Session 26
Panel: DOS, Windows, UNIX: EDA and the OS Wars

Chair: Richard Goering - EE Times, San Mateo, CA
Organizer: Abbie Kendall - OrCAD, Beaverton, OR

The UNIX-based workstation had been the predominant platform at the mid- and high-ends of design. DOS-based systems were prevalent in the more general-purpose design realm. In recent years, however, competitively priced, high-performance technology from Intel and Microsoft has thrust PC-based desktop design into nearly all levels of the electronics design industry.

The panelists, representing software, computer system, and EDA tool companies plus electronics designers, discuss the State of Operating Systems and the impact on electronics designers and the EDA industry.

A panel member from Microsoft will examine the different versions of Windows and what each provides. Also to be discussed is the state of the DOS operating system; the impact that Windows NT and Cairo will have on UNIX; what a true Windows application offers the designer, and finally, how the Windows, DOS and UNIX environments can mesh.

One panel member examines an approach that is already being implemented by several high-end vendors: supplying customers with design tools and more sophisticated services. This tools/services mix helps to compensate for software that cannot always measure up to the “bleeding edge” demands of silicon design. These vendors face the difficult task of structuring new business models to serve these customers in design environments with a multiplicity of platforms and operating systems, plus a lack of interoperability within EDA tools.

Another panelist’s perspective is that most of today’s and tomorrow’s design groups exist in a mixed O.S. environment. As such, there won’t be one O.S. that wins the war, but rather several that will prevail. Suppliers who best satisfy user needs will share the design workplace.

Another view states that over time, users will overwhelmingly select Windows desktop design because of its strong value proposition. This includes designers now working in a mixed environment. It may take them longer to switch to Windows because of their high investment in UNIX-based tools. But they will eventually retire legacy systems for the price/performance of desktop design, and because Microsoft’s Win 32 operating system provides all the functionality needed for the vast majority of users.

Panel Members:

Brian Moran - Microsoft, Redmond, WA
David Orecchio - Viewlogic Systems, Inc., Marlboro, MA
David Pellerin - TechWin Users Group, Duvall, WA
Jim Plymale - OrCAD, Beaverton, OR
Nigel Ross - Sun Microsystems, Inc., Mountain View, CA
Patrick Williams - Intergraph, Huntsville, AL