



SETH'S BLOG

Don't Shave That Yak!

The single best term I've learned this year.

I want to give you the non-technical definition, and as is my wont, broaden it a bit.

Yak Shaving is the last step of a series of steps that occurs when you find something you need to do. "I want to wax the car today."

"Oops, the hose is still broken from the winter. I'll need to buy a new one at Home Depot."

"But Home Depot is on the other side of the Tappan Zee bridge and getting there without my EZPass is miserable because of the tolls."

"But, wait! I could borrow my neighbor's EZPass..."

"Bob won't lend me his EZPass until I return the mooshi pillow my son borrowed, though."

"And we haven't returned it because some of the stuffing fell out and we need to get some yak hair to restuff it."

And the next thing you know, you're at the zoo, shaving a yak, all so you can wax your car.

This yak shaving phenomenon tends to hit some people more than others, but what makes it particularly perverse is when groups of people get involved. It's bad enough when one person gets all up in arms yak shaving, but when you try to get a group of people together, you're just as likely to end up giving the yak a manicure.

Which is why solo entrepreneurs and small organizations are so much more likely to get stuff done. They have fewer yaks to shave.

So, what to do?

Don't go to Home Depot for the hose.

The minute you start walking down a path toward a yak shaving party, it's worth making a compromise. Doing it well now is much better than doing it perfectly later.

NOTE: Apparently turned into a computer term by the MIT media lab in 2010, [yak shaving](#) was referenced by my pal Joi Ito. (Link: [Joi Ito's Web: Yak Shaving](#))

March 5, 2005