

# An Open Letter to Software Developers

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From Jean-Louis Gassée  
Be, Inc.



Today's computer platforms have a few things in common. They're based on technology that's at least ten years old. They stifle software developers with huge marketing and distribution costs, intense competition, and saturated markets. And they do not fully exploit the latest innovations in hardware design.

Be, Inc. has devoted considerable time, effort, and talent to creating a fresh alternative. An alternative that overcomes the limitations of today's tired and bloated operating systems. One that truly takes advantage of today's powerful hardware; that makes it easy to write and deploy advanced applications; and that presents new business opportunities for your company.

We'd like to introduce you to the BeBox™, a high-performance, low-cost system designed to meet the demands of sophisticated computer users and developers. It's the first true real-time, object-oriented system that features multiple PowerPC processors, true preemptive multitasking, an integrated database, fast I/O, and a wide range of expansion options—all at a price that's aggressively below that of any competitive offering.

The BeBox is certainly an excellent system for programming, for classical compute-intensive applications, for video games, and for personal productivity tools. And with its combination of raw power afforded by dual PowerPC processors, an innovative new portable operating system, and familiar development tools, the BeBox is poised to become a significant alternative for a wide range of next-generation applications.

## **We Need Each Other.**

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No computing system can succeed without excellent software; no software development company can succeed without an excellent system for current and future development. In other words, we need each other. Be is strongly committed to making sure we can both profit by working together.

We understand the pressures you face in determining which operating systems to support. It's a complex business decision. Therefore, allow us to present the business case for partnering with Be.

First, the assertion that independent software vendors are driven solely by the size of the available installed base is simplistic. Many other factors come into play: The potential of market sizes over time; the possibility of gaining a dominant share in a given segment; the

strength and quality of the competition; and the barriers to entry and costs of market participation. These are just a few examples.

Equally important—perhaps even more powerful—is the ability of a system to adequately demonstrate the capabilities of your application. Painters, sculptors, architects, writers, and teachers are driven by more than market share; they consider the “expressive power” of the medium above all. And anyone familiar with the software business knows that developers are artists too.

## **Now for the Specifics.**

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There are three “Ds” every developer faces in the effort to succeed in the software business: Development, distribution, and demand creation.

### **Development**

To facilitate your development efforts, we offer a powerful, flexible, multimedia hardware architecture with rich I/O capabilities standard on every unit, a powerful real-time multitasking kernel, an object-oriented class library and application framework, and an outstanding development environment with familiar development tools.

The hardware features two PowerPC 603 processors running at 66 MHz, room for 256 MB of RAM, and 16-bit CD-quality sound. It provides a broad spectrum of expansion and I/O options, including three slots on the very fast (132 Mbits/sec) PCI bus for high-speed add-on cards; five expansion slots on the ISA bus for low-cost, lower-bandwidth cards; four MIDI ports; a high-speed SCSI-II port; four serial ports, one “geekport,” two joystick ports, three infrared ports, and one parallel port.

Our system software is small, fast, and real-time. It provides multithreading, preemptive multitasking, and memory protection. On top of the proprietary kernel, we have designed a graphics server that delivers ultra-responsive, continuously updated windows; a database server that supports live queries of user- or developer-defined collections of data; and a digital media toolkit that allows for manipulation of real-time streams of audio/video data. All of this is accessible from our object-oriented C++ framework. We also ship a graphical browser with every machine, which shows off many features of the OS and allows the user to manipulate all of the files and database objects on the computer.

For application development, we offer the CodeWarrior™ PowerPC development environment



from Metrowerks, along with full technical and user documentation. You can use the current version of CodeWarrior hosted on the Macintosh for all of your application development, and soon we'll offer the entire CodeWarrior Integrated Development Environment—including a high-speed linker, compiler, and debugger—native on the BeBox.

The BeBox will begin shipping to selected customers and developers in mid-October, 1995. The suggested U.S. list price for a bare-bones system is \$1,600. The BeBox ships with key components such as the CPU board, system software, and manuals, and allows you to customize your system with standard components from the "PC clone organ bank," including monitors, keyboards, memory, **hard disks**, CD-ROM drives, and modems.

The BeBox is only the first member of the Be product family, which is being expanded to include four-processor and portable configurations. Future Be products will also incorporate other versions of the PowerPC processor. This is a product line that will grow with you.

#### **Distribution**

Be offers you an innovative and effective electronic distribution model designed to maximize your exposure and your profits. As opposed to the traditional distribution model, which requires you to provide significant cash up front for catalog advertising and to support the cost of distributors and dealers, the Be distribution model requires minimal up-front investment and eliminates the middleman completely.

We provide market access to your software through a combination of e-mail and Internet communications. Be systems have Internet connectivity built in, and Be will register every customer's telephone number and Internet address, so we can supply you with up-to-the-minute information about each and every one of our customers. That gives you the opportunity for repeat sales and easy sales of software updates.

By eliminating the middleman we'll enable you to offer your software at a significantly lower price and help avoid the common problems of piracy associated with high-priced software.

#### **Demand Creation**

All of Be's customers and resellers will be connected and accessible via e-mail, so it's easy to notify your target market about your products and upgrades. You can circulate demo versions of your products, patches, documentation, and price lists via BeMail, or place them on Be's World Wide Web server where customers can view and download them.

Be is also working to provide cost-effective demand creation and customer education in a number of ways. We'll hold or sponsor forums and newsgroups to assist with interdeveloper and intercustomer relations. We'll also publish periodicals with information of interest to targeted groups—developers, A/V professionals, and general customers.

#### **Let Us Prove it to You.**

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We're confident that the Be architecture delivers a fresh and exciting alternative for developers who are frustrated by the limitations of today's computing architectures. We invite you to take the next step by calling us to request product specifications. We'll be glad to answer your questions, and we'll do everything possible to enlist your support.

Sincerely,

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Chairman and CEO  
Be, Inc.

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