Web Development: Ending the Monotony

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When the web was new, everyone was excited to be a part of it: Print designers were attracted to its aesthetically oriented nature; Marketing gurus revered its ability to instantly distribute massive amounts of information to millions of people; and programmers were eager to try something completely new. Individual experiences and opinions may appear to differ on the surface, but everybody loved the web for one quality: timely tangibility. For the first time in the industry's history, a few simple lines of code could create something that every business could benefit from.

Roughly thirteenth years later, the internet has become a mainstay of global culture, and for good reason, but much of its simplicity has been lost. The first web sites were easy to create, but did little more than display information. Today, they can automate nearly every business process, but require enormous amounts of time and effort to create and maintain. The modern internet has vastly simplified business; But what will simplify the modern internet?

In smaller companies, each person fills several different roles, and is vital to the organization's progress. This structure, though often necessary, rarely allows for the enhancement of technical ability, which can limit the caliber of the company's clientele. Even with a significant technical offering, advanced projects demand so much of the company's resources that they ultimately hinder profitability. In an effort to compensate for lack of knowledge, many developers search the internet for pre-programmed code snippets to reuse each time a client requests certain features. This approach can prove somewhat useful to programmers already familiar with the relevant language, but those with less experience often find it difficult to modify the code so that it accurately meets the client's expectations.

Larger companies have several seasoned professionals on staff, and can handle many projects simultaneously, but lose a lot of efficiency to repetitive tasks. There are a number of "core" features that are common to most high-end web sites, but must be reengineered, sometimes from scratch, for each client. Because of this, web development has become a perpetual cycle of inefficient monotony: Web developers create innumerable variations of the same code; web development firms adjust their pricing to compensate for the consumption of resources; and clients wait months before seeing any returns on their healthy investment.

The current web development process is mutually detrimental to all involved parties, meaning that any significant improvement would benefit everyone. If a single software solution is to successfully correct the gross inefficiencies plaguing the web development industry, it must merge with the current process naturally, and without significant alteration of procedure. To accomplish this, the solution should be structured around standardized concepts in such a way that its function is familiar, its operation intuitive, and its utility undeniable.

Basic web content can operate offline, which is why several software products can effectively simplify its creation. Dynamic functionality, however, typically operates from the server level. This is why traditional attempts to simplify dynamic functionality are heavily code-oriented. Though such products can offer minimal aid to advanced web programmers, they fail to benefit the larger, less-experienced group. In order to soften complexity without being too code-oriented, a software solution must have constant communication with the web server.

To foster the software-server relationship in a manner that retains stability, the solution should operate from the web server itself, but must do so remotely, rather than locally. And because remote operation, through internet or network connection, is bandwidth-dependant, the solution must be extremely small in file size if it is to rival the operational speed of local software.

Most professionally developed websites require functionality beyond the simple presentation of text and graphical content. The complexity of such functions varies equally with the expertise required to develop them. By increasing the ease with which advanced elements may be created, a product decreases the necessary technical ability of its users. Thus, the degree of simplification dictates the experience levels to which an effective solution must cater: Operation must be simple enough not to confuse novices, yet utilitarian enough to please veterans; it must minimize the tendency for error without excessive constraint.

The strategic elements of the development process (site mapping, database design, graphical layout, etc.) are essential and must be preserved, whereas actual programmatic tasks (Population of shopping carts and secure users, databasing form submissions, creating newsletter campaigns, etc.) should be streamlined to the greatest possible extent without compromising their actual function.

Perhaps the most redundant and time consuming of all development tasks is that of connecting each element in an advanced web site with others, especially in companies where many different developers are responsible for a single project. For the finished site to function properly, these elements must interact seamlessly so that their overall function is unified. To address this issue, a software solution must simplify the creation and management of *several* advanced elements in such a way that each can function independently when deployed alone, yet cooperatively when deployed with others. Software products that focus entirely on a single advanced function lack other elements with which to interact, and are consequently rendered ineffective as possible solutions.

In the realm of professional web sites, everything is a custom job. Many clients request similar functionality, but do so in a manner unique enough to drastically reduce the viability of pre-programmed, “cookie cutter” products. For a software solution to keep pace with the infinite flexibility of the web, it must provide exceptional support for custom scripts, and its source code must be modifiable. And to ensure that source code modifications remain client-specific, the software solution should be installed on a per-website basis.

Aside from utility, a software solution's cost must be far lower than that saved through its use, and must merge with existing price structures easily. It is in this area that the Application Service Provider (ASP) model fails. Many ASPs offer excellent, feature-rich development tools, but base their pricing upon monthly hosting fees, whereas most developers charge for development and management, with little emphasis on hosting. A software solution must allow the developer freedom to select the hosting environment best suited for his pricing scheme, which eliminates all application service providers from consideration.

A product's viability as a solution is dependent upon its adherence to the these standards: preservation of core concepts and strategic processes, prevention of error without creative constraint, exceptionally intuitive operation, server-side installation, small file size, numerous diverse and interwoven features, reasonable and non-recurring implementation cost, and modifiable source code. The more of these standards that a particular product meets, the more effective it is as a development tool. However, only a product incorporating *all* of these elements can be considered a legitimate solution.

The widespread utilization of a software product encompassing each of the aforementioned characteristics would revolutionize the web development industry. Developers could spend less time working on repetitive tasks and filling gaps in their knowledge base, and more time building purely client-specific features. With the reduced costs and faster production times resulting from this amplified efficiency, web companies could offer lower prices and a quicker return on investment while also gaining a bigger project capacity, thereby making higher profits off a larger number of happier clients. Furthermore, extremely advanced developers would have more time to develop entirely new concepts that further the advancement of internet technologies.

A plethora of software providers have attempted to develop a solution, but to little avail. Only a handful claim to streamline more than one dynamic concept, and even fewer are intuitive enough to benefit developers of all experience levels and powerful enough to deploy higher-caliber web sites. Currently, only one software product satisfies all the requirements of an effective solution: Soholaunch Online Business Suite.

Designed for developers of all experience levels, the Soholaunch Online business Suite effectively prevents user error while remaining infinitely flexible through modifiable source code and extensive support for custom scripts. Operation is extremely intuitive, and minimal experimentation yields useable familiarity; the novice can master it quickly, and the expert can use it efficiently. E-commerce applications, secure login systems, electronic mail campaigns, event calendars, and many other dynamic functions are developed and managed cooperatively, but also act independently with equal proficiency. Each installation of the Soholaunch Online Business Suite – totaling less than 800kb in file size – is associated with a single website (IP or Name-based), and is compatible with both Linux and Windows NT server environments. Because it is portable and site-specific, its implementation cost can correspond with nearly any pricing structure.

The extraordinary dynamic of the Soholaunch solution caters to an expansive range of technical experience levels, but most remarkably, it allows websites and their developers to grow and mature within the product. It deploys and manages basic, informational websites as easily as it does massive e-business applications, but also allows basic, informational websites to grow into massive e-business applications. Because its basic features are equally as intuitive as its advanced features, the novice developer can enhance his own technical ability far more rapidly than would be possible using traditional development methods.

Soholaunch Online Business Suite revitalizes the web's original simplicity, and allows all those who love the web to use the web. It eliminates the technical barrier for designers and marketing gurus, and lets programmers create revolutionary applications without having to waste time on repetitive coding. Extremely few websites exceed the capability of the features built in to Soholaunch Online Business Suite, but for those that do, a few simple lines of code can create something that even the most demanding businesses can benefit from.