

When there's a problem with the platform, you blame the platform, whether it's the platform's fault or not

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I watched with a twinge of sad recognition Scoble's hissy fit when his blog didn't show up correctly in Bloglines because it was the classic application compatibility problem, just shifted to the world of Web 2.0. (I don't know what *Web 2.0* means, but since nobody else who uses the term knows what it means either, I'm at least in good company.) It followed the usual pattern. First, there's "It works on that other system but not on yours, so it's obviously your fault," followed by the invective "You suck." Next, the development team scrambles to study the problem and the investigation reveals that the bug was in the app after all. But that doesn't get the platform off the hook. They had to disabled a feature (temporarily, at least) because one app was breaking the rules and ruining it for everybody. Even the aftermath follows the classic application compatibility story arc, wherein Scoble admits that Bloglines doesn't suck but still defends his tantrum because he "needed to force the issue cause no one was taking care of this bug." (It's the Politician's Fallacy: Something must be done. This is something. Therefore, we must do it.) In an addendum to the original rant, he adds, "I needed to force the issue because I was losing readers." In other words, "I don't care whose fault it is, but I'll blame Bloglines so that somebody is on the hook for fixing it, even if they didn't cause the problem." In the same way customers which encounter an application compatibility problem will expect Microsoft to fix it regardless of whose fault it actually is, because they're losing money (readers) every day the problem persists, and complaining loudly is perceived as the best way to get people to help you. (While it's true that complaining loudly will get people to help you, it is also an effective way to get people to hate you.)

There's no moral to this story, just a curious connection between recent events and my pet topic of application compatibility.

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