

Force-feeding the dogfood

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20051117-11

November 17, 2005



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Windows 95 contained some new networking features, and since I was one of those crazy people who sampled every flavor of dogfood in the store, I actually tried out all of them. One of the features, a network protocol, I thought was interesting enough that I decided to help them out by forcing everybody else on the team to dogfood it.

Here's how I did it.

I had a bunch of debugging documents and other materials that people generally found useful. I put them on my machine, which acted as a file server. Anybody who wanted these files had to install the network protocol in order to get them. And the files were valuable enough that people were willing to take a chance on a new network driver just to get them. Not only did the client side of the driver get a lot of dogfood test coverage, so too did the server side, since my computer would be servicing a lot of simultaneous connections from people reading my documents. I remember finding a variety of interesting bugs this way. (And of course I ran stress over this protocol.)

I later became friends with the lead tester for the protocol, and he told me that my simple act of force-feeding the dogfood to every other member of the Windows 95 team was a key element of making their feature a success.

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