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Prerelease Participant of the Month

February 2012

We are pleased to announce the Prerelease Participant for the month of February, 2012 - Aaron Neff. Aaron's association goes back five years to 2007 when he was invited to ColdFusion. When not digging into ColdFusion, he spends his time playing tennis, riding Sea-Doos, running, soccer, horseback riding, rollerblading, biking, solving brain teaser games, and spending time w/ family and friends.

Following is an Interview with Aaron where he elaborates on his experience with Adobe Prerelease -

Q: How long have you been associated with Adobe Prerelease?

A: Five years: Invited on Valentine's Day, 2007.

Q: How did your interaction with Adobe Prerelease first start?

A: During the fall of 2006, I entered a contest that Tim Buntel (former Product Manager of ColdFusion) held on his blog. Contestants were asked to submit logo ideas for the Prerelease of ColdFusion 8 (codename "Scorpio"). My wife and I created ideas using Illustrator (me) and Flash (her). I emailed many ideas to both Tim and Ben Forta (Mr. ColdFusion himself). I didn't win that contest, but the future reward was much greater. Soon afterwards, I submitted my application to join the Scorpio Prerelease and was accepted. I'm unsure if it was Tim or Ben who helped me get approved into the Prerelease. Maybe it was both of them. Maybe they thought I was sending them too many emails w/ CF logos, and felt my energies would be best directed at beta testing CF itself :)

Q: What are your hobbies and areas of interest?

A: In addition to ColdFusion development and ColdFusion Prerelease testing, I enjoy such activities as tennis, riding Sea-Doos, running, soccer, horseback riding, rollerblading, biking, solving brain teaser games, and spending time w/ family and friends. Lately, I, my wife, and the kids have been playing a bit of New Super Mario Bros on the Wii. Our 8yr old daughter Mia will likely become a graphic designer, and our 5yr old son Ace will likely become a CF web developer. ;) Maybe we can get some child-centric tutorials published by Adobe Press. We bought BlackBerry Playbooks - because they run the Adobe Flash Player - and I plan to begin studying app development for these.

Q: What do you do and how do Adobe products help you in your profession

A: I own a custom web design and development company (What iT iS dESign studios - www.itisdesign.com). Primarily we create ColdFusion web applications that empower a wide range of businesses with innovative solutions to efficiently overcome technical hurdles and generate new revenue streams. In college (1998), my dad bought me my first computer and I used it to teach myself HTML (since graphic design classes weren't very web design focused at that time). That same year, my mom got me my first website customer - my hometown. My college graphic design classes (Ball State University's College of Fine Arts) also taught me Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Dreamweaver, Flash, and Fireworks. These products allow us to bundle additional services (especially in the area of print) that complement our customers' websites. I was taught *some* ColdFusion (version 4.5) during an internship. But it was after college, in 2002, when I began teaching myself ColdFusion. I'd remembered my internship, and how ColdFusion simplified the development of powerful and complex web applications. To this day, ColdFusion continually fascinates our customers with its rich feature set. Standardizing on Adobe products allows me unprecedented ability to express my creative vision, methodical problem solving, and fascination with technology into a truly cost-effective business solution that enables our customers to shine above their competitors.

Q: What do you think are the most important benefits of participating in a Prerelease program?

A: Participating in a Prerelease program allows participants the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions about the product. I actually see it as a mutually beneficial relationship between the Prerelease participant and Adobe. I, for example, work with Adobe products every day and I like to see these products serve their purpose. Finding product and documentation bugs, and offering ideas of enhancements, are my way of contributing to the improvement of these products. On the other hand, Adobe gets the benefit of improving their products with the help of actual users before releasing the products. And as the participants and engineers collaborate on the product they all love, they all benefit from the stronger community that

continues to grow around the product.

Q: How has your experience been so far with respect to Prerelease team's overall level of response, awareness and communication skills? Any other suggestions?

A: I'd like to nominate quite a few of the ColdFusion and ColdFusion Builder engineers for "top Adobe engineer of the month" just for putting up with all my questions =D Overall, I'd say the experience over the last 5 years has been 90%-95% positive at any given time. The response and awareness levels are, thankfully, usually quite high. The level of communication is sometimes hindered by language barriers (I'm in the United States and the engineers are in India). This is no one's fault, but is a fact of life in today's world of increasing globalization. On occasion, engineers have had Connect sessions and phone conversations with me, and it has helped communication tremendously!

Suggestion: Each product's Prerelease should have an Adobe Connect meeting room. This would facilitate discussion, and decrease miscommunication, by allowing participants and engineers to share their screen to discuss an idea that would otherwise be difficult to visualize via email or forum posts.

Suggestion: Please fix bug #3115854. It is a problem with the new Bugbase. Currently, the Bugbase requires "version" when searching. This makes it take longer to find bugs/ERs, b/c we have to guess the version the bug/ER was filed against. :(If the Bugbase did not require "version" when searching, this issue would be resolved. :)

Suggestion: Please fix bug #3118597. It is another problem with the new Bugbase. Currently, the Bugbase's search results grid is a bit frustrating to use. This is because the grid forgets the user's column sorting and pagination, when the user returns to the grid after having clicked one of the links in the "ID" column to view a ticket. Example: If I sort one of the grid's columns and/or navigate to page 2+ of the grid, and then I click the ticket number link in the ID column (to view a ticket), and then I click the browser's Back button, the grid now shows page 1 of the grid and the column sorting is lost. :(Anyhow, the grid is ColdFusion-powered, so the solution is simple: Just add target="_blank" to the ID column's cfgridcolumn tag (ex: <cfgridcolumn header="ID" target="_blank"../>) and then this issue will be resolved. :)

Q: How significant do you feel is Prerelease's contribution towards enhancing Adobe's overall product & service quality and brand equity?

A: Regarding Product and Service Quality: The Prerelease program allows Adobe to visualize how their customers will interact with their products before the products are released. This understanding not only helps them develop industry-leading products and thorough documentation during the Prerelease, but I also believe this insight helps them train their employees for extraordinary customer service and support after the Prerelease ends.

Regarding Brand Equity: First, just like any other business, Adobe strives to maintain a positive image. The Prerelease program is an excellent way to maintain credibility as a global leader in software development. Second, buyers have a much higher perception of Adobe when they know their products have passed through the Prerelease testing. And third, the Prerelease participants themselves raise the public's opinion of Adobe as they enthusiastically teach others about the new features in the version of the product they just tested.

As a whole, the Prerelease's contribution is one of Adobe's most valuable assets. And I will continually strive to be one of the Prerelease's most valuable assets. Adobe and ColdFusion: Happy Valentine's Day, I love you!!

Congratulations Aaron! We are honored to publish your interview on the prerelease site.

Activities

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