

# The complicated engineering behind an ice cream social

 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20160905-00](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20160905-00)

September 5, 2016



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Moving offices is a time-honored tradition at Microsoft. Some time ago, several teams (including my own) moved into a new building, and my local team had an ice cream social as a housewarming party.

This ice cream social was not a fancy affair. It consisted of two one-gallon tubs of vanilla ice cream, complemented by a bottle of chocolate sauce, a can of whipped cream, and a jar of maraschino cherries. Two of us did the scooping, and everybody got two scoops.

(The administrative assistant explained that it goes much faster and is much less messy if you have a dedicated scooping-person rather than letting everyone scoop their own ice cream.)

The following Monday, another team thought of having their own ice cream social. The administrative assistant told them, "Oh, the XYZ team did that last Friday. I have a cart you can borrow. We took a shelf from a bookshelf and put it on the cart to use as a table. It worked out really well. Just the right size, nice and stable. You can borrow the entire set-up if you like."

The other team accepted the generous offer, but something must have gotten lost in the translation, because we saw the following in the kitchen refrigerator:

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9WmzJjxT7LKe5Qn5dSR8/thYPNOgJVFv4eVc+H4YWEEms1hcSZCmrdPpwLbAv//Z"

On the shelf is a sticky-note that says "Do not remove."

We may be software engineers, but that doesn't mean that we're smart.

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