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By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Bill Gates, 1987
Microsoft

Ladies and Gentlemen, Bill Gates Has Left the Building

As of June 28, Microsoft is officially sans Bill Gates

Yesterday, June 27, 2008 was a day that made it into history simply because it marked the transition of Bill Gates out of his day-to-day role at Microsoft, a company founded together with Paul Allen in 1975. As of June 28, Microsoft is officially sans Bill Gates, now 52 years old and committed to focusing almost exclusively on philanthropic work via the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. But at the same time June 28 is synonymous with Microsoft's debut on a new path, other than the one in Bill Gates' original vision. A new direction that is designed to take the Redmond software giant into the cloud... In one of the cafeterias on the iconic Redmond campus Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer along with approximately 1,000 Microsoft employees gathered yesterday morning to say farewell to Gates, a ceremony that reverberated across the world in all the company's offices. By pure coincidence, Bill Gates' pseudo-retirement, because he still retains the title of Chairman and will continue as a member on the Board of Directors albeit just once a week, is synchronized with the last days when Windows XP will still be available via the retail and OEM channels. Windows XP, with Service Pack 2, is the operating system that took Microsoft over the 1 billion milestone for the Windows install base worldwide. At the end of June 2008, both Gates and XP are, at least theoretically, out the door. But just as XP, now with SP3, will linger on until at least 2014, so will Gates continue with Microsoft, even if in a smaller role, dealing with innovative projects, such as making the connection between the Windows operating system and natural user interfaces ubiquitous. "I wanted to share some of my thoughts and reflections as we go through today," said [S. Somasegar](#), Senior Vice President, Developer Division on June 27. "I have had a fantastic time being a part of Microsoft and being able to work on some great products and technologies that a lot of people around the world use. Being able to do this in an environment with Bill Gates at the top of Microsoft has been very rewarding. Over the years, I have had many opportunities to interact with Bill and learn from those interactions. Bill is an individual that I deeply admire and respect." **"Today hurts deep"** "I wasn't fortunate enough to attend the Bill Gates town hall in person today. Though it was being webcasted to all MPRs on campus - I decided to watch it from my desk, after all I feared shedding a tear in front of a whole bunch of colleagues. But the load on the network gave me the slip and I had to go into an MPR. I couldn't help but shed a tear - but I wasn't alone - the man himself shed a few tears when the energetic Big Boy Ballmer couldn't hold himself together any longer, that moment, I'm sure the whole world broke down. Dang - Today hurts deep," revealed [Mohammed Jeelani](#), Development Lead, Microsoft. The official website of the company was redesigned to mark the end of Gates' two year long transition out of Microsoft. Just under the slogan "your potential, our passion" Bill Gates is "looking back, moving ahead" on [Microsoft.com](#). The architect of Microsoft's success, and a brand larger than even Windows or Office, the company's flagship products, now just the third wealthiest man in the world, is moving on into the next stage of his life. "As I ask myself when the first time was I ever heard of Bill Gates. I can't even remember it's something like how you don't even remember someone telling you - "this is your brother" or "this is your sister". I grew up knowing this chap - he wasn't just a hero, or just an inspiration, he is a way of life - someone who we look up to as a role model who we can't replicate even a smallest fraction of how we live not just our professional life but also our personal," Jeelani added. The fact of the matter is that Bill Gates has created much more than just Microsoft. Gates is the catalyst that spawned the entire software industry in a time when the personal computer wasn't given many chances to succeed in either business environments or in households. It was Gates' original vision

that has ultimately taken Microsoft to where it is today, with over 1 billion copies of Windows in use worldwide. **"Thank you Bill, for bring us this fantastic digital world, and let us know the magic of software!"**The message in quote marks above, complete with the original spelling belong to [Rex Tang](#) from Microsoft Consulting Services Japan. In case you didn't know it, spelling and grammar are not requirements for writing code, especially English spelling and grammar in Tokyo. Japan was one of the first markets where Microsoft expanded as it was evolving. The then young company managed to bet big on the internationalization of its software products and end up winning. And internationalization is still the key for continual expansion, but not so much on the developed markets, as in emerging countries. After Bill Gates, Microsoft needs to start focusing intensely on the next five billion potential users around the world. But at this point in time, software can no longer be limited to the desktop. In fact, it's no longer all about software and the Redmond company has already acknowledged this as it is gearing up for a new strategy involving Software + Services. "Seeing the farewell to Bill Gates... Yes, I work for Microsoft and I am proud of it. To be very honest he was one of the reasons I joined this company. The people working here are my personal reason to stay... Microsoft – Change the world or go home!!! We just started," said [Frank Fischer](#), Manager for Technical Evangelism at Microsoft Germany. **"Think big and Dream big"**Microsoft is capable of continuing on sheer momentum alone, but this does not actually mean that without Gates the company will remain where it is today. The geeks are still in charge and illustrative examples are Ray Ozzie, Chief Software Architect and Craig Mundie, Chief Research and Strategy Officer. The team at the helm of Microsoft is not complete without Steve Ballmer. Ozzie, Mundie and Ballmer will be bridging Microsoft's traditional software products with new services in the cloud. "Here are a couple of things that are top of mind in terms of what I have learned from Bill think big and Dream big; think and optimize for the long-term; the power of software is huge and as much progress as we have made, there is a lot more to do. Bill has had a phenomenal impact around the world through software, computing and Microsoft. As he transitions to spend more of his time and energy with his foundation, I want to thank Bill for what he done and wish him all the very best," Somasegar stated. But Bill Gates' thinking big and dreaming big times are not over yet. He will face even bigger challenges at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation where the default mantra is that all lives on this planet are equal. In the past Gates dropped out of Harvard and went on to build Microsoft. The software giant in its turn changed the face of the world forever. Now Gates is abandoning Microsoft and moving on yet again, despite of the possibilities that are in place and almost guaranteed. And philanthropy is as far away from code as possible. "Good luck Bill! All happiness & success to you in this next stage of your life - working on the foundation to solve even bigger problems is a great way to spend the next phase of your life. There will be huge challenges of course - poverty, malaria, aids etc are tough tough problems and Bill does not have the comfort of programming and computing knowledge that helped him blaze a path in the Tech industry. But he is smart, intense and persistent so one feels like significant progress will be made. And even if he doesn't have the same degree of success, he's already achieved more than most could dream of," said Microsoft's [Ivan Joseph](#). **"Bill is an icon of software and IT technology that has changed the world for better forever"**Bill is moving onward to new challenges, but at the same time he is leaving a strong legacy behind. The Microsoft co-founder has had a monumental influence on the world, and there are few of his rivals who can claim the same. But like it or not this is farewell... For Microsoft going forward means Microsoft 2.0. For Gates, this is obviously Bill 2.0 time. One thing that Gates did and has yet to get credit for is not the way he changed the future back in 1975 when he created Microsoft, but how he will continue to shape the future even after June 27, 2008. "To some people Bill may be synonymous to the richest guy in the world. But to many others, including myself, Bill is an icon of software and IT technology that has changed the world for better forever. He is an icon of our generation, and perhaps many generations after. Before I joined Microsoft, the notion of working for Bill

and his company was so noble. After almost seven years I found that feeling remains so true and so strong. Our CEO Steve Ballmer perhaps has said it all for all of us, "We've been given an enormous, enormous opportunity. And Bill gave us that opportunity. I want to thank Bill for that," said [Zhiming Xue "Z"](#), a Microsoft Architect Evangelist based in the Mid Atlantic area.