

Microsoft vs. justice department 12363

[Technology](#), [Computer](#)



In late October 1997, the Justice Department was again interrogating Microsoft. They have been at this since 1993, when they took over from the frustrated Federal Trade Commission. The computer industry of today is exploding more and more as time passes, and competition follows. I think this is a good topic because the world today is surrounded by computers, and it will continue to be this way. It is safe to say that Bill Gates and Microsoft are leading this new revolution, maybe even too much. Microsoft Windows is no doubt a monopoly, but is it a legal one?

A legal monopoly is subject to government-regulated prices. Microsoft Windows is an example of this, and its 'Windows' software is used worldwide on every IBM-compatible PC sold today. Patent laws protect Microsoft's idea, and this is why they are a monopoly. Now back to the question at hand. Is Microsoft a legal monopoly? Microsoft Windows is a legal Monopoly, but Microsoft is an illegal monopoly because they force consumers to use other software that comes along with Windows.

Netscape Navigator is a well-known World Wide Web browsing tool that is not affiliated with Microsoft. Microsoft Internet Explorer (MIE) is Microsoft's very similar version of a World Wide Web browsing tool that comes along with Windows. Every PC with Windows 95 or newer has MIE embedded into Windows. It is possible to remove the MIE icon from your desktop, but removing MIE files from your computer will result in a loss of necessary files needed to run Windows. Therefore, you cannot remove MIE from your computer.

This has brought much concern to the Justice Department. If every IBM-compatible PC comes with Windows, and Windows comes with MIE, then why buy Netscape Navigator? The Justice Department feels this is an unfair advantage. Microsoft is using its monopolistic powers through its Windows patent, to force consumers to use other software. This severely brings down Netscape's, and other competitions profits. It is also extremely unjust.

Microsoft argues that they are just being a tough competitor, and are trying to compete against Netscape. Facing a contempt citation in 1998, Microsoft signed an agreement giving computer makers freedom to install Windows 95 without an MIE icon. So once again, the icon is gone. MIE is still installed, and when an Internet user tries to dial-up, or login to an Internet connection, MIE pops up asking to be the default browser.

The case is very ongoing, and is still going on today. The judge did rule that Microsoft is acting in a monopolistic way, but has yet to decide if Microsoft's behavior breaks anti-trust laws. The two sides went back to court in Washington, on February 22nd. This would be the last time in court before the judge decides that the anti-trust laws have been broken. This decision, which could change the world's computer industry, may not be expected for a couple more months.

In Chicago, the two sides continue to try and work out a settlement. There would probably be a settlement if Microsoft releases the source code for Windows to all competitors, but if not then the judge will have four main options: split up Microsoft into separate companies, force Microsoft to open

their source code, bar Microsoft from giving companies huge discounts to use their software, or create several identical versions of Microsoft.

One of the many points brought up in Microsoft's favor is that if they are forced to break into many smaller companies, software prices will rapidly go up. It would make it much more expensive to get the software needed to surf the web. All the different companies would be competing for their own web browser, or their own form of Windows. This would give the other companies a fair chance to compete, but many other companies would come up with different versions of Microsoft's Windows, which is unnecessary. I believe that there is no need to break up Windows, or release the source code. Microsoft Internet Explorer is the main problem, and it shouldn't break beyond that.

At home, school, work and just about everywhere that we go today computers are involved. The subject of the Microsoft case is a great controversy and should be discussed in classrooms. Microsoft is a huge corporation that has created many wonderful jobs and services for many people, but I believe that because of how they attached Microsoft Internet Explorer to Windows, they have taken advantage of their Windows patent. This is a good example of an illegal monopoly. The idea of forcing customers to use their product is a good idea for their company to break down the competition, but in this case is illegal and undeserved.

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