When Microsoft* Makes Elevators (1)

It will no longer be necessary to press a button to indicate which floor you want to go to. You will simply drag the elevator icon to the desired floor. This will be called "intuitive."

You will drag the elevator icon to the desired floor using a specially coded Microsoft Stylus on a touch sensitive Windows CE screen. This will be called a "security feature."

People will find they can drag the elevator icon to the desired floor using just an ordinary pen. This will be called "an accessibility feature."

Then someone will find that you can drag the elevator icon to the desired floor with just your finger. This will be called "unauthorized access" and will be condemned as hacking.

Microsoft will lobby States to make it illegal to select a floor using anything other than a Microsoft authorized stylus. This will be called "corporate responsibility."

Two teenagers from Cloverdale, California, will be arrested by the Secret Service for "hacking" the elevators in the World Trade Center, with their fingers.

For the first 10 days that Microsoft Elevator** is in operation, elevators won't take anyone anywhere. This will be called "beta testing."

For the next 5 days that Microsoft Elevator is in operation, the doors will be taped shut and a sign will say "Installing the Initial Shipping Version, Please Wait" (But the sign will be really cute and feature licensed cartoon characters).

The first time you use an elevator running Microsoft Elevator it will take you to several different floors before letting you off. This will be called "A Quick Tour."

The second time you use an elevator running Microsoft Elevator it will take you to several different floors before letting you off. This will happen because you didn't un-click the "Quick Tour on Startup" box the last time.

The initial shipping version of Microsoft Elevator will not take anyone to even-numbered floors. This will be called "limited functionality." A Microsoft representative will say "this is only to be expected from the initial release of a complex product such as this."

When asked to comment, independent industry analysts will say "This is only to be expected from the initial release of a complex product such as this...besides, users are prepared to wait for Microsoft to deliver full functionality."

When some people, who need to access even-numbered floors, start to complain, Microsoft will point out that travelling to an odd-numbered floor and walking up one flight of stairs is very healthy. This will become a permanent "lifestyle-enhancement" feature.

Some analysts, citing 15 minute wait times when signaling an elevator, will suggest that Microsoft Elevator could be improved. They will be labeled "Microsoft Haters" and Luddites.

Steve Balmer, Microsoft's Exec. V.P. of Sales and Support, will be heard to say, "Yeah right, like you order every damn person in a 20-storey building to call an elevator at the same time, sure, response times are going to be flaky, get over it."

When the same analysts reveal that the wait times were recorded during controlled tests performed on a weekend in an empty building, other analysts, fresh from the "See How I Live Life" tour of Microsoft CEO Bill Gates' soon-to-be-completed mansion, will say, "Obviously such tests are slanted and do not reflect real world performance."

Speaking on Larry King Live, multi-billionaire Gates will say "What would they have us do, Larry, go back to the bad old days of button pushing?"

Hacker bulletin boards will circulate a series commands that cause the elevator OS to reboot mid-floor, for a period of 3 minutes, although it will seem longer.

Meanwhile a small Silicon Valley start-up will release a Microsoft Elevator utility that allows users previously unavailable access to even-numbered floors. It is soon installed on more than 50% of elevators running Microsoft Elevator 1.0.

Microsoft will purchase the company and shortly thereafter launch Microsoft Elevator 1.1 with a "Wimp Interface" which allows users the option of direct access to the floor of their choice without taking the stairs.

For the next 5 days all elevators running Microsoft Elevator will have the doors taped shut and a sign saying "Installing Upgrade, Please Wait."

In high profile installations, such as the World Trade Center, Microsoft will hire booth bunnies to stand by the taped elevator doors and hold up a series of cards describing the new features of Microsoft Elevator 1.1.

The new features of Microsoft Elevator 1.1 will include "Power Clicking" for elevator call buttons. This will be hailed as breakthrough technology because it gives users a realistic feeling that elevators really do come quicker, the more times per second you request them.

Several weeks after the Microsoft Elevator 1.1 upgrades are complete, an elevator user will become trapped between the 19th and 20th floors of an office building in Des Moines, Iowa.

The user will pick up the emergency phone, new in version 1.1, and it will automatically dial the Microsoft Elevator Support Service. Twenty minutes later a computer will answer the phone and play a message which says: "Thank you for calling MESS, all of our representatives are currently assisting other customers who got stuck before you did. Please avoid breathing and stay on the line as long as possible."

Fifteen minutes later a MESS rep will come on the line and say, "Thank you for calling MESS, what is your product registration number?" The user will shout "I'm trapped!" The rep will say "We prefer the term Exit Impaired, sir, but please continue, what floor were you trying to reach?"

The user will scream "What difference does that make? I'm trapped between the 19th and 20th floors of an office building in Des Moines, Iowa." The MESS rep will laugh and hang up, absolutely sure it is a prank call because there are no buildings that tall in Des Moines, Iowa.

But there are! The user will call again and demand to speak to a supervisor. Fifteen minutes later a Senior MESS Rep will come on the line and talk the user through the operation of the Diagnostic Information Resource Executable.

Twenty minutes later the support engineer will say to the trapped user, "Now, all that's left is to confirm the changes, so switch to the confirmation window."

Without thinking, the user will press Ctrl-Tab, which switches windows on most Windows products, only to find himself plunging over 200 feet to his death.

At a press conference later that day, Microsoft will state "If the user had read the Microsoft Elevator Read Doc file, he would have known that, while Ctrl-Tab switches windows on most Windows products, in Microsoft Elevator 1.1 this keystroke is assigned to the Direct Emergency Access Transfer Hatch(TM) feature."

When pressed for more information, the Microsoft representative will admit that the Direct Emergency Access Transfer Hatch(TM) is not discussed in either volume of the User Manual. However, she will quickly point out that it is mentioned in Appendix G of the Microsoft Elevator Resource Kit, a set of 3 CD-ROMs available direct from Microsoft for only $149 during the Microsoft "We Make Killer Apps" promotional campaign.

When the press ask for more details about the Direct Emergency Access Transfer Hatch(TM) a Microsoft technical representative will step up to the podium and say "It's like this cool, way-fast, downward-opening hatch door. It consists of like 99% of the floor area of the elevator."

The next day analysts will praise Microsoft for providing such innovative safety features, and for donating $50,000 worth of Microsoft "Killer App" rebates to the Des Moines school district in memory of the deceased user. Later that day Microsoft stock will close at a new record high.

Notes:

* The following quotes from Microsoft's web site:

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[http://www.microsoft.com/misc/cpyright.htm]

** The following quotes from a 1997 Microsoft press release:

REDMOND, Wash. March 10, 1997...The Windows CE licensing program is designed to assist manufacturers focused on a variety of industrial and consumer electronics devices, such as phones, handheld terminals for vertical applications, other types of terminals, industrial control, point-of-sale devices, and automotive applications...Products could range from systems used in industrial applications, such as shop floor automation, to consumer electronic devices.
[http://www.microsoft.com/corpinfo/press/1997/Mar97/oakannpr.htm]

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