Analogous business practices of McDonalds, Wal-Mart, and Microsoft and thoughts on Open Source and Globalization

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In their 1990 revision of "Free to Choose", Milton and Rose Friedman appended an annex concluding: "...we are recognizing the dangers of an over-governed society, coming to understand that good objectives can be perverted by bad means, that reliance on the freedom of people to control their own lives in accordance with their own values is the surest way to archive the full potential of a great society." Their critique of the growth of bureaucracy in, and regulation by, the US Federal Government in the latter half of the 20th century was well founded. However, no amount of de-regulation, during the Republican controlled political era of 1980s, would play a role in the perversion that would plague the globalized market today. During the era of big government, many corporations were already realizing the potential to expand into new global markets. They realized that in order to do so, they would need to market their products and services in new ways.

Consumers of desktop computers systems have taken Microsoft Corporation into their confidence, and not on the part of any action by Microsoft to earn their trust. The decision was made on their behalf by corporations and government bodies. Today, despite having been found in direct violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act and guilty of monopolistic practices by a total of 9 US Federal Judges, Microsoft holds 97% of the personal and business desktop computer operating system market share. Consumers subjectively share in the plight of IBM Corp. and The US Department of Justice, seemingly unable to act in force. But how did it happen? Doesn't the traditional capitalist market prosper most when an abundance of competition spawns innovation? If the system worked as designed, how could the product with the dominant market share be so deplorable? Unfortunately, Microsoft's market stance is not unique; it is part of a growing and alarming trend. Many answers lie in the Globalization of World markets and a process termed McDonaldization.

Changes in globalized markets are reciprocally interdependent on the advances in information technology that enable them. Corporations have formed a dependency on business intelligence data; allowing them to execute asynchronous strategies in different regional markets. The impact of the infusion of corporate presence into foreign markets is that companies have become more competitive, and this has led to aggressive new advertising and marketing strategies. Traditionally, as globalization advocates would argue, more choices in the market is beneficial to the consumer, but we are realizing that this is not the case and that globalization is simply allowing existing monopolies to proliferate more freely. With domestic markets completely saturated, conglomerate corporations see the greatest growth potential abroad.

These three companies have asserted a global stance and have executed business strategies that have realized the power of branding, allowing them to ascend to insurmountable positions in their respective markets. The impacts into domestic society are far greater reaching in consequence than can be addressed here, but in light of globalization, domestic corporations entering into foreign markets have prompted an exchange of cultures. Regardless of their origin, people frequently have difficulty discerning the acts and values systems of foreign governments from those of it's citizens, much less business entities. This is especially concerning given present day world opinion of America post 9/11. The egregious business practices of these three corporations reflect poorly upon us as a nation, and the alarming trend with which we passively accept this situation is highly detrimental, serving only to bolster the appearance of imperialistic foreign policies, both militarily and socio-economically.

Today, omnipresent advertising sears into every day life in the most bizarre and intrusive locations. Every last visible surface has become a marketing medium. The ramification is a phenomenon sociologist dub as “religious consumerism”, “commercialism”, or the desire to associate with brands. In fact, some corporation's business models are entirety dependent on branding (ex., Apple Corporation). The result of this paradigm shift: people who feel defined as individuals, not by self consciousness, autonomy of thought, or unique personal convictions, but by associations with corporate identities: the car they drive, the clothes they wear, their cell phone service, their alma mater, their credit card, their religious and political associations, their caffeinated beverage preference. This increasingly homogenized society of non-distinct citizens is exactly the class of consumer that the three companies at hand desire. Bombarded with marketing and ads from birth, consumers form deep-rooted, subconscious associations that guarantee corporations market share and prolonged customer loyalty.

These corporations are entirely autonomous entities and this essay is not an attempt to compare their organizational structures, nor is it an argumentative text against them or globalization. It is an observatory analysis of their analogous business practices, goals, and shared affects on society though the manipulative use of technology, branding, and marketing. First, a pragmatic historical review of each company's chronology is required, followed by several analogies of discrete business practices. Finally an introduction to a global phenomenon of Open Source / Free Software that has shown the potential to undermine and even reverse the negative effects of the Microsoft Corporation's global monopoly and has illustrated a desire by the market to return to freedom of choice.

