# FUD: Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt

It's not surprising that commercial software manufacturers want to sell their software and that everyone who selects an open-source application in place of a bit of commercial software reduces the commercial software manufacturer's unit sale by one. This is the primary reason that some of the commercial shops resort to FUD — fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

They tell you that you get what you pay for. They tell you that open-source software is written by chimps and maintained by monkeys, that you won't get support when you need it, and that bugs won't be fixed promptly, if at all. Mostly lies, of course.

An example: I use the Filezilla FTP client because it's highly versatile, functional, and works the way I want it to. At least most of the time. Despite the name, Filezilla is not associated in any way with the Mozilla Organization, which is best known for Firefox.

When I downloaded Filezilla 3.0.10 in early June, one of the first things I noticed was that the sort-by-date function was broken. Sorting by name worked, but sorting by date produced a list that placed some files in what appeared to be random order. This is an important feature for me because I want to upload only the files I've changed or added recently and I depend on the sort-by-date function to identify those files.

| Filename | Last modified ▽ |
|---|---|
| .. | |
| VistaEmailsSuitExA.pdf | 3/2/2008 8:43:40 AM |
| siteaudioplayer.swf | 6/17/2007 6:14:39 ... |
| index2008.html | 6/6/2008 5:50:32 PM |
| ElectronicPublishing.pdf | 4/27/2008 10:19:43... |
| 20080323.html | 3/23/2008 12:21:21... |
| 20080120.html | 1/26/2008 6:27:43 ... |
| 20080330.html | 3/29/2008 1:00:41 ... |
| 20080525.html | 5/24/2008 10:50:17... |
| 20080420.html | 4/19/2008 11:00:50... |
| 20080210.html | 2/9/2008 9:49:29 AM |
| 20080601.html | 5/31/2008 10:00:12... |
| 20080427.html | 4/26/2008 4:27:44 ... |
| 20080224.html | 2/23/2008 6:34:04 ... |
| 20080413.html | 4/12/2008 1:59:28 ... |
| 20080127.html | 1/26/2008 8:34:44 ... |
| 20080316.html | 3/15/2008 12:37:01... |
| 20080511.html | 5/10/2008 8:17:26 ... |
| 20080217.html | 2/16/2008 6:51:15 ... |
| 20080106.html | 1/26/2008 6:27:43 ... |
| 20080203.html | 2/2/2008 8:29:42 PM |
| 20080406.html | 4/5/2008 5:38:17 PM |
| 20080608.html | 6/7/2008 4:55:47 PM |

**NOT IN ORDER**

Assuming that I would find several previous reports citing the problem, I opened the Filezilla but monitor at Sourceforge.org and found none. So I grabbed a screen shot that showed the problem, wrote a quick summary, and posted the bug report on a Thursday evening.

Friday morning, less than 12 hours later, the bug was shown as resolved.

Not all open-source software problems are resolved that quickly, of course, but many are. So if you find an open-source application that performs a task you need, don't let fear, uncertainty, and doubt get in your way because the developers are often surprisingly accessible.

I can enter bug reports for some of the major commercial publishers, too. If I know the product manager, I can send a note describing the problem. If not, all I can do is try to report the problem via support channels or, occasionally, through the public relations office.

Open-source developers often allow anyone to post bug reports. These reports are examined, evaluated, and (if legitimate) used to improve the product. ß

# The real reason for the Internet: Lions

Have you seen the Norwegian lion and her 4 cubs? If not, you're too late. Apparently the server load (and the cost associated with it) were too much for the zoo. On August 1, they announced that they would no longer be streaming live lion video.

I'm involved with an online discussion list for editors. In the first half of June, one of those editors posted a message to the chat area of the list and included a link to "lion cam". Eventually I got around to clicking the link. I saw a sleeping lion and a couple of cubs. Then one of the cubs woke up and I watched for more than an hour.

Over the next several days, I watched the cats sleep and eat. I watched mama cat groom the kittens. I watched the kittens wander around and bump into each other. This was

all happening a quarter of the way around the planet and I watched it live.

Web cams aren't new, but this was different. I couldn't see any baby lions at the Columbus Zoo because we don't have any baby lions. And even if we did, I would get to see them for a few minutes or maybe half an hour. After that, I would wander away to look at something else. But I could watch the lions in Norway for hours while I was sitting at the computer.

