

## Advanced Interface Productization: Lessons Learned



David Kurlander, <http://kurlander.net/DJ/>  
*Industry Consultant*

### Abstract of Kurlander's presentation at AVI 2012

Over the years David has managed several research projects relating to advanced interfaces and has turned them into shipping products. Microsoft Comic Chat uses automatic illustration generation and the visual language of comics to present online conversations. Microsoft's Mobile Internet Toolkit renders web interfaces on a variety of mobile devices. Microsoft Surface is a multi-touch, object-sensing table-top display. More recently he has been advising start-ups in the mobile content / ubiquitous computing area. Juggling the competing interests of research and product development has been often interesting, sometimes painful, and always challenging. **David will discuss lessons learned while productizing interface technology**, including selecting the product to ship, balancing research and product requirements, navigating management's whims of the day, setting goals, and evaluating the results. He will discuss what has worked and what has not, and why certain efforts have been more successful than others.

### Bio

David Kurlander joined Microsoft Research as one of its charter members in 1992. In 1996 he followed one of his research projects into a product team, and found himself leading the chat and communities technology effort. Subsequently David managed Microsoft's Adaptive User Interface team, which created Microsoft's mobile web technology for the .NET Platform, and shipped it along with Visual Studio.NET. As General Manager of the New Consumer Technology Group, he led the effort to propose and build exciting new product concepts, including Microsoft Surface, which has strongly influenced Microsoft's future Windows interface development. David left Microsoft at the end of 2005, and has been working with several technology start-up companies, as well as advising a venture capital firm. David received a Bachelor's degree in Applied Mathematics from Harvard, and a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Columbia. Prior to Microsoft, David worked at a diverse collection of places, ranging from Xerox PARC to the Pentagon. He has been active in the research community, and was chair of the ACM UIST Conference. Over the years, David has done research or worked on products related to visual languages, graphical editing, interface agents, automated illustration, adaptive interfaces, ubiquitous computing, table interfaces and more.

---

### Lessons learned while productizing interface technology

1. Learn from other products (and research) ...and exploit their weakness
2. Seek out domain experts: build a multidisciplinary team
3. You will be surprised how people use what you create ...build for extensibility
4. Listen to your users... the more users the more you learn
5. You cannot ignore the mundane stuff
6. Find great ship vehicles
7. Importance of public relations (PR)... good advertisement
8. Make experiments in university labs first .....  
write once, target any device
9. Be nimble, be quick
10. Exploit sea changes, ride the wave... but they may overtake you
11. For hardware devices cost of goods and form factors are critical... time can help
12. Company dynamics and the market will affect what you ship