Subject: Re: Mac Market Share in Science
Posted by Kenneth P. Bowman on Wed, 21 Dec 2011 16:45:31 GMT

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In article <MPG.295a767b9783588e989957@news.giganews.com>,
 David Fanning <news@dfanning.com> wrote:

> Folks,
>
> Check out the latest article on AstroBetter about what
> operating system astronomers use:
>
>   http://www.astrobetter.com/os-apt-astronomers
>
> It seems to me the same trend is occurring in science
> generally.
>
> I would guess that if we don't get a version of
> IDL that looks like a real Mac application soon,
> that no amount of cool graphics features (even if
> they worked!) will save the company.
>
> Cheers,
>
> David

I can remember when RSI (I think it was still RSI at the time) cancelled the Mac
OS version of IDL. I felt lucky that they were willing to make a command line
version of IDL available for the Mac. (I think this was about the same time
that Michael Dell suggested that Apple sell the company and return the money to
their shareholders.)

I have watched a similar trend in Mac usage in atmospheric science over the last
five or six years. Before that time, at meetings and conferences, <10% of the
laptops would be Macs. Now when I do a quick count, it is >50%. A number of
long time Windows users in my own department have converted to Macs. The
holdouts are primarily lab scientists, who are tied to PC hardware and software
for their data acquisition and control systems.

It is ironic that now that Apple is really achieving market share success in
science and higher education, they are increasingly ignoring that market. The
same thing is happening to some extent in the "pro" markets for graphics and
video.

First Apple cancelled the XServe RAID. Maybe that made sense because they
couldn't compete with cheaper vendors, but I have two XServe RAIDS that are
still running (perfectly I might add, never a glitch 8 years) long after I have
retired newer RAIDs from the likes of Western Scientific. Maybe Thunderbolt

external RAIDS will provide a satisfactory replacement.

Then Apple cancelled the XServe. Their suggestion is to use Mac Minis or Mac Pros, but they don't fit into our system architecture, which requires rack mountable systems. Sure, most or all of the services we provide via the XServes can be done with cheap Linux boxes, but they are more difficult to manage and reliability is worse.

The Mac Pro hasn't been updated in ages. Rumors are that it is about to be cancelled.

On the software side, OS X 10.7 Server is missing a large number of administrative features from 10.6. And so on. I can't blame Apple. They ruthlessly cut products that don't have big sales and relentlessly move toward where the *big* market is -- consumers.

Science and education are a tiny blip on their radar. I just hope that they will continue to make products that can be adapted to my uses until I retire.
;-)

Ken Bowman