

The frustration of people who have already decided on the solution and won't let you derail them with your annoying questions

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I illustrate this frustration with an actual mail thread (suitably redacted) which I was an observer to. It's a long thread because that's part of the frustration.

From: Adam

I am looking for some expert advice here on finding a better solution to our performance problem with Product P. Here are the details.

[Here follow the details on a problem and three proposed solutions. Feature F is mentioned briefly and rejected because "it will be a problem because of Condition C."]

From: Bob

This approach is prone to a lot of trouble.

Please be more specific about what was wrong with Feature F.

From: Adam

We were concerned about Scenario S when we are in Condition C.

From: Bob

But Condition C is exactly why Feature F was developed.

From: Charles

How big is Scenario S? I'm part of a team that is even worse than Condition C, and we haven't noticed any problems. But maybe your Scenario S is a lot bigger than ours.

From: David

Stepping back a bit and emphasizing Charles's point: You rejected Feature F because "it will be a problem." Have you actually tried it? Set up a testbed with Condition C, turn on Feature F, and try it out. Do you actually see problems you predict? As with any performance problem, the first thing you have to do is measure. Information like "A job of size X takes M minutes to run to completion" gives us something to work from.

From: Adam

Actually, I know what Charles's situation is, and our Condition C is worse than Charles's. And we found that when we ran Scenario S on a default configuration, it was really painful.

From: Edward

Can you be more specific about what the pain was?

From: Adam

Please focus on the topic we originally asked and let the experts help us solve our performance problem.

From: Edward

I am the Product P expert who designed and implemented Feature F. I would like to help you. The measurement suggested by David would help everyone understand your situation. Feature F was specifically designed to improve performance in Condition C. If you assume that it will not work without even trying it, then the first thing you need to do is turn it on and try it and measure it.

By the way, your second proposed solution is missing some important steps. If you want to continue along that plan, then you should refer to the Scenario Z section of this whitepaper I wrote (part of the Product P Resource Kit) and use that as a template.

From: Adam

Thanks for your great whitepaper. It's really useful! I will test it in our lab next week.

That was the last we heard from Adam. It's sort of the whitepaper version of somebody who is just looking for the magic thing to type without trying to understand why it works or what its advantages, disadvantages, and limitations are. My guess is that Adam is just going to plunge ahead with his proposed solution #2 even though it's probably not the best solution. He already decided what he was going to do and just wanted somebody to sign off on his solution. He wasn't interested in learning about other options, as demonstrated by his blind rejection of Feature F (which was in fact specifically designed to address his situation).

It was also strange hearing Adam demand that we avoid annoying tangents (like trying to understand what exactly the problem is) and let the experts solve his problem. Even though everybody involved in the discussion knew far more about Product P than he does, and that he singled out the *most qualified expert* for his scolding.

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