Mr. Cook,

I've never emailed you before and I'm not happy to email you for the first time with something like this. I very much appreciate your time to consider this.

I'm a FileMaker Developer and have been using FileMaker since 1991, that's 24 years, and was in the FileMaker Business Alliance for just shy of 10 year until today. Today I was removed from the FBA as I have been talking about the problems developers have been having with FileMaker Inc publicly and also discussing how Xojo can be used to move from the FileMaker Platform due to all of the issues the the FileMaker Inc team has created. I'm not upset by being removed from the FileMaker Business Alliance as I wasn't planning to renew my membership, but I am truly upset with how FileMaker Inc is ruining the FileMaker Platform.

The following is something I was planning to post on our blog, but I thought I could send this to you and FileMaker to hopefully affect change to make the FileMaker Platform better. I apologize as the text below is still rough and for the length, but I think you'll get the idea. I still plan to provide development services to our clients that use the FileMaker Platform for years to come, but we will be moving future and current clients to Xojo for the reasons you'll understand. My only goal is for the FileMaker Platform better so I can create better solutions for our clients. If FileMaker Inc can't do that, you'll find developers like me leaving the platform and soon afterwards, they'll move their clients to their preferred platforms.

I don't need a response, but I do hope you'll look into these issues. I'm not the only person who feels this way. If you'd hear from the members of the FileMaker Business Alliance and could hear candid responses, you'll hear similar stories. Many members are afraid to speak for fear of retribution from FileMaker Inc.

Thank you very much for your limited time.

— Hal

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Software Development & Consulting Since 1991.
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FileMaker Inc is Ruining the FileMaker Platform

That's right. The FileMaker platform reached its peak somewhere around Version 12 and has been in a decline ever since.

I've been developing FileMaker solutions since around 1991, when I created my first solution. It was used to schedule bus routes to place British tourists on buses to go from their hotels to attractions in Orlando, FL. I'm FileMaker Certified in Version 7 thru 13. I have been a strong advocate of the FileMaker platform ever since.

But that all changed about a year ago, between the releases of FileMaker 13 and 14.

It's not the products, it's the management of FileMaker Inc that's causing the platform to lose value. FileMaker probably won't go out of business since it makes so much money and has an incredible number of users captured in annual agreements.

For years, FileMaker Inc has been a trusted 'friend' to developers who build solutions using the platform. They created the FileMaker Business Alliance to help create and nurture those relationships. We participated in the FBA program for more than 10 years.

At some point FileMaker started to take developers for granted, and take advantage of those relationships. [[NEED EXAMPLES HERE - LIKE CONTACTING CLIENTS DIRECTLY, NOT BEING TRANSPARENT / ROADMAP, ETC]] That's one of the key reasons that many developers started to abandon the platform.

Regardless, CampSoftware continued to maintain its relationship with FileMaker Inc, participate in the FBA program, contribute to the FileMaker community, and help folks with their FileMaker solutions. We continued to hope that FileMaker Inc would make positive changes to the FileMaker Business Alliance program and the platform in general.

Today I was was notified by FileMaker Inc that CampSoftware is being removed from the program. I'm not upset about FileMaker's decision. Our membership was going to end in May, and we had no plans to renew or continue with FileMaker Certification.

But FileMaker's decision has given me an opportunity to collect my thoughts about things - some of which I had bottled up for many years. I thought I would share my thoughts here.

The FileMaker Business Alliance

I now realize that the FileMaker Business Alliance really is just a 'Program' that's designed to funnel sales to FileMaker Inc. FileMaker refers to FBA members as "partners,"but we're just an extension of the FileMaker sales team. We develop software to create recurring revenue for FileMaker Inc.

The FileMaker Platform

The FileMaker Platform is truly amazing and there is NOTHING else like it. But there are many issues with the platform right now, including some of the recent updaters. [[Give examples here?]]

FileMaker Inc's Management

But none of those are show stoppers. The real problem with FileMaker is the management of FileMaker Inc. I think it's time for Apple to fix this problem since they own FileMaker.

I'm not the only one who is unhappy with with how FileMaker Inc is guiding the FileMaker Platform. Tim Dietrich left the platform (http://timdietrich.me/blog/goodbye-filemaker/) and I know of at least one 'Platinum' FileMaker Business Alliance member who quietly quit. (I won't mention them by name as they requested to keep it quiet.) If there are three if us branching away from the FileMaker Platform, there must be many more of us who are not happy.

