

AOL makes \$4 billion Netscape purchase

NEW YORK (AP) — America Online Inc., the computer online service that naysayers once said would surely be crushed by Microsoft or the Internet, emerged as a newly formidable competitor Tuesday with its deal to buy Netscape Communications Corp.

The \$4.21 billion merger could fundamentally alter the balance of power on the Internet.

While AOL is already the world's largest Internet access and online service provider, the deal gives the company important advantages in its battle with Microsoft Corp. to dominate the main Internet sites where people get information and buy goods and services.

Together, Netscape's and AOL's sites reach a staggering 70 percent of all people who access the Internet, according to NetRatings, a research firm.

The deal also underscores the popularity of Netscape's Navigator software for browsing the Internet, despite the meteoric rise of Microsoft's rival Internet Explorer — a crucial concern in the U.S. government's antitrust lawsuit against Microsoft and its chairman, Bill Gates.

Microsoft lawyers argued Tuesday that the AOL-Netscape deal backed up their claim that Microsoft is simply a player in an extremely competitive software market

and not, as the government claims, a monopolist trying to crush its rivals.

The merger also is a vindication for Steve Case, 40, the boyish-looking chairperson of AOL.

"We do recognize Microsoft is a major competitor in a lot of different areas, but we've always said we'd like to work with them wherever it makes sense."

— Steve Case
America Online Inc. chairperson

Just a few years ago, AOL was ridiculed for supplying its own proprietary online entertainment and information to subscribers at a time when people could get a far wider choice on the Internet. Last year, a surge in usage across AOL's network triggered massive bottlenecks.

Despite the problems, Case stuck to AOL's strategy of mass-mailing start-up diskettes

and luring tens of millions of Americans to "channels" of neatly organized subject categories. AOL also provided online users access to the Internet and set up its own free Web site, encouraging users to buy products and services from advertisers.

But Case, realizing AOL's limitations, wants to dramatically step up his Web presence by using Netscape's Web sites and software.

Case said there will not be a big change for consumers right away. But he said eventually he plans to give AOL's 14 million subscribers easy links to Netscape's popular NetCenter Web site, a portal to services and information geared toward businesses.

AOL is expected to offer advertisers a single rate to reach users of its proprietary online service and visitors to the NetCenter site as well as to its existing AOL.com Internet site.

A second plan is to use Netscape's software to eventually create a new AOL browser that makes it easier for people to view and retrieve Web information. For now, however, AOL will continue to use Microsoft's browser.

"We do recognize Microsoft is a major competitor in a lot of different areas, but we've always said we'd like to work with them wherever it makes sense," Case said in an interview.

PRADHAN

Continued from Page 1

Pradhan could face up to 10 years in prison if he violates the terms of his probation, District Attorney Bill Turner said.

A 1997 System audit accused Pradhan of misappropriating more than \$100,000 in University funds for personal benefit.

Pradhan was placed on paid leave in August 1997 and returned to the University a year later, pending the Committee on Academic Freedom, Responsibility, Tenure, Review and Promotion hearing.

In the audit report released last year, University officials said Pradhan:

- Used University funds for personal travel and lodging expenses associated with three private companies he owns.
- Made graduate students perform work exclusively for his private companies.
- Threatened not to sign a master's thesis for Gavin Holland unless Holland publicly presented a paper to benefit one of Pradhan's private companies. Holland, according to the report, said he agreed to present the paper for fear he would not get his thesis approved for his master's degree.

Pradhan, a native of India, filed a lawsuit against Texas A&M University in August saying he had been the subject of discrimination and First Amendment rights violations.

In October, a six-member committee of faculty members ruled the charges in the

System audit were enough to cause termination of Pradhan.

Jim Ashlock, the deputy director of University Relations, said Pradhan is guilty will not alter his relationship with the University. Pradhan's term scheduled for June 30, 1999, Ashlock said.

"It has not changed Dhiraj Pradhan's relationship with the University," said. "We will have to see what actions of this before any actions are taken concerning Pradhan."

West said Pradhan plans to continue to teach at Texas A&M University, pending recommendation of CAFRT.

Pradhan accepted the COE's Chair Professor of the Computer Department in 1992. As the chair, Pradhan was given unrestricted control over the endowment fund of the department.

Prior to coming to Texas A&M, Pradhan was a professor at the University of Massachusetts in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering from 1983 to 1992.

He served as associate professor at Oakland University School of Engineering from 1978 to 1982. He was an assistant professor in the summer of 1975 at the University of Stanford.

In his work outside the University, Pradhan served as a consultant for IBM and AT&T, in the areas of advanced computing, computer architecture and computer-aided design.

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TILL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS (PG) 10:25 12:55 2:20 4:45 7:15
 THE WATERBOY (PG-13) 10:20 11:45 12:30 1:50 2:45 (ON 2 SCREENS) 4:30 5:25 7:00 9:30 10:10 11:50 12:25

THE SIEGE (R) 11:30 2:00 4:35 7:30 10:20 12:55
 RUSH HOUR (PG-13) 5:20 8:00 10:30 12:50
 THE WIZARD OF OZ (G) 12:35 3:00
 PRACTICAL MAGIC (PG-13) 9:25

*HOME FRIES (R) 11:35 1:55 4:25 7:10 9:50 12:15
 *VERY BAD THINGS (R) 11:50 2:25 4:55 7:35 10:00 12:30
 JERRY SPRINGER: FINGERS (R) 12:20 2:50 5:10 7:55 10:35 1:00
 PLEASANTVILLE (PG-13) 6:50 9:35

ANTZ (PG) 10:10 12:15 2:35 4:50
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