Technology And The Future, Who’s In Control Essay, Research Paper

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Technology and The Future, Who?s In Control?

Technology significantly shapes the way we live today, and is no less of a significant influence than religion or government for determining how we will live tomorrow. The interesting aspect about the influence of technology is that it is controlled by a much larger group of “leaders” than religion or government. These “leaders” include both individuals and businesses, together known as the consumer. The consumer controls what will be on the market by making the demand for it. Any computer software store holds the evidence which makes that demand a reality. The evidence is the overwhelming amount of IBM software compared to Macintosh software. The reason for this ever-increasing gap of products available for an IBM-compatible computer and those available for a Macintosh is that the consumer demands software for the IBM, not the Macintosh. This example shows how technology available in the future will be a direct result of the demands consumers put on the computer companies today. The two demands which will have the most impact on what will be produced are the needs for affordability and for a user-friendly product.

Consumers want a product at an affordable price, whether it is for at home or for their business. However, new technology, especially in the area of computers, is usually not affordable. The consumer has the power to make it affordable, by demanding that product. For example, a personal computer ten years ago sold for about $3,000.00. Now, because of the demand consumers have made in the last ten years, a new personal computer can be purchased for around $1200.00. Consumers also have the choice to buy a used PC, in which case they will pay around $600.00 – $800.00.

The reason this drop in cost has occurred has to do with supply and demand. Supply and demand has a large influence on the prices of products that use new technology. Computer companies wouldn?t make, or supply, thousands of personal computers until a demand was made. Through the late 1980?s and early 1990?s the demand was heard by the computer companies, and personal computers went into mass-production. It seems pretty simple. The consumer makes a demand, and the PC goes into mass-production. One step is missing though. There has to be a reason behind the consumer?s demands. Something had to happen to spark the interest of millions of people around the world. This “something” was the computer companies made the PC easy to use. They made the software easy to use, which made the computer a convenience to many consumers. Consumers began to create documents using the word processing software available instead of a typewriter, keeping inventory on a spreadsheet instead manually in hard-to-read ledgers, and playing Pac-Man for free instead of paying a quarter at the arcade. All of this was promoted and sold using the phrase “user-friendly”.

A “user-friendly” product is one that any average consumer could load onto their computer and use, without being required to read a 200 page manual first! Businesses look for user-friendly products especially. It?s true that the average consumer of software packages desires an easy-to-use program, but when a business invests in new technology, they are also investing in the training of the employees who will have to use it. If it is not user-friendly, the cost of this training may double in both time and money. Microsoft Word for Windows is an excellent example of a user-friendly application. The prompts on the status line and the icons that give explanations of their duties are two ways that Word helps beginners understand how the program works. Most businesses would prefer for the technology to do the training. It saves them money and frustration. Software companies know that a pleased individual or business is more likely to welcome future technological advances than a frustrated one.

The demands for affordable and user-friendly products that we as the consumer put on computer companies today will have a direct result on the technology of the future. The software industry?s commitment to providing products that the we ask for leaves the consumer in control of technology in future years.