Mike Nelson – SED Article – due August 26, 2010

<u>[Optional Title] Where's the Opt-Out Link for F.U.D.?</u>

In the world of I.T., FUD is the work of the marketing and sales fluff-makers, over trained sales engineers, and over-zealous executives. Its primary objective is to spread false and misleading information, leading to confusion and misguided solutions. It takes no prisoners by undermining credibility, destroying our allegiance to companies and their products, and reveling in the fact that most people will believe anything they read or hear. I hate FUD, especially when it gets in the way of me being successful in something, so now I am on a quest to become FUD-Free.

FUD has many forms and origins, with the earliest recollection on the use of FUD was back in the 1920's. It was common in war for opposing countries to use it as propaganda, with one of the most famous purveyors of wartime FUD being "Tokyo Rose". In reference to technology, some believe that the Carl Amdahl separation from IBM in 1975 , and the FUD flooding from IBM that ensued, brought us the actual acronym for Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt. But, as this picture of a circa war poster from 1943 shows, it apparently was around long before that.

In my experience, I have found that most of the FUD that comes my way isn't from marketing brochures or advertisements, but rather directly from the people who try desperately hard to influence your thinking and decisions. I have seen all sorts of variety of FUD, from cable providers all the way down to the type of laundry detergent I use, and it still somehow amazes me that it seems to be in a never ending supply from everywhere. Almost daily, I pour over my favorite blog posters and eyeball my twitter feed, and just when I think I've gotten through without being bombarded with its rhetoric, it slips through and shows its ugly face again.

I have started to create a simple plan when dealing with I.T. vendors and their FUD. My goal is to keep it simple and hopefully, somewhat effective.

1. Take a course in reading body language. This was one of the best classes I have ever taken, and it brings enormous value in your daily interaction with people, both professionally and personally. I have found, and called out, many a fibbing vendor using these skills.
2. Take in whatever the vendor supplied "experts" tell you. Make sure to require that any reference documents or links that are mentioned by the vendor, including tech notes, articles, their personal blog sites, etc., be given to you. It is one thing to casually mention in a

presentation that "Oh, and the statistics show that our product is superior to our competitors", but to actually back it up with fact is another. If it cannot be confirmed or corroborated, it is FUD, plain and simple (this step usually causes heartburn for sales folks).

3. Get ALL of your questions answered. If it cannot be answered, either right there or via a follow-up, then you are being setup for FUD.
4. Research. This is the key to your success in pummeling FUD. Knowledge truly has power over FUD.

But what I really want to know is where the Opt-Out link is for FUD? We have opt-out for almost everything else, even some that are required by law, but why not for FUD? An idea given to me by a peer that I think is great is to implement the "Do Not FUD Registry", similar to the national "Do Not Call Registry" for Telemarketers. How about the creation of the "FUDinator", possibly a tiny device that could be worn and automatically warns you of incoming FUD? Or better yet, how about having it shoot a phaser beam set to stun at the perpetrator that is spewing FUD at you? Not only would you be closer to being FUD-Free, it would be a lot of fun!