

# april 13, 2009

## microsoft's method

When the world's largest software company starts paying tens of millions of dollars to attack Apple in multiple media outlets, you'd better pay attention – it may all prove meaningless, but we can't predict the future, and that's a lot of weight to throw around.

Thus when **Microsoft's** third "Laptop Hunters" ad aired a few days ago, and resurrected another long-discredited reason not to buy Macs, we took notice. When on that same day, the company promoted a ridiculous "analysis" by an analyst with a long track record of bashing everything Apple does, we moved to puzzled: why is Microsoft trying to pretend that it's 1997?

It's been occupying us for days, but this issue's **MDJ Analysis** must, by necessity, clearly state the problem before attempting to solve it. To that end, we

look briefly at the new television ad and its "Macs are for children" message. We then examine the corpus of **Roger L. Kay**, the author of the "What Price Cool?" study that Microsoft sponsored to further the company's notion of an "Apple tax." Of course the study is ridiculous, and people in the know should have suspected so even before reading it, because Kay made himself into the analyst always willing to tell the press that Apple was doing it wrong – like Rob Enderle but without the public meltdowns.

Today's analysis offers what we intend to be the final word on Kay and why he should not be taken seriously in any Apple-related context. Next time: the harder question of why Microsoft is playing this game. We invite non-trial subscribers to add their own thoughts and hypotheses on the MacJournals-Talk mailing list. It's indeed a puzzler. [Turning back the clock, page 1.](#)

## MDJ analysis

# "turn those machines back on!" can microsoft party like it's 1997?

At the end of the [climactic scene](#) of the 1983 movie *Trading Places* (a modern classic inexplicably missing from the [National Film Registry](#)), the manipulative Duke brothers have been bankrupted in a very few minutes. Acting on erroneous inside information, the Dukes purchased hundreds of millions of pounds of frozen concentrated orange juice (FCOJ) futures for US\$394 million than they were worth. When they can't come up with the assets to make good on the deals at the end of the trading session, their assets are immediately seized in repayment.

Mortimer Duke is *livid*. Ignoring that his brother has collapsed from a heart attack, he demands that the exchange start a new trading session right then so that he can make his money back. The Board of Trade will not do this, but even if it would, it wouldn't make the slightest difference. *No one* is going to buy the Dukes' FCOJ contracts for the price Mortimer would want – somewhere between two

to six times as much as their closing price. *Nobody*. But Mortimer cannot be convinced of this, and he is literally dragged kicking and screaming from the Exchange floor, pointing to the trading systems and shouting, "Turn those machines back on! *Turn those machines back on!*" As if that would solve any of his problems.

That phrase has been echoing through our minds in the past few days – but in Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer's voice. Microsoft wants the world to pretend that it's 1997 again, because back then, Microsoft was winning.

## resurrecting memes

On Thursday, Microsoft unleashed the [third ad](#) in the "Laptop Hunters" series of television commercials. In this 60-second spot, 11-year-old Jackson and his mother, Lisa, go looking for a laptop with [2](#) ▶