Avoiding Exclusionary Language in RFCs

draft-moore-exclusionary-language-00
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• Language that offends or distracts is counterproductive to IETF’s goals
• We can and should do better
  – I believe the community will willingly do so
• Changes to language can also harm clarity and readability
• Most (not all) suggestions to modify our language are probably uncontroversial, because:
  – The language is obviously disparaging, or obsolete
  – The language is of low value to IETF
• A few words are very useful, not easily replaced, and may lack compelling evidence of harm
  – Changing these may be controversial
• Recommendations high points:
  – RFC editor maintains exclusionary language section in style guide
  – I-D tools warn authors/editors of potentially exclusionary language, based on style guide
  – Author/editor and WG entrusted to make good decisions (perhaps in consultation with RFC editor)
    • They are subject matter experts
    • No automatic substitutions
    • Mandatory blocking rules require IETF consensus
  – No requirement to revise existing RFCs