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The Most Fragile Engineers I Know
by Ethan Banks

This tweet crossed my Twitter timeline recently. I'm confident it's not actually by the legendary investor Warren Buffett because it's not a verified account, and the last name is spelled wrong. Besides, I suspect Mr. Buffett has better things to do than fuss with social media--empire building must be quite time consuming.

Even so, I liked the sentiments expressed.

The smartest people I know:

1 Don't get easily offended
2 Read more than they talk
3 Enjoy intelligent discourse
4 Quickly admit when they're wrong
5 Comfortable changing their opinion
6 Surround themselves w/ intelligence
7 Seek to understand every perspective on a topic

9:18 PM - 25 Aug 2018

I've decided to make my own list from an IT engineering perspective. And instead of listing the smartest traits, I'll explore the characteristics of the most fragile.

The most *fragile* engineers I know:

1. Are easily offended. Engineers I've met with fragile egos lack confidence and are offended by everything. New technology. Having to integrate with other tech silos. Having to make design compromises. Criticism. They are argumentative, angry, and hypercritical of others, describing them as "idiots," "morons," and other vociferous denigrations. And since managers (senior executives especially) are obviously useless, every managerial directive is a new source of outrage and offense.

2. Talk more than they listen. Fragile engineers need to prove to everyone that they know everything. When explaining a problem to them, they cut

you off as if they already know what to do about your issue. They think they know better than the business stakeholders, and like to implement technology instead of solve problems.

3. Enjoy arguing. The most fragile engineers I've worked with are contradictory people. Their perspective is rarely "we can figure out a way to make this work." Instead, they want to prove why the new thing can't work, didn't work the last time, and won't ever work in the future. They are a barrier and not an enabler.

4. Never admit when they are wrong. Fragile engineers are never wrong. They never make a configuration mistake. They never unplug the wrong cable. They never shut down the interface that cuts them off from the management plane of an entire campus. They never power down the wrong router in the rack. They never make a bad recommendation. I mean, they do all of these things. We all have. But fragile engineers never admit their screw-ups, covering up with ambiguity. Truly evil engineers will blame others.

5. Doggedly hold an opinion. When confronted with evidence, they will contradict and fight despite what the data says. These folks seem to think that changing an opinion is some admission of inadequacy, and fragile egos can't tolerate that. Facts be damned.

6. Keep smart people away. Fragile engineers are threatened by more skilled engineers, and will do their best to keep them away. After all, a skilled engineer might make them look bad, and that just won't do. It's not about growing into something better. It's about protecting the existing situation.

7. Force others to accept their perspective. The fragile engineer doesn't want to hear other points of view. Why bother when one's own point of view is clearly the only correct way to think? For these folks, the best way forward is to convince everyone else of their idiocy, and wrestle them to the ground with their opinion.

After more than two decades of working with technology, I hope I'm more mature and less fragile. Writing my contrary points above, I found myself wincing at a career's worth of memories tied to such people.

A fragile ego can steamroll relationships. The data center rack you stand up today is the one you'll tear back out eventually. It's not that important that you won the argument about the cable coloring scheme.

Interpersonal relationships have the potential to last much longer, and can make you better in the process. They are worth investing in. However, you need to be vulnerable before that growth can occur. Vulnerability isn't fragility--it's admitting you don't know everything.

Vulnerability is a sign of maturity.

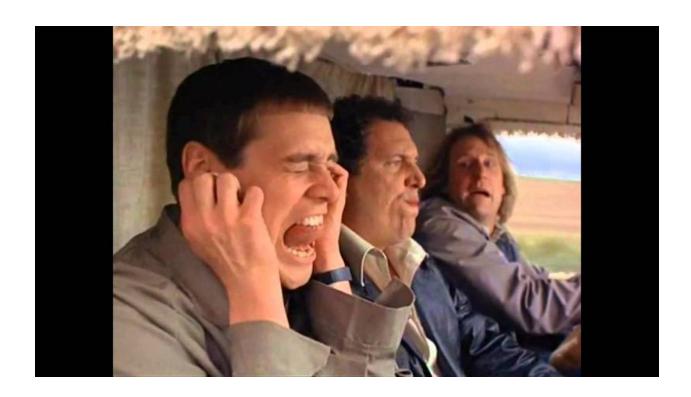# Packet Pushers Listener Survey: We Need Your Feedback!

