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Cool Tech

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Welcome to another edition of Cool Tech. In this edition I talk more about Content Management Systems, running a small business, XAMPP, Yahoo!Pipes and displaying YouTube videos, Flickr Images and Amazon.Com books on your Web site.

This edition is loaded with links that I think you'll find interesting. In the small business section I explore outsourcing your life. That's right. We're going to a whole new level with outsourcing.

Content Management Systems (CMSs)
Last time we looked at two popular Content Management Systems (CMSs): Wordpress and Joomla. If you're interested in setting up a professional Web site then these two choices are definitely the way to go.

Both Wordpress and Joomla have programs that extend the capability of the base program. For example, you can add a forum and photo gallery to Joomla if you wish. Wordpress has hundreds of plug-ins that do all kinds of things such as automatically submitting content to Google or displaying Youtube videos.

I wrote my own simple PHP program to display Youtube videos in Wordpress. Check out this page: *http://www.1913intel.com/videos*. This runs my YouTube play list. Get the code for this program at end of this article.

There are quite a few open-source CMSs available today. You can demo many of them at this Web site:

http://www.opensourcecms.com/

Two other CMSs worth taking a look at are Drupal and XOOPs. Installation of both packages is fairly easy.

How to install Drupal (video): *http://www. volkanrivera.com/eng/?p=13*

How to install XOOPS: *http://www.xoops.org/ misc/docs/Xoops-for-Dummies/install.htm*

All of these packages allow you to easily build database-driven Web sites with Web pages created dynamically on the fly. Make sure to stick with PHP and MySQL initially, because they're easier to set up than PERL programs.

Top 10 mistakes when selecting a CMS:

http://www.opensourcecms.com/index. php?option=com_content&task=view&id=229 1&Itemid=1

Running a Small Business
Let's say that you've decided to start a small actuarial consulting firm. You could set up a professional looking Web site using either Wordpress or Joomla. Typically, you can find a host that will install these packages for free.

If you need graphic design or other types of Web site work, then I suggest you check out www.elance.com. At Elance, people from around the world can bid on your job. A programmer in India can probably do the job for much less than a local programmer. I've used Elance in the past, and it worked well for me.

Don't stop at just outsourcing your Web site work. What about outsourcing your life?

http://finance.yahoo.com/family-home/arti- cle/103092/Outsourcing-Your-Life

Check out this Business Week article titled, "Mom-and-Pop Multinationals." It shows how an African-American couple outsourced many tasks for several of their businesses.

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/08_28/b4092077027296.htm

I'm in the process of hiring *http://www.globetask.com/* as my Virtual Assistant. I run a Web site on international conflict and need an assistant to help with various tasks such as tracking down YouTube videos and developing a strategy to attract advertisers to my Web site. The pay is $10/hour. I'll let you know how it works out.

Information about outsourcing comes from the book, "The 4-Hour Workweek." The Web site for this is *http://www.fourhourworkweek.com.* Why do the work yourself when someone in India can do it for much less? Also, they'll do it while you sleep. When you wake up in the morning your tasks are done. Your work is getting done 24 hours a day!

Instead of buying "The 4-Hour Workweek," try locating it at your local library. I live in the Seattle area, and when I want a book or audio CD I go online to track it down (*http://www.kcls.org*). I order it online and have it delivered to the local library near where I work. I get an e-mail notifying me when it has arrived. I then go to the local library to pick it up and spend only a couple of minutes in the actual library building.

You're going to need sales in your new job as an actuarial consultant. I was absolutely blown away at the sales concepts described at www.highprobsell.com. Get ready to have your sales world turned upside down using High

Probability Selling concepts. High Probability Selling is a no-nonsense approach that focuses on efficiently finding people that already want to buy what you have to sell. You quickly learn to disqualify people that aren't ready to buy now. Also, you will learn how to stay in touch with people so that when they're ready to buy they'll think of you.

XAMPP

In the last edition of Cool Tech, I left off with a reference to XAMPP. XAMPP is a series of programs that will allow you to easily set up a Web server on your PC. Additionally, it comes with PHP, Perl, MySQL and a whole lot more. So let's get it running on your PC.

Go here to find the right version for you:

http://www.apachefriends.org/en/xampp.html

I like to use the zip version. After downloading the package, unzip it to c:\xampp. Read the readme_en.txt file. Go to the DOS command

prompt and launch the setup_xampp.bat file. That's it. There is no messing around with the registry.

Go to the DOS command prompt and run apache_start.bat. Do not close this window or you will shut down the Apache server.

