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Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

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7 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

Microsoft will soon enter the market to provide MP3 music downloads, which people can join and pay for every month. Microsoft has teamed up with the music video network MTV to make the rival service, which is called Urge. It will be a highlight of the soon-to-be-released Vista operating system. Unbelievably, Vista is the first major upgrade to Windows in more than half a decade. Unfortunately, Urge is in a totally different format to Apple's iTunes, the current leader in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to use the Microsoft-MTV service unless they buy a separate music player.

Urge will give users access to over two million songs and thousands of videos from the MTV archives. Consumers can transfer songs to their MP3 players but they will not be allowed to burn them to CDs, unlike Apple's iTunes. Urge is aimed at making Microsoft the leader in digital entertainment. Bill Gates wants to overtake Apple in the online market for music sales. Microsoft's leader added an Apple-like touch of glamour to the launch of Urge by hiring the services of pop star Justin Timberlake. The singer told a technology show: "Urge [has] a ton of options to play, interact with, and buy music."

WARM-UPS

1. BILL GATES: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about Microsoft's Bill Gates. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting or surprising. What more would you like to know?

2. PRODUCTS: In pairs / groups, talk about these Microsoft products. What are their rival products? Are the Microsoft products better? How would you improve the Microsoft products?

- Windows operating system
- Hotmail e-mail
- MSN search engine
- Xbox 360
- Internet Explorer
- Windows Media Player
- Office (Word, Excel, Power Point...)
- Messenger

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

MP3s / launching new products / music services / Apple / iTunes / Bill Gates' vision / MTV / urges / operating systems / subscription fees / glamour / options

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. SENTENCE STARTERS: Complete these sentence starters about Bill Gates. Discuss your finished sentences with your partner(s).

- a. Bill Gates' success is due to _____.
- b. A lesson I learn from Bill Gates is _____.
- c. I would advise Bill Gate to _____.
- d. Bill Gates really needs to _____.
- e. Bill Gates will succeed _____.
- f. Bill Gates was lucky because _____.

5. BILL & STEVE OPINIONS: Do you agree with these opinions on Microsoft CEO Bill Gates and Apple CEO Steve Jobs? Discuss them with your partner(s).

- a. Apple's iPod is easily the coolest music player.
- b. Microsoft will overtake Apple as the leader in digital music sales.
- c. Bill Gates is as creative as Apple CEO Steve Jobs.
- d. Windows does not deserve to be on 90 percent of the world's computers.
- e. The new Microsoft OS will be a major success.
- f. The company that makes an MP4 music player will win the sales battle.
- g. Apple is a better company than Microsoft.
- h. Bill Gates is jealous of Apple CEO Steve Jobs.

6. MICROSOFT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Microsoft. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Microsoft's Bill Gates is suing Apple for stealing its MP3 technology. | T / F |
| b. Microsoft has teamed up with the music network MTV. | T / F |
| c. Microsoft issues major operating system upgrades every year. | T / F |
| d. The Apple iPod will be totally useless with Microsoft's MP3 products. | T / F |
| e. Windows users will have access to over two million songs. | T / F |
| f. Window's digital music service will allow users to burn songs on CDs. | T / F |
| g. Bill Gates wants to overtake Apple as #1 in digital music sales. | T / F |
| h. Bill Gates copied Apple in providing glamour to his product's launch. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| a. teamed up | competitor |
| b. rival | targeted |
| c. highlight | completely |
| d. totally | millions |
| e. separate | focus |
| f. consumers | joined forces |
| g. aimed | employing |
| h. touch | customers |
| i. hiring | bit |
| j. a ton | different |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. enter the market | in more than half a decade |
| b. Microsoft has teamed | burn them to CDs |
| c. the soon-to-be-released | format to Apple's iTunes |
| d. the first major upgrade to Windows | from the MTV archives |
| e. ...in a totally different | to provide MP3 music downloads |
| f. thousands of videos | touch of glamour |
| g. they will not be allowed to | of options |
| h. overtake Apple in the online | Vista operating system |
| i. added an Apple-like | market for music sales |
| j. Urge has a ton | up with the music video network MTV |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

Microsoft will soon _____ the market to provide MP3 music downloads, which people can join and pay for every month. Microsoft has _____ up with the music video network MTV to make the _____ service, which is called Urge. It will be a highlight of the _____ -to-be-released Vista operating system. Unbelievably, Vista is the first _____ upgrade to Windows in more than half a decade. Unfortunately, Urge is in a _____ different format to Apple's iTunes, the current _____ in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to use the Microsoft-MTV service _____ they buy a separate music player.

