

Re: OT: Mozilla/Firefox (was:Re: Windoze ends year with a major cert ...)

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- *From:* Bill Todd <billtodd@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 01 Jan 2006 22:13:31 -0500
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Bill Gunshannon wrote:

In article <08KdnRrif94RrSXenZ2dnUVZ_tSdnZ2d@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Bill Todd <billtodd@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> writes:

Bill Gunshannon wrote:

In article <seKdnZwmQP1shiXeRVn-jQ@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Bill Todd <billtodd@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> writes:

Bill Gunshannon wrote:

...

"God, grant me the
serenity to accept
the things I cannot
change, the courage
to change the
things I can, and
the
wisdom to know the
difference. " -
Reinhold Niebuhr

Re: OT: Mozilla/Firefox (was:Re: Windoze ends year with a major cert ...)

The final phrase being the crux of the matter in this case. Especially with a Web-based issue like this one, it's surprising how many people still feel that individuals can't come together and actually affect events

How many Linux users are there worldwide? Heck, they even have a marketing branch (which is more than VMS has, but that's another story). Who is winning the desktop? Linux or Windows?

What part of the fact that Linux **still** doesn't directly compete with Windows as a desktop OS (though it's coming closer and closer to becoming a competitor) has managed to escape you?

It competes as much as any non-commercial product can be said to compete.

Bzzzzzt! Wrong answer!

The problem is that there's a major difference between compatibility in underlying OSs and compatibility at the application level. Browsers confront the latter challenge and by and large surmount it (at least when running on the same underlying OS), whereas the only way Linux can even begin to offer **real** compatibility with Windows is via intermediaries such as Wine - and even that addresses only application binary interface issues rather than, say, driver compatibility (though for network drivers a Linux wrapper has recently appeared that at least starts to address that problem).

So the 'non-commercial' Firefox can compete directly with IE in ways that are pretty much impossible for any non-Windows OS to use to compete with Windows itself: it's the difference between the incestuously-connected infrastructure dependencies that surround an OS and the far less challenging standards issues that apply to individual applications like browsers.

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To look at it another way, third-party application and driver developers have to go considerably out of their way to get their products to run *at all* on Linux, while (at least where the desktop is concerned) they don't *have* a product unless it runs on Windows: is it any wonder that Linux can't offer nearly the richness in desktop options (or often the completeness of implementation even where somewhat similar options exist) that Windows can?

By contrast, Web designers (especially these days) have to go out of their way to make a site that *doesn't* work as well with other browsers as it does with IE - and if they nonetheless manage to do so, unless they've depended heavily upon some IE-specific feature like ActiveX a small amount of tweaking can rectify the problem.

All of the major distributions offer all the same tools

as Windows and include a desktop installation option.

Linuxoids

spend most of their time and breath talking about how they are the alternative to Windows.

And are about as credible as the U.S. Green party is when fielding a presidential candidate: leaving aside any debate about whether they're offering something better, the simple fact is that far too few people are paying attention for them to prevail (at least as of yet).

And what relevance does Linux have to a specifically Web-based issue like this one in the first place?

The issue was whether or not a handful of squeaky wheels could force web content providers to stop writing code specific to Windows.

Wrong again. The original contention to which you responded was "Some of the solution to that is for every user that has a problem to complain to the webmaster or whoever. Enough squeaky[sic] wheels and some lube may become available."

Your responses since then indicate that you believe that the class of

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users who experience such problems includes *most* non-IE users (i.e., something like 10% of *all* users, in marked contrast to 'a handful [sic] of squeaky[sic] wheels'). That's *a lot* of potential complaints.

Linux

is more than a handful/ It is hundreds of thousands if not millions of anti-Windows users. And their impact on Microsoft has been negligible at best.

Actually, Microsoft is extremely concerned about Linux - though their concern has until recently centered upon the inroads that Linux is making into their server business rather than the desktop arena.

