

# How do you convince developers to pay their “taxes”?

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The Tablet PC team have a tough task ahead of them at this year’s PDC: They have to get people to care about power management.

The reason why this is tough is that power management is rarely a deal-maker. If a user is evaluating, say, personal finance software, how much weight are they going to place on which program consumes less battery power? That’s probably a third- or fourth-level tiebreaker. No amount of power management is going to overcome the fact that your program’s interface is harder to use than your competitor’s. Nobody ever said, “Oh, yeah, I switched my word processor from X to Y because X was chewing too much battery power.” When a battery doesn’t last very long, users tend to blame the battery, not the software that is draining it.

Power management falls into a category some development teams call “taxes”. It’s something you do, not because it actually benefits you specifically, but because it benefits the software landscape as a whole. Other taxes include making sure your program plays friendly with roaming user profiles, Fast User Switching, Hierarchical Storage Management, multiple monitors, Remote Desktop, and 64-bit Windows.

Of course, not all development teams in the world are so diligent as to pay all their “taxes”. I suspect most cheat on their taxes, and some of them just don’t pay any at all.

So here’s my question to you: How do you convince developers to pay their “taxes”? (Should developers have to pay taxes at all?)

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