MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026 · ISSUE #1

The Rizz News

Yesterday's Top Tech Stories — Curated by RizzBot

First, make me care

▲ 764 · 236 comments · gwern.net

TL;DR: To engage readers, writing should immediately provoke curiosity or address a knowledge gap, rather than starting with generic background, ensuring they continue reading.

A recent article argues that effective writing must immediately make the reader care, rather than beginning with "fatal background" information. The author suggests hooking the audience by posing a compelling question or drawing attention to a gap in their knowledge, creating an "itch" that the rest of the piece will scratch. Using the example of the Venetian empire, the piece contrasts an intriguing question about its survival with a dry, LLM-generated introduction on the same topic. The key takeaway is that if a reader isn't hooked by the first screen of text, they will likely quit reading, no matter how valuable the subsequent information is.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The main debate centers on whether TikTok success requires constant evolution of attention-grabbing "hooks" or sticking to a proven niche. One perspective suggests creators must continuously innovate as hooks lose effectiveness, while the prevailing counter-argument is that the algorithm rewards consistency, leading successful accounts to repeat a single theme or "hook" extensively. A key insight raised is that this can trap creators in a specific persona, making it difficult to pivot their content as the platform continues to serve their "one hit" to new audiences.

A macOS app that blurs your screen when you slouch

▲ 664 · 217 comments · github.com/tldev

TL;DR: Posturr, a macOS app, utilizes your Mac's camera and Apple's Vision framework to monitor posture, progressively blurring the screen when slouching as a real-time reminder to sit up straight.

Posturr is a new macOS application designed to improve user posture by utilizing the Mac's camera and Apple's Vision framework for real-time monitoring. When slouching is detected, the app progressively blurs the screen, providing a gentle visual reminder to sit up straight, with the blur clearing instantly upon correction. It offers features like multi-display support and custom sensitivity settings, and is privacy-focused, performing all processing locally on the device without requiring an account or tracking. Users can install it via Homebrew or manual download, and it runs as a lightweight background application.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The comments explore the idiosyncratic physical rituals associated with deep focus, such as slouching or specific walking postures, suggesting a strong mind-body connection in creative and technical work. A central theme is the value of interruption-free solitude for "slow thinking," with the shower cited as a rare modern sanctuary from constant social and digital contact. A notable tangent reveals strong privacy concerns, with users advocating for hardware kill switches over software solutions to prevent surveillance from cameras and microphones.

ICE using Palantir tool that feeds on Medicaid data

▲ 1383 · 903 comments · eff.org

TL;DR: ICE is utilizing Palantir's ELITE tool, which accesses Medicaid and other agency data, to identify and target immigrants for deportation, raising significant privacy concerns.

A new report reveals that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is using a Palantir-developed tool, dubbed ELITE, which leverages Medicaid data from the Department of Health and Human Services. This tool generates maps of potential deportation targets, creates individual dossiers, and assigns "confidence scores" for addresses to assist ICE in locating individuals. This raises significant privacy concerns as government agencies are pooling data collected for essential services for purposes unrelated to its original intent, echoing past "Total Information Awareness" controversies. The EFF has actively challenged similar practices, warning of the potential for abuse of consolidated government records.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The comments argue against the "nothing to hide" stance on privacy, highlighting the potential for abuse by those in power, like government agencies or individuals in law enforcement. A central debate explores whether tech companies' data profiling is accurate; the consensus is that the platform's goal isn't perfect demographic accuracy but rather creating powerful models to predict user behavior for monetization. The discussion also points out the perceived hypocrisy of tech leaders who dismiss privacy concerns until their own data is made public.

Adoption of EVs tied to real-world reductions in air pollution: study

▲ 592 · 628 comments · usc.edu

TL;DR: A new study published in The Lancet Planetary Health confirms that increased adoption of zero-emissions vehicles in California significantly reduces nitrogen dioxide air pollution.

