

When it absolutely, positively has to be there for the product demo overnight

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The preparations for the Windows NT launch event included acquiring impressive hardware to demonstrate the operating system’s scalability.

One of the pieces of hardware loaned to Microsoft for demonstration purposes was a massive server with *four processors*.

Hey, this was 1993. Symmetric multiprocessing wasn’t something you would find in consumer-grade PCs for over a decade.

This was a very expensive system, and a custom case was ordered to ensure its safe travel as it toured the world, going from one demo to the next. The schedule for this was very tight, with delivery of the custom case expected in Redmond on the day before the system had to be shipped out to its first performance at a sales conference in Hawaii.¹

As bad luck would have it, the custom case was stuck in Memphis, having missed its outbound flight to Redmond. This meant that its arrival in Redmond was delayed by a day. The custom case would arrive, have to be packed up, and then rushed to a shipping center so it could go back out on the same day.

The person responsible for getting the fancy computer to Hawaii talked with the shipping company about the situation. At the time, they were Microsoft’s exclusive provider of overnight delivery services, and from how this story unfolds, it’s clear that they were serious about maintaining that status. The instructions were, “When you get the case, *don’t let the delivery person leave*. Make him wait for you to pack up the system and give it back to them. We’ll take care of it from here.”

The case arrived the next day, and the delivery person was understandably confused by the instructions not to leave. He called the main office and returned with a bewildered look on his face. But at least he didn’t leave. He waited while the team packed up the expensive server and had it ready to be shipped back out.

The delivery person asked, “Do you know what’s happening with this box?”

That was an odd question. The team answered, “Well, we assume that after we give it to you, it’s going to Hawaii overnight.”

“Yes, but that’s not all. It is getting *its own plane*. My instructions are to take this box directly to a jet which will take it straight to Hawaii. I’ve never seen that happen before.”

Windows NT launched on this day in 1993. I guess the demo machines arrived in time.

¹ Why do sales people get conferences in tropical locations?

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