soon
totally
teamed
major
unless
enter
leader
rival

Urge will give users _____ to over two million songs and thousands of videos from the MTV _____. Consumers can transfer songs to their MP3 players but they will not be _____ to burn them to CDs, unlike Apple's iTunes. Urge is _____ at making Microsoft the leader in digital entertainment. Bill Gates wants to _____ Apple in the online market for music sales. Microsoft's leader added an Apple-like touch of _____ to the launch of Urge by _____ the services of pop star Justin Timberlake. The singer told a technology show: "Urge [has] a ton of options to play, _____ with, and buy music."

allowed
interact
access
glamour
aimed
hiring
archives
overtake

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'digital' and 'music'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "MICROSOFT" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Microsoft and Bill Gates.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| • enter | • access |
| • teamed | • burn |
| • released | • aimed |
| • decade | • overtake |
| • totally | • glamour |
| • separate | • ton |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you like Microsoft?
- c. What do you think of Bill Gates?
- d. Where do you think operating systems would be if Bill Gates was not born?
- e. Do you think there is a product that can compete with the iPod?
- f. Do you think Bill Gates worries about Apple?
- g. What do you think of the Microsoft-MTV partnership?
- h. Do you think the new Vista operating system will be popular?
- i. What adjectives would you use to describe Bill Gates?
- j. What features or options would you like to see on a music player?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Which do you think is the better company, Microsoft or Apple?
- d. Do you think Bill Gates' idea to use a different format to iTunes is a good one?
- e. Do you think Urge will overtake iTunes?
- f. What advice would you give to Bill Gates?
- g. What are the chances that Urge will fail?
- h. Would you choose iTunes' pay per song service or Urge's monthly subscription service?
- i. What are Bill Gates' biggest successes and failures?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SOFTWARE: In pairs / groups, agree on a useful application or piece of software (or anything related to computers, e-mail, the Internet or digital lifestyles). Make a presentation on it using the table below.

MY PRESENTATION IS ABOUT _____	
Introduction	
My history with it	
Features and functions	
Faults	
Usefulness to business / daily life	
Reasons it beats rival products	
Its future	
Conclusion	

Give your presentations to different partners / groups. Ask the speaker questions after each presentation

With your partner(s), talk about the presentations you heard. Which was best?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Urge – the Microsoft-MTV collaboration. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. THE FUTURE: Write an essay about the future of music sales, music players and digital music. Read your essay to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Bill Gates. Tell him what you think of his vision and his company. Give him advice on how take more custom away from Apple. Show your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar ideas?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. T f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| a. teamed up | joined forces |
| b. rival | competitor |
| c. highlight | focus |
| d. totally | completely |
| e. separate | different |
| f. consumers | customers |
| g. aimed | targeted |
| h. touch | bit |
| i. hiring | employing |
| j. a ton | millions |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. enter the market | to provide MP3 music downloads |
| b. Microsoft has teamed | up with the music video network MTV |
| c. the soon-to-be-released | Vista operating system |
| d. the first major upgrade to Windows | in more than half a decade |
| e. ...in a totally different | format to Apple's iTunes |
| f. thousands of videos | from the MTV archives |
| g. they will not be allowed to | burn them to CDs |
| h. overtake Apple in the online | market for music sales |
| i. added an Apple-like | touch of glamour |
| j. Urge has a ton | of options |

GAP FILL:

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Microsoft will soon **enter** the market to provide MP3 music downloads, which people can join and pay for every month. Microsoft has **teamed** up with the music video network MTV to make the **rival** service, which is called Urge. It will be a highlight of the **soon-to-be-released** Vista operating system. Unbelievably, Vista is the first **major** upgrade to Windows in more than half a decade. Unfortunately, Urge is in a **totally** different format to Apple's iTunes, the current **leader** in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to use the Microsoft-MTV service **unless** they buy a separate music player.

Urge will give users **access** to over two million songs and thousands of videos from the MTV **archives**. Consumers can transfer songs to their MP3 players but they will not be **allowed** to burn them to CDs, unlike Apple's iTunes. Urge is **aimed** at making Microsoft the leader in digital entertainment. Bill Gates wants to **overtake** Apple in the online market for music sales. Microsoft's leader added an Apple-like touch of **glamour** to the launch of Urge by **hiring** the services of pop star Justin Timberlake. The singer told a technology show: "Urge [has] a ton of options to play, **interact** with, and buy music."