

The start of the conference.

Jim is opening the conference.

“Welcome to Mainz everyone, and welcome to the conference. We have present senior representatives from industry and representatives of a research centre and people from various press organizations. Welcome to you all. Our first speaker is the Managing Director of Gigantic Business, who I am told has some interesting news to make public.”

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business gets up to speak.

“Thank you Chairman. As many of you know, Gigantic Business is a major participant in the consumer electronics market. As you also all know there are various other major participants in the same market and, let’s face it, the going rate is none of us ever mention our competitors. Yet today I am going to do so.”

There is a collective murmuring around the room. The Managing Director pauses for effect. As the murmuring subsides he continues.

“The reason is because recently one of competitors approached us with a proposal.”

More murmuring.

“Yes, we know about not inhibiting the market, but there is an exception namely if it helps consumers, and this is what the proposal is about. As you know Gigantic Business has recently launched the Locomotive device and I can tell you that it is very successful. InterJollies have become very popular very quickly. Anyway one of our competitors approached us and mentioned that they had produced a competing product with their own collection of localizable sentences to use the generic term for them though they may well have their own name for their own version and asked if they could include our InterJollies in their product and in return we could include their localizable sentences in our Locomotive device. All this being put as being to help consumers so that messages composed on one brand of device could be received and localized on the other brand of device.”

There is a pause. People sit mostly quietly, waiting for what is to follow.

“Well, we thought about it and, let’s face it, with a product already released and popular we wondered why we should risk giving help to give a competitor’s product market credibility. However, we considered the greater good and decided that it would be in the interests of consumers to agree and so we agreed.”

There is chattering in the audience at this news.

“So maybe some of you from other competitors might like to think about that and as to whether an industry-wide agreement on this would be a good thing in the interests of consumers.”

A flashback.

The office of the Managing Director of Gigantic Business.

A knock on the door and Janice enters.

“Excuse me, I have a message from the Chairman.”

“Oh.”

“He just rang.”

“Well I was here, why did you not put him through?”

“I was going to but he said he was just ringing to leave a quick message”

“Yes, alright, what did he say?”

“He says that there is to be an institute meeting tomorrow evening with a talk about the history of integrated circuit development and he is going and he hopes that you may be going as it looks good.”

“Is that it, just that?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you Janice.”

Janice leaves the room.

‘I wonder what he wants. Why not just let Janice put him through and tell me. Oh well, I suppose I had better go. I haven’t been to one of the evening meetings for years.’

The next evening. A lecture room of a nearby university.

“Ah, hello Walter, I hoped you would come, it promises to be an interesting meeting.” says the Chairman.

They sit through the talk and the question and answer session.

“Ah,” that was good.” says the Chairman.

They stand to go.

The Managing Director is wondering what this is about, surely there is more to this.

“Oh,” says the Chairman “there’s the Chairman of Large Engineering Business, I haven’t seen him for a while, we used to see each other quite often at these type of meetings years ago when we were both young engineers.”

‘Here we go’ thinks the Managing Director ‘a chance meeting all carefully arranged on neutral premises and so I’ll more or less have to listen and maybe get pressurized.’

The Managing Director is introduced to the Chairman of Large Engineering Business. the two chairmen chat a bit about the old days and go on for a while about how technology has changed over the years.

'Get on with it, what is this really about.' thinks the Managing Director.

The Chairman of Large Engineering Business speaks to the Managing Director.

"As we have happened to meet here, there is something I would like to ask you about if I may please."

"Yes certainly."

"Well, we had a board meeting earlier this week and, well, as it happens our company has been developing a product to compete with your Locomotive device, with which, if I may say so off the record, we are very impressed. So we are preparing to launch, complete with the set of the localizable sentences set out by the LocSARA organization, which as you know are open source, and some of our own devising."

'Are you indeed.' thinks the Managing Director.

"Well, we had a board meeting the other day to finalize it all and I suggested that, in the interests of interoperability, whether we should ask you if we can include your InterJollies and their code numbers in our device, ... and in exchange we would let you include our sentences and our code numbers in your device."

'Not a chance.' thinks the Managing Director.

"Well, in the event there was quite a lot of objection to that and some people were quite vociferous in saying that ... well that our product is better than yours and let consumers decide which they want."

'Well ours is already out there with big sales and very popular, so letting consumers choose is fine by me.' thinks the Managing Director.

"Anyway I persisted - it got a bit heated, with some agreeing with me but many not, and then our Managing Director suggested that we leave it until next week's meeting and if I could make an informal enquiry of you and report back your reaction then we - our board that is - could make a decision."

'My instinct is to say 'no', but what if other companies enter the market with similar devices and everybody except us agrees to interoperability between devices from various manufacturers. We could be left out of it all and even if let in later we might never recover ... it could look bad as if we are deliberately stopping customers being able to have fun. ... We're going to need to agree but I'll get something out of it.' thinks the Managing Director.

There is a pause.

"Well, what do you think of the suggestion." asks the Chairman of Gigantic Business.

"I will need to think about it and discuss it with the Gigantic Business board."

"Yes of course, these things take time. If I can report back that we have had this chat and that you are thinking about it. I can probably get an extension for another week while your board meets and considers the matter."

“Well, we have weekly board meetings too. I won’t say one way or the other now.”

“Yes of course.”

“As we were first in the market, if we do agree we get the right to make the announcement ... right.”

“Yes, I expect that I could get agreement to that.”

‘You’ll need to.’ thinks the Managing Director.

“And in your press release you put ‘by kind permission of Gigantic Business in the interests of interoperability for the benefit of consumers’ - and you say it in any and all oral presentations - not just you personally but anyone from your company.”

“You drive a hard bargain. Alright.”

“Good.” says the Chairman of Gigantic Business.

“I first got interested in localizable sentences when I read a very upbeat article about them in Trade Magazine.” says the Chairman of Large Engineering Business.

“Yes, I saw that article.” says the Chairman of Gigantic Business.

Conversation then becomes general with the two chairmen chatting away while the Managing Director sits there wondering about it all and about clearly having been set up for this by his own chairman.

The flashback ends.

Simon Eastleigh speaks.

“Excuse me, could you say which is the competitor to which your refer please?”

“Well, I could, but I am not going to do so. Not because I am unwilling to mention the name of a competitor but you will be hearing from their Managing Director soon and he can make his own announcement in his own talk.”

Jim speaks.

“Well, I think we will all break for some refreshments and resume in forty-five minutes time.”

‘Time enough for various side chats to take place I suppose.’ thinks Edith.

‘That went well,’ thinks the Managing Director of Gigantic Business. ‘that should get some good press publicity. It is all very fortunate that the press found out about this conference and got here and heard that. I wonder who tipped them off about it.’