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TYPO3 and the Read/Write-Web

Thoughts from a Web 2.0 journey

Waiting in the terminal for my flight home to Copenhagen I grabbed a part of what must have been the IT section of Financial Times. "Saving the planet in reverse" or so was the title of a column that captured my interest.



Social scientists had found that technology is not able to deliver a true substitute for real life meetings (and hence, we would probably have to continue polluting the air by travelling). In fact, trying to use emails, PM and video conferencing could even trick people into overlooking important social benefits of team work that comes with meetings in real life (IRL). I knew exactly what they were talking about. My trend curve is definitely going up when it comes to real life interaction around TYPO3 development. It is also interesting how I have allowed certain communication channels in our community to distract me so much during the years when they were used for the wrong purpose - something that is not easy to spot when you are deep inside.

The Social Success of TYPO3

Not considering air pollution and the great ideal of internet-based communication replacing travelling, working together IRL is in fact a hidden secret behind TYPO3's success. Probably the single most powerful ignition in our community is events, starting out with the snowboard tour and going all the way to Developer Days and the T3CON for professionals. Even us, nerds, the bit generation - used to navigating in a virtual universe and used to covering a surprisingly great amount of our social needs this way - at the end of the day we are still humans, inspired by the presence of our likes.

Bring the Fireplace Logs Together

I see a future where the TYPO3 association has a task more important than directing development support; a TYPO3 Association existing primarily to break down barriers to participation, giving people low and high an equal chance to get involved and shape the future of TYPO3. This also includes a focus on supporting and enabling meetings in real life. Basically, offering a fireplace and the means to get there - the fuel is brought along by the people themselves. In this light, aren't we blessed to live so concentrated in the same timezone, with a traveling distance of no more than four hours?

The Read/Write Web

At the PHP conference in Frankfurt the keynote speaker, Tim Bray, director of web technologies at Sun Microsystems, talked on Web 2.0. Rather than dancing the buzz-dance, he described the essence of this new focus as the "read/write" web contrary to the "read-only" web. I think this expresses the point much better: A web where people are involved in creating content. As an Open Source community that is inherently our identity! Or should be. It definitely seems like the strength that has built our most important successes - for instance the Extension repository - and simultaneously the reason for our biggest problems. I suppose there Web 2.0 holds an interesting wisdom that is also the very strength of a community like ours and the edge we will always have over a tightly controlled commercial software project.

Enabling people to participate

So, is TYPO3 Web 2.0 ready? No, we probably haven't seen the forest for all the trees yet. But we are slowly waking up! And isn't it great that those same principles that make a read/write web powerful are the very foundation of our success in the past? This seems like a free lunch to me. A fruit that is just waiting to be picked. So simple. In more practical terms, it means that we should offer greatly improved interaction services on our community websites. Services that enable automatic meritocracy-based "social mobility" in the developer pool. For TYPO3 as a product, it means consolidated ways to produce such services in frontend plugins.

The Broadway Show is over

Okay, so these are some thoughts. What many of you might miss is the roadmap. The fact is, that there is no such thing as a roadmap unless someone takes the responsibility to shape it and implement it. A "public" roadmap for TYPO3 is inherently incompatible with a vision of an organic read/write community which is responsible for its own fate. So, enough of that. TYPO3's future is not a show on Broadway where you can lean back and watch, it is an interactive play which you are able to influence directly and where you are responsible for the end result. Or this is what it should be. A festival. Welcome in, honestly.

DER AUTOR



Als TYPO3-Gründer und Präsident der TYPO3 Association leitet Kasper Skårhøj die Aufgaben der T3A zusammen mit anderen aktiven Mitgliedern. In seiner Freizeit raucht Kasper Zigarren und renoviert sein Haus. Er lebt mit seiner Frau Rie und seiner kleinen Tochter Amelie in Kopenhagen, Dänemark.