Shady McShadingtons, Exhibit A: Experts-Exchange.com

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Related Categories: Misc, SQL, Coldfusion

As a web developer, I often find myself in need of professional help. (Don't we all?) Sometimes all that stands between me and a completed project is a quick Coldfusion, SQL, or Actionscript example. At times like these, I turn to Google.

Much of the time I can find what I need in the first few search results. A code example here, a syntax clarification there. One site that used to bug me, however, was Experts-Exchange.com.

I'd scan the Google search results, find a page where someone was asking exactly the same question as me, and link over to find the answer. Sadly, if the page was hosted by Experts-Exchange.com, I'd be greeted by a message like "All comments and solutions are available to Premium Service Members only".

Am I expected to sign up for a premium service just to get an answer to a programming question? What happened to freedom of information?

The answer, as it turns out, is that nothing happened. Experts Exchange is trying to bully you into buying something that should be (and in fact, *is*) absolutely free. You just have to know where to look.

Here's an example. Upon opening **this page**, you'll see a question about the CFFILE tag, followed by some blocked comments and solutions. Now for the tricky part: *scroll down.* That's it. Just scroll down to the bottom of the page.

Imagine my surprise when I dicovered that the answer to this and every other question on the site is visible, in plain text, just by scrolling. Imagine how angry I'd be if I actually paid for this service and then discovered it was freely available to anyone, anywhere, any time.

What a rip-off. Seems like a shady business practice to try and weasel some free money out of hard-working developers.

So, in conclusion, don't pay for things you can get for free.

(Note: I've only checked this with IE6 - I read somewhere that Experts-Exchange uses javascript to do something funky with some DIVs, which might hide it from plain view in other browsers. Even in that case, you should be able to view the source to see the solutions.)