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Senior Developer,
Adooda

Adooda Enlists Zend Framework to Quickly Develop Free Online Classifieds

Customer:	Adooda
Geography:	Brighton, UK
Industry:	Online Classifieds
Challenges:	Getting to market quickly
Solution:	Zend Framework and PHP 5

Background

In 2004, Michael Tuckwell owned and ran a retail business. Frustrated by the high cost and ineffectiveness of conventional advertising, he created Adooda, an online classified site. As Tuckwell explains, "Fees were always increasing and it was never clear at the outset how many there were or how much they cost. Listing fees, final sale fees and many others really added up." His vision was also to offer a free online business contact directory as an alternative to the Yellow Pages.

The idea actually took form in late 2006, and launched in 2007, running on two Red Hat servers with MySQL. They also use AJAX in a limited capacity in their address management and their classifieds. Aside from Tuckwell, there are three developers and one co-director. Consultants are used on an as required basis.

The Challenge

Adooda was a small company and needed to get to market fast which meant they would require a solution with:

- The shortest possible lead time
- A base to build on
- The ability to integrate other web services

Adooda's entry into the competitive marketplace of online classified ad sites meant that they had to deliver new content rapidly and to integrate with many other partner sites. Zend Framework on PHP 5 has given them that competitive advantage.

The Solution: Zend Framework, Zend Studio, and PHP 5

The company looked at a number of rapid application frameworks to build on quickly, including Ruby on Rails and Java. Java was quickly dismissed because development time would take too long. Ruby is a fine language, but Adooda didn't want to learn another syntax because PHP's C-like syntax, ease-of-use, and the object-oriented features available in PHP 5 were all good reasons to use PHP.

Having a background in PHP and finding developers to build with it is another important factor that allows Adooda to ramp up their team size quickly and as needed. As Senior Developer Colin Seaman sums it up, "Time to market was a big influence on the choice, as was the number of different helper functions available in Zend Framework."

The fit for PHP and Zend with Adooda's needs was nearly total. "There was no need to rewrite it ourselves," says Seaman. "We're using 12-15 of the components," he added, "and that means there's not too much that we're *not* using at the moment."

Here are some of the Zend Framework features & services that Adooda has found to be the most indispensable so far:

- **MVC**

"We started with the Model-View-Controller components and were very impressed from the outset when we were able to use the MVC view helpers/tokens to replace the code we had previously created in another tool."

- **XML Integration**

"We did data integration from a third party source using XML and web service integration for the classified section. We used 5-6 lines of Zend Framework code for what would have been a few files worth of raw PHP just to get the same effect. So we were very pleased with that. And you can obviously do that within an hour quite easily, with testing as well."

- **Templates**

"We can easily set up our own templates and just hand them off to our designer, which means our designer doesn't specifically need to know the ins and outs of Zend Framework, and they can get on with what they do best, which is designing the site."

- **Web services**

"We also have a partnership with JaJah, a VOIP company, and we have integrated their technology into our site. Rather than go through your PC, Jajah calls you back on your land line and then completes the call. Our members can sign up and communicate with other Jajah members from the Adooda site. All of this has been seamlessly integrated into our web services using XML-RPC."

- **Zend Cache**

"By using Zend Cache we were able to reduce processor usage. In fact, caching our queries made the site much quicker and gave our users the responsiveness we were looking for."

- **Locale**

"By using Zend's locale facilities, all of our content is poised and ready for translation in the future – a huge benefit when we go international. It was also easy to adapt for testing."

Looking Forward

Adooda is experiencing strong growth in their traffic already. Running two servers now with plans to add many more in the future, Adooda is confident that they are ready for the tsunami of users that will be increasingly using their site.

Zend Studio is used by all members of their development teams. Just the code completion feature alone is "worth the cost of purchase," says Seaman, "it makes the reference manual for PHP and Zend Framework unnecessary most of the time, we just keep adding the functionality our business needs, without having to leave the Zend Studio environment."

Seaman believes in the future that open source will be stronger than commercial languages. "You get a larger mix of people developing for fun, and not for profit." Seaman also sees Zend as being a major key player in PHP development and promotion. "No other company that I know offers the products and support that Zend has to offer."

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