

“Not With A Bang, But With A Whimper”

The so-called document format standards war between OpenDocument and Open XML has ended “not with a bang, but with a whimper.” Or more plainly stated, Microsoft has robbed opponents of Open XML of any colorable claim that any war was taking place.

Microsoft today has announced that not only will it be supporting OpenDocument as a default save-as option in its Office products and will also be participating in its future development. Microsoft will continue to support and work on Open XML as well as both PDF and XPS formats. Difficult to pretend any of those formats are “enemies” when at least one company is committed to supporting and developing all of them.

Signs the document standards war was entirely fictitious have been around for quite some time. Where was the Microsoft opposition to OpenDocument in standards bodies such as OASIS and ISO? Perhaps they forgot? Didn't get the memo?

True, there was an active campaign against Open XML, complete with drive-by bloggings, apocalyptic visions of the future, rumors of corruption (internal incompetency isn't an acceptable explanation) and the like. I say a campaign against Open XML, but that isn't true.

The campaign against Open XML was at its start, in the middle and at the end an anti-Microsoft campaign. The merits or demerits of Open XML were simply a convenient launching point for criticisms of Microsoft.

Evidence? The same comments were filed in ISO by different national bodies, along with no suggested repairs to fix those errors. If it were one or two, perhaps coincidence, but several hundred? Touting ISO as **the** place for standards approval, at least until the approval of Open XML. Upon the approval of Open XML, then ISO was also suspect.

Need more? Watch the reaction to this announcement by Microsoft. Remember the cry has been that Microsoft should adopt OpenDocument. Microsoft has now adopted OpenDocument and it will be devoting resources to its development. For those unfamiliar with the concept, that means Microsoft will be making a positive contribution to the ODF development effort.

My recommendation is that everyone put up their noise makers and welcome Microsoft to the OpenDocument community and prepare to work with them to advance its development.

Covington, 21 May 2008

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