



Marketing by Degree

Gordon Peery, Editor

At various intervals along the course of the mighty Mississippi River are thermometers that measure the water's temperature. Variations in the temperature, caused by a multitude of factors flowing into the river, ultimately affect the temperature of the water in the Gulf of Mexico, which in turn affects the quantities and qualities of the shrimp harvest.

This information is important to the folks at the Red Lobster seafood chain, who use it to plan menu specials. If a bountiful shrimp harvest is in store, they know well enough in advance to plan and market low-priced shrimp specials. Knowing in advance of a slim harvest allows them time to de-emphasize shrimp so that more profitable items can be pushed instead.

Marketers need solid information to move forward efficiently and effectively. The Internet has opened up oceans of new or previously hard-to-get information, but the sheer volume can be overwhelming, let alone trying to determine the validity of various facts and figures.

What is even more challenging is keeping up with changes. For example, when Web banners first appeared, many advertisers got phenomenal results. When the market became flooded and the novelty wore off, publishers started giving away banner space to enhance print contracts. Then, as Web sites were refined and banners became more creative, they once again gained value. Meanwhile, e-mail marketing, which initially carried both logistical and legal risks, has now become popular and successful.

We know that it's just a matter of time before something new happens that will first reduce if not demolish the

effectiveness of e-mail marketing as we know it and then carry it to a new level where it will enjoy even more success — at least for a while. Ditto for banner advertising and e-mail newsletter sponsorships: DoubleClick's Ad Serving Trend Report shows that rich media is producing six times the number of click-throughs as non-rich media, but for how long will that remain true?

Agility is the key, but here's the catch: if we change our approach every time we stick our toe in the water, we're apt to end up following our own muddy footprints around in a circle. What we really need to assess is the net effect of the various temperatures and currents on our customer base at the point where we connect with them.

It is interesting to see online marketing referred to as "interactive," as though the thing that defines interactivity is the click of a mouse. Certainly direct mail (postal) requires more manipulative action on the part of the recipient. Trade shows, which fall under the face-to-face label, also have the opportunity to stimulate interactivity. And even print advertising can move toward this through creative calls-to-action and the use of inserts and other hands-on devices.

The Web has allowed us to think of connecting with customers in an interactive way, but there's no reason that these new concepts need to be totally restricted to online connections. The key remains what has always been at the core of marketing: engaging the emotions of the readers so they become participants. □



Smile

Gordon Peery, Editor

When I was beginning a career in advertising sales several years ago, my boss (and mentor, as it turned out) gave me some advice that seemed silly at the time. "When you're on the phone with a prospect, smile as you are having the conversation." Well, sure enough, it seemed to make a difference, and while it could not guarantee a sale, I definitely felt like I was communicating more effectively.

More recently, there has been research that shows that the muscles used in the act of smiling actually have an impact on brain chemistry. So there was method in my boss's madness after all.

As we go to press with this issue of *Developer Market News*, there is a lot going on in the business world not to be smiling about. Just as we have all become more wary of potential terrorist activities, so we now must be suspicious of business partners or companies whose fall from grace might have a direct impact on our business, possibly dragging us down with them. Of course, very few of us thought things were going to remain as vibrant as they had been. We knew the burgeoning economic growth was in fact going to burst, and it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that it did. What we couldn't predict is the depth to which unethical accounting practices have penetrated, and the resulting economic chaos.

Regardless of how the current crisis resolves itself, software will play an increasingly vital role in the core of our economy. Software has become one of the most important weapons in every company's competitive strategy. This may not seem like a bright spot — but one of the reasons there is hope is that software is so bad. Most of us look at software not so much for what it can do, as what it is *supposed to* do. We have been conditioned to accept the difference much more placidly than we would accept deficiencies of just about any other product, be it in a personal or business environment. As issues of processor speed and bandwidth become less of a problem, developers can begin making improvements in how well software works. They in turn will demand continued improvement of tools and other resources.

There has never been a better time to move forward. As long as these shortcomings remain, there is a tremendous opportunity to compete through improving the quality of products and services. Companies who demonstrate their confidence in the midst of the chaos can really shine and grow. But it's about more than just profits. It's about meeting exciting challenges and building integrity, both in how we conduct our business, and in what we create. And it's about smiling, because in the long run these things really do matter. □

Seeing the Whole Picture

Gordon Peery, Editor



In A.D. 1296, the foundation stone was laid for a new cathedral in Florence, Italy. The builders and the financiers (wealthy wool merchants) had a vision for what they wanted, which included a dome of greater size than had ever been constructed. The story is presented in marvelous detail by Ross King in his book, *Brunelleschi's Dome* (Penguin Books), and will be enjoyed by anyone interested in art, architecture, engineering, or history.

