What We Need are Standards in the Cloud
If a standard falls in the forest and there is nobody there to adopt it, is it still a standard?
AND NOW...
The Fish Slapping Dance
My name is
Benjamin Black
And I have no standards.
Let’s talk about something interesting, instead:
Technology adoption.
Why adopt a technology?
Utility:
Does this solve my problem?
Interoperability:
Can I combine vendors+products to solve my problem?
Independence:
Can I be totally free of vendor lock-in?
Independence

Interoperability

Utility
These are not equal.
A hierarchy of needs.
Independence

Interoperability

Utility
Some problems need not go past **UTILITY**.
e.g., SQL (in reality)
Some problems can’t achieve **UTILITY** without **INTEROP**.
e.g., TCP/IP
The cycle:
1] Disruption.
MASSIVE UTILITY
(and a lot of imperfection)
Rapid adoption
(by definition)
2] Competition.
EXPLORATION
Endless variety
Goal: Discovery
Not just of solutions.
But of the **complete** problem.
Many ‘standards’
(meaning no standard)
The seeds of interop are sown.
We are currently in this stage.
FORMALIZATION
Our itch having been scratched, we turn to less pressing matters.
Independence
Successful standards formalize what is already true.
Standards are side-effects
of successful technology.
There are no successful standards absent successful implementations.
All successful standards are de facto standards.
TANSTAAFL
(the innovation moves elsewhere)
Standardize too soon, and you lock to the wrong thing.
Unclear that it is even possible to standardize ‘too late’.
We have missed an important question:
What do we even mean by ‘standard’?
Standard

Standard specification

Standard committee
Standard:
What everybody uses.
Utility + Disruption

→

Standard
Standard specification:
What someone hopes you’ll use.
Interoperability

Standard specification
Standard committees:
The legislative branch.
Independence

Standard committee
Concerned with:
Licensing
Patent grants
Open process
Interoperable implementations
Open source
etc.
Special bonuses:
Politiks
Permanent seats
Preferential votes
Secret handshakes
etc.
If you don’t achieve UTILITY...
Customers won’t bother.
They want their problems solved.
Standard committees don’t build.
We can only discover the right standards by building and exploring.
To discover the right standards, we must eschew standards.
Go do.