

# Microsoft woos new pals in D.C.

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Created 27/03/2005 - 4:30pm

Submitted by srlinuxx on Sunday 27th of March 2005 04:30:51 PM Filed under [Microsoft](#) [1]

On Feb. 24, Microsoft Chief Technology Officer Craig Mundie sat in on a "big boys" conference call with the Federal Communications Commission. Others on the line were the chief executives of Time Warner Cable and Comcast and the chairman of the FCC.

Three weeks later, the FCC made a major decision regarding cable set-top boxes that favored Microsoft and the cable companies ? and rejected months of lobbying by Intel and others in the computer and electronics industry.

Five years ago, Microsoft would not have been in on such a call and probably would not have prevailed. But the phone conference with the FCC is one result of a carefully crafted strategy, the culmination of years of work by the company to undo damage from its landmark federal antitrust case and make new friends in the nation's capital.

And it needs those friends. As one FCC commissioner put it, Microsoft is back on the "regulatory radar screen."

But, as Mundie said in a recent interview, he's been preparing for this moment for 10 years.

The renewed interest stems from a long-awaited development in technology and entertainment: the arrival of the "age of convergence."

In yesterday's analog world, television programs were delivered on TVs, radio shows on radio. Today's technology has complicated the situation by enabling cable, computers and all manner of electronic devices to deliver the Web, phone service, music, video and other digital content.

As a result, federal oversight in the telecommunications arena is extending into software companies such as Microsoft, and the company has been anticipating the change. Positioning itself for new ventures in telecom and entertainment, Microsoft is crafting tactical alliances with other companies and political power brokers and pushing policy positions on critical telecom issues in D.C.

What's more, its positions and alliances seem to shift with neck-turning speed.

The company is back "in the thick of things" because of convergence, said outgoing FCC Chairman Michael Powell, who added bemusedly that it will be interesting to "watch the coming convergence of lobbying and public positions."

[Full Story](#) [2].

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