

## Groklaw And Standards 101

The Groklaw article on [YEARFRAC](#) is wrong when it says Microsoft can solve that problem on its own. It is a Standards 101 type issue. Here's why:

YEARFRAC is not a fact but a social convention about how to count days for financial calculations.

One of the reasons for standards is to document and formalize social conventions. If we can document Microsoft's and other definitions of YEARFRAC, that improves our ability to reliably interchange information.

Microsoft and others have solved the YEARFRAC problem on their own before and that has only contributed to the problem. Remember that YEARFRAC is a social convention? That means that any private definition only worsens the problem.

Solving and documenting the YEARFRAC and other formula functions will be a common effort by OpenDocument, Microsoft and others. No one can solve it alone or in isolation. Or, like I said at the beginning, Standards 101.

Improving interoperability means improving interoperability of all users, between Microsoft-based products as well as those of any other software manufacturers and that can only happen by agreement on and documentation of all financial functions. To say otherwise or to suggest that anyone, even Microsoft, can “go it alone,” or in isolation, is contrary to the nature of standardization.

Any standard, Unicode, OpenDocument, YEARFRAC, etc., benefits MS, Oracle, IBM, Sun, Redhat, etc., as well as Apache, OpenOffice, PostgreSQL, etc. To effectively help anyone we have to help everyone.

If those who originated and commented on the Groklaw article had invested their time supporting the technical OpenDocument standards work we would be further along than we are, and financial institutions and individuals would be closer to interchanging their data more reliably.

Covington, 2 June 2008

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PS: Anyone interested in seeing what I do instead of blogging and answering blogs, can visit the ODF website and look under recent documents. [OASIS Open Document Format for Office Applications \(OpenDocument\) TC](#)