It's like having baby lions in the house without having to deal with super-size litter pans and the hazards created by a full-grown lion who might not understand that you only want to look at her kittens.

This isn't the same as going to the zoo, of course. The image is fuzzy, but it has allowed me to view the lions closer and for longer periods than I could at a zoo.
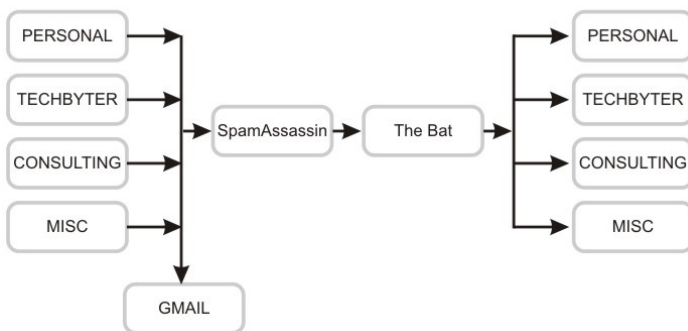
When the federal government created what was destined to become today's Internet, probably nobody thought of it as enabling people around the world to watch lion cubs in Norway, but I'm glad it turned out that way. ß

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# The Gmail archive

For the past several months (since March 5, 2008) I've been automatically forwarding all of my e-mail (including spam) to Gmail for archiving. I set up this account when the office started blocking ports 25 and 110, which effectively closed down access to my personal e-mail accounts. The blocking issue was resolved within a few hours, but I decided to keep the special Gmail account anyway.

Because everything, including spam, gets forwarded to it, I have both a complete record of all messages I've received, even after deleting them from my local machine, and a 30-day summary of spam trends. Both of these are useful.

Here's how it works:



Including e-mail forwarders for special addresses, my personal accounts, business accounts, and TechByter accounts, messages from about 30 different addresses are accumulated on the TechByter server at Blue Host in Orem, Utah. The messages are all forwarded to my Gmail account, so this includes about 7500 spams per month, although that number has now dropped to about 4700.

Spam Assassin strips out most of the spams and passes the messages along to my e-mail client, The Bat, which then filters the messages into several dozen mailboxes depending on the address of the sender, which address the message was sent to, and information in the message headers or subject line. It looks a lot more complicated than it really is.

I like the ability to keep an eye on trends in spam, but the additional advantage is that every message (around 10,500) I've received since March 5 is archived here. No matter where I am I can look for a message in the archive if I have access to the Internet and a Web browser.

A new feature makes this even more useful. If I want to reply to a message from Gmail, I can tell Gmail which address to use as the sender's address and as the reply-to address. If I reply to a TechByter message from the Gmail account, the reply will come from TechByter and not from Gmail. To use this feature, you need to provide Gmail the address you want to use and then reply to a confirmation message. That keeps people from creating a message that appears to come from, for example, Bill Gates.

If your e-mail provider offers the ability to forward mail while retaining it in your POP3 or IMAP mailbox, you may want to look into setting up a special Gmail archive account. ß

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# A terabyte and a half on your desktop!

Seagate would like to put a terabyte and a half on your desktop. Not all that long ago, a terabyte and a half would have been the size of your desk. And just a few years before that, a terabyte and a half would have filled your office.

The 3 new consumer-level hard drives are the industry's first 1.5-terabyte desktop drives and there's a half-terabyte drive for notebooks. Seagate increased the density by using perpendicular magnetic recording technology. PMR packs the data bits together sideways instead of using the traditional longitudinal recording.

The Barracuda 7200.11 will be available in a 1.5TB capacity starting in later this month. It's a 3.5-inch drive with 4 375GB platters that spin at 7200RPM. The drive will have a 3Gb/second Serial ATA interface with a sustained data rate of up to 120MB/second. That's only slightly faster than the current drives.

Prices? They haven't been announced yet. ß

## CORNER on the market by A.J. Stinnett

*"Managers succeed by letting employees decide how to do their work, making sure work procedures are flexible, and requiring procedures that permit work to be done efficiently."*