But sending Steve Balmer and Bill Gates around the world dangling sweet deals to try to convince municipalities not to convert to open-source OSs became a recurring theme during 2005: Linux may not *yet* have made significant inroads into the Windows desktop market, but Microsoft certainly appears worried that it may start to.

Linux is still basically a 'techie' OS with a small (though growing) cadre of early non-techie adopters which some distributions are catering to.

Bull. Linux stopped being "techie" at least as far back as the the first serious RedHat offering. And maybe before that. Ygdrasil had a "pop it in the drive" nearly automatic install. Today you have even more simple "just boot me" installs. Maybe you need to get out more. There are Linux desktop installs that are easier, require less interaction and even require less knowledge than Windows.

An OS doesn't have to be difficult to be 'techie': it just has to be *different* enough that none of the standard support infrastructure applies (and hence people are on their own).

Different (and fewer) applications, different (and fewer) hardware options, different (and *vastly* fewer) support people (your brother-in-law may well be able to help you with a Windows problem, but what's the probability that he'll be able to help with a Linux problem? he probably couldn't even help with a Mac).

But your response here is quintessentially techie ("Hey, *I* can deal

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with it just as easily as with Windows!"): perhaps *you* need to get out more.

By contrast, Firefox is definitely mainstream:

It won't be mainstream till it comes already installed in a desktop system.

Dell is beginning to do precisely that, starting in the U.K. - guess you missed it.

Until then it is just another third party add-on.

fully competitive with IE and often superior, but without IE's glass jaws (and even if Firefox has some of its own, until the hacking community actually attacks them with the ferocity it demonstrates toward IE Firefox will remain a significantly safer option to use).

And as long as web content providers continue to specifically target their web sites at IE it will continue to be a wannabe.

You keep saying that, but have already admitted that you have no figures to back up the implication that non-IE browsers are at any significantly general disadvantage. So repeating it just constitutes more hot air.

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(the perception of an unstoppable Itanic juggernaut of a few years ago comes to mind: that perception didn't just fade away on its own, nor was the fade pushed by corporate interests - even IBM was on board at the time, and Sun was only temporizing rather than in its current full-attack mode).

Bad example. Itanic was a mistake from the beginning.

And IE wasn't? Perhaps you need to study browser history a bit more closely.

Don't understand that one. IE was just another browser in the beginning.

No - it was Microsoft's belated attempt to catch up with and corral a burgeoning market whose inception it had completely missed.

Except it had the backing of the most powerful desktop OS in the world and was integrated and automatically installed. It worked just as well as any other browser.

Er, no yet again: not by any stretch of the imagination. As I said, you need to firm up your historical knowledge in this area.

It even had it's ancestry deep int he same roots.

It was never the outsider so it always had the upper hand.

Wrong again (this is getting tiresome). It began life as the outsider to a well-established Netscape browser, and only managed to muscle its way into dominance by being bundled with the OS that virtually everyone used.

Itanic was

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the outsider from the beginning when it was made blatantly obvious that it was not going to be compatible with it's predecessor.

Au contraire: the claim 'from the beginning' was that Itanic *would* be compatible (upwardly, of course) with IA32. But the execution in that area sucked ('compatible' but at only a small fraction of IA32 speed just didn't cut it).

If IE had been

written to use some other presentation language than HTML, then it would have failed and been just like the Itanic.

IE was nominally upward-compatible with HTML in a not entirely dissimilar manner to Itanic's nominal upward-compatibility w.r.t. IA32 (ActiveX being one of IE's more major incompatible 'extensions').

....

None of this is locally

written, we use a package provided by a company that sells this same package to lot's of people.

In other words, your entire argument is based upon experience with a single package (God only knows how old, let alone how commonly-used in the rest of the world) that doesn't happen to play nicely with other browsers?

....

So what? BG isn't the one making decisions on how to structure sites around the Web: the most he can do is try to entice those who are to use non-standard techniques, and that practice is fading fast.

Keep telling yourself that.

Is that adolescent come-back supposed to be an effective substitute for

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something containing actual substance?

- bill

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