Ruby on Rails. Rapid Development. Agile Framework.

written by Manoj Khanna | August 8, 2006

I've been keeping myself busy (hence, no posts in past three weeks) with RoR development on a small project which I've taken along with my three person team. Its been fun so far; and working with Ruby on Rails (RoR) is an added bonus. The rapid development approach of RoR really drives the agility through the project. It reminds me of words like agile, rapid, RAD, scrum, etc. Its fantastic. But there is a learning curve especially when you aren't so familiar with the underlying scripting language such as 'Ruby'.

Now the more I get into the world of RoR, I see more and more of Web 2.0 traits. AJAX (the underlying structure of AJAX has always been there but recently renamed), the CSS mantra, the MVC approach; it almost seems nothing new is invented here with these terms and references to Web 2.0 world. But the basic attitude towards the development of web apps surely has taken a new turn. JSP, XML, XSLT, Swing, etc. seem to be out of the window; but not quite yet. And, RoR is still in kindergarten; but growing rapidly in popularity. And we see a lot of new development and apps growing in this area. And it seems that everyone's working on RoR and Ruby; but not everyone.

I'd like to talk more about my experiences on RoR but I'm not quite done yet and my small application has still ways to go. But surely I'd like to talk about it in weeks/months to come. So for now, I'll leave at that RoR certainly has a rapid development model and with a very agile framework; which means a lot in today's web app development world.

Technorati Tags: Ruby on Rails, RoR, Project Management, AJAX, Agile, Rapid, Rapid Development, Scrum

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Emails. Tasks. Timeline.

written by Manoj Khanna | August 8, 2006

I started this post about two weeks ago but never got to a point where I can actually sit down and finish it. So I decided to do this today. I am altering my style of writing to be more focused on my immediate subject matters and what I have at hand at the moment. I think that was my approach in the begining but somehow it got lost and I got into this RDF and RSS things and collecting news and then reporting it. Well anyone can subscribe to the news feeds and get to it. And this reminds me of MT. I still like Moveable Type (MT) when it started and had a clean code to download and what a clear out of the box implementation. WordPress does the same now. And its much neater and presentable. And ajaxy! One of the reasons why I moved my new blog on my book to WordPress.com was simple and straight cause I like simple and straight approach. WordPress does that, and it has most of the things which Blogger still lags/lacks into (I'm not complaining!). But I'm happy with both. And I really don't want to take the pain out of my already 20hrs workday to move more stuff from one place to the other. Enough ranting!

One thing I've been observing over the past couple of weeks

is to understand the reality of how well communication of emails happen. My take so far on it is that it never happens very well actually. Most of the times they are interpreted wrong! With wrong tones and wrong attitudes. I prefer picking up the phone and talking to someone straight but sometimes people don’t like that and if you just walk upto them to talk or clarify well then it becomes more defensive and the other person starts thinking – ‘why didn’t he send out an email in the first place’ – sort of invading privacy or a private territory. Well all things said and done, at the end of the day my focus is to look into my immediate tasks at hand and their timelines. With emails pouring in most tasks get buried under pile of emails sent and recieved everyday. And sometimes this can happen even at the end of the same day! Now unless you are an Outlook champion (which I believe except the tech support guy nobody is) and know really-really well how to run the rules and organize all of your emails then chances are pretty good for you track your own stuff but if you are not that then you don’t have to be in limbo and you should be able to manage those tasks and timelines al by yourself by using other means. Forgetting a task and timeline are a serious blow in anyone’s face in a work environment. And especially for any project manager this is not a pretty situation to be in. And this is why I created my own solution to this problem. I started using multitracking mechanism to keep on top of all my tasks and timelines which come through emails directly or other requests visa emails and are formal and informal types both. And here’s what I do and use:

(a) FLAGS: Flagging is one of my favorite tool – as my emails reside on the server its easier for me to track them via flagging and it reminds me at the time when I need it and when should I set it to and what action should I specify.

