

Microsoft v. General Motors

At a recent COMDEX, Bill Gates compared the computer industry to the automobile industry and stated: *'If GM kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would be driving \$25 cars that got 1000 miles to the gallon.'*

A slightly aggrieved General Motors immediately issued a press release stating: *'If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:*

- For no reason whatsoever your car would crash twice a day.
- Every time they repainted the lines on the road, you would have to buy a new car.
- Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason, and you would just accept this, restart and drive on.
- Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to start, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
- Only one person at a time could use the car, unless you bought "Car95---or "CarNT". But then you would have to buy more seats.
- Apple would make a car that was powered by the sun, reliable, five times as fast, and twice as easy to drive, but would only run on 5% of the roads.
- The oil, water temperature and alternator warning lights would be replaced by a single "general car default" warning light.
- New seats would force everyone to have the same size butt.
- The airbag system would say "Are you sure?" before deploying.
- Occasionally for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turn the key, and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.
- GM would require all car buyers to also purchase a deluxe set of Rand McNally road maps (now a GM subsidiary), even though they neither need them nor want them. Attempting to delete this option would immediately cause the car's performance to diminish by 50% or more. Moreover, GM would become a target for investigation by the Justice Department.
- Every time GM introduced a new model, car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.
- You'd press the "Start" button to shut off the engine.

Taken from: *Distributed Systems and Networks* by William Buchanan, McGraw Hill, 2000.