

Microsoft Plans Surgical Strike on the e-Space with Its New Browser Plugin

Contributed by Salil Pillai
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Microsoft is yet again toying with the idea of surrogate marketing, by launching the Silverlight (SL), the medium they exploited to topple Netscape in the 1990's with the Internet Explorer browser. Silverlight is a browser plugin or software for playing media files and other Web applications that work on Windows and Macintosh with Firefox, Internet Explorer and Safari browsers. SL will be able to display interactive animations, graphics, audio and video streaming within a fixed window of the particular Web browser display.

{bot_wrgoogle}Microsoft had tied up with National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to provide hours and hours of free video streaming of recently concluded Olympic events live from China. The new offering of Silverlight after two years of testing is shoved upon to every user who came online to watch the live coverage of the event. Though there is some initial glitches like prompting the user to re- install SL who already have had it in the system, Microsoft's intentions are wide and clear.

Even though live coverage is confined to the US web users currently, when it becomes available for everyone, it is likely to cause serious damage to the competitors. With the new offering many of the less popular events were available free to watch, but popular and higher viewership events had been with a price tag attached to it. However, the sidelined events by the television channels got better exposure as it was free of charge. With higher bit rate streaming effects, the Olympics were made a visual treat for web users even while working in their offices.

Even if someone is not intend on using Silverlight or not yet installed it can use Windows Media Player (WMP) for non-live viewing. A partnership with Novell will offer a version for Linux users as well. In the near future, one can even expect mobile version of the SL in Windows Mobile and Nokia Smart phones.

But the market analysts view these developments differently; they are rather reminded of the federal anti-trust legal battle in which Microsoft was penalized for misusing its market spread unscrupulously to promote its own browser developer to gain control over the Web world. During early 1990's Netscape Navigator had the monopoly over the browsing world, but in 1995, Microsoft annihilated Netscape by packing free Internet Explorer browser with its Windows Operating System.

In real time, Microsoft is understood to have plans of upsetting the apple cart of Adobe who has the most popular and sophisticated Flash media player, which is widely used for streaming interactive content, video and audio files. It is common knowledge that majority of Internet surfers use Flash to stream videos and other related files. Currently, WMP of Microsoft and Quicktime from Apple have negligible presence in the e-space in terms of usage and application. This is the space, Microsoft is eying through its latest offering of media player. At a glance, Silverlight seemed to be a clone of Flash, yet insiders argue, it's still early days to be judgmental about the plugin, and Microsoft's intentions.

But prima facie, if Microsoft were to project SL in its forthcoming version of operating system, it would definitely position the company to topple yet another software giant Adobe in the months to come. Nevertheless, Microsoft countered the argument by stating that it was part of company's continued effort and commitment to provide innovative and compatible products to their operating system.

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