

Migration: the Return

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Yup, the Migration continues. More and more developers are leaving Microsoft technologies behind, and exploring new grounds.

For example, it's interesting to read how Kevin Hoffman (writer at The .NET Addict's Blog) takes his first steps in Cocoa; I've been down that road too, and his impressions are almost the same I had 4 years ago:

I tried to create the stereotypical "Hello World" application. I dragged a button onto a form and then I figured, "What the hell, this ought to work", so I double-clicked the button and was ready to try and figure out how to get a message box to come up. Much to my chagrin, all I did was pull up the properties inspector for the button.

My first reaction was to drop Xcode and go back to Visual Studio where I felt comfortable. You know how, even though something might actually smell really, really bad, the fact that you're familiar with it and might even call it home makes it endearing? The same is true of a development tool. Regardless of whether your tool is good or bad, the fact that it's the tool you've been using for years makes it feel comfortable and familiar, like a security blanket.

I took a step back and tried to figure out what the hell was going on. After a few minutes, I realized that Xcode was actually doing a really, really, really good thing. The vast majority of problems that arise from a poor separation of concerns between the GUI and the underlying code, model, and controller (if you even have such constructs in your app!) stem from the fact that you can double-click a button and immediately start writing code without thinking about the consequences of such a thing.

But even more groundbreaking is to read that Mike Gunderloy (of "Coder to Developer" fame) is also leaving behind Microsoft technologies, testing other grounds and sharing his experiences along the way:

The last time I completely walked off a job and started over with a new career was around 1992, when I shut down the publishing

business I'd built around FACTSHEET FIVE. After a while I ended up writing software, and writing about software, for a living. I've spent the bulk of the last fifteen years developing some amount of reputation and expertise in the Microsoft universe, having published dozens of books and hundreds of articles, worked as an editor and consultant, written (as a subcontractor) parts of various Microsoft products, and so on. I'm also the editor of the Larkware site, which tracks news in the Microsoft software world for developers.

Unfortunately, over that time I've also come to the conclusion that, even though it is staffed largely by smart and ethical people, Microsoft itself represents a grave threat to the future of software development through its increasing inclination to stifle competition through legal shenanigans. Its recent attempt to claim that no one can implement a user interface that looks anything like the Office 2007 ribbon without licensing some nebulous piece of intellectual property represents a new low in this regard.

I'm in a bit of a bind. Unlike fifteen years ago, I've got a family, including four kids, and I can't afford to just walk out on a career that brings in good money. But I rather desperately want to find an alternative. This blog will record some of my explorations as I hunt around in other corners of the software world, trying to decide if there's a viable business plan for me that can include weaning myself off of Microsoft software.

This is a great moment in computing history, I think.