


RECEIVED

JAN 13 1988

Edward M. Esber, Jr.

TO: All Employees
FROM: Luther Nussbaum 
DATE: January 13, 1988
RE: NEW STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH MICROSOFT

I have the unique pleasure to tell everyone in the Ashton-Tate family that, at a major press conference today in New York, we have announced the signing of a long-term strategic alliance with Microsoft Corporation, under which we will co-develop and co-market a database server software product, called the Ashton-Tate/Microsoft SQL Server.

SQL (pronounced "sequel") Server is a relational database server based on field-proven technology developed by Sybase, Inc. We will provide technology and database expertise to Sybase, while Microsoft will provide technology based on their LAN operating system expertise. When the product is available in the second half of 1988, we will market SQL Server to our retail distribution channels worldwide. Microsoft will market the product to OEMs.

This is a very important announcement for Ashton-Tate. Along with future versions of dBASE, SQL Server will provide the best database solution for our corporate customers. It also will play a major role in broadening the reach of personal computers into applications areas that had been the exclusive domain of minicomputers and mainframes.

Today's announcement is just one element of Ashton-Tate's comprehensive strategy to remain the PC DBMS leader and one of the best software companies in the world. I'm pleased that Ashton-Tate employees in and near this project honored the strict confidentiality necessary to successfully complete and announce this alliance. More exciting announcements will follow in the weeks to come. The part you play is especially important to our success, and I look forward to a 1988 filled with accomplishment.

See last page for contact information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASHTON-TATE AND MICROSOFT FORM LONG-TERM STRATEGIC ALLIANCE
TO MARKET SQL SERVER FOR LOCAL AREA NETWORKS

NEW YORK, January 13, 1988 -- Microsoft Corporation and Ashton-Tate Corporation today announced SQL Server, a relational database server software product for local area networks. SQL Server is based on a field-proven relational database management system licensed by Microsoft from Sybase, Inc., of Berkeley, California, and enhanced with networking technology from Microsoft and database technology from Ashton-Tate.

Under the agreement, Ashton-Tate will license SQL Server from Microsoft for redistribution through all its retail channels. The product distributed by Ashton-Tate will be called the Ashton-Tate/Microsoft SQL Server. Customers will be able to buy SQL Server by itself or in combination with a future version of Ashton-Tate's dBASE database product. Microsoft will license SQL Server on an OEM basis to hardware manufacturers.

SQL Server will provide high-performance database services to network users using the Structured Query Language (SQL), the predominant language by which application programs communicate with relational databases. The SQL Server can be used with dBASE or other workstation software products.

Ashton-Tate Will Provide Complete Solution for dBASE Market

"Ashton-Tate will combine the power and performance of SQL Server with the many end-user benefits of dBASE," said Edward M. Esber Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of Ashton-Tate. "We will also ensure that the thousands of applications written in the dBASE language will be able to take advantage of SQL Server. The alliance between Microsoft and Ashton-Tate provides customers with unparalleled capabilities: the ability to use SQL, dBASE and other PC languages against the same data at the same time from any DOS or OS/2 workstation in the local area network environment."

(more)

Open Platform for Applications Development

SQL Server embodies an open platform architecture which benefits software developers and end-users. Microsoft and Ashton-Tate will encourage third-party software developers to write applications programs that take advantage of SQL Server's network-based multi-user database services.

"The network has emerged as the most important computing platform for new and innovative application programs," said Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft. "As an open platform, SQL Server will enable developers to write distributed, network-intelligent applications that combine the rich interface of traditional PC applications with the multi-user processing power and data sharing formerly confined to minicomputers and mainframes. We are pleased that Ashton-Tate recognizes the importance of the network and the necessity for an open platform database server. By bringing dBASE, the leading database on the PC market, to this platform, we are helping to ensure the broadest market acceptance for the SQL Server," said Gates.

Esber also endorsed the openness of SQL Server, saying, "SQL Server is an open platform and, as such, has benefits for both dBASE and non-dBASE users. We will aggressively promote the open platform benefits of SQL Server to the software development community at large."

SQL Server provides a foundation for a wide range of group productivity applications. Microsoft and Ashton-Tate expect that in addition to dBASE, many leading PC-based applications and languages will use SQL Server as a multi-user database engine. SQL Server will provide the basis for transaction-oriented systems, including accounting systems, document libraries, inventory management systems and other applications which have previously been implemented on large-scale systems.

Significant Advances in Database Technology

SQL Server represents a significant advance in the way applications programs talk to databases. It offers a unique client/server approach that splits the functions of a database management system cleanly into a "front-end" component where data is manipulated by end-users or applications, and a "back-end" component where data is stored and retrieved. This architecture responds to the needs of the network environment, where large numbers of intelligent workstations and server machines need to exchange data quickly and easily with one another.

(more)

The product also incorporates three major advances in relational database technology. First, it features stored procedures, which are compiled by SQL Server to dramatically increase the speed of storing and retrieving data. Stored procedures also help to ensure data integrity in a multi-user environment, where many different application programs access the database. Second, an advanced transaction-oriented DBMS kernel makes the database constantly available for administrative tasks such as backup and recovery, even while users continue to access the database. The DBMS kernel also maximizes transaction throughput, so that SQL Server's performance, as seen by an individual user, stays virtually constant as users are added to the network. Third, SQL Server will provide a technology bridge between on-line transaction processing systems and PC databases. One such example will be the ability of dBASE applications to transparently access SQL Server.

Customer Shipments Slated for Second Half of 1988

Ashton-Tate plans first shipment of SQL Server to customers in the second half of 1988. Final pricing of SQL Server will be announced by Ashton-Tate in the second quarter.

Microsoft and Ashton-Tate will conduct a series of jointly sponsored events, including technical seminars and conferences, to encourage independent third party and corporate developers to write applications that take advantage of SQL Server. The first event will occur in conjunction with Microsoft's planned Advanced Network Development Conferences scheduled for March 30-April 1 in San Francisco and April 13-15 in New York.

SQL Server runs on any OS/2 system-based network server, including those with the Microsoft OS/2 LAN Manager or the IBM LAN Server. SQL Server communicates with workstations running under OS/2, PC-DOS, or MS-DOS.

Ashton-Tate Corporation (NASDAQ: "TATE") is one of the largest developers and marketers of business applications software. Its products cover five applications areas and are designed to provide fast and efficient solutions to business problems.

(more)

Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ: "MSFT") develops, markets and supports a wide range of software for business and professional use, including operating systems, languages, and applications programs, as well as books and hardware for the microcomputer marketplace.

#

Microsoft and MS-DOS are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation.

Ashton-Tate and dBASE are registered trademarks of Ashton-Tate Corporation.

SYBASE is a registered trademark of Sybase, Inc.

For more information, please contact:

Ashton-Tate - Gail Pomerantz - 213-538-7345

Microsoft - Marty Taucher, Kathryn Hinsch - 206-882-8080

Miller Communications - Mel Webster - 617-536-0470

The Waggener Group - Claire Lematta, Pam Edstrom - 503-245-0905