Why doesn't a program show up on the Start menu's Recently Used Programs list if I just used it to open a document?

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A customer had a question about the Start menu's Recently Used Programs list: Start with a brand new machine. If you double-click a document which is associated with a program, the associated program does *not* appear on the Start menu Recently Used Programs list. In order to get it to show up there, you must explicitly launch the program directly (rather than indirectly via a file association). This behavior is consistent across all applications. Is this a bug or a feature?

This was a strange question, because it didn't seem to be particularly underlined actionable. I mean, whether it's a bug or a feature doesn't change the fact that *that's what you get*, and it doesn't change what you are going to do in response.

	Is it a bug, or is it a feature?	
It's a bug ↙		↘ It's a feature
Deal with it		Deal with it

What's more, the precise algorithm by which a program earns a position on the Recently Used programs list is not documented; indeed, the algorithm has changed many times over the years. So whether it is a bug or a feature, it's a bug or feature that is subject to change at any time. Which kind of renders the distinction pointless.

I pointed out to the customer liaison that this seemed to be a pointless question, seeing as the answer won't actually affect the customer's next step. As part of the initial contact, the customer liaison asked how the customer was being affected by this, and that's when we learned that the customer is being blamed by his manager of setting up the computer incorrectly, and the customer wants to be able to shift the blame to Microsoft. (Apparently, the customer is willing to spend money on a support incident if it will let him dodge blame.)

And even with this background information, the conclusion as to whether the behavior is a bug or a feature still doesn't affect what the customer does next!

	Is it a bug, or is it a feature?	
It's a bug	↙ ↘	It's a feature
Blame Microsoft		Blame Microsoft

Anyway, the answer is that it's a feature. There are many programs that get launched programmatically or indirectly, and the Start menu doesn't want to clutter the Recently Used Programs list with programs which the user may not recognize, or programs which users are not even expected to run manually at all! Therefore, in order to appear on the Recently Used Programs list, the user must have explicitly launched the program directly.

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