McDonalds

The success of the McDonalds brothers, and later that of Ray Kroc, can be traced to the works of Max Webber, a turn-of-the-20th-century German sociologist, who's research on the workforce ethics and process was the model Henry Ford applied to the assembly line. Not surprisingly, it was also inspiration for the methods used by Aldoph Hitler's SS during the Holocaust, who were responsible for the extermination of approximately 7 million Jews in Europe. It applies four major principals to the fast food industry: Efficiency, Calculability, Predictability, and Control. The term McDonaldization, as coined by sociologist George Ritzer, describes the appalling application of these principals to many other facets of modern society, including, but not limited to: entertainment, media, communication, health care, criminal justice, faith/religion, mortality, family structure, higher education, sexuality, politics, etc., and the attempt to convert these facets into rational systems.

Efficiency, as it applies to fast food, is the continual striving of workers and managers to accomplish assigned tasks more quickly with less effort. The result is that managers and owners extract more work out of their employees while patrons are served more quickly. The products are simplified and homogenized. Tasks traditionally performed by service workers, such as trash removal, beverage or condiment preparation, are offloaded to the customer. As it applies to McDonaldization of society, efficiency is most commonly linked to the contagious increase in the pace of life. Everything from the workplace to vacation is affected, and the underlying value behind enjoying the passage of time is devalued. The constant urge be active, involved, or in motion results and global anxiety ensues; hence the superficial modern American lifestyle.

Predictability and Calculability, as they apply to fast food, relate to the use of high levels of mathematical accuracy in any process, specifically the measuring of input and output quantities. By quantifying portions with numerical standards, by focusing on quantity-instead-of-quality, and by standardizing everything from the menu to the uniform to the supplies used to build the facility, predictability is gained. With an emphasis on quantification, a focus is placed on the larger quantity portions of mediocre, lower quality food. I.e., a meal served in any location of a McDonalds is identical in portion and taste. Discipline, order, systemization, formalization, consistency, and methodical operation are rewarded by patrons upon which comfort is taken in the certainty of products and services, especially when in foreign environments. Outside of the fast food industry, these values can be personified by any number of quintessential modern American values, but specifically lifestyles of routine or exuberance. Examples include the willingness to tolerate daily monotony (ex., commuter traffic). The suburbanization and homogeneous nature of the American landscape. The constant emphasis placed on the acquisition of wealth through employment and the suggestion that meaning and happiness in life can be derived from the acquisition of wealth. The constant over stimulation by the media, marketing, and entertainment industries emphasizing sexually explicit and gratuitously violent content and programming designed to entice primordial desires. The manipulation and commercialization of the human psyche.

Control and the dehumanization of labor is very straightforward. The value of work is diminished by the application of routine procedures to all tasks. Because humans represent the greatest source of uncertainty in a rationalized system, complex tasks are broken down into discrete, simplified ones. Processes that can be accomplished by a machine are, and where they cannot, human behavior is converted into machine-like behavior. The human worker is relieved of control and decision making responsibilities. In practice, dehumanization is most visible in conversations with fast food employees where dialog is constituted by a scripted series of prompts and replies. In the kitchen, food is shipped in pre-cut and in preprocessed form. Instead of employees “cooking”, they are more so “preparing” food (i.e., heating and packaging). Certain tasks are delegated to specialized employees; the kitchen resembles a factory. The process works but is unbecoming of human nature, and eventually the employee begins to reject the irrationality of the rationalized system. The fast food industry therefor has the highest employee turnover rate of any other sector, and employees are rarely ever privy to benefits.

Other underlying economic impacts of the fast food industry are vast and wide. The effects fast food has on suppliers has forced radical changes in the agricultural and livestock industries. The enormous demand for supplies such as potatoes and beef has caused large corporations such as ConAgra to become involved. Frequently, through price fixing, small family owned farm businesses are forced to consolidate or enter into contracts with larger suppliers. Cattle processing plants operated by large suppliers are notorious for lackluster policies on worker safety conditions. Frequently, immigrant workers are employed to work in inhumane conditions that resemble accounts from Upton Sinclair's “The Jungle”. Use of immigrant workers places them outside the protection of OSHA or USDA safety inspections. Additionally, any fines government regulatory bodies that are able to levy against large suppliers are simply absorbed as operational overhead.

