



Practice What You Preach

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Over the years, I have found it surprising that vendors do not always use their own products. In the case of hardware, many products are developed by people who have little or no interaction with the people who use them. Most developers probably do not operate their own products in the way they are meant to be used either. Unfortunately, the focus is on improving existing specifications – to make a product faster, better, cheaper – rather than creating new features that solve problems or make processes simpler. Easier said than done, you might say. However, insight is a commodity companies can easily obtain by actually using their own products in their everyday work environment.

I have specific experience with scanner vendors, but I suspect the same is true of many other companies across a variety of markets. In the case of scanners, vendors often tout their product's ability to “manage paper documents more efficiently”, ultimately providing greater access, distribution, and control of problematic paper documents. But these great benefits often fall short in the real world because vendors do not ensure that their products offer a reliable user-friendly solution.

For example, if a scanner has a document feeder that is temperamental, then that vendor is not helping people to “manage their paper documents more efficiently.” Rule number one: product features should work properly. If the scanner interface is convoluted or requires a significant amount of time to get a document scanned correctly, then the scanner manufacturer is not helping people to “manage their paper documents more efficiently.” Rule number two: ease of use is vital. If a scanned image is properly fed through the device and is transferred into a computer, but then becomes difficult to find or is not easy to work with; then of course the company is not helping people to “manage their paper documents more efficiently.” Rule number three: provide a benefit.

When people purchase a product and use it as intended, they expect it to do the job they purchased it for. Are your products reliable, user-friendly, problem solvers? Use them and find out. If your answer is “no” to any of these three things, then fix it. Your customers will be happier, your products and technologies will be more valued, and your company will have more success.

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