Assembly

Jeff Browning, 2007-10-04

If you spend much time with kids, you learn that assembling things - trains, toys, etc. - is part of the program. You also learn that kids themselves really like assembling things. Train cars switching places in-line behind the locomotive. Tracks sections in various configurations. Of course all of this is done to get the desired result (which can change daily or even hourly!)

Some of the most interesting kids don't stop with the order of the cars or train track. Some actually take the cars apart, reassemble them in new ways (sometimes missing certain parts), and arrive at completely new and cool variants of the original.

Fast forward a few years and it's easy to see why "pimping a ride" via extensive mods and customization is such a major trend among adults (big kids). Assembling new variations on a theme, for either expression or purpose is a powerful and exciting process with amazing results.

The ability to assemble pieces flexibly is to me what feeds ingenuity and makes it possible to achieve great things. If locked into a fixed environment, it's hard to assemble and let the mind run to it's most creative (and dare I say "productive"?!) result. For example, have you ever seen a wizardized HTML editor or web development tool that can completely wizardize building a website that solves any unique need? It's not only impossible - you would likely chuckle at anyone suggesting it. Even simpler, I can't imagine how MS-Excel would work if it only had a wizard. In fact, other than charting, it's actually the un-wizard (and BTW - statiscally the Microsoft product featuring the highest customer satisfaction rating for years...)

Going back to kids (or cars... or bicyles... or music... or virtually anything engaging or innovative), the toys that stop getting used are the ones with the least flexibility to be used in new and interesting ways. Alternatively, toys (or cars... or bicyles... or music... or virtually anything engaging or innovative) that afford infinite possibilities to assemble new combinations are the most engaging and frankly, most interesting. (heck - some even keep parents engaged for hours...)

Everytime I launch the iRule Editor, I kind of smile (thanks Joe!). To have the ability to quickly build highly useful iRules yet be able to tweak them and tune them to infinite degrees, it's the perfect technology and tool for solving real problems. I can use Codeshare to find building blocks that both accelerate the process and help me learn simultaneously.

My creativity is my only limitation. And, that's pretty cool.

I think that's an important part of why we are seeing so many cool things going on amongst the DevCentral community. You (the members) are finding new ways daily to assemble new combinations or collections of technology to solve things that in some cases have not been able to be solved before.