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# s14e06: Congratulations, Your App Has Apps In It Now



## Things That Caught My Attention

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### 0.0 Context Setting

A not-rainy, nicely cloudy, not-too-cold morning in Portland, Oregon, on Tuesday 10 January, 2023.

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### 1.0 Some Things That Caught My Attention

Just a short thing today because I am trying to write not faster but, er, shorter. Less. I am trying to write less.

### 1.1 Congratulations, Your App Has Apps In It Now

Apps (sorry, applications or programs) and web apps love to have other apps inside them now, as if putting computers in things wasn't bad enough, now we're putting apps inside apps.

I digress.

One reason why apps are in apps now is because if your app supports apps inside it then you can have a *platform* and platforms are great because they are a) giant megastructures in oceans that are terrifyingly large that maybe one day might be repurposed into giant carbon scrubbers and be a jobs program for the oil and gas industry, and b) are ways for software companies to make even more money from software by persuading other people to make software that lives in your software. Phew.

All of this means that Zoom has apps now, which isn't an entirely bad idea. Zoom, the app for ensuring the knowledge worker parts of an economy continue to work when there's a pandemic, is mainly for making sure that you can see other people, but sometimes you want to type things to other people or try to draw things with your mouse pointer. So there are things like a *whiteboard* in Zoom. But the smart people who make Zoom realized that Zoom was also being used by people to look at whatever multiplayer Google Doc or Jira or Miro or Mural or whatever at the same time. So Zoom lets you share screens which is kind of okay, but what if you could do everything you wanted inside Zoom? That would be neat!

Look. Here is the Zoom App Dock that inexplicably appeared in Zoom a few weeks ago:



It is not great, partly because the bottom Zoom nav bar already had an icon for “Apps” but its numbers were not going up and to the right enough, so someone had the bright idea to put the Apps In Your Face. FaceApps.

Anyway. Now we’re in the wonderful situation of, e.g.:

- Downloading and installing Zoom from your platform’s app store
- Using a b2b saas app like Miro, also downloaded from an app store, or in your browser
- Extending your Miro Collaborative Tool Experience or whatever by using something from the [Miro Marketplace](#)
- Adding Miro to Zoom by going through the [Zoom Marketplace](#)
- Starting a Zoom meeting
- Opening the Miro app in the Zoom App Dock

And I get what it’s trying to do: it opens up Miro (a web app) inside Zoom, lets you create a new Miro document and there are some hacks/features to let you collaborate in the Zoom

window with the Miro app which kind of works, if your guests are 1) logged in to Zoom and not using Zoom as a guest and 2) have installed the Miro app in Zoom which they may or may not be allowed to do based on their organizations policies.

Phew! But all of this is to say that now there are apps in your app and here's a few observations:

- Wow did the web as an application delivery mechanism ever change things up so anything with a web view could have a web view in it and that could have a web view (subject to "just" figuring out security)
- Wow is the web a weird application delivery mechanism where people are writing applications and then essentially compiling them down to binaries using WebAssembly, but weirdly shoehorning it into a hypertext framework
- Past a certain size there are clearly incentives for an organization to try to springboard from its One Thing That Has Market Dominance into All The Other Things (see: Zoom also now wants you to do your email inside of Zoom).
- This doesn't necessarily have to be *bad*, but it is getting towards the "your web browser has a window manager, but your web browser is itself in a window manager, but your eyes are not window managers so we're only two layers deep so far".
- There is something about embedded applications into web views inside of other applications that feels *a little bit OLE* or *a little bit Taligent* or as we might say nowadays *shitty OLE/Taligent* in the sense that what we've got probably isn't that elegant but unfortunately and frustratingly fits into the definition of "so bad it works and gets adopted but is also inefficient".

- I mean the reason why is that Miro now has to produce a bunch of variants of its web application that fit whatever space is made for it in whatever other hosting application, which as ever is subject to frenzied competition. Of course someone will just say “but APIs!”

Anyway. Now you have apps in your apps. Not a bad thing? Sometimes done badly? I definitely do not like the sudden intrusion of this Zoom App Dock, though.

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A quick one for Tuesday. How are you doing? I’m pretty meh.

Best,

Dan

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