Wal-Mart

Sam Walton reinvented supply chain management and built an empire around a bold retail operations model: reduce costs, pass it on to the customer, and focus on volume. His original stance as a small-time retailer worked well. Playing the role of the underdog, the Bentonville, AK startup took advantage of the unwillingness by larger retailers (Sears, Kaufmanns, Etc.) to enter into rural American communities. His original intentions were genuine; having grown up in rural America and worked his way through college, he knew that small town businesses had logistics problems which translated to high costs for consumers. He believed that such communities should have affordable alternatives, and it paid off. Sam Walton built a small empire of stores in small communities and towns across the American mid-west. Wal-Mart broke sales and profit records throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s, elevating Sam Walton the wealthiest man in America. At the time of his death in 1992, Sam Walton appointed a new executive management team, charged with leading the company in new directions while maintaining his legacy of pro-employee and pro-customer policies.

Between 1993 and 2003, Wal-Mart's annual sales more than quadrupled from $55 billion to $245 billion. The side effects of this perpetually expanding operation lead to less-than-glamorous media attention. Trouble began when investigations by the media found that Wal-Mart was buying merchandise from suppliers alleged to be purveyors of child labor. Also, under the guise of legacy Walton'esqe policies of treating employees well by maintaining close manager/ employee relations, Wal-Mart had repeatedly undermined efforts by stores to unionize, going so far as to threating closure of stores. With 1.2 million employees, which made them the largest private employer in the United States, and 4500+ stores world wide, such a move would is not as unsound as it seems. Also, a pattern was emerging and a grass-roots campaign was using the Internet to coordinate anti Wal-Mart movements in small town America. With the shift in manufacturing and mining industry overseas, many small towns in America had entered a “post-industrial” era of depression. Wal-Mart's entrance was suddenly a destructive force to any such town. Wal-Mart would open a new store and begin targeting local businesses. Wal-Mart could engage in pricing wars of attrition, even absorbing a loss for any duration of time as needed to monopolize the market. Once the commercial district of a community had been abolished, consumers would be left with few choices. Consumers aren't the only ones effected by these tactics. With other businesses gone, local government's businesses tax revenue from would become entirely dependent on the presence of a Wal-Mart. The increased tax revenue may seem appealing initially, and Wal-Mart's “Community Outreach” efforts frequently offer to help pay for municipal infrastructure upgrades to help facilitate the building of a Wal-Mart. This would all change later, as Wal-Mart began consolidating locations into Wal-Mart Super Centers. By pulling out of communities, consumers would be forced to commute further and the local government would be left bankrupted.

Additionally, their juggernaut like growth meant they had the ability influence and manipulate manufacturers, vendors, and suppliers with their inexorable purchasing power. They could dictate pricing and have profound effects on a supplier's business model. Many such businesses frequently had to re-architect their entire organizational structure to meet demand for Wal-Mart's purchasing requirements. Because no business would turn down contracts with Wal-Mart, and because Wal-Mart can dictate the price at which products are purchased, doing business meant greater overhead and smaller margins on products. Manufacturers would either be forced out of business (ex. Rubbermaid) or be forced to move their workforce overseas, where operations costs were lower due to lack of government regulations on worker health & safety policies and environmental laws.

