Automate Social Media

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Technologies used

1 HTTP POST
2 The site's API
3 Cron to set-and-forget

HTTP is the web protocol. Most of the time, a web browser issues GET requests to retrieve information. You can tell this by the presence of "?" followed by key-value pairs. For example, I received a link to `https://app.talentpair.com/?utm_campaign=notif` on email today. The utm_campaign=notif is a sign that the browser will be issuing a GET request.

However, there is a different type of request that we will use to automate posts to social media today – the POST request. This sends the parameters as the body of the request. A sample post body is
{"addr": "Number 10 Downing Street, London, UK"} The body can be anything and the length is unlimited, whereas with the get parameters, the length of the URL is more limited.

This is the easiest way for a developer to interact with a site.
I've set up a simple API to illustrate this in the next slide.

I use my laptop mainly on battery. And, as we are very aware, batteries die. So, I've set up an API to tell me how much percentage this laptop has left. To access this, just type `curl http://[myhost]/version` into your shell and you will be rewarded with `{"battery":"96%","timeRemaining":"20:00"}`, where the fields "battery" and "timeRemaining" are the ones that are useful to us, so these are the only ones I'm embedding here.

Most social media sites have similar APIs to mine, allowing users to interact with them from their own programs. For example, TweetDeck was a popular Twitter client leveraging the X platform.

No API? No problem!

If, on the off-chance there is a site that doesn't provide an API, we can create our own API to use it. There is a service published by Diffbot, which makes webpages easier to digest using automated tools. If this is not enough, we can leverage methods, such as Selenium.

Diffbot

Diffbot is one service which makes webpages easier to digest using automated tools.

Selenium

Selenium takes the place of me to drive my browser. So, anything I can imagine, can be manifested.

Last step to automation

The last step to automation is set and forget. I don't know about you, but, compared to a computer, my memory is…lacking. As I'm an old-school Unixhead, I use cron to automate as much as I can. For example, I have a weekly job to renew this server's SSL certificate.

Questions, Comments, Concerns?

Hit me up on Slack – @Hasan Diwan – or on email – hasandiwan@gmail.com. Thank you for your kind attention. Oh, and should you need any site automated, let me know.