The Old New Thing

Microspeak: bubble up

19 Feb 2013 7:00 AM | **12**

Bubble up is the name of a soft drink, but at Microsoft, it means something else. (Remember, Microspeak is not just terms used exclusively within Microsoft, but also terms used at Microsoft more often than in the general population.)

To *bubble up* information is to expose the information at a higher reporting level. For example, you might have a local team report that goes into detail over all the work items the team is responsible for and the corresponding status of each item. The data from this report may *bubble up* into a group report, which summarizes the work item status across all teams.

As another example, if there is an error condition in a particular item, the error may be reported on the status page for that item, and it may *bubble up* to the status page for the container as well (meaning that the information will be reported there, too).

Information can *bubble up* in other less formal ways. For example, your manager may say, "That's important. "I'll make sure to bubble that information up in our weekly status meeting," which is a jargony way of saying, "That's important. I'll make sure to present that information in our weekly status meeting."

The implied metaphor is bubbles rising to the surface of a liquid, with the suggestion that reaching the top of the liquid is a good thing in some way or other. (Even though people usually don't pay attention to the bubbles at the top, and once they get there, they tend to just hang around for a while, and then *pop*. A rather ignominious end to a bubble, if you ask me.)

The concept of information *flowing to higher levels* is used even in the HTML DOM specification: Event bubbling is the term used to describe how an event travels from an element to its parents.

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Comments

Mathieu Garstecki
19 Feb 2013 7:59 AM
#

It has become common technospeak, WPF also uses it for routed events raised from children to containers.

kinokijuf
19 Feb 2013 8:00 AM
#

Next on Microspeak: ignominious.

Brian_EE
19 Feb 2013 8:18 AM
#

The analogy really only works for a liquid though. Like water boiling over (is that good in your organization?) or a result of shaking things up.

In the atmospheric model, bubbles (such as from a kid blowing bubbles from a soap solution) float down to the surface and then pop. Is there a workplace analogy for that?

Lockwood
19 Feb 2013 8:37 AM
#

Brian: Or they just blow up in your face

JM
19 Feb 2013 9:00 AM
#

@Brian: "In the atmospheric model, bubbles (such as from a kid blowing bubbles from a soap solution) float down to the surface and then pop. Is there a workplace analogy for that?"

Yes, it's called a company vision. They float down from on high, pop on the unsuspecting workforce, and after the initial fright things continue more or less as before.

JK
19 Feb 2013 9:02 AM
#

Perhaps it's that the information is inefficiently sorted to the top of the organisation?

Mike
19 Feb 2013 12:49 PM
#

Exceptions also 'bubble up' in the callstack :)

SomeGuyOnTheInternet
19 Feb 2013 4:11 PM
#

I think the analogy is flawed for error conditions. This is better:

"I'll make sure that exception rises like scum to the status page for the container"

Mook
19 Feb 2013 8:01 PM
#

If I remember correctly, the HTML DOM event bubbling came from Microsoft via IE - Netscape was doing event capturing, I think. So it's still a microspeak :)

cheong00
20 Feb 2013 4:18 AM
#

Our company tends to use bizzword "esculate" to serve the purpose.

AndyCadley
20 Feb 2013 6:08 AM
#

Bubbles rise all the way to the top, are mostly ignored until eventually they pop and just disappear entirely. So, exactly like management reports then.

Joker_vD
21 Feb 2013 10:26 PM
#

Though "event bubbling" is kinda stretching this analogy, because items are not below their parents — childrends are in front of their parents! "Event nailing"? Like, the event is going further into item hierarchy as a nail going farther into the wall...

Though again, why people don't just use "to propagate" or "to relay" is a mysterious mystery to me.