Microsoft

The history of Microsoft is wrought with missed deadlines and questionable business practices. Their first successful business deal was a complete accident: a contract with IBM to develop the operating system for the first desktop PC. IBM approached Microsoft, but a long-standing mutual agreement between Microsoft, who's business at the time was limited to programming languages, and a competing firm, not to interfere in each-other's respective markets prevented them from bidding. When Microsoft learned that their competition had turned down IBM's offer, Microsoft breeched it's agreement. They agreed to license the their competitor's product, modify it slightly, and resell it. Ironically, the product that Microsoft had promised to deliver wasn't even completely written yet, nor was it originally developed or owned by Microsoft. Moreover, it would end up taking so long to accomplish that they would miss their deadline by months. Not 10 years earlier, Microsoft's Bill Gates and co-founder Paul Allen had gotten their start in the software industry by stealing numerous hours of time on Harvard's computer labs to work on a commercial venture that would become Microsoft's initial product offering. And so went business practices at Microsoft under the guidance of Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer: lie, cheat, steal. With a guaranteed revenue stream from the IBM contract and a monopoly over the Operating System market, Microsoft grew and decided to entire the applications market. Many attempts were made to develop genuine products to compete with existing applications on the market (i.e., word processors, spreadsheets, etc). However, as one abysmal failure after another tanked, the IBM model was applied: Copy or reverse engineer ideas and features from the competing products, integrate them into their own product, and then settle out-of-court when patent and lawsuits arise, leaving the market bereft of competition. In this manor, the great mediocrity of commercial desktop software arose to it's current state today, and many companies (Lotus, Novell, Real, Stac Inc., Go Inc., Netscape) were bankrupted or crippled along the way.

Analogies

What these three companies share is a desire not only to dominate their respective markets, but to ingrain their brand name into consumers' mindset as syndicated “household brands”, essentially creating a one-to-one relationship between their company and the market their market. All three are led by extremely competitive and ruthless executive management teams, too whom more frequently than to the product or service offering, credit should be given for accomplishments. In the process, they have all attracted media attention above and beyond the level of criticism to be expected of the market leader. In many ways, the questionable marketing and sales approach of these companies can be compared:

- All three companies prey on the uneducated and uninformed consumer. Wal-Mart does so inherently by moving into rural communities. Although that may seem like an entirely vindictive stereotype of American citizens in those locales, consider the amount of poverty that has crippled many small rural communities in America as a result of the off-shoring of mining or manufacturing industry jobs in the later half of the 20th century. In the post-industrial communities, where Sam Walton's original intentions during the 1950s/60s may have been genuine, today when taken into account with Globalization, are tactics that are viewed as entirely predatory in nature. Wal-Mart relies on consumers lack of understanding that their patronage fuels demand for the import of products manufactured overseas, which ironically is reciprocally self-destructive pattern to the blue-collar / working class customer who Wal-Mart targets with it's extremely competitive pricing scheme.
- McDonald's approach on consumer ignorance is two-pronged: first, they create brand-association very early on in the impressionable minds of children by marketing directly to them using gimmicks such as cartoons, toys, and playgrounds on premises. The children approach is a tactic learned from the Tobacco Industry personified in the famous memo entitled “Brand Imprinting for Later Actuation in Life”. Secondly, they appeal to a new generation of consumers with their speed of service, convenience, affordability, and quantity-over-quality approach. These values are especially appealing to under-privileged consumers, who are frequently of minority status, either via ethnicity or by social standing (single parents, etc.). Such consumers are unable or unwilling to understand the negative health consequences of consumption of fast food; for most it is simply not a priority.
- In the same way that Wal-Mart will enter into community, engage in price-wars of attrition, and eliminate the ability of local businesses to compete, Microsoft will do the same with any sector of the software industry. If Microsoft decides to develop a product, instead of innovating or developing it

from scratch, they have a long standing history of simply stealing patented and copyrighted ideas, algorithms, and features from competing products and integrating them into their equivalent. The resulting lawsuit is drawn out for along as possible by their extensive litigation staff until the competing business capitulates due to excessive legal fees and damages incurred by loss of sales. Most business settle out of court for some minuscule amount of monetary reimbursement in comparison to what Microsoft will make selling the product. Frequently it is only sufficient to prevent bankruptcy and repay investors and shareholders. Once the software component has been integrated into Microsoft Windows and bundled with the next version, the software market is essentially left bereft of competition. This is precisely what happened to the Web Browser, Word Processor and Media Player markets. Additionally, unfounded but universally understood concerns about incompatible formats make it impossible for any other company to enter the market in question after the demand for competing products is no longer there. Microsoft relies on customer ignorance to the fact that alternatives do, or once did, exist.

