The Redmond Reality Distortion Field: Analogies involving high-performance cars, usually Ferraris

devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20151027-00

October 27, 2015

Raymond Chen

At the announcement of Windows 10, Joe Belfiore remarked,

> We want all these Windows 7 users to have the sentiment that yesterday they were driving a first-generation Prius… and now with Windows 10 it's like a Tesla.

Well, at least it's not a Ferrari.

Inside the Redmond Reality Distortion Field, everybody loves to compare their project to a Ferrari. My guess is that the people making these comparisons are young male engineers who love fast cars and dream someday of owning a Ferrari, or they are older male executives who love cars and already own Ferraris.

I fall into neither category.

When I hear somebody compare their project to a Ferrari, I think, "So your target audience is wealthy jerks? Your project is dangerously fast, over-engineered, absurdly expensive, and is always in the repair shop?"

I would rather a product be a Honda Civic or Toyota Corolla: Affordable, gets the job done with no fuss, high reliability, low TCO, no exotic parts or special driver training required. Especially if your product is an infrastructure component. Those things should be as boring as all get-out. The last thing anybody wants is exciting electrical wiring.

"Hi, yeah, um, nobody can print because somebody took a corner too hard and dinged the tire and suspension, and the printer is up on the lift right now, and the shop says it'll be around $5,000 to fix it, plus $500 for a new tire. But trust me, once it's fixed, we can go from 0ppm to 60ppm in three seconds. Sure we use twice as much toner, but *man* that printer is *sweet*!"

One of my colleagues fell somewhere in between the two categories above: He was a young male engineer who owned a Ferrari. It was a used Ferrari, but still. Ferrari. The problem was that the Ferrari was always in the repair shop. His solution: Buy a second Ferrari.

This is not a solution available to most people.

Of course, this is also not a problem most people have.

Bonus chatter: The day after I wrote this, I was in a meeting where a team was showing off their project. The presenter said, "We created a Ferrari, basically."

Raymond Chen

Follow