

SUN - GOOGLE

You may have read lately that Sun Microsystems and Google have formed a partnership, a long term strategic alliance, and quite probably an unholy alliance from Bill Gates' perspective. According to their press releases, their mandate is to promote their respective technologies, and to that end the Google Toolbar will be bundled with Sun's Java Runtime environment. Both of these two products are quite familiar to users, Java being primarily used for web-based script applications that run in their browser, and the Google Toolbar allowing browser-integrated searching and popup blocking. For their side of the bargain, Google has promised to start integrating Solaris-based Sun servers in their operation where they have traditionally used off the shelf hardware with the Linux operating system. It is important to understand what these two companies really do for a living.

Sun Microsystems is a company that manufactures thin client servers and the unix-based operating system Solaris that runs on them. A thin client server is a computer that allows a bunch of "dumb" terminals to run simultaneous sessions on the server. From a user standpoint, you sit down at the terminal, login and use the terminal like a normal PC, though the session is really running on the server. All user documents and settings are stored on the server, the dumb terminal stores nothing, it's really dumb!

Google is in the business of giving away free services. They make their money several ways but the largest revenue stream is from attaching low impact contextual advertising to the service. What that means is that Google ads are usually related to whatever it is that you are doing, searching for, viewing or participating in. Businesses pay Google on a price per 1000-click basis for the advertising. Their recent IPO generated a ton of capital for expansion, and the share price has more than doubled since it was released probably because of their ethical attitude towards advertising and their continual development of new products.

Because of the various strengths that these two companies bring to the table, I predict that we will soon see a Google operating system, probably a downloadable image that you can burn to a CD and then boot your PC from. This would give you a graphical desktop, a set of programs to run, a bunch of games to play and of course complete access to the internet, all without any of the liabilities of the Windows operating system. For example, you wouldn't be able to get viruses or spyware, the session really wouldn't be running on your PC, it's running on the server. You would still be able to save your work on local hard or flash drive, but they would be protected from malware by the simple permissions control of a unix-based operating system. Best of all, I expect that this download and the use of it would be FREE, at least at first. Pull the CD out of your drive and you boot to Windows again normally.

Moreover, I also predict that shortly after that that the first "Google Box" will be made available, either to purchase, or more ideally, to rent. This will be a dumb terminal with no hard drive, flash memory only, a built in LCD screen, probably about 12-14 inches, and of course wireless connectivity. The Google Operating System will be programmed directly into the flash memory of the device with regular updates being added while the device is connected to network. For a nominal fee of probably \$15-30 dollars per month, you will be able to take this thing anywhere and connect anywhere, all while not having to worry about how your Windows is running.

Bill Gates is shaking in his boots.

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email sean@intrex.ca or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.