

Microspeak: Click stop

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20200218-00

February 18, 2020



Raymond Chen

A term that is beginning to gain currency at Microsoft is *click stop*. Here are a few citations. See if you can figure it out.

| Document title: Features Available at Click Stop 1

| Components should view mode X as a click stop toward switching to mode Y.

| We have decided to have a click stop at MVP and another after all Priority 1 features are complete.

In its most general sense, a *click stop* is a reference point in an otherwise continuous range.

It derives from the photography term which describes detents on a camera lens aperture dial. Although you can set the aperture to any value you like, the notches make it easier to set the aperture to one of a handful of commonly-used values.

In Microspeak, the term is usually used to refer to points in the development of a software product. These key moments are a time to pause and reflect, taking time to assess the state of the product more thoroughly.

In other words, it's a fancy synonym for *milestone*.

Although that is the original intended meaning of the term *click stop*, that didn't stop the term from being used in other completely different ways. I suspect that what happened is that the term was coined spontaneously by some senior executive who was a photography enthusiast, and everybody was afraid to ask what it meant, so each person came away with their own idea of its definition. I've noted earlier that a nontrivial source of Microspeak is the desire to impress upper management. Everybody wants to use the term, even if they don't know what it means.

These mutated versions of the term *click stop* are never defined in the documents they are found in. Defining the term would betray that you aren't "hip" and "with-it". You just throw the term out there and hope it makes you sound like senior management material.

Click Stop 2 is defined as users in markets where feature X is not available. Users can also end up in this Click Stop if the feature has been disabled by Group Policy. Users can be in Click Stop 2 and Click Stop 4 at the same time.

This document thinks that a *click stop* is a way of categorizing different types of users, and that click stops can overlap. This doesn't mesh well with the original *aperture dial detent* sense of *click stop*; you can't set a dial to two values at the same time.

But that never stopped them.

Some sort of prize needs to be awarded to the author of this sentence which I found in a different document:

Industry adoption of feature X will move us toward our North Star click stop.

Being able to incorporate multiple Microspeak terms into a single sentence proves that you're ready to be promoted to senior management.

Bonus chatter: One of my colleagues thinks that *North Star Click Stop* sounds like the name of a great Seattle gastropub.

Raymond Chen

Follow