(b) USING WHITE-BOARDS: The other favorite tool is my almost wall size white board. On top of that I use multi-colored pens, hmmm… For me each pen has a priority and a code. With each pen having a significance of its own helps me track which one is due when, what and where. And most of all it the white-

board sits right in front of my face all the time!
(c) TO-DO-LISTS: Making a to-do-list at the begining of the day usually helps me a lot. And these days instead of making it everyday I use online tools to-do-lists and make them whenever I get a chance and then track and delete when I start implementing that list. In this category lately I've started using TadaList, before that I used RememberTheMilk (nice name and idea!).

So even after going through so many steps if I miss at any one of my tasks or timelines then its purely my fault and fault of not completely following my 'remind-me' system. And possibly I got too lazy or too careless to pay attention to them or didn't have the motivatioin to complete them.

In a nutshell on emails; 'Emails' are instant ways to communicate but at the same time they are very fragile. A communication that needs to be handled with utmost care and in a very gentle manner. Cause if you don't then you should be ready with a contigency plan. And voila! I found this post on Writing Sensible Email Messages. Looks like I'm not alone thinking this, finally. Happy emailing!

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Droppie Water

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My book. Open Source Project Management.

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I've decided to create a separate blog for my book, Open Source Project Management, as the title suggests, the book is on open source and the project management practice in the open source world. Through this blog I want to focus on the subject of this book and little away from this blog. Although the subjects covered here are broader in open source world and include the business perspectives and does include project management per se but I still wanted to keep project management related thoughts on my book in a separate space which I strongly feel should be there. And this way I can get

one-on-one response on my book. Although you are most welcome on this blog and read what else I have to say in other areas apart from the book's subject.

I invite active reader participation through comments on OSPM blog in shaping my book and its content flow. Since the book is on open source a somewhat open source approach in creating this book would not be a bad idea! I'll try to post some excerpts or share the ideas which I feel should be included in the book on this blog. Also, I plan on publishing the milestones so as to let the readers know where the book is in the process right now, and whether they can get an early peek at the book. I am still thinking at this stage on what all can be done with OSPM blog and I've so many ideas running through my head right now. Well I'll guess I'll bring them up as they come to me. So OSPM blog will be a work in progress all the way.

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Ruby on Rails, AJAX & Web 2.0

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I got a chance to attend my first ever SF Ruby Meetup. I was amazed by the overwhelming response and the turn out of the people attending this meetup. And the energy and

enthusiasm which everyone brought with them was quite interesting to watch. Thanks to Bosco, the organizer of The San Francisco Ruby Meetup Group, for putting all this together. You can check out the highlights of the meeting here (Thanks Todd!).

In a nut shell it was very obvious with people, announcing that they are looking for Ruby/Ruby on Rails developers, that there is an increasing demand for Ruby & Ruby on Rails developers already. I'm not surprised with the success of Ruby, cause whatever has been happening with Java and J2EE isn't something enlightening to look into. The tangent where Java development has gone can be explained into other alternatives which have been now around for sometime in past couple of years. But Java is still strong. But Ruby on Rails (RoR) is becoming popular. The ease and flexibility of RoR is something which is of a greater fascination then to be writing the entire piece of code yourself from scratch. Today's development demands agility, pre-built components and modules, with plug-play fascination which gets the developer and the development really far. The unit tests functionality in RoR adds another set of value for the development time and cutting short that extra time.

The another buzzword which was getting its mention again and again was AJAX! And the very Web 2.0 appeal for websites! I also heard people talking about Laszlo, Flex, Ruby & Flash, and yes I did see Macs' all around with occasional glimpse of PCs, and yes, I found one guy wearing 'dojo' t-shirt! I was also amazed to hear startups and their new ventures in RoR, especially, two fresh Berkeley grads with their startup idea looking for RoR developers (!), and then a gaming startup which is already funded! Is the 90's back now with a new name of 'Ruby' as oppose to Java! Don't think so and none of us want that again. We'll see all that in next year or so with RoR and its development. But overall it was a great experience for me and a lot of take home learning, of-course!

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