Effects of the Single UNIX Specification and CDE

In February, we asked our readers what difference the Single UNIX Specification and/or the Common Desktop Environment (CDE) make to them and their companies. Here's what they told us.

{Editor's Note: Some readers refer to the Single UNIX Specification by a previous name, Spec 1170.]

CDE and Spec 1170 will make a big difference, because we port our product to all popular Unix hosts, [DEC's] VMS and Windows NT. VMS and most Unix support these two specs. Windows NT is a different breed of cat.

Jim Palmer
Irvine, CA

They have made almost no difference for two reasons:

1. We ship most of our product on platforms (like SunOS) that don't support the stuff yet.

2. Even when vendors support the spec at the OS level, they botch the *include* files so things still don't compile across different platforms without #ifdef gyrations.

What is needed is a compilation-level standard rather than an OS API standard. The ANSI C and C++ efforts have done much more for portability than the Unix unification efforts.

Tony Aiuto
Great Neck, NY

To system vendors it has made a difference, because multiple vendors are moving toward a common goal. The impact on customers and ISVs will not happen until the "big" vendors (Sun, HP, IBM, Digital, SCO) all deliver it in their products and side effects—such as common user documentation—appear.

Michael Condry
Mountain View, CA

We are an independent software vendor. The Single UNIX Specification better positions Unix-based products to hold the middle ground between legacy mainframe and desktop proprietary systems. It will secure Unix's hold on the server market over NT. The Common Desktop Environment will position Unix-based products more firmly in the still up-for-grabs market of power tools. With the century date-change challenge looming over mainframe land and the increasing need to integrate that world into modern client/server architectures, the power tools market is going to be a critical area of near- and longer-term growth.

Dale Way
San Francisco, CA

Spec 1170 is a good idea, and CDE is a great interface. For CDE to work, I need seamless application cross-platform capability between MS Windows applications and CDE applications. I prefer a Unix kernel to drive my desktop, but I also need to conform to corporate products from Windows. Until this is done, I cannot consider CDE.

Pat Hogan
Vancouver, BC, Canada

After polling our internal experts, we see that CDE has not made any difference in our Unix strategy. It also does not seem to be a priority with our clients. It is tough to judge, based on low initial interest, how much effect it will have on the future.

Carol Schmitt
Dallas, TX

We are a Unix consulting shop, providing professional services to business users of Unix. Regarding 1170, there has been no impact. It's a great initiative, and I hope vendors eventually adopt it, but we don't have it yet and must still program around the uniqueness of each vendor's Unix. (We use at least four here: SCO, HP, Sun and IBM.)

The impact of CDE has been minimal. Most of our clients use Unix in a character-based business environment where CDE is a non-issue.

Larry Karnis
Brampton, Ontario, Canada

As an independent software vendor, I can say that CDE has made the path clear for doing GUI development on Unix. Without it, we would have pursued Windows as our main development platform. Now we have two look-and-feel platforms to support—Windows and CDE—instead of three or more; that is manageable.

The Single UNIX Spec isn't very useful yet. Posix is there now but incomplete. We can live with it. If this new spec makes its way into AIX, Solaris and HP-UX, that would be a welcome change. Even the Windows API has fragmented, and it isn't nearly as old as Unix.

Mike MacFaden
San Jose, CA

We are an independent software developer, and all of our programming is done in ANSI C. We built our code to be portable from Unix platform

Effects of the Single UNIX Specification and CDE

to Unix platform. We have not seen any change since the various companies agreed to support Spec 1170. We think Spec 1170 is a great idea, as it at least defines what an OS has to have.

As far as CDE, we do not use any Unix GUI. Our applications are business applications, and they are displayed in two different ways: using terminals and with a Windows GUI.

Gary Halvorsen
Arroyo Grande, CA

We are an independent software vendor, and we expect the Single Unix Specification to make a big difference, but only if the vendors adhere to the specification soon. CDE does not affect us yet. Also, I have been battling to get hold of both specs on the Internet.