It's that time of year when we come to you, virtual hats in hand, to ask for a few minutes of your time to **take our annual audience survey**.
Your responses help us in several ways:

- Feedback helps us suck less at what we do now (we hope)

- Feedback informs new ideas and initiatives (entirely new ways to suck!)

- Aggregate audience data helps us attract sponsors (the whole money thing is icky, but we gotta eat)

We never share individual responses or any personalized details with anyone.

If you have a few minutes, we'd really appreciate **your input**. Thanks!

Are Vendor Keynotes Worth Attending?

by Drew Conry-Murray

Every time I sit through the CEO keynote at a big vendor tech conference, I feel like we could save everyone's time if they just played **this video:**

[Try watching this video on www.youtube.com](www.youtube.com)

The tone of a CEO keynote is chipper, upbeat, and relentlessly sunny. In keynote land, everything *is* awesome.

You know exactly what the CEO is going to say: the company's doing great, we love our customers, and here's an inspirational video to demonstrate the softer side of our ruthless capitalist enterprise.

Sometimes the CEO will walk through new product announcements. Inevitably, these new products are disruptive and revolutionary, yet easy to deploy in your brownfield environment. They will transport your organization to the nirvana of digital transformation.

As a tech reporter, I'm obliged to sit through these keynotes, which are essentially marketing decks with a light show, because I have copy to deliver.

But what about the thousands of other people in the room? Why do they trudge into a cavernous hall at 8:30 a.m. to sit thigh to thigh in tightly packed chairs, eardrums assaulted by crushing techno music, to endure ninety minutes of vacuous gas-baggery?

If you don't have to file a story, is the executive keynote really worth it?

Genuinely curious, I asked this question on Twitter, and I got a few interesting responses.

For some, it's a waiting game; they're there to hear a guest speaker, perhaps a celebrity or other well-known figure, and so they'll sit through the executive portion in anticipation of a payoff.

Others, however, want to hear the company's vision or understand the narrative the company is constructing. This information may affect their own decisions about how they engage with the company and its products.

Does the vendor's direction align with their own? Is the vendor speaking to relevant issues or problems? And is the product roadmap advancing toward customer goals?

Whether they get useful answers to these questions is another story, but they are listening.

Packet Pushers News Bits

We get briefed on new products and other tech news. Sometimes they're worth writing, podcasting, or making a short video about.

Meta Networks Rethinks Remote Application Access - Startup Radar

[Meta Networks](#) thinks it has a better way to securely connect remote users to corporate and SaaS applications.

Able to work with both managed and unmanaged laptops and smartphones, Meta Networks lets administrators control access specifically to those applications a user needs.

[LINK](#)

Mike Dvorkin And Container Security Trashcan

We caught Mike Dvorkin during VMworld 2018 and got two minutes of his time to talk about container security.

[LINK](#)

Briefing in Brief 053: Mode.net's Cloud Private Network For Your SD-WAN

Mode briefed Ethan Banks about their cloud private network. Whoa! Thought Mode was an SD-WAN company? Not quite. Mode partners with several SD-WAN platforms so that it's easy to stand up a tunnel from your SD-WAN forwarders to Mode's private network. That makes Mode a network alternative to private MPLS that integrates with your SD-WAN fabric.

[LINK](#)

The End Bit

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Human Infrastructure is bi-weekly newsletter with view, perspectives, and opinions. It is edited and published by Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray from PacketPushers.net. If you'd like to contribute, email Drew at drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net.

We don't give away your email address or personal details because that would suck.

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