Twitter Thread by Alan Cooper



Alan Cooper
@MrAlanCooper

“And that’s what this guy said, one day he said, “I want you to see what Microsoft is doing.”” 1

“And he took me to a technical pitch meeting somewhere in Silicon Valley, and there was Steve Ballmer up on the stage, and they were talking about Microsoft Windows.” 2

“And they were saying that they were going to do really impressive stuff with this graphical multitasking system, and which did not impress me at all. Okay? ’Cause I had my own, and I wasn’t that impressed with theirs.” 3

“But there were some things that I couldn’t do because I didn’t have access to the deep guts of the operating system. And there were things that I wanted, which were interprocess communication, dynamic relocation, and dynamic load ability.” 4

“This is the argument that I had for a year-and-a-half at Digital Research, all the systems guys there would come to me and say, “Alan, you’re the applications guy, what is it you want?” And I’d say, “I want dynamic relocation.”” 5

“And they’d say, “Yeah, yeah, but why would you want that? What else do you want?” I go, “I want dynamic relocation.” “Well. . .,” “Yeah, yeah, no thanks.”” 6

“And they didn’t understand that without dynamic relocation, multitasking is useless.” 7

“They saw it as a scientific experiment; and I saw it as a practical platform, and as programs come in and go out of main memory, you have to be able to slide the remnants of the old ones down to the end, and make room for the new guys to come in.” 8

“And they had the technology, but they wouldn’t build it. And it really frustrated me.” 9

“And there was Steve Ballmer up on the stage saying, “Dynamic relocation and interprocess communication.” And you know, dynamic loading of modules that could run and go out without shutting down the operating system.” 10

“I said, “Okay, I’m sold!” It wasn’t the sexy graphics that sold me. It wasn’t the GUI that sold me, because I had my own GUI. What sold me was the dynamic relocation, which I couldn’t do.” 11

“So I went home and I put my little graphic front end, and multitasking dispatcher in the sock drawer, as my wife calls it, and started building software in Windows.” 12

Taken from the transcript of an oral history I gave to the IEEE Computer History Museum. https://t.co/VuKXntwHzr. 13