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[Internet Explorer 8 - Mission Impossible?](#)

Should Microsoft just abandon the browser business?

The first taste of [Internet Explorer 8](#) is now just around the corner. This year's MIX08 kickoff keynote address on March 5, 2008, will feature Internet Explorer General Manager Dean Hachamovitch and the first presentation of Internet Explorer 8. Designed to replace Internet Explorer 7, IE8 is planned for availability by the end of 2008, or in early 2009, with the first beta scheduled to hit by the summer of this year. And there are high expectations of IE8, from both end users and web developers, putting increase pressure on Microsoft to both evolve the browser by adding new features, functionality and capabilities, and by expanding support for web standards, while at the same time not breaking the web that was designed for IE5, IE6 and IE7. In this context, Microsoft revealed that it has come up with a one-size-fits-all solution that would be tailored to diversified web scenarios. IE8 will feature no less than three standards mode. In "Quirks mode" the successor of IE7 will remain compatible with existing content. In "Standards mode" IE8 would offer the same support as IE7. But in super standards mode, Internet Explorer 8 will be fully standards compliant. But Håkon Wium Lie, chief technology officer of Opera Software, says that it's not enough. Instead, Wium Lie has come with his own list of what Microsoft should deliver with [Internet Explorer 8](#). "Support Acid2 and Acid3, by default. Acid2 is a well-known test and the follow-up Acid3 is being finalized. The tests must be passed by default. That is, users or authors should not have to select 'standards mode', which is guaranteed to minimize the impact of standards. Support the underlying specifications. The Acid tests are written to help browser vendors who act in good faith, and they do not guarantee compliance with the underlying specifications. Microsoft must commit to implementing the underlying specifications of the Acid2 and Acid3 tests. Provide documentation. Lack of documentation on how IE implements standards has been a problem for web developers. For each specification Microsoft implements, it must provide a detailed list of limitations, bugs and extensions. The list must be publicly available," Wium Lie stated, as cited by [The Register](#). "Drop mode switching. Documents that trigger standards mode in IE6 or IE7 (or almost standards mode, as per the documentation in Wikipedia and on Microsoft's site) shall continue to trigger standards mode in the future. No new magic switches can be introduced. Commit to interoperability. It is important to ensure that Microsoft remains committed to supporting web standards, even beyond Acid2 and Acid3. If two or more major web browsers, in official shipping versions, add standards-related functionality that's generally considered useful to the progress of the web, and described in a publicly available specification, Microsoft must add the same functionality," Wium Lie added. Stuck at an insignificant audience share of the browser market, Opera has filed an antitrust complaint with the European Union Regulators, alleging that Microsoft has been leveraging the Windows monopoly in order to gain the dominant position on the browser market. Opera asked the EU Antitrust Commission to force Microsoft to strip down Internet Explorer from Windows, and also to make the proprietary browser standards compliant, in its default configuration without different modes. Wium Lie's prediction for IE8 is that Microsoft will find it impossible to satisfy his Internet Explorer 8 wish list. "If Microsoft can't live up to the standards of the web, I suggest they leave the browser business," Wium Lie concluded.