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Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

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7 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

Microsoft is about to enter the MP3-download fray by launching its own music service. Just to complicate matters for consumers, its new product will be totally incompatible with Apple iTunes, the current leader in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to subscribe to Bill Gates' vision for the future of music purchasing and enjoyment. Mr. Gates said his service will "dramatically redefine how Windows users discover and enjoy music". Microsoft has collaborated with the music video network MTV to forge the rival service, to be called Urge. It will be built into all new copies of the Windows operating system and is set to be a highlight of the new OS Vista. Unbelievably, Vista is the first major upgrade to Windows in over half a decade.

Urge will give Windows users access to over two million songs and thousands of videos from the MTV archives for a set monthly subscription fee. While consumers can transfer songs to their MP3 players, they will not be allowed to burn them to CDs, unlike Apple's iTunes. Urge is aimed at establishing Microsoft as the frontrunner in digital entertainment. Bill Gates is intent on ousting Apple from its perch as the dominant player in the online market. Microsoft's impresario even added some Apple-esque oomph to his Las Vegas launch of Urge by recruiting the services of pop star Justin Timberlake. The singer told a gadget show: "Urge offers artists like myself a new way to reach fans with 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 could the Microsoft products be improved and given added oomph?

- 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 / oomph / gadgets / 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 and 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 on the market.
- 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 deal a heavy blow to Apple.
- 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's new MP3 service will complicate the choice for consumers. T / F
- c. The Apple iPod will be totally useless with Microsoft's MP3 products. T / F
- d. Microsoft issues major operating system upgrades every year. 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. fray | vaults |
| b. complicate | millions |
| c. collaborated | top dog |
| d. forge | battle |
| e. set | put together |
| f. archives | convolute |
| g. frontrunner | sparkle |
| h. ousting | destined |
| i. oomph | kicking out |
| j. a ton | hooked up |

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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Microsoft is about to enter | frontrunner in digital entertainment |
| b. its new product will be totally | the rival service |
| c. subscribe to Bill Gates' | Apple from its perch |
| d. ...to forge | incompatible with Apple iTunes |
| e. ...in over half | oomph to his Las Vegas launch |
| f. thousands of videos | a ton of options |
| g. establishing Microsoft as the | a decade |
| h. Bill Gates is intent on ousting | the MP3-download fray |
| i. added some Apple-esque | vision for the future |
| j. a new way to reach fans with | from the MTV archives |

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 is about to enter the MP3-download _____ by launching its own music service. Just to complicate _____ for consumers, its new product will be _____ incompatible with Apple iTunes, the current leader in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to subscribe to Bill Gates' _____ for the future of music purchasing and enjoyment. Mr. Gates said his service will "dramatically _____ how Windows users discover and enjoy music". Microsoft has collaborated with the music video network MTV to _____ the rival service, to be called Urge. It will be built into all new copies of the Windows operating system and is _____ to be a highlight of the new OS Vista. Unbelievably, Vista is the first major _____ to Windows in over half a decade.

redefine

matters

upgrade

fray

vision

set

totally

forge

Urge will give Windows _____ access to over two million songs and thousands of videos from the MTV archives for a _____ monthly subscription fee. While consumers can transfer songs to their MP3 players, they will not be allowed to _____ them to CDs, unlike Apple's iTunes. Urge is aimed at establishing Microsoft as the frontrunner in digital entertainment. Bill Gates is _____ on ousting Apple from its _____ as the dominant player in the online market. Microsoft's impresario even added some Apple-esque _____ to his Las Vegas launch of Urge by recruiting the services of pop star Justin Timberlake. The singer told a _____ show: "Urge offers artists like myself a new way to reach fans with a _____ of options to play, interact with, and buy music."

gadget

burn

perch

users

intent

ton

set

oomph

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Microsoft targets Apple iTunes

Microsoft is about to enter the MP3-download _____ by launching its own music service. Just to complicate matters for consumers, its new product will be totally _____ with Apple iTunes, the current leader in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to _____ to Bill Gates' vision for the future of music purchasing and enjoyment. Mr. Gates said his service will "dramatically _____ how Windows users discover and enjoy music". Microsoft has collaborated with the music video network MTV to _____ the rival service, to be called Urge. It will be built into all new copies of the Windows operating system and is _____ a highlight of the new OS Vista. Unbelievably, Vista is the first major upgrade to Windows in over half a decade.

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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 'rival' and 'service'.

- 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 | • archives |
| • totally | • burn |
| • vision | • frontrunner |
| • discover | • intent |
| • forge | • oomph |
| • decade | • gadget |

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 as a CEO?
- d. Where do you think the world of operating systems would be if Bill Gates had not come along?
- e. Do you think there is a product that can compete with the iPod?
- f. How much of a worry do you think Apple is for Bill Gates?
- g. What do you think of the Microsoft-MTV collaboration?
- h. Do you think the new Vista operating system will wow the world?
- i. What adjectives would you use to describe Bill Gates?
- j. Do you need some oomph in your life or business?

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 the market already has enough incompatibility of products without Microsoft adding to it?
- f. What advice would you give to Bill Gates?
- g. What are the chances that Urge will fail?
- h. Would you opt for a pay per song service or a 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 highly useful application or piece of software (or anything related to computers, e-mail, the Internet or digital lifestyles). Create 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 the way music interacts with our lives. Read your essay to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar visions?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Bill Gates. Tell him what you think of his vision and his company. Give him advice on how to give Microsoft more oomph and 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. T d. F e. T f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| a. fray | battle |
| b. complicate | convolute |
| c. collaborated | hooked up |
| d. forge | put together |
| e. set | destined |
| f. archives | vaults |
| g. frontrunner | top dog |
| h. ousting | kicking out |
| i. oomph | sparkle |
| j. a ton | millions |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Microsoft is about to enter | the MP3-download fray |
| b. its new product will be totally | incompatible with Apple iTunes |
| c. subscribe to Bill Gates' | vision for the future |
| d. ...to forge | the rival service |
| e. ...in over half | a decade |
| f. thousands of videos | from the MTV archives |
| g. establishing Microsoft as the | frontrunner in digital entertainment |
| h. Bill Gates is intent on ousting | Apple from its perch |
| i. added some Apple-esque | oomph to his Las Vegas launch |
| j. a new way to reach fans with | a ton of options |

GAP FILL:

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Microsoft is about to enter the MP3-download **fray** by launching its own music service. Just to complicate **matters** for consumers, its new product will be **totally** incompatible with Apple iTunes, the current leader in digital music sales. This means anyone who has an iPod will not be able to subscribe to Bill Gates' **vision** for the future of music purchasing and enjoyment. Mr. Gates said his service will "dramatically **redefine** how Windows users discover and enjoy music". Microsoft has collaborated with the music video network MTV to **forge** the rival service, to be called Urge. It will be built into all new copies of the Windows operating system and is **set** to be a highlight of the new OS Vista. Unbelievably, Vista is the first major **upgrade** to Windows in over half a decade.

Urge will give Windows **users** access to over two million songs and thousands of videos from the MTV archives for a **set** monthly subscription fee. While consumers can transfer songs to their MP3 players, they will not be allowed to **burn** them to CDs, unlike Apple's iTunes. Urge is aimed at establishing Microsoft as the frontrunner in digital entertainment. Bill Gates is **intent** on ousting Apple from its **perch** as the dominant player in the online market. Microsoft's impresario even added some Apple-esque **oomph** to his Las Vegas launch of Urge by recruiting the services of pop star Justin Timberlake. The singer told a **gadget** show: "Urge offers artists like myself a new way to reach fans with a **ton** of options to play, interact with, and buy music."