

The day I stole Joe Belfiore's mouse

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He's now the head demo-monkey/cheerleader for Windows Phone, but back in the old days, Joe Belfiore was the head demo-monkey/cheerleader for the Windows 95 user interface design. A team-wide meeting was held to show off the new interface that they had developed. Wow look, we have a Start menu (though it wasn't known by that name yet), a taskbar (though it wasn't known by that name yet), shortcuts, a Close button (in the upper right corner), property sheets, all that good stuff. At that time, I was still developing my thermonuclear skills and in particular was cultivating the skill of asking challenging questions during the Q&A that comes at the end of these sorts of meetings. I adopted the role of the mouse skeptic and asked, "I noticed that property sheets don't show up in the **Alt + Tab** list. How do I switch to a property sheet without a mouse? And more generally, how well will this new interface work for keyboard-based users?" The answer (which managed to remain true all the way through the Windows 95 project) was "To get back to a property sheet, go back to wherever you launched it from and launch it again. And we have not abandoned the existing rules for keyboard access. There will be keyboard equivalents for all mouse-based actions." To make sure he stuck to his word, I snuck into his office and stole his mouse. I assume he survived, though for all I know, he just went and ordered a new one.

Inspiration for today's entry: Seven days using only keyboard shortcuts: No mouse, no trackpad, no problem?

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