- The negative health effects and mediocre quality of McDonaldized fast food can be easily compared the quality of Microsoft software. Puns about “bugs” excluded, despite the existence of a plethora of healthier, more cost-effective options, the unwillingness to investigate alternatives is shared by the desktop software consumer and fast food patron. Take for example the horde of viruses, malware, and SPAM that plague the modern Internet enabled computer running Microsoft Windows. The exploitable code that hackers are able to find and manipulate is the direct result of stagnation of the development process of the Microsoft product in question. As an excellent example, most of the recent flaws that plague Microsoft were exploited in Internet Explorer, the victor of the web browser war. After Microsoft won the web browser war with Netscape Communications, it essentially discontinued development on Internet Explorer, leaving it vulnerable to attack by hackers.
- Alternative options to Microsoft's products do exist, but in the same way that McDonanlds appeals to consumers' laziness, Microsoft has gone to lengths to reduce the complexity of the User Interface of Windows to the point where users no longer are required to understand the core, fundamental concepts of computing. The result: every computer in the world has an homogenized interface, which is analogous with the McDonaldization values of Calculability and Predictability of dining experience and the preparation of food.
- Although the user interface chosen by Microsoft is far from optimal, they've effectively locked themselves into that design by standardizing on it in earlier revisions of products and by not offering alternatives. Because of the “dumbing down” of consumers, switching from one user interface to another would involve a learning curve. Consumers are generally undesirable of changes that would involve some degree of effort or work to understand. This is analogous to a fast food consumer's unwillingness to cook their own food or understand the industry to which they are a dependent consumer.
- And finally Microsoft's compulsorily licensing stance with PC vendors is analogous with Wal-Mart's strong-arm handling of suppliers. In the same way that Wal-Mart can dictate pricing to manufacturers of retail goods, Microsoft

can compel computer hardware manufacturers to bundle it's software packages with systems or fear reprisal by disqualification from Microsoft's "Hardware Compatibility List". Exemption from which would erode consumer confidence in the hardware vendor's products.

Open Source / Free Software

Open Source / Free Software (OSS/FS) is not a corporate entity, a market trend, or a patented technology. Open Source is a process. It's a "paradigm shift". It's a robust model for developing reliable, secure, portable, and scalable software. It's a way of licensing software free of compulsory terms and conditions on usage. It's a rejection of conventional thinking and a declaration of desire by the market for choices. When examined non-abstract, it's a large, globally distributed community of software developers collaborating through the Internet. The developers involved are an experienced and esteemed group, often interleaved in the commercial software industry. They are a self-selected group of individuals, thus resulting in a higher level of motivation than any software developer working solely on the behalf of monetary reimbursement (although one can make a lucrative living as an OSS/FS developer). By making the software entirely free and by making the source code freely available to anyone, organizations and individuals are at liberty to reuse the code for commercial and non-commercial uses. OSS/FS utilizes the peer-review process to ensure the quality of code written. The analogy of a "bazaar" compared to "cathedral" is frequently used to describe the process.

Open Source / Free Software has been adopted by fortune 500 companies, governments, and educational institutions around the world. It can be found on servers, desktops, embedded devices, and mission critical systems such as aerospace and defense. The core protocols that constitute the Internet, and the draft protocol designs underneath them, were developed on OSS/FS platforms on behalf of the Dept. of Defense DARPA project. The software that runs 2/3 of the web servers on the Internet, as well as the thirteen core 'name servers' that enable the Internet, have always run free software written on the OSS/FS platform.

Software developed by the OSS/FS community is not a new concept. The origins can be traced to the first academic installations of computers during the 1950s, 60, and as late as the 70s, when source code sharing was a common practice and efficiency was crucial to making software run on the extremely limited resources of computers during the era. However, during the growth of usage of computers by businesses during the 1980s/90s, software became a lucrative business and the need for rapid development of commercial software marginalized the OSS/FS community. As the speed and resources of computers increased, less emphasis was placed on quality and optimization and more so on features and user interface.

Today, for almost every commercial application on the market, there is an OSS/FS equivalent. If to exist not simply for the virtue of offering consumers a choice, OSS/FS equivalents tend to cost less to implement (to say nothing of free licensing), have richer feature sets, and are of higher quality. When that is not the case, the source code of OSS/FS project is available for an organization to contribute to and adapt to their needs.

