Sometimes, an app just wants to crash

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Raymond Chen

I think it was Internet Explorer 5.0, when we discovered that a thirdparty browser extension had a serious bug, the details of which aren't important. The point was that this bug was so vicious, it crashed IE pretty frequently. Not good. To protect the users from this horrible fate, we marked the object as "bad" so IE wouldn't load it. And then we got an angry letter from the company that wrote this browser extension. They demanded that we remove the marking from their object and let IE crash in flames every time the user wanted to surf the web. Why? Because they also wanted us to hook up Windows Error Reporting to detect this crash and put up a dialog that says, "A fix for the problem you experienced is available. Click here for more information," and the "more information" was a redirect to the company's web site (where you could upgrade to version x.y of Program ABC for a special price of only $nnn!). (Actually I forget whether the upgrade was free or not, but the story is funnier if you had to pay for it.) In other words, they were crashing on purpose in order to drive upgrade revenue.

(Astute readers may have noticed an additional irony: If the plug-in crashed IE, then how could the user view the company's web page so they could purchase and download the latest version?)

Raymond Chen

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