

Software developers have stopped caring about reliability

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Created *17/10/2021 - 10:43am*

Submitted by Roy Schestowitz on Sunday 17th of October 2021 10:43:00 AM Filed under [Development](#) [1]



Of all the principles of software engineering which has fallen by the wayside in the modern "move fast and break things" mentality of assholes modern software developers, reliability is perhaps the most neglected, along with its cousin, robustness. Almost all software that users encounter in \$CURRENTYEAR is straight-up broken, and often badly.

Honestly, it's pretty embarrassing. Consider all of the stupid little things you've learned how to do in order to work around broken software. Often something as simple as refreshing the page or rebooting the program to knock some sense back into it - most users can handle that. There are much stupider problems, however, and they are everywhere. Every morning, I boot, then immediately hard-reboot, my workstation, because it seems to jiggle my monitors into waking up properly to do their job. On many occasions, I have used the browser dev tools to inspect a broken web page to figure out how to make it do the thing I want to do, usually something complicated like submitting a form properly (a solved problem since 1993).

When the average person (i.e. a non-nerd) says they "don't get computers", I believe them. It's not because they're too lazy to learn, or because they're backwards and outdated, or can't keep with the times. It's because computers are hard to understand. They are enigmatic and unreliable. I know that when my phone suddenly stops delivering SMS messages mid-conversation, it's not because I've been abandoned by my friend, but because I need to toggle airplane mode to reboot the modem. I know that when I middle click a link and "javascript:;" opens in a new tab, an asshole a developer wants me to left click it instead. Most people don't understand this! You and I, dear reader, have built up an incredible amount of institutional knowledge about how to deal with broken computers. We've effectively had to reverse engineer half the software we've encountered to figure out just where to prod it to make it do the thing you asked. If you don't have this background, then computers are a nightmare.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/145>

[2] <https://drewdevault.com/2021/10/17/Reliability.html>