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Monday, June 13, 2005 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

Interface

## Cartooning Microsoft manager has offbeat outlook

**Who:** Hans Bjordahl

**Day job:** Program manager for Microsoft's Outlook e-mail program. Bjordahl works specifically on the calendar part of Outlook.

**Other jobs:** Bjordahl, 35, creates a comic strip for Micronews, Microsoft's weekly internal newsletter. He also edits and operates [MrCranky.com](http://MrCranky.com), a film-review site so ill-tempered that its highest movie rating is "almost tolerable."

**The next "Dilbert"?** Bjordahl produces the comic strip "Bug Bash" for a small stipend for Micronews. It replaced "Dilbert" on Micronews, much to the initial chagrin of Microsoft employees. "Bug Bash" has since gained a following, and last month Bjordahl took the strip public at [www.bugbash.net](http://www.bugbash.net). He hopes to get it syndicated in newspapers or other publications.

**Geek humor:** Yep, "Bug Bash" is full of that. One strip made fun of unacceptable server architectures. Others revel in uncomfortable office scenarios. "Humor is often best when there's underlying tension around it," Bjordahl said.

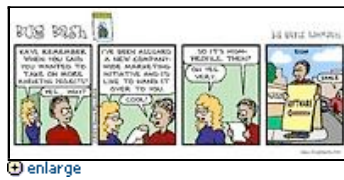
**Funny bone at Microsoft:** Bjordahl said he gets some of his best ideas from employees, who e-mail him describing something that just happened at a meeting they attended. One strip showed someone giving a presentation on his computer when an instant message from a friend popped up. Quite embarrassing for a 'Softie.

**Growing Cranky:** Mr. Cranky was co-founded by Bjordahl and freelance writer Jason Katzman in 1995, when Bjordahl worked at a dot-com in Colorado called XOR. The two bought the rights to the feature in 1998 and moved it to its own Web site. It has steadily gained an audience of about 500,000 visitors a month and has been picked up by the Chicago Tribune for use on its Web site and its free RedEye publication.

**Division of labor:** Katzman does most of the reviews, and Bjordahl edits, acts as webmaster and does some writing. The site is loaded with zingers: "Some movies are so badly written that they make me want to cry. Other movies, like 'The Pacifier,' are written in such a way that I'd like to gouge out my tear ducts with a fork."

— **Kim Peterson**

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