Recenty, Tim and I sent out a survey to see who might be interested in Xojo (http://xojo.com) which is a very attractive development platform that we find to be an excellent alternative to FileMaker for 'developers'. We got a great response and learned that these FileMaker developers are looking for alternatives to the soon to be deprecated FileMaker Runtimes, relief from the v13/v14 price gouging, and to get their FileMaker Go solutions on the iOS App Store. Earlier this week Tim and I were guests on a Xojo Webinar (http://developer.xojo.com/webinar-filemaker-qa) to help answer questions that

FileMaker developers had. The webinar software could had a maximum of 100 participants and we filled it. Between the survey and the webinar, it's clear that the FileMaker Community is UPSET with FileMaker Inc.

Between the releases of FileMaker 13 and 14, there was a post on the FileMaker Community site called 'Filemaker Inc in review of former employees' (https://community.filemaker.com/thread/83774). In that thread, Rick Kalman posted something extremely nice about FileMaker developers: 'BTW, FileMaker developers are our partners first and foremost, not simply "customers". You developers bring out the value we sweat to put into our products; you are the yeast that causes our bread to rise.'

I thought, Rick cares. I'm going to email some things that could be fixed to make FileMaker better. So I emailed Rick and also copied developer_programs@filemaker.com on the message. Here's what I sent:

I really wanted to post this in the thread, but I don't want to stir the pot. I just want things to get better. I LOVE FileMaker. It's an amazing tool and we can create just about anything. I want FMI to rock because when it rocks, I can rock. Did I say it rocks?

That said, we the developers in the FBA are not treated as "partners". I know this from personal past experience and from conversations with several other developers. I'd love to hear what you think about this. I hope you and FMI really mean what you said about us being partners.

- Licenses - We sell licences to our clients and make a few dollars while saving our clients money too. Then down the road, FileMaker contacts our clients about upgrades rather than talking to us, the "Partner". We have real relationships with our clients, but FileMaker ignores that by contacting our clients directly. My feeling is FMI does this to make a few more bucks on the licenses rather than letting the Partner make the sale and make a few bucks. FBA "Partners" should be listed as the consultant of record in a portal on your customer record to show who is and has been their "Partner". The current consultant of record should be copied on all emails to the client, especially for license info.

- Web Referrals - The consultant search should be much more prominent and way less complicated. We don't get any stats about how many times we've been found or clicked.

- Features - There are so many features that we need. I know about the feature requests page, but it feels like a black box. ExecuteSQL has been around for years and we still can only do select statements. We still don't have table and field level triggers. We can't use WebKit on Windows Web Viewers. PDFs don't work in runtimes. We can't natively send html emails and can only attach one file. The list goes on and on. The point here is that FMI doesn't ask its "Partners" what we need other than the feature requests black box. Xojo has a great model for this. Each developer picks their top x needed features to give an indication for what we need in the product.

Rick was nice enough to reply back with a very nice response about what I called the Feature Request Black Box. I replied back with how Xojo makes all feature requests public and how Xojo developers can vote on them. I felt 'heard'. For the remaining items he suggested I contact other departments including **Julie Sigfrinius**. So I emailed Julie and copied Rick.

Ann Monroe replied back and mentioned they are working on data cleanup designed to help with the Licensing issue. Ann and I emailed back and forth for a few days. The exchange was very nice and helpful. That was at the beginning of April this year, but the Licensing issue still hasn't been addressed other than seeing some screen shots of a potential solution shown about a month ago.

Over a month later, I still didn't hear back from **Julie Sigfrinius**. So I emailed her again so I could discuss it with her. Julie replied back the next day with a point-by-point reply to my email. She had many great suggestions, except about the licensing issue. In the reply, Julie told me to attend the FBA Reseller Qualification Training webinars, because that might answer the questions that I had and address my concerns. So I attended the webinars - all 4 hours of them! - and it was a complete waste of time as there wasn't any new content. I let Julie know it via email and via the Q and A section of the webinar to provide immediate feedback.

So Julie requested a call again. During one of those phone calls, I can't remember which one, **Julie Sigfrinius** threatened my membership in the FileMaker Business Alliance as I 'might not be a good fit for the FBA. Julie felt that I was too negative and I said that I'd try to change the way I communicate. This is after being a member for close to 10 years.

It's very ironic to me that FileMaker Inc has implemented or about to implements two of the ideas I suggested after being berated by Julie. One was the recent Feature Requests (https://community.filemaker.com/community/discussions/product-ideas/) and the other is the yet to be available Licensing Portal. And I still haven't received a response about why FileMaker contacts my customers directly rather than working with their 'Partner'.

FileMaker Pricing

The other problem with FileMaker Inc is the new pricing.

