

15.965 Technology Strategy (Spring 2009)

Professor Michael A M Davies

Class 12: Adobe Systems Incorporated

Please note that you are *not* required to submit a write-up. However, writing down your thoughts may help you during class discussion.

Adobe has been involved in a long-running standards battle, primarily against Microsoft. It is the leading supplier of software for the graphics arts and publishing industries, and its initial success came through establishing and exploiting Postscript.

It has a strong presence in web development and is now evaluating whether it should focus on the eBook market.

Please give some thought to the following questions:

- what is the technical *architecture* of the electronic publishing *system* and the *innovation trajectory* for the key enabling technologies?
- what does the *demand opportunity* look like, how is it co-evolving with the enabling technologies, and what is the pattern of *diffusion and adoption*?
- what have been the key *episodes* and *eras* in electronic publishing formats?
- who are the key complementors within the *business ecosystem*, and what partnerships should Adobe be pursuing?
- how was **Postscript** established as a *de facto* standard?
- how did Adobe make money from Postscript, despite its being an '*open*' rather than '*proprietary*' standard?
- which are the key *customer groups* and *applications* that Adobe should be focusing on now: commercial; general consumers; eBook users; a subset of eBook users; desktop or PDAs?
- what are the key strengths and weaknesses of Adobe, Microsoft and other players in the eBook and eDocs spaces?
- what should Adobe do now?
- can Adobe win the standards war?
- will there be a single standard, or multiple competing standards?
- how did Adobe capture value if and when it is successful in establishing PDF as the *de facto* standard?
- and, bringing this right up to date, what do you think of Amazon and the Kindle; will it be successful in establishing this as a standard?

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