Launch a Web browser such as Internet Explorer or Firefox. Type in http://localhost

You should see the following statement:

Congratulations:
You have successfully installed XAMPP on this system!

> ### In the small business section I explore outsourcing your life. That's right. We're going to a whole new level with outsourcing.

Check the status. Everything should be active except MySQL and FTP programs.

Let's check out PHP. Write the following program in a text editor. Call it hw.php. Put it in the htdocs subdirectory.

```
<?PHP
   Echo "Hello World";
?>
```

Type this in browser address line: *http://localhost/hw.php*

If you have a problem, go back to the XAMPP site and snoop around for answers. Another option is to search the Web for answers. I experienced no problems on my Windows XP operating system. I have also installed this package on the Linux operating system (Redhat 8) with no problems.

Let's check out Perl. Call the following program hw.cgi. Put it in the htdocs subdirectory.

```
#!"C:\xampp\perl\bin\perl.exe"

print "Content-type: text/html\n\n";
print "<H1>Hello World</H1>\n";
```

Type this in browser address line: *http://localhost/hw.cgi*

Hopefully it worked. If not, you're on your own.

Check out these Web sites if you want some cool open-source programs to run:

http://www.hotscripts.com
http://www.sourceforge.net
http://www.freshmeat.net

When you're done playing around with the server you can close it by shutting down the DOS window.

Using Yahoo!Pipes
Most of you have heard about RSS feeds. Many of you use RSS feeds. Now there's a way to gather RSS feeds, remove duplicates, filter them, sort them and more. Check out *http://pipes.yahoo.com.*

I run a Web site located at *http://pipes.1913intel.com*. This is a fully automated system. News from several RSS feeds originating from Google News goes into my Pipes program. Once the RSS feeds are sliced and diced, the end result automatically feeds into my Wordpress Web site at *http://pipes.1913intel.com*. This allows me to automatically keep up with events in Russia, China, Iran and Israel. Check out this link:

http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/pipe.info?_id=3EzWPqy_2xG0Bc9c00qv4w

This Pipes program points to YouTube videos based on the article titles located on my front page at *http://www.1913intel.com*. Click on

the individual links to see the YouTube video: *http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/pipe.info?_id= a36132c04d387dc6ee953f305be74831*

How did I get my Pipes programs running? I borrowed some code from other people and modified it. You can snoop through programs written by other people and make a copy for yourself.

Displaying YouTube Videos, Flickr Pictures and Amazon.Com Books

The concept for the displaying YouTube videos, Flickr pictures and Amazon.Com books is the same in a PHP program:

1. Read an RSS file: any read file function works here.
2. Parse the RSS file into an array: simplexml_load_string($file)
3. Loop through the array: foreach()

Looping through the array is the hard part, because you need to know the array elements, which change for each application. I searched Google for YouTube and simplexml to find the RSS/XML elements that I needed to display YouTube pictures. Also, looking at the RSS feed elements directly helps. The simplexml_load_string() function is already built into PHP.

The Amazon.Com program can be conceptually upgraded (ramped up) to replicate most of Amazon.Com content. I know this because I tried to do it a few years ago using the browse node codes from *http://www.browsenodes. com*. I also wrote a PHP program to capture my own node codes using Regular Expressions (RegEx). That was before Google kicked me out of their search engine results.

Here are the programs and source code for displaying books, videos and pictures:

Books: *http://www.1913intel.com/demo/ amazon-xml.php*

Get the code here: *http://www.1913intel. com/demo/amazon-xml.txt*

Just change the txt extension to php in order to run the program. This program returns two random books from a list.

Videos: *http://www.1913intel.com/demo/videos.php?tags=Paris+Tourism*. Change the tags to anything you wish.

Get the source code here: *http://www. 1913intel.com/demo/videos.txt*

Pictures: *http://www.1913intel.com/demo/ flickr.php?tags=Russia,River*

This program displays thumbnails so that there are no copyright problems. One photographer complained to me about displaying thumbnails of his photographs. He wanted to charge me $300 per thumbnail. I modified the program to exclude his photos.

I wanted to put a sticker on his forehead that says, "Logic Does Not Apply Here!" Is it a good idea to add photos to Flickr knowing that all of your material is freely available via the Flickr API? Perhaps a more secure location might be in order if you're going to panic over thumbnails? Anyway, the courts have already made clear that displaying thumbnails is NOT a copyright violation. We can thank Google for getting that decision in court.

Get the source code here: *http://www. 1913intel.com/demo/flickr.txt*

If you have any cool ideas or links for Cool Tech then shoot me an e-mail at *matt_ wilson@farmersinsurance.com.*

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