FileMaker 12 was the last 'reasonably' priced version of FileMaker. Filemaker Pro was around $300, FileMaker Server was $1000 or $3000 for FileMaker Server Advanced with Instant Web Publishing for up to 50 Web Users. We thought that $40 per Web User was fair. FileMaker Go's pricing was

updated to be free. Everyone was pretty happy and complacent for the most part, but many of us desired a Lite version of a FileMaker to be like FileMaker Go without development features, but that would run on Mac or Windows that would cost around $100. No one was asking for a free lunch, but FileMaker Developers around the world desired a less expensive version a just about all of our users NEVER used the development features.

FileMaker 13 was released at the end of 2013 which is exactly when FileMaker jumped the shark (just like Fonzie did on Happy Days - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumping_the_shark). FileMaker released a brand new technology called WebDirect to replace Instant Web Publishing which was showing its age. WebDirect was amazing, but a bit rough around the edges. Everyone was really excited until the pricing was revealed which was kept secret from those of us in the FileMaker Business Alliance. When the secret was let out of the bag, we were SHOCKED. FileMaker did away with FileMaker Server Advanced for $3000 and made the FileMaker Server be $1000 to simplify the options and pricing. So far so good! WebDirect now required a purchase of 'Concurrent Connections' which we now call 'Con-Conns' since this was essentially a con game. EACH con-conn was priced at $180 each and you had to purchase them in packs of five which was about $900. FIleMaker 12 Advanced cost an extra $2000 for 50 Instant Web Publishing Web Users and now, you could only get ten WebDirect users for $1800. No one was happy. We got one-fifth the users for close to the same money. FileMaker Server 13 with 50 Web Direct Web Users would cost about $10000. That's an increase of $7000 from FileMaker Version 12 and 13. On top of all that, if you used FIleMaker Go which as made free in version 12, you had to use con-conns for those connections too. That's right, the FREE FileMaker Go just went to $180 per connection. People were going nuts, but we had clients and solutions that needed to be upgraded. FileMaker Inc knew that and started pushing 'Monthly' pricing which HAD TO BE PAID Annually, but discounted from the purchase price if you went with the 'special' Annual pricing. That discount has a price though. If you stop paying the Annual pricing, you have to uninstall all your FileMaker Products leaving you with nothing. The discount is essentially an Annual RENTAL.

FileMaker 14 was then released. We all expected FileMaker Inc to roll back the pricing from the FileMaker 13 pricing fiasco. instead, FileMaker Inc decided to jump the shark a second time while increasing the ramp even higher buy INCREASING the cost of concurrent connections (con-conns) from $180 each to $280 each which is $50 less than a copy of FileMaker Pro at $330. That meant the FileMaker Server 13 with 10 con-conns went from $2800 to $3800. FileMaker Server 13 with 50 con-conns went from $10000 to $14100.

Continued Quality Issues

Aside from the insane pricing, the first several version of FileMaker Server and FileMaker Pro were ok, but the updaters have been a nightmare. If you update your FileMaker 14 Server using the updaters, you're close to guaranteed to having your server not work on reboot. The only solution is to completely uninstall FileMaker Server and reinstall it using the FULL installer and not use the UPDATER. FileMaker Inc makes that difficult too as you can't just download the full installer from their website. Only the updaters can be downloaded. In short, FIleMaker has jacked up the pricing to an incredible level and now quality control has dropped. It's gotten so bad that FileMaker released FileMaker Server 14.0.4, then a FileMaker Server 14.0.4 PATCH, then a Windows only update to the

updater.

I've heard that internally, FileMaker Inc, isn't even using FileMaker to run their business but instead uses Salesforce. If this is true, FileMaker Inc is telling the world to use FileMaker to run their own business rather than eating their own dog food. If they used their own product, before releasing it to the public, the quality control could be brought up back when FileMaker Inc used their own products.

Aggressive Marketing

If that's not enough, FileMaker Inc is really appearing to be desperate. Since the MASSIVE price hikes, FileMaker inc has been offering very attractive two year annual upgrades. I don't know if this is true or not, but I've heard that FileMaker Inc has had a big drop in sales. In order for the profitability bar chart to not show a dip, they are aggressively going after two year deals. If that's true, I imagine that that bar chart will have a big dip around two years from now. My guess is that they don't want Apple, who owns FileMaker Inc, to see that dip.

Apple Needs To Step In

Between the platform and the company, FileMaker is a complete mess. The management team is RUINING the FileMaker platform, and it's time for Apple to take them over and clean up the mess that has been created. If you didn't know, FileMaker Inc is wholly owned my Apple Inc.

I've emailed Tim Cook a link to this post to hopefully get him to fix this mess that the current leadership has created. His email address is tcook@apple.com. If you've had similar stories with FileMaker Inc or had problems with FileMaker Inc, please let Tim Cook know. I'd love to be carbon copied on your emails to Tim Cook at hal@campsoftware.com.