Arnaud, Beavis, Butt-head and Process

Arnaud's recent posting, [A Standards Quality Case Study: W3C](#), qualifies the author to include on his resume: "blissfully unaware of corporate politics in the standards process." The dull repetition by an IBM staffer of their surprise at the passage of OpenXML is the first clue that something isn't quite right. Why would anyone associated with one of the major interests for or against OpenXML be surprised by its quality? Given the [Beavis and Butthead](#) type approaches on both sides of OpenXML, no process would have had any other result.

Consider the Beavis like opposition to OpenXML. Rather than anything resembling a sensible approach under any process, we all saw, heard and experienced:

- The same comments, originating from the same individuals, being filed in multiple stamdards bodies
- Non-productive sites such as NOOXML, which offered no meaningful analysis (or solutions)
- A no cooperation policy from start to finish (and woe to anyone who suggested otherwise)

It is true JTC 1 needs reform but it needed that before OpenXML. The Beavis crowd overlooked (or chose to ignore) the need for reform before they were slapped down for being arrogant and overbearing in JTC 1 member countries.

The Butt-head proponents of OpenXML did not proclaim they were "The Great Cornholio" like Beavis but they had their moments in the campaign to see OpenXML approved. Among their low points (there were no high points):

- Decidedly uncooperative attitude (I am still waiting for a plain text version sans duplication)
- Responses were as little help as possible
- A "we want what we want and we want it now" attitude from start to finish

I think the Butt-head side seriously abused a process that had been designed by the Beavis side for their own abuse but that hardly qualifies as an objection to OpenXML.

Given the mis-guided corporate strategies that drove the OpenXML dispute, there is no process, not even the best one humanly possible, that would have saved the day.

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PS: This characterization should not be applied to all the participants in the OpenXML process. Some participants, even some vendors, really attempted to be good standards citizens and to do good work. But they are easy to distinguish from the ones mentioned above.