Email tip: If you ask a question that can be answered in only one way, but that's not the answer, don't be surprised that nobody responds at all

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It's not infrequent that I see somebody ask a question that can be answered in only one way. But if that's not the answer, then nobody will respond.

> Is there a module that does XYZ?

This question can be answered in only one way: "Yes, here it is." If nobody has written such a module, nobody is going to reply saying, "No, nobody has written the module you request," because that would require the responder to prove a negative.

"I have scoured the entire planet, including code sitting on a hard drive in somebody's mother's basement, and have verified that there is no module that does XYZ. Furthermore, I have altered the rules of the universe to ensure that nobody will write such a module in the time between I completed this investigation and the time you receive this message."

If you ask a question asking whether something exists, there's only one possible response, because nobody is going to say that the code you request has never been written.

So far, nothing is wrong. Perhaps the person who asked the question was about to write an XYZ module, but wanted to make sure the effort was not being duplicated.

However, there are some people who fail to realize that they just asked for proof of a negative, and send a follow-up:

> Resending. Can somebody please tell me whether this module exists?

What's particularly scary are the people who ask the question in such a way that they are not only asking for proof of a negative, but in fact proof of a *perpetual* negative. There was one customer who was rather insistent upon receiving an answer to a question of the form "Will there ever be a tool that will…?"

And once again, the round-up of unhelpful or rude subject lines I've seen in the past five months:

- Please help
- Some help please?
- some help please? [lowercase this time]
- KB980665 – customer issue!
- I need urgent help
- Windows Vista SP1
- SP1?
- Need help — SRS299792458
- a problem
- Possible Bug [capital letters make it sound Important]
- Hi

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