

Microspeak: Tented

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20180425-00

April 25, 2018



Raymond Chen

Here's a citation for the Microspeak term *tented* from [an old Microsoft job listing](#) that is no longer available, maybe because the [req](#) has been filled.

You and your team will decide how the Office clients and services measure their success in performance sensitive areas like latency, memory/disk footprint, and battery life not only for the devices of today but also on the evolving ecosystem of hardware including new, *tented* devices that Microsoft is building.

What is a “tented device”?

No it's not [a two-in-one laptop in the tent configuration](#).

It's also not [a data center in a tent](#).

The term started in Windows 8. The hardware team was developing some new hardware devices. One was a tablet that would run Windows on an ARM processor. (That device would eventually be marketed under the name *Surface RT*.) Another was a tablet that would run Windows on a desktop-class processor. (That device was marketed under the name *Surface Pro*.)

These were top secret projects, with access very tightly controlled. They were so top secret that you weren't even allowed to say the product code names in the presence of people who weren't cleared for access, because the mere act of saying a code name discloses the fact that the project *exists at all*. The code phrase for saying that somebody has been cleared for access to the top secret projects was *in the tent*. If you wanted to know whether it was okay to discuss the top secret projects with Alice, you would ask whether Alice was *in the tent*.

This phrase *in the tent* had some catchiness to it, so people started applying it to any case where there was a top secret project. And since all cool words get verbed eventually, the term *in the tent* led to the verb *tented*.

- “Is Alice tented for project X?” = “Has Alice been granted access to information about project X?” which basically boils down to “Is it okay to discuss project X with Alice?”

- “This relates to a tented project.” = “This related to a project for which access to any information is tightly restricted.”
- “This is a feature for a tented device.” = “This is a feature for a device for which access to any information is tightly restricted.”

Few projects rise to this level of secrecy, but in case you have one, there’s a Microspeak term to describe it.

Bonus chatter: Some years later, I learned that the concept of being “in the tent” is recursive: There are tents inside tents! Even though you are tented for some project X, there may be a part of that project that is double-top-secret, and you need to be tented for that part of the project to know about it.

Raymond Chen

Follow

