

The Fundamental Problem with Windows 8: One Non-User's Perspective

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James Kendrick may have nailed one of the biggest problems with Windows 8 in [The disconnect with Windows 8.1: Hiding the Utility](#):

In making Windows 8.1 work on all types of devices, Microsoft built a lot of ways to do common tasks. Unfortunately, most are hidden from view.

I'm no anti-Microsoft zealot but what he says, coming from a lot of experience using mobile devices of all types, does give me pause about replacing my Windows 7 machine with Windows 8, part of which I discussed in [Using Ubuntu Linux Instead of a Windows 8 Upgrade](#).



My concern has to do with the way I've learned how to use new devices and new software since the 1980s: through trial and error I learn the minimum to get the next task done.

Admittedly that's not always an efficient way to learn. It means that I sometimes stumble past important actions and concepts, ignorance of which may come back to bite me later.

But that's the way I've learned new stuff and is why I really appreciate it when something

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new has a built-in transition path that lets me bootstrap my way to basic competence.

What Kendrick says about Windows 8.1 might partly explain why that operating system has hit the market with such a thud. Its path to competence is not clear and frustrates even experienced users -- like me -- who are eager to learn something new but need more help along the way.

As I mentioned earlier my adoption of Ubuntu Linux proceeded smoothly. There was enough familiarity there to ease the transition. The "out-of-the-box experience" has been pretty smooth with Linux, partly due to my staying with the basics and to my acceptance of a relatively familiar but kinder and gentler interface.

I've had similar experience with iOS devices for some of the same reasons that Kendrick points out. Even though the iOS touch interface differs significantly from desktop environments, interaction consistency as well as accessibility of basic controls from app to app help both novice and experienced users.

Kendrick's biggest negative, if true, may be the single biggest reason for Windows 8's difficulties in the market: it makes new users feel stupid. That's bad. Why should I subject myself to that when so many alternatives exist?