Reacting to demand from customers for more “open” solutions, Oracle, Sun, IBM, and a host of other firms have all adopted OSS/FS models in some fashion. The demand for “open” solutions relates to desire by customers for interoperability of solutions, and the desire to be free to move from one platform to another with minimal difficulty. “Open” can be defined as products and solutions based less on proprietary models and more so on well documented standards. It is often overlooked that, statistically, most of the software written by professional programmers is not for sale; it is written strictly for private use within organizations. Here especially, where commercial software products used in the development process would traditionally be proprietary and incompatible (having a contagious effect on the resulting software developed using them), vendors are rewarded for adopting OSS/FS models which give programmers and systems integrators more control and freedom and simplify the process of integrating different products together. With regards to commercial software, general opinion dictates that it takes too long to develop, costs too much as a final product, and doesn't work very well once completed. Much of that problem stems from the fact that software industry is really a service industry laboring under the persistent and unfounded illusion that it a manufacturing industry. This is self evident in that most commercial software companies generate the majority of revenue in support services (installation, customization, repair) rather than actual licenses fees.

One excellent case study of the advantages of the OSS/FS model over proprietary alternatives is the history of the UNIX operating system. When AT&T began licensing the source code to major UNIX vendors, including Sun, HP, Digital, SGI, and IBM, each began to develop a proprietary (and incompatible) version that ran on each company's respective hardware platform. With the exception of the occasional agreement on basic interoperability standards, most UNIX vendors engaged in bitter rivalry that left the market divided, left vendors vulnerable, and put customers and application developers in frequently compromising positions. Microsoft, with an inferior product offering, was able to take advantage of the situation by offering a low cost alternative. Doing so gave them the stranglehold on the market. Today, most commercial versions of UNIX have been marginalized, and those that have not have adopted OSS/FS strategies (ex., Sun, IBM). Today, UNIX-like operating systems such as GNU/Linux now hold the largest percentage of both the Internet and corporate server market, and that's only going to grow as organizations realize the advantages of OSS/FS.

Impacts

Despite the efforts of special interest groups, lobbyists, and PR firms with seemingly unlimited budgets, to counter the efforts of consumer advocacy groups and public awareness campaigns, changes are coming to the retail and fast food industries. The 1990s ushered in a new era of journalism that allocates a greater volume of attention to corporations. Ironically, the frequently sensationalist nature of this media coverage, which frequently exists solely entertain it's audience while selling ads, tends to backfire on the same corporate entities that promote them.

For McDonalds and the fast-food industry, the prolonged negative effects of exposure to and consumption of the product have taken a tole on the health of customers. Nearly 2 out of 3 Americans is now overweight, 1 out of 3 obese.

Consumers awareness is beginning to grow as the side effects of obesity (diabetes, heart disease, cancer to name a few) reach pandemic proportions. This awareness opens up new opportunities for food service business to compete with fast food by offering healthier alternatives while still utilizing the McDonaldized processes that appeal to convenience and affordability consumers demand.

For Wal-Mart, a mismanaged public relations campaign on issues such as anti-union policies, supplier relations, community impacts, gender based discriminatory policies, and child labor have eroded public support. Although Wal-Mart's income and sales revenue increase every year, the seeds of a grass roots campaign have been planted. A movement to reinvigorate small business in America is growing. Communities across America are armed with the tools and knowledge they need to prevent Wal-Mart's entry into their realm.

But more important that retail and food, for far too long consumers have taken for granted the perhaps the most critical of products and services that make all other aspects of modern our lifestyle possible: Software. For Microsoft, the future is less ambiguous. Although the negative effects of Microsoft's monopolistic practices on society are less visible than that of Wal-Mart or McDonalds, OSS/FS is having the desired effect and consumers will soon be asking the same questions asked of Wal-Mart and McDonalds. This is precisely the type of attention the Microsoft PR policy abhors, as their marketing strategy depends entirely on creating the impression that no viable alternatives exist.

