

When you are looking for more information, it helps to say what you need the information for

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Raymond Chen

It's often the case that when a question from a customer gets filtered through a customer liaison, some context gets lost. (I'm giving the customer the benefit of the doubt here and assuming that it's the customer liaison that removed the context rather than the customer who never provided it.) Consider the following request:

| We would like to know more information about the method the shell uses to resolve shortcuts.

This is kind of a vague question. It's like asking "I'd like to know more about the anti-lock braking system in my car." There are any number of pieces of information that could be provided about the anti-lock braking system.

- "It requires a Class C data bus."
- "The tire position sensors are on the wheel-axis."
- "It is connected to the brakes."
- "It is shiny."

When we ask the customer, "Could you be more specific what type of information you are looking for?" the response is sometimes

| We want to know everything.

This is not a helpful clarification. Do they want to start with Maxwell's Equations and build up from there?

As it happened, in the case of wanting more information about the method the shell uses to resolve shortcuts, they just wanted to know how to disable the search-based algorithm.

This sort of "ask for everything and figure it out later" phenomenon is quite common. I remember another customer who wanted to know "everything" about changing network passwords, and they wouldn't be any more specific than that, so we said, "Well, you can start

with these documents, perhaps paying particular attention to this one, but if they tell us what they are going to be doing with the information, we can help steer them to the specific parts that will be most useful to them.”

As it turned out, all the customer really wanted to know was “When users change their password, is the new password encrypted on the wire?”

Third example, and then I’ll stop. Another customer wanted to know everything about how Explorer takes information from the file system and displays it in an Explorer window. After asking a series of questions, we eventually figured out that they in fact didn’t want or need a walkthrough of the entire code path that puts results in the Explorer window. The customer simply wanted to know why two specific folders show up in their Explorer window with names that didn’t match the file system name.

When you ask for more information, explain what you need the information for, or at least be more specific what kind of “more information” you need. That way, you save everybody lots of time. The people answering your question don’t waste their time gathering information you don’t need (and gathering that information can be quite time-consuming), and you don’t waste your time sifting through all the information you don’t want.

You might say that these people are employing the *for-if* anti-pattern:

```
foreach (document d in GetAllPossibleDocumentation())
{
    if (d.Topic == "password encryption on the wire") return d;
}
```

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