Constructing the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore would take 150 years. Progress was routinely interrupted by wars, and by the Black Death, which at one point claimed 80 percent of the residents of the city. What was remarkable, though, was not the time it took, but this fact: "Even the original planners of the dome had been unable to advise how their project might be completed: they merely expressed a touching faith that at some point in the future God might provide a solution."

In 1418, it finally became necessary to provide a workable design for the dome. The town fathers arranged for a competition to solve what seemed like an impossible situation. The winner was one Filippo Brunelleschi, who was not a carpenter or a mason, but a goldsmith and a clockmaker. His experience in those professions gave him a unique perspective on the challenges, and the result not only allowed the cathedral to be built — it revolutionized architecture.

Zip to the present: to the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur, where three mathematicians have apparently solved the age-old problem of how to prove that a number is

prime. The importance and complexity of this problem was effectively addressed in the July issue of *Dr. Dobbs' Journal* (see "Prime Numbers"), published just a few weeks prior to the actual solution emerging in India.

Assuming that the new theory holds water, we can look for a significant impact, particularly in the area of encryption. Those working in the field have been given revolutionary insights, just as Brunelleschi's insights opened the door to Renaissance architecture.

With marketing, we are subject to no such laws. Of course, we follow certain trends and guidelines so that results fall within predictable patterns, but at the end of the day we can really do whatever we want. Those who are aggressive innovators either become heroes or unemployed.

In planning media campaigns, we are still slicing and dicing everything up into separate categories for print, online, face-to-face, direct mail, direct e-mail, and so on. Is this still the best way to be doing things? I ask the question seriously, and without holding my own answer. What has worked for you, and what hasn't? How can we at CMP do a better job of helping you sell your products and services?

The construction of Santa Maria del Fiore involved the skilled labor of woodcutters, carpenters, stone cutters, masons, and manual laborers. The project may have been started on faith, but it was brought to successful completion by the vision of someone who understood how all the pieces needed to fit together, and who did not allow his imagination to be limited by tradition. The magnificent dome, finished in 1446, still dominates the Florentine skyline. ■

Simplicity



Gordon Peery, Editor

My friend Paul, an engineer, was working on a project several years ago for Renault, the French car manufacturer. The work involved replacing the traditional method for sounding the horn, which was essentially a matter of a circuit being completed when the horn mechanism was pressed. There was nothing really wrong with that system, but the managers at Renault thought new technology should be exploited, so my friend put together some embedded code and designed new hardware that allowed a computerized signal to activate the horn sound. This of course made the entire mechanism a lot more complicated and costly. In Paul's defense, he thought it was a stupid idea, but the money was there, and somebody was going to do it.

Attraction to complexity can be, if not fatal, at least risky. One of the characteristics of computer programming is that it appeals to people who appreciate complex challenges. This does not necessarily mean that they will deliberately write more complex code, but it certainly facilitates that possibility. On the other hand, experienced developers also appreciate the elegance of code that is clean and efficient.

Certainly the long-term trend has been towards more standardization, the use of better tools, and better understanding and implementation of the entire development process. It is somewhat remarkable that in spite of all the progress that has been made, software is still so inadequate. In a study commissioned by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), conducted by the Research

Triangle Institute, the cost of buggy software nationally is estimated at \$59.6 billion annually. More than half the costs are borne by users, with the remainder by software developers and vendors. What is most disturbing is that the study apparently determined that although not all errors can be removed, more than a third of the cost, an estimated \$22.2 billion, could be eliminated through improvements in the process. This suggests that despite any foreseeable improvements, inferior software will continue to suck almost \$35 billion out of the economy with users, vendors, and developers bearing not only the monetary cost, but the frustration as well.

I'm a little more optimistic. The national and global community of software developers includes some of the greatest and most creative minds on the planet. They are passionate about technology, but more important, they are passionate about progress. Just think, it was not very long ago that there were no ATM machines, no pay-at-the-pump gas stations, no opportunities for the average person to do research and shopping online, and a host of other things that work pretty flawlessly most of the time. With a nearly \$60 billion carrot out there, the community will respond. The problems might be very complex, but the solutions may well hold their virtue in simplicity. ■

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Resource:

For more information about the RTI study, go to http://www.nist.gov/public_affairs/update/upd20020624.htm#Economics

True Colors



Gordon Peery, Editor

The editorial desk for *Developer Market News* is in New Hampshire, where the trees are now at the peak of autumn color. The view out the window is considerably more enticing than the computer monitor, forcing a little more discipline to get the day's work done.