A recent plague of security concerns in numerous Microsoft products has eroded public support and opinion of the organization to an irrecoverable state. Consumers are questioning why Microsoft leaves all but a few elite customers in an upper echelon vulnerable to attack. A series of internal memos leaked from Microsoft strategists dubbed by the community as “The Halloween Memos” indicate that Microsoft sees the OSS/FS process and community as a direct threat to market share with which it's present business model is simply incompatible, and therefore cannot compete with. The catatonic behavior with which they have attempted to confront and undermine OSS/FS, often associating it with socialist, anti-capitalist ideals, only works to bolster the OSS/FS movement. OSS/FS alternatives to Microsoft keynote products, including the Mozilla / Firefox Web Browser, the GNU/Linux Operating System, the Apache web server, the OpenOffice office productivity suite, all continue to grown in popularity while gaining market share. The European Union (EU) recently found Microsoft 's business practices monopolistic and compelled them to un-bundle products sold in Europe. Additionally, the conversion to, and adoption of OSS/FS development models by Microsoft's biggest competitors, including Oracle, Sun, Apple and IBM, further isolates Microsoft from the rest of the market. Given the availability of viable alternatives to Microsoft products and the slow and gradual rate at which they erode Microsoft's market share, OSS/FS proponents have reasons to be optimistic.

The effects of OSS/FS on Globalization are impossible to predict. Most importantly, the OSS/FS model represents a desire in the industry to return to freedom of choice in the market. The concepts of OSS/FS also have strong undertones of democracy, liberty and freedom, and as their usage expands, these values are proliferated with them. This is especially important, as OSS/FS has a large following and potential for growth in south-east Asia, especially in China.

China has already shown the greatest potential for economic influence over the global economy this century. Further, OSS/FS is building a strong base in it's origins: academia. Primary and higher learning institutions around the world, needing to reduce the overhead of technology curricula, and predicting the change in market trends, are rejecting curricula often based on subsided or donated proprietary technologies by vendors looking to instill vendor loyalty in faculty and students.

OSS/FS also represents a rejection of McDonaldization in society. For example in I.T., software professionals who elect to use OSS/FS do so without the support of a large corporate entity behind the name brand. Therefore, the learning curve of I.T. professionals who administrate OSS/FS systems is significantly greater than that of those who administrate commercial software systems. Unlike their counter-parts, who have been sheltered by oversimplified graphical interfaces, OSS/FS administrators are required to understand complex underlying concepts, protocols, and standards. I.e., in the same way that fast food preparation has been dehumanized and oversimplified into acute, unskilled tasks permitting for employment by any demographic, similar are the responsibilities and learning curves of the Microsoft or commercial software administrator. Where as the OSS/FS administrator may be required, from time-to-time, to draw from their comprehensive knowledge to modify software to suite their needs or read the source code to troubleshoot a problem, the option to modify commercial software or view it's source code simply does not exist. Likewise, upon termination of employment, the fast food employee, in similar form to the Microsoft administrator, retains no marketable skill sets in a kitchen environment, *except* for those proprietary processes designated by the fast food company, having never been given the option to deviate from pre-defined policy and procedure with the intention of improving the product.

And finally, unlike large international firms looking to expand into the next market, the OSS/FS movement has no goals of conquest. Instead, the shared goals of OSS/FS projects and the people who compose them, working either autonomously or in cooperation with each other, are strictly to develop secure and reliable alternatives. What's more, the OSS/FS process blurs the distinction between the traditional role of developer, tester, and user insofar as software the development process is concerned, thereby redistributing authority and responsibility evenly. The influence of individuals who advocate usage in any role of the OSS/FS process are the catalyst for changes in the business and development models of software developers in the private, public, and academic sector. Thus, the people are the change; and the change has shown not only the potential to challenge Microsoft's monopoly , but reverse a the growing negative effects of McDonaldization of society. And although you may frequently see an IT professional wearing a garment embroidered with the logo of their favorite OSS/FS project (perhaps their Operating System or Web Browser of choice), the individual is not advocating devotion to a large international conglomerate corporation, but to a project, a process, a mindset, and a belief system, to whom they subjectively and entirely voluntarily belong.

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