

# Don't complain. Do something useful instead.

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Here's a fact that you, me and everyone else knows, but is afraid to admit or despite how Hollywood portrays things; life isn't fair.

If it were, we would all be awarded PhD's, own mansions, have the perfect partner we would spend the rest of our lives with, the environment would be trouble free, and there would be peace and happiness worldwide.

The reality is, it doesn't turn out that way.

Getting a Degree is hard work (I kid you not!), relationships need communication, understanding and patience of the other (because of the simple fact that men and women are wired up differently), we don't always get the man or woman that we want, the environment is in serious shape (depending who you listen to), and world peace is currently a pipe dream. (The "War on Terror" doesn't seem to be solving issues, it seems to inflame them at the cost of lives.)

So how do we react or respond to all this? Simple, we step back, gather the right info (both sides of the story if necessary), and do what we can in our own little corner of the world. It doesn't matter of our race, religion, or our beliefs, we should be doing something about such issues. (And not just anything. Things that help in an effective manner, no matter how little they may seem).

You're probably wondering what the heck is this Australian-Chinese Linux user yacking about here in Sydney on a Sunday night? Am I bored? Possibly. But I was sitting on the toilet when the idea for this blog came up in my head, so bare with me.

Its about a Frenchman named François Bancilhon. He's the CEO of Mandriva. A few days ago he blogged about his frustration to the world. If you haven't read it, its here for your convenience.

## An open letter to Steve Ballmer

<http://blog.mandriva.com/2007/10/31/an-open-letter-to-steve-ballmer/> [1]

Essentially, its this: Mandriva won the contract to supply their software solutions (with Intel's Classmate PC) to Nigeria. However, it turned out to be, depending how you view it, a hollow victory when the customer said the following:

***"we shall pay for the Mandriva Software as agreed, but we shall replace it by Windows afterward."***

Ouch! Feels like a stab in the gut, doesn't it?

This is an example of life's "curve ball". And how did François react? Immaturely and unprofessionally, throwing his 2 cents back at MS's CEO, Steve Ballmer.

*"Wow! I'm impressed, Steve! What have you done to these guys to make them change their mind like this? It's quite clear to me, and it will be to everyone. How do you call what you just did Steve? There is various names for it, I'm sure you know them."*

While I sympathise (UK/Aussie spelling) what the Mandriva CEO is feeling, how does this help in the overall scheme of things, especially for Linux as a whole? Simple. It doesn't.

Who cares how the result turned out. You got paid for your services and it was the customer who chose what they want. You can't do anything about that, as it's their choice. You've just got to respect it, even if you don't like it. But what's embarrassing is complaining about it to a worldwide audience.

May I suggest something François? If Microsoft gets up your goat, do what I do. Get a boxing bag. Go for a run. Do some meditation. Burn off that anger. Because venting that anger to the wrong person(s) isn't productive.

Another way is to use that anger as motivation. Motivation to drive you harder and become more effective. "Effective" as in doing something that helps drive Linux further.

Something like "donating" or hiring a couple of programmers or hardware hackers in helping with the Nouveau driver project. (open 3D driver for Nvidia cards). Or help in one of the opensource Office Suites in improving document compatibility with MS's proprietary document formats. Or even develop an opensource application that is a direct equivalent to AutoCAD, Quicken, etc (or any other number of apps that people want in order to assist them into Linux). Most important is to allow format compatibility to an open solution.

When you do stuff like this, the community recognises and appreciates what you do. They give credit where it's due. And while Mandriva is among a number of Commercial Linux distributors, it doesn't mean you shouldn't put in the extra effort and be like the rest. The extra mile you throw in, is what defines you in being different. You must stand out in this rapid changing business world.

When you give to someone without asking for a thing in return, you are always remembered and appreciated in a special way. You will be viewed differently. Because to the eyes of those you give to, you're a cut above the rest. (This is something I learnt in University...Not in a course, but from personal experience).

Microsoft isn't like that. Everything they do has a motive. Every action they take is in response to something or someone they see as a threat. After 2 yrs of looking into how they behave, there's really one word to describe them: **nefarious**. Even their "interoperability" stance with opensource is a facade. Everyone knows it, especially with the "Patent gotcha" license fee in that EU anti-trust case.

We're supposed to be better than that. We're supposed to be mature, professional, while being creative to resolve our weaknesses. But how then, should you react when MS has you feeling frustrated? Well, I always remember this quote. It's burned into my head.

*"The most important thing the hacker community does is write better code. Our deeds are the best propaganda we have. Most of us, most of the time, shouldn't be distracted by worrying about beating Microsoft's PR or countering their political moves, because writing good code is in the long run a far more potent weapon than flackery."*  
-Eric S. Raymond

Another memorable quote is in Rocky Balboa, when Rocky teaches his son something very important.

*"Let me tell you something you already know. The world ain't all sunshine and rainbows. It's a very mean and nasty place and I don't care how tough you are, it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life."*

*But it ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done! Now if you know what you're worth then go out*

*But you gotta be willing to take the hits, and not pointing fingers saying you ain't where you wanna be because of him, or her, or anybody! Cowards do that and that ain't you! You're better than that!"*

You have choices in life. Sometimes you may not see them or simply act out of habit because something didn't go as you intended in your mind. All I'm saying is, François had a choice of ignoring this minor setback, to move on, and to focus on the bigger goal of being part in making widespread Linux adoption more of a reality, rather than waste time on this childish nonsense.

Microsoft can try to hurt us in many ways, but they can't kill us. We know this, because we've seen them try many times since 2001! 🍷

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**Links:**

[1] <http://blog.mandriva.com/2007/10/31/an-open-letter-to-steve-ballmer/>