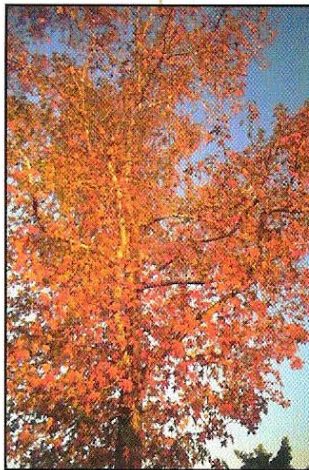
The reds, yellows, purples, and oranges have been present during the spring and summer, but they were concealed by the green of chlorophyll, and now it is the decline of green, brought on by the halt in photosynthesis, that allows this spectacular collage to emerge.

The cycles of the economy are, unfortunately, much less predictable. But as the green stuff evaporates from the market, what remains are, in a sense, true colors. It is a good time to look around and take stock. We can learn a lot about what competitors are made of, what their priorities are, and we can see perhaps a little more clearly what our own enterprises are all about. One of the things the colors show us is the diversity of the forest, and indeed it is the same in the market. This diversity is why the market is dynamic. We thrive on the excitement of the challenges this presents.

We saw what might be considered the "annuals" in the landscape — there

are always a few, but dot-com fever gave us a bumper crop over the last year or two. Then there are those companies who were more or less faking the whole process of photosynthesis. Their time of reckoning has come also.

That leaves companies who, for the most part, know how to do business. Products and services are constantly evolving, and part of a strong marketing message should be to convey not only the quality of products, but their adaptability as well.



At CMP we take evolution very seriously. Our publications compete by evolving their design to be more accessible to readers and more compelling for advertisers. New editorial features increase our coverage of new aspects of technology. We pride ourselves on our portfolio of software development magazines, Web sites, and of course the Software

Development Conference and Exhibition, now in its fifteenth year. Our communications through *Developer Market News* allow us to convey ideas and practical advice on how marketing to software developers can be better understood and more effectively executed. Please write to us, let us know how we're doing, and share your thoughts and ideas. ■

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The Creative Future



Gordon Peery, Editor

I think I can safely say that the movies I've seen in the last year would include my all-time best and worst movies. I can't say, however, that in my forty or more years of watching movies there has been any significant overall improvement. In spite of huge technical innovations, there are still a lot of bad movies, several okay movies, and a few good ones.

Ditto for music. In the history of recorded music there have been those who pushed the envelope, a sampling of whom would include Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Elvis, the Beatles, Dave Matthews, Bela Fleck, Peter Gabriel, Wendy Carlos, and Tupac Shakur. And of course the technology for recording has achieved incredible advancement. Still, the amount of non-stellar and quite bad music clutters the market. Even superstars like Michael Jackson discover that if they don't create good music, people are not going to buy it.

In this issue of *Developer Market News*, industry veteran Jim Sherburne begins a three-part article on the software development process — why it has evolved in a way that creates so much bug-ridden software, and what needs to be done to change this. While Jim's conclusion (which we haven't read yet) will no doubt recommend some specific changes in the way software is developed, it's a safe bet that developers will continue to produce software that "needs improvement" for as long as software exists.

The reasons have less to do with human fallibility than human creativity. Like film making and music, there

is a creative component to software development, and while creativity requires a certain amount of structure, it also rebels against it.

I present this as good news. Movies and music may not have "improved" (although they have evolved), but huge industries have grown up around them. The fact that Michael Jackson can spend millions in the studio may not ensure the quality of his product, but it provides good revenue for the studio owners, engineers, musicians, and so forth. And the market tolerance for the price of CD's provides great business opportunities for distributors and retailers.

As publishers of some of the most important technical magazines in the software development industry, we are dedicated to solving problems. At the same time we have a vested interest that more problems will be there to solve five years, ten years, and fifty years from now. We could, of course, become a society of automatons, for whom function will reign over form. But probably not. As long as the creative process is necessary for the satisfaction of our evolutionary passion, we will need to nurture this component of the human character.

Marketing, of course, is also a creative process, and one that indeed harnesses the tools of film and music, as well as creative language and graphics. We hope that in the pages of *Developer Market News* you'll find a resource not only for pragmatic improvements to your marketing efforts, but creative ones as well. ■

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