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SMB File Transfer Utility: No Longer Distributed

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TOPIC -----

Is the SMB File Transfer utility still available? Does it work with 7.0? If it's no longer available, did anything take its place? Are there any third-party options?

DISCUSSION -----

Decision to Withdraw from Distribution

The SMB File Transfer utility, which was included with Apple's TokenTalk NB product (M0237), was withdrawn from U.S. distribution on May 15, 1991.

When this decision to pull SMB FTU was made early this year, it was based on a combination of market realities and engineering resource constraints, which are summarized in the following paragraphs. Since that time we have reached agreements with IBM that will result in much better and broader solutions than SMB FTU can offer.

Third-Party Alternative

One currently available third-party LAN-based option, Miramar's MacLANConnect, works differently but offers file access across your LAN. A description of it is posted on AppleLink.

Limited Market

The market for the product has always been fundamentally limited by the small share of the server market held by SMB-based servers. This market segment has continued to shrink over time, with Novell emerging as the clear winner. Within the Macintosh subsegment of this market, the product's potential is further constrained by two very specific limitations:

- TokenTalk NB card support only, and
- The inability to mount the SMB server on the desktop.

Non-product events also influence this subsegment, including IBM's decision to market Netware 386 (with AppleTalk support) and Microsoft's decision to include AppleTalk support in LAN Manager 2.1. Thus, both principal proponents of SMB servers will be selling solutions supporting AppleTalk.

Compatibility Issues

The engineering resource constraints are due to software release issues with the product:

- IBM PC-LAN and OS/2 LAN Server Compatibility Issues
The latest versions of IBM's PC-LAN Server (for DOS-based servers) and OS/2 LAN Server aren't completely compatible with SMB FTU. The reference server implementation for the product was IBM's PC-LAN Server 1.0 release. It has, however, continued to work with all but the latest versions of the DOS SMB server and even the OS/2 SMB server (something it was never designed to do). With the release of PC-LAN Server 1.33 and OS/2 LAN Server 1.2, however, the product has started to exhibit some problems with file directories and privileges. These problems were traced to a change in the SMB implementation on the server.
- Incompatible with System 7
SMB FT was never revised to work with System 7. The incompatibilities created by new software releases from both IBM and Apple would require a significant expenditure of engineering and test resources that have already been committed to higher priority projects.

Upcoming Products Surpass SMB File Transfer

On October 2, Apple and IBM announced the intention to offer customers new networking solutions (refer to the press release "Apple and IBM to Offer Customers a Broad Range of New Networking Efficiencies" for all of the details). Among our intentions are to place an AppleTalk stack on the OS/2 LAN Server to allow Macintosh, OS/2, and DOS-based personal computers to share files, query corporate databases, and access a broad range of communications services through a common OS/2 server. This provides quite a leap in functionality over SMB FTU.

Microsoft announced, approximately one month ago, support of AppleTalk on their LAN Server, which too will enable a much greater degree of functionality over SMB FTU.

Neither the Microsoft nor the Apple/IBM solution is available today. When customers upgrade to this latest version of OS/2 LAN Manager or PC-LAN Server, Macintosh users will receive a more comprehensive set of services on IBM-based networks than was available to them with SMB FTU. And it will be native to the Macintosh.

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