 2 man-year's of thierry Fauconaux's time.

   Sorry, David, but this is a bineheaded business decision, since the
attraction of IDL in the sicentific community is at least as much its
cross-platform portability as its versatility for the individual user.
If I'm developing applications and software trees to deploy across a
broad (if not enormous) user base, why would I even bother to look at aq
product that's as self-restricted as IDL now is?

   By the way, I have offered to buy the OS X IDL code base from Kodak.
Anybody know where Thierry is now?

            Joe Gurman

Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by David Fanning on Wed, 10 Oct 2001 23:44:09 GMT
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Joseph B. Gurman (gurman@crosslink.net) writes:

>   By the way, I have offered to buy the OS X IDL code base from Kodak.
> Anybody know where Thierry is now?

Over at Pavel's having a beer, is what I heard. :-)

David

P.S. Let's just say my ears are wide over for
Pavel's *next* post!

--
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Subject: Re: Expecting Phone Call from Oprah
Posted by Struan Gray on Tue, 23 Oct 2001 14:07:59 GMT
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Joseph B. Gurman, gurman@crosslink.net writes:

>   Sorry, David, but this is a bineheaded business
> decision, since the attraction of IDL in the sicentific
> community is at least as much its cross-platform portability
> as its versatility for the individual user.

 It's boneheaded if you think you're in the business of
selling a computer language and application development
environment. It's much less boneheaded if you want to make money
selling turnkey solutions and ready-made applications to users
who will never write their own routines. My impression is that
RSI is now going after this second sort of customer, having
originally been aimed at the first. The press release announcing
Scally's appointment as CEO is littered with clues to this
effect: they want David and Ron K's business.

 I agree with David that this looks very much like a 'big
business' decision, and although I believe the RSI folks when
they say this was not a Kodak imposition, it is exactly how Kodak
has behaved when pulling out of various niche photographic
markets in the last few years. The question is not whether
supporting the niche users is profitable, but whether you would
make even more money supporting someone else. It's a bit like
the armchair investor who pours his whole life savings into last
year's top stock.

Struan