

How I got Started in ColdFusion

Posted At : August 1, 2011 9:45 AM | Posted By : Steve

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After having announced ["How I got Started in ColdFusion" day](#), I feel obligated to write mine.

In 1999 I was working for a telephone company. For the job I was doing (one sure to have been largely automated away by now), we often had to call other local telephone companies (this was when there was a big distinction between local companies like BellSouth and long-distance companies like AT&T). We had a code on our screen (say "SWB"), which indicated a company. Then we would call the number for that company.

This worked fine for the larger companies, but it turns out that there are tons of local companies. So, the real-world process for those was this. You would see a code on your screen (say "3RC"). Then you would ask the person in the cubicle across from you what "3RC" stood for. If they didn't know, you would walk around your floor asking the more experience people what it stood for. Finally, someone would say "That is Three Rivers Communications". At which point, you would ask for the number for "Three Rivers Communications" (this wouldn't necessarily be something you could easily search the internet for at the time). This often led to another round of walking around the floor.

I had recently finished reading "ASP for Dummies" based on the suggestion of some techy friends who thought my degree in Philosophy with a minor in religion might not be that great on the job market (who knew?). So, I told my boss that I thought we should have an intranet app where people could put in the code and get back a phone number and that it should be set up so that people could update that information as needed.

This led to a meeting with someone at his boss's level, who asked me if I knew how to do that. I said "No, but I think I can figure it out". Based on that confident assurance, he called a server administrator to give me access to the servers.

At this point, I feel well on my way to being an ASP programmer. Good news for me, I think. ASP seems easy enough and VBScript is a lot like VBA, with which I was pretty familiar (not like that crazy JavaScript stuff with those scary-looking curly braces). Obviously, that was not to be.

The server administrator called me and told me that he had given me access to program an application in ColdFusion. I meekly protested something about my "ASP for Dummies" book and said "What is ColdFusion?" (only vaguely remembering having seen some "Powered by ColdFusion" icons on web sites). He told me it was more secure and easier to learn than ASP and said there was some book by QUE publishing that most people used (3.1 version of CFWACK). So, I found the book.

About a month later I had the application up and running. It was still being used heavily when I left the company three years later. Though, it being a big pile of crap from a coding standpoint, it likely didn't survive my departure by very long.

The success of that application convinced the company to send me to "Fast Track to ColdFusion". My next app was a calendar app for scheduled late days that even the lady across the cubicle who couldn't figure out copy-and-paste found easy to use.

After those two applications, it was just more of the same (though I did end up having to do a tiny bit of ASP while I was there), eventually leading to a full time ColdFusion job in Denver and now to working for myself (for more than 9 years).

So, that's my story. I'm excited to read others.