A new study by Keck School of Medicine of USC researchers, published in The Lancet Planetary Health, provides the first statistically significant evidence linking zero-emissions vehicle (ZEV) adoption to reduced air pollution. Analyzing satellite data from California between 2019 and 2023, the study found that for every 200 ZEVs added, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) levels dropped by 1.1%. This real-world confirmation highlights the immediate public health benefits of EVs, even as ZEV registrations in California increased from just 2% to 5% of light-duty vehicles during the study period.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The comments argue that the environmental debate over EVs versus internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles is often misdirected. The key insight is that a small number of old, poorly-maintained, or illegally modified "gross polluter" ICE cars are responsible for a disproportionately massive share of emissions, a problem often overlooked in simple comparisons of new EVs to new ICE vehicles. An interesting related point is that other unregulated sources, such as two-stroke engines in lawn equipment, may contribute more to specific types of air pollution than the entire automotive fleet.

A flawed paper in management science has been cited more than 6k times

▲ 699 · 360 comments · columbia.edu

TL;DR: A widely-cited management science paper with over 6,000 citations was discovered to be seriously flawed, but the academic institutions involved have systematically blocked attempts to correct it.

A widely cited management science paper on corporate sustainability, referenced over 6,000 times by Wall Street executives and government officials, has been found to contain serious flaws and misrepresentations. A replication attempt revealed issues with its methodology, mislabeled statistical significance, and

critical missing tests. Despite these findings and the authors admitting to publishing a misleading report, the journal refused to act, and universities disregarded evidence of research misconduct, highlighting a breakdown in the scientific publication process. This incident underscores concerns about institutional failures undermining trust in scientific research.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The comments highlight a pattern of academic dishonesty where creators of new software use flawed, misleading benchmarks to falsely claim superiority over established open-source tools. The key perspectives are from experienced developers frustrated by the misrepresentation of their work and the failure of academic journals to retract or correct these biased publications. The main controversy is the apparent lack of integrity and accountability in the academic peer-review process, which allows demonstrably false claims to enter the scientific record.

Google confirms 'high-friction' sideloading flow is coming to Android

▲ 640 · 718 comments · androidauthority.com

TL;DR: Google confirms a "high-friction" sideloading flow is coming to Android 8.0+ to enhance user risk awareness, sparking concerns it might subtly impede app installations.

Google has confirmed a "high-friction" sideloading process is coming to Android 8.0 and later, aimed at increasing user awareness of risks when installing apps from unverified sources. Matthew Forsyth, Google Play's Director of Product Management, describes it as an "Accountability Layer" to ensure users understand potential dangers, even allowing advanced users to bypass verification with extra steps. While Google maintains this isn't a restriction, questions remain whether the added friction will remain purely educational or subtly make sideloading more difficult on Android. The company has not indicated requirements for external tools, focusing for now on risk education.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The main debate is whether iOS still holds a significant app advantage over Android, which is a key factor in Google's long-term strategic competition with Apple. One perspective argues that Google is bafflingly ceding ground by removing unique Android features while Apple's hardware and app ecosystem remain superior, locking users in with high-quality, exclusive apps like Affinity and better-performing software like Microsoft Office. The counterargument posits that the iOS app advantage is an outdated "gold rush" myth, asserting that many core apps are now worse on iOS and that Android's openness provides superior alternatives like F-Droid.

Using PostgreSQL as a Dead Letter Queue for Event-Driven Systems

▲ 252 · 78 comments · diljitpr.net

TL;DR: Wayfair effectively used PostgreSQL as a Dead Letter Queue for event-driven systems, finding it superior to Kafka for inspecting and managing failed events due to its robust queryability.

In event-driven systems, reliably handling processing failures is a significant challenge, especially when Kafka consumers encounter issues like API downtimes or malformed events. A project at Wayfair found traditional Kafka-based Dead Letter Queues (DLQs) lacked sufficient visibility and querying capabilities for business-critical reports. They successfully pivoted to using PostgreSQL as their DLQ, directly persisting failed events into a dedicated table with contextual failure data. This innovative approach enabled easy inspection, targeted reprocessing, and clear status tracking of failed events with minimal operational complexity.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAYS

The comments debate using PostgreSQL as a message queue versus specialized systems like Kafka. The main theme is pragmatism; for the majority of applications without massive scale, Postgres is a powerful and flexible starting point that offers unique benefits like dynamic priority and easy querying. The key perspectives are that it's a sensible default that can be outgrown if needed, versus the premature optimization of using complex tools like Kafka for "resume-driven development."