

Nathan Wallace

Comp 4730

4/14/09

### Examples of Technology "Win" and "Fail"

Below are summaries of the articles that I found in which Technology either benefited people ("Win") or disrupted, inconvenienced, or harmed people ("Fail".) As per the assignment, there are two examples of defeat, and one of win. I'd like to keep the "Win" article for the last, so let's dive right into the "Fail."

#### **Fail: Gears of War screwup makes PC version unplayable** (Kuchera 2009)

This article, brought to us by Ars Technica (<http://arstechnica.com>) examines an all-too-common method of technology fail: software which was meant to protect players of the video game Gears of War from cheating actually locked all players out of the game, meaning that no one could play, whether they were cheating or not! The problem of preventing users from cheating in online games is a very complex one, and one common method to catch those who cheat is by verifying the integrity of the game executable. What happened with Gears of War was that the digital signature which ensured that the game was a legitimate, unaltered copy actually expired too soon. The error caused the game to simply quit working, leaving paying customers (players of the game) out in the cold.

Luckily, there was a workaround which allowed players to play the game before a fix was released by Epic Games (the publishers of Gears of War.) By setting the system clock back to a date before the digital signature expired, users could still enjoy the game they paid for. What is particularly sad about this failure is that the people which the anti-cheat software was supposed to protect were likely the only ones affected by it. I speculate that most cheaters (being more tenacious as well as tech-savvy) would have found the workaround more quickly than those normal players, who simply expected their game to work.

### Fail: **Seagate Responds to Barracuda Problems** (Key 2009)

Some days you just can't win. That was the case with Seagate, manufacturer of the 500GB Barracuda line of hard drives. Just days after popular news site Slashdot.org reported that many of the drives were failing, Seagate issued an update to fix the failures. Only this time, the update actually "bricked" some of the drives, causing all data stored on these hard drives to be inaccessible! "Bricked" is a slang term used when a piece of computer hardware is damaged and can no longer function as anything more than a brick. One particularly bad aspect about this failure is that if a user had many drives of the same type (such as a RAID array, or a primary drive and an identical backup drive,) then all of them could be affected by the same update, causing the user to be unable to access *any* of their data.

Luckily, the drives weren't truly bricked (which implies that recovery is actually impossible,) and the fault was fixed in yet another update released a few days later (Yam 2009). After applying the new update, users were finally able to access their data, with the only true loss being their time and perhaps their nerves!

### Win: **Nokia Qt LGPL switch huge win for cross-platform development** (Paul 2009)

Finally we arrive at the "Win" section of this paper, and it's a good one. Qt Software, now a division of Nokia, added a LGPL license option to their C++ application development and GUI framework known as Qt. Why is this win? Qt has long been the foundation of some great free and open source software projects (most notably the KDE project, which provides a desktop environment and application suite for Linux, BSD, and other OSes.) And while using Qt has always been free (under the GPL) for open source projects, it has been costly to use in commercial projects. Not any more. The LGPL stands for the "Lesser General Public License," and is often used as an alternative to the stricter GPL when licensing libraries. The GPL contains clauses which cause all new software which even uses a GPL piece of software to also be free. The LGPL allows other non-free software projects to use the free code, and still sell the software commercially. The idea is the more people you have using the

library (regardless of what they are developing,) then the higher the likelihood that those people will contribute to free and open source projects using their acquired talents.

By Qt Software making the Qt libraries available under the LGPL, the overall number of Qt developers is expected to rise, and hopefully start contributing to the rich ecosystem of open source software. Smaller development shops, who beforehand couldn't afford the expensive Qt license, can now use Qt for free, and bring their applications to the commercial world. Qt is an easy way to development cross platform applications, which is beneficial to everybody (imagine if all of your favorite applications were available simultaneously on Windows, Linux, OS X, and your phone, too!) Now that Qt is freer than ever, more developers can create cross-platform software more easily than before. Qt's release is truly a "Win"!

## References

Kuchera, Ben (2009, January 20). Gears of war screwup makes PC version unplayable. Retrieved April 14, 2009, from Ars technica Web site: <http://arstechnica.com/gaming/news/2009/01/pc-gears-of-war-drm-causes-title-to-shut-down-starting-today.ars>

Key, Gary (2009, January 19). Seagate Responds to Barracuda Problems. Retrieved April 14, 2009, from Anandtech Web site: <http://www.anandtech.com/weblog/showpost.aspx?i=540>

Yam, Marcus (2009, January 22). Seagate Releases Firmware to Fix HDD Bricks. Retrieved April 14, 2009, from Tom's hardware Web site: <http://www.tomshardware.com/news/seagate-hard-drive-firmware-bricked,6889.html>

Paul, Ryan (2009, January 14). Nokia Qt LGPL switch huge win for cross-platform development. Retrieved April 14, 2009, from Ars technica Web site: <http://arstechnica.com/open-source/news/2009/01/nokia-qt-lgpl-switch-huge-win-for-cross-platform-development.ars>