



# TeraTech News

## Tools for Programmers

**We make you a computer hero every day**

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### CFUN-03 Conference

New to CFUN this year is CF BootCamp - this is one of four tracks we have - the others are Advanced CF, MX Integration and Empowered Programming. CF BootCamp is a 2 day introduction to ColdFusion that will get you programming in ColdFusion fast!



If you are new to ColdFusion, or if you have a friend who is learning it, please come to CF BootCamp and get ahead in your career. The

\$249 price for CFUN is a bargain compare to other intro CF classes that cost \$1200!

To get more information go to:  
<http://www.cfconf.com/cfun-03/>  
or email [michael@teratech.com](mailto:michael@teratech.com)

### TeraTech New Members

We want to welcome three new members to TeraTech. Daehong Kim, Nii Dowuona, and Jason Schwartz.

*Daehong Kim* is a Graphic Design Intern. He is a graduate with a degree in Studio Art/Graphic Design from the University of Maryland at College Park. He is a member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts and a teaching assistant for a senior graphic design course in the Department of Art.



*Jason Schwartz* comes to us with over six years of experience in software analysis, implementation, and support. He will be working in the areas of technical support, usability, documentation, and testing.

*Nii Dowuona* is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University (Computer Career Institute). Client/Server and Web Development are his areas of expertise. He aspires to learn as many languages and technologies as humanly possible. He also has a BSc. degree in Animal Science.



### What People Want

(Part 1)

Starting in the 1980s when the media turned the spotlight on how economic survival, let alone success, would require enormous cultural changes at corporate giants such as AT&T, IBM, and Xerox, discussions of culture and its effects dynamically increased each year.

Dozens of experts and thousands of people have used millions of words to describe and explain culture. Here are 10 random responses from non-managerial knowledge workers to the question, "What's culture?"

1. The people. Their personalities and interpersonal communications.
2. The ambience that the company emits.
3. The environment in which workers co-exist and achieve the company's goals.
4. It should describe the company's work environment/atmosphere/morale, etc.
5. The company culture is the framework or environment that motivates employees to produce the best results for the company.
6. It's [the company's] identity.
7. The way things really are as opposed to how they're described.
8. Environment of interaction and judgment.
9. How people relate to each other professionally and personally.
10. The reason for coming to work.

Although these answers may seem simple in comparison to the concepts propounded by both experts and academics, their accuracy can't be disputed.

Well beyond salary, culture is why people join a company—and more important, why they stay. It is what motivates (or demotivates) them, and cultural changes are frequently why they leave.

Be sure to read Part 2: *Cultural Negatives* in our June issue; Part 3: *Cultural Positives*, in July and Part 4: *Creating/Changing Your Culture* in August.

RampUp Solutions is the manager's mentor for culture creation/infrastructure, retention, and hiring—all on a shoestring budget.

For more information, or permission to reprint this article, visit us at

<http://www.RampUpSolutions.com> or write [miki@RampUpSolutions.com](mailto:miki@RampUpSolutions.com)

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## Whitespace Programming Language

Most modern programming languages do not consider white space characters (spaces, tabs and newlines) syntax, ignoring them, as if they weren't there. We consider this to be a gross injustice to these perfectly friendly members of the character set. Should they be ignored, just because they are invisible? Whitespace is a language that seeks to redress the balance. Any non whitespace characters are ignored; only spaces, tabs and newlines are considered syntax.

For more info see <http://compsoc.dur.ac.uk/whitespace/index.php>  
And check your calendar to see if it is still 4/1/03!

## Usability – Often Overlooked

By Jason Schwartz

You may be an expert coder, a sharp graphic designer, or a data mining mastermind, but ask yourself, how usable is the software you are creating?

Usability is one of the most important factors to consider when designing and creating software; after all, the end *user* needs to be able to *use* the software, right? Sometimes, though, developers focus too narrowly on incorporating functionality, fixing bugs, and writing “quality code,” while losing sight of the big picture that is usability.

Why is usability important? Let's look at some (but by no means all) of the reasons:

- **Customer Satisfaction.** For the user, the interface is everything. The end user doesn't see or care that the code is well structured or that proper Hungarian notation is used. All the user cares about is that the software is easy to use. If you develop usable software, the customer is happy – and you look good.
- **Efficiency.** Difficult-to-use software makes tasks take longer, increases user frustration, and encourages people to go back to manual methods. Easy-to-use software helps people complete tasks faster, and even allows them to do things they couldn't do manually. In other words, usability saves the customer money.
- **Revenue.** When corporate websites are easy to use, visitors spend more time at the site and return more often. This translates into increased revenue from online sales, advertising, and name recognition. A website that is hard to navigate discourages repeat visits and makes the company look bad.

What can you, the developer, do to improve the usability of your software? A complete list of usability

guidelines would be far too long for this discussion, but here are some general suggestions:

- **Look at what users do.** This seems obvious, but how often do you watch people use your software? Studying how real-life users interact with software is one of the best ways to improve usability. Watch for unnecessary redundancy, unintuitive control placement, inefficient or difficult keyboard access, and performance bottlenecks. Users will often do things that developers never thought of when designing the software. Accounting for this will make your software more usable.
- **Follow conventions.** Where published or recognized conventions exist, use them. Employ conventional menu names and keyboard shortcuts. If radio buttons are appropriate, don't use checkboxes. Adhere to the published human interface guidelines for your software's target operating system.
- **Document.** The most usable software in the world may actually be useless without proper documentation, such as user manuals, online help files, contextual help, and “Read Me” files.
- **Educate.** Often, the customer is the biggest barrier to implementing usability. The traditional consulting process, with its written proposals, requirements, and dry lists of features, can leave usability by the wayside. The people negotiating the contract may not have solicited any input from actual users. Educate customers on the benefits of usability and insist that they involve real-life users in the project.
- **Learn from the experts.** As of this writing, a search for “Usability” on Amazon.com yields 80 results. Curl up with a good book on usability, and take advantage of other people's hard work. If you apply their principles to your projects, you might see dramatic improvement in the usability of your software.

If you consider usability as early as the design and prototyping phases of your project, you are already ahead of the game. Factoring in usability will go along way towards improving your software and making you look great to the customer!

You can direct your usability questions to [jason@teratech.com](mailto:jason@teratech.com)

**If you missed previous articles, you can locate them at <http://www.teratech.com/news.cfm>**

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