

Is Flash the new VHS?

We have witnessed many product wars over time. Whether it is hardware, software, brand or process, there is inevitably going to be a division of opinion. More importantly, opinion can often be more powerful and decisive in the product war than fact.



It's the better product right?

Right now there is a heated battle waging in the technology world with the Adobe Flash versus HTML5/CSS3 debate. There are two distinct camps involved and the gap between the two couldn't be more divisive.

Undoubtedly, HTML5 and CSS3 do provide the functionality to provide a rich media experience while supporting and furthering open standards. That being said, we live in a vendorized world where marketing is king. Adobe has long been the major player in the rich media space and with their Flash and Shockwave products we have seen great advances in capabilities of media and gaming on the web.

Now we have reached a point where we have David versus Goliath. In this case, David is the open standards community and supporting developers; Goliath is the wide adoption of proprietary products due to "ease of use". What is easy is not always what is right. Unfortunately, there are many more people who can produce content through these tools than there are skilled developers who can produce a quality product with open products and standards.

Looking back to the 70s and 80s, we had the long standing VHS versus Beta debate. Technically Beta was a superior product and there were a large number of proponents for the standard due to its quality compared to that of the VHS format. Add some marketing and voila! Goodbye Beta and hello VHS.

What about things that we find in our house everyday? Most people will agree that handmade furniture is truly the best quality product you can get, but there are 299 Ikea stores worldwide and I would guess that somewhere in your house you have a piece of furniture or a utensil named Gunther or Ole that you bought or were given from the well marketed chain.

The challenge that is faced with HTML5 versus Flash is along the same lines. It is a matter of wide adoption. And as many know, wide adoption does not necessarily indicate the best quality product.

So do we have options right now? We do in a way. For example [here](#) is a really slick sample of HTML5 and CSS3 animation, but unless you are running Chrome or Safari it won't do you much good. I'm not sure if you've read the statistics on desktop operating system environments and browser wars, but Chrome and Safari despite their quality, are not the only browsers in the market today.

I personally support the HTML5 and CSS3 method, but I'm also realistic that this has a long way to go and we will be living with Flash for a long time. My only hope is that the "Flash only" site becomes a thing of the past. Given the push towards SEO and mobile compatibility I would like to see more of the "click here for HTML version" options out there. There is not much that is more

frustrating than being out on the road and seeing a website for a restaurant or housing development and when I try to get the contact information I am met with a broken site because it requires Flash.

And to close, some motivational words from the great Bill Hicks on marketing and advertising.

p.s. Before you comment on the Flash embed...it's not me, it's Youtube. That is what we call Irony