

Content Insider #76

Clash of the Titans

"In my mind's eye, I see, three circles joined in priceless, graceful harmony. Two full as the moon, one hollow as a crown. Two from the sea, five fathoms down. One from the earth, deep under the ground. The whole, a mark of high renown. Tell me, what can it be?" – Princess Andromeda (Clash of the Titans – 1981)

The PC/CE industry has replaced the auto industry as the bellweather of world economy.

We're working on our second billion PCs. "Everyone" has or is buying an HDTV. People without cellphones held to their ears are viewed as people you wouldn't want to talk with anyway. Individuals without earbuds in their ears are so not with it!

It is worse than not having an email address...gasp!!!

It is easy to see the importance of the industry because suppliers – hardware/software – are now being sued with alarming regularity. That's how you tell how large you are in the industry – how many lawsuits you have on the table.

The industry is so important at retail that the last 45 days of the year mean the difference between red/black ink.

It is so important that it has completely eliminated Christmas and New Years for people who have to prepare for the huge events in January.

This year in three overstuffed, stress filled days the Titans of the industry held court on stage in two different cities – Las Vegas, San Francisco.

Imagine the dynamics of it all.

Members of the media had to decide how to best cover the three who would shape the coming year and possibly the future – Gary Shapiro, CEA; Bill Gates, Microsoft; Steve Jobs, Apple.



Zeus had to be amused as he watched them stride to center stage to hold court. Three dominant figures determined to hold sway over the audience. Equals but remarkably different.

We're probably lucky they are each so strong and independent because if you could put them together on the same venue – and get them to agree on a common set of goals – the gods would have reason to fear for their place in the firmament!



Shapiro has all of the polish and tact you would expect for someone who walks the fine line of keeping more than 2,000 CEA members happy.

He not only holds court over the largest trade show event in the Americas but has vanquished some formidable enemies along the way. Comdex...gone. E3...he says he's not interested but did have a sizeable gaming venue. CEBIT Americas...not much a fight.

His keynotes are always interesting. He does a fantastic job of being upbeat for the industry highlighting its wins and its future while sliding past where he has been less than successful...major wins with Congress.

Of course he's a lawyer by training so Shapiro knows when to pick his battles.

Shapiro is polished. He's credible. He's focused. He does a pretty damn good job of making a global bunch of companies that don't play well together sound like a focused, consumer-centric, value-driven industry.

By the end of his keynote you feel remarkably upbeat about the industry. There's no call to action but you are willing to come back next year.

Gates for a techie is a pretty good speaker...not great but good.

Giving his keynote highlighting all of the "fun," "cool" things you can do with the Microsoft technology clearly thrills him. This time – for a change – all of the demos even worked. He was super happy.



It was probably his best keynote of all time. Still it is hard to get folks breathing heavy when your presentation covers the world.

Oh sure Ballmer was there along with a bunch of supporting minor gods that reinforced his message. Gates does a good job of putting positive spin on things ordinary folks shouldn't concern themselves with like DRM, work-in-progress Vista and MS goal of global domination.

His announcement that he was going to come back at least one more year to do a keynote received polite applause. Sort of like Barry Bonds saying he would do another season with the Giants.

As if these two industry pillars weren't enough for the first real work week of the year, some poor slob had to trek north several hundred miles to the city by the Bay to hear Steve mesmerize his followers.



The guy is the best showman the industry has. He owns the stage he strides across. He grabs his audience by the throat at the outset and never lets go. He gets his fuel from the adoration of the Mac faithful.

He's gotta be like a tent show minister preaching to his flock.

You have to be jealous of the way Jobs whips his flock into a frenzy.

Gates would probably drop \$100 million (kinda pocket change for him but...) to bathe in that type of adulation.

The cheering for Jobs was unbelievable. There was hardly a dry eye in the house. Everyone was ready to run out when he wound up his keynote and plunk down their credit card for a cup of Kool-Aid.

Ok so the iPhone only has 5 hour battery life. Is really great for web surfing, receiving some email, doing finger exercises and possibly making phone calls.

So what if it shares its name with Cisco?

So what if it is only vaporware at this point?

If he's excited...we're excited.

If he believes...we believe.

If Jobs owned more than 4 percent of the PC market – added to his 60 percent of the mobile music player market – he could replace Zeus on Mt. Olympus.

If Shapiro was able to focus all of his persuasive talent and convince Steve that it would be great for him to be a part of CES we would have a helluva keynote event.

Imagine.

Shapiro warms the crowd up.

Gates feeds the minds.

Jobs fires up the audience.

The crowds mob the floor looking at all the “insanely great” products.

Ok so that's never going to happen. But it would make for some fantastic presentations.

Since we'll probably never see three circles joined in priceless, graceful harmony all we can say is...”A titan against a titan!”

At least the two shows won't overlap next year (CES – Jan 7-10, MacWorld – Jan 14-18) so we can recover over the weekend.

Of course now that Steve Inc. is a CE company...

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