

Genies, Peasants and NOOXML

One evening, through a cold miserable rain, a hungry Russian peasant was walking home. A luminous being appeared in their path. "Please! If you will make one wish, it will free me from my prison!" The genie pointed to an oddly shaped lamp on the side of the path. "Wish for anything you want, food, power, wealth, ..., anything!" The peasant grunted, "I wish my neighbor's cow would die," as he pushed past the genie to continue home.

The strategy behind NOOXML strikes me as being quite similar to that of the Russian peasant. It seeks nothing that would benefit itself, no new product to sell to customers, no new service to serve as a revenue stream. It is simply a wish that "...my neighbors cow would die."

What is puzzling in this day and age of quarterly reports and returns that any corporate governance structure would long tolerate spite as a business strategy. Or that investors would stay with companies that follow such strategies.

OpenXML (OOXML) has issues in its latest version but the profitable strategy is to help isolate those problems and fix them. Correcting problems with an XML based document format is a benefit to everyone. If not a direct addition to the bottom line, it at least avoids later costs in dealing with defects in a format.

OpenDocument supporters should be wishing that OpenXML (DIS 29500) will be approved along with a new work item to amend it to fix the problems found at the BRM (or following). Any other wish is a walk in a cold rain with a Russian peasant wishing his neighbor's cow would die.

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PS: As the OpenDocument editor, I think OpenDocument benefits from having a publicly debated format that MS Office software uses. I would prefer that it be OpenDocument but recognize that in a non-clone culture that opinions differ.

PPS: The US technical committee that I chair, V1, has recommended approval of DIS 29500 as an ISO standard. The final US position will be determined by the INCITS Executive Board and how many Russian peasants are voting in that forum.