

The most expensive notepads in Microsoft history

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Many years ago, I visited the office of a colleague who worked on Internet Explorer in order to work on some problem or other. As we investigated the issue, we took notes on a 5"×7" tear-off notepad which bore the logo *Forms³*.

My colleague then pointed out to me that we were taking notes on the most expensive notepads in Microsoft history.

Forms³ (pronounced “forms-cubed”) was the code name for the project that was the precursor to *Trident*, the layout engine that powers Internet Explorer. As I recall the story as it was told to me, project management thought it would be cool to have custom notepads made for their project. The people responsible for converting this idea into reality designed a logo, laid it out, and found a vendor to produce the notepads. But there was some sort of misunderstanding (maybe the asked for too many colors? didn’t order enough notepads to trigger the bulk discount?), and the price for the notepads ended up being something ridiculous like \$10 for a 50-page notepad.

That’s how the most expensive notepads in Microsoft history came to be.

Bonus chatter: Oh, by the way, the word “precursor” I used up there? Yeah, that was a euphemism for “cancelled (but used as a learning opportunity).” Microsoft engineers are fond of black humor when it comes to software (especially software made by Microsoft) as a way of coping with adversity, and after the *Forms³* project was cancelled, there was a subculture of engineers who morbidly called it *Forms tubed*.

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