Hendrik Vermooten
Wierda Park, South Africa

We are an ISV, and we develop a product that must be ported to SunOS, Solaris, AIX and HP-UX. All the specs in the world do not help us unless all the various operating systems conform. We still have a lot of OS-specific variations in our code.

Margie Templeton
Los Angeles, CA

While both Spec 1170 and CDE are excellent ideas on paper, the delays in the industry's implementation of these standards have made them almost irrelevant. CDE is a specification that should have made a common desktop Unix a reality. However, as it is still not implemented by many Unix vendors, many ISVs have already opted for an MS Windows look-and-feel for their Unix implementations, rather than waiting for CDE. The delays in producing a CDE environment have actually made implementation of alternatives necessary if an ISV is to
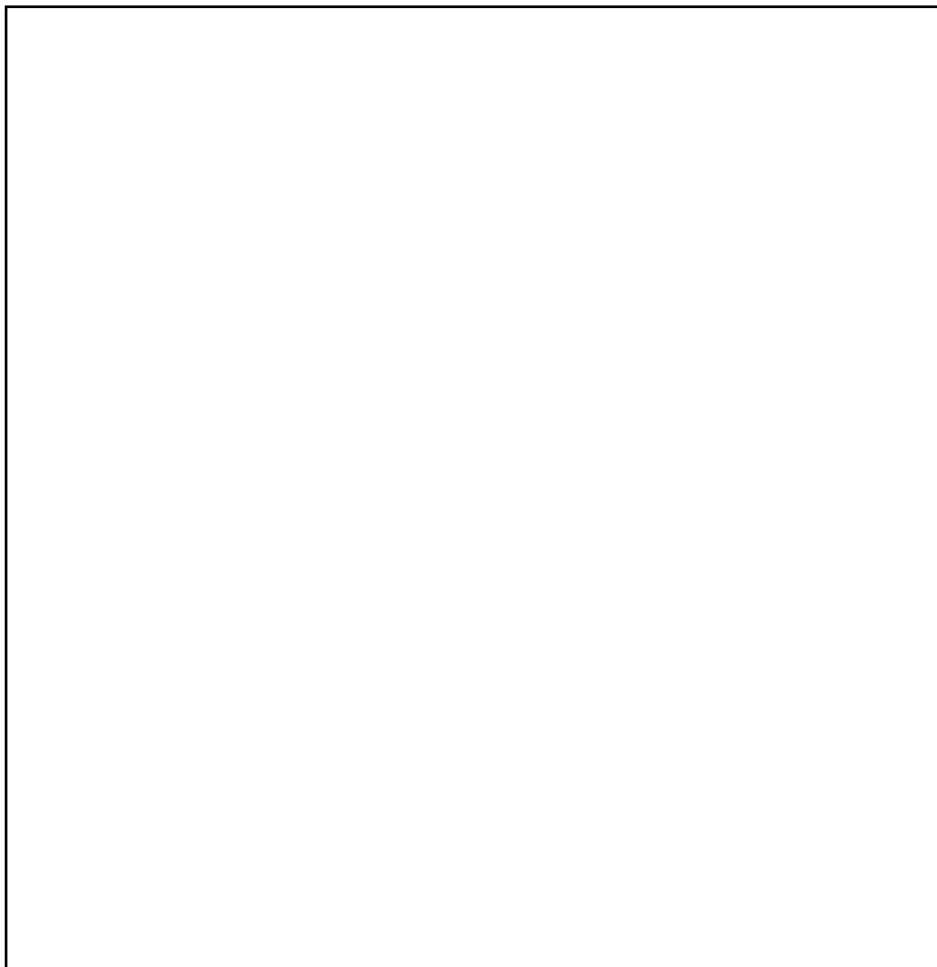
remain in the marketplace.

Richard Usanis
Cary, NC

IT