



TeraTech News

Tools for Programmers

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Heatherstone picks *TeraTech* to take over clients

Aaron Overton, president of Heatherstone Digital Solution picked TeraTech to take over all of its clients when Heatherstone closed in December 2002. Aaron was relocating to Redmond WA to work for Microsoft and needed a quality software consulting company to take over his ColdFusion and database consulting clients. Aaron picked TeraTech as the best consulting company in the DC area to take over from Heatherstone. We are proud that we were selected and have enjoyed working with the new clients.

ColdFusion Tip

Q: Can you please explain the difference between the Session variables and Client Variables? It looks to me that they are almost the same.



A: They are similar! Both allow a ColdFusion website to remember information about one user from page to page. This persistence of data is not available in basic HTML pages because the web is "stateless". The differences are as follows:

1. Client variables can work across a cluster of servers. Session only on one server.
2. Session variables can contain structures and arrays, client can only contain simple variable such as strings and numbers.
3. Session require locking, client don't.

Personally I recommend using client variables as being easier for beginners to use because of point 3. Note when using client variables you should store them in a database and not in the default location (the Windows registry). This is both more reliable and allow for future clustering.

Annapolis CFUG

TeraTech helped to restart the Annapolis ColdFusion User Group together with Dan O'Connell of the Maryland Dept of Natural Resources, which is based in Annapolis. The user group is a place for programmers to share programming tips and to listen to speakers on new topics in ColdFusion and web programming. TeraTech is sponsoring the group, which meets the third Thursday of each month. For more information see <http://www.ancfug.com>



It's "And" Not "Because"

Last week I attended a quasi-social business function and found myself in conversation with a very knowledgeable and polished executive. When I asked him what he did he said, "I'm not working, I'm looking for my next opportunity." His answer floored me and I asked again. His initial reaction was to repeat himself, assuming that I hadn't heard him (it was noisy), but my continued look of inquiry finally brought a second answer, "I'm a CFO."



It's sad enough that people choose to define themselves based upon how they earn a living, and very bad when, as in the conversation mentioned above, employment becomes the career validation without which the career ceases to exist. However it's much worse when people take another step and subconsciously merge their identity with that of their company—I call it ego-merge.

I coined this term more than 20 years ago to describe a state of mind that is not only unhealthy for individuals, but also damaging to the companies for which they work.

Ego-merge is the result of melding "me" and "my company" in the mind of the employee, whether worker or manager. It's most obvious in tough times and most noticeable in conversation when people use "because" instead of "and," thereby crediting the company or manager for their skills: "I'm great *because* my company/manager is great." instead of, "I'm great *and* my company/manager is great."

At first glance ego-merge might actually seem to be a positive for companies, but it's not. When employees' egos merge with their company's, they often blame themselves for the company's problems even when they have little power and may not have any line responsibility. Worse, it can be a major productivity sapper when times are tough—employees with ego-merge have a difficult time believing that they are good enough to help turn the company around, since in their minds their skills are good *because* of the company.

MORE NEXT MONTH...

By Miki Saxon, CEO RampUp Solutions, Inc. Be a discussion leader and/or participate in RampUp's TalkBack. Register now at www.RampUpSolutions.com
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MX on the Rocks and MXNORTH Conferences

TeraTech's president, Michael Smith, will be speaking at two international ColdFusion conferences this spring. The first, MX on the Rocks, is in Boulder, Colorado (hence "on the Rocks" of the Rockie Mountains). The second, MXNORTH, is in Toronto Canada. Michael will be speaking on three topics project management; Fusebox Methodology and Looping in CF. For more information see <http://www.cfconf.org/>



Unsure about Section 508?

As many programmers for the Federal Government already know, there are new standards for Web page accessibility called Section 508. Currently these standards are mandatory for all federally sponsored sites, but who knows when the law might be extended to all sites.

Section 508 ensures that the disabled can get access to the same public information as to others. On the last census there were 54 million Americans with some disability, including 10 million blind and visually impaired. People with disabilities use tools such as screen and Braille readers. Think of their tools as "alternative browsers." Just like the issues between IE and Netscape, other browsers need consideration when you code.

Imagine you cannot see and you have a friend read you the HTML source for a page over the phone so you can understand the site. That is what viewing a site with a screen reader is like. Imagine minutes of hearing header HTML code for navigation – with cryptic image file names and no English description. Imagine complex table layouts with no clue as to what each number means. Imagine applets that you don't know anything about because there is no HTML source for them.

Welcome to the world of the blind web user. Section 508 suggests how you can make their life easier when reading your webpages.

508 is hot - both Macromedia and Microsoft have web pages listing their 508 compliance initiatives, and Macromedia has released an extension to Dreamweaver with accessibility tools. Designing for maximum access to web content is spreading to education, local governments, and corporations. Learn more at CF 202 - 508 & ColdFusion on Wednesday, March 5th, 2003
<http://www.teratech.com/training/>

Amazon Web Service

by Michael Smith

Amazon recently released a free Web services that let you query and display data from Amazon's Web site in your own applications. That could be in your website or in a Windows program. A web service is a way of providing both data and functions to customers over the internet in a controlled way. In Amazon's case you can query for books and get a list of books back. You can then query for details on a book including book images to display in your app. Behind the scenes web services send and receive data using the standard HTTP method that normal web pages use. But a web service formats the page in a special way using an XML based format called SOAP. Fortunately ColdFusion MX avoids having to learn the details like this and provide a direct way to both consume and create web services. If you are interested in providing web services to your customers or vendors then contact me at michael@teratech.com for details.



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