



TEXT SUPPORT

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In conversation with
Tom Green

BUILDING DYNAMIC WEB SITES
WITH MACROMEDIA STUDIO MX

RATING: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TOM GREEN IS A WRITER, lecturer, seminar leader and educator with a passion for teaching the process of new media and interactive media development. He created the process-based approach to teaching interactive Media used at Humber College in Toronto.

You call the seven products in Macromedia's Studio MX tools. What are the key raw materials needed to come up with a cutting-edge, user-friendly Web site?

The raw material is imagination and creativity. The tools simply make it easier to pull the idea out of your brain and put it on the computer screen. When you stop aligning yourself around software and regard it as a "tool" you actually become more efficient. I can create a three-state

button — up, over and down — in about five minutes in Fireworks, and have it fully functional in Flash about one minute later. That same workflow in Photoshop takes 15 minutes.

Having said that, if there is a feature of Photoshop that is unavailable to me in Fireworks, then the tool choice is obvious.

What are the biggest weaknesses you see on Web sites today?

One word: Cool. These sites are traditionally developed, using a client's budget, to announce to their peers, "Aren't I clever?" Huge mistake.

E-commerce sites also tend to forget there is a real human involved in the process. I just hate clicking the buy button on one of these sites, only to be informed I made a mistake on one of the seven pages I just waded through.

There is a study floating around that claims almost 80 per cent of all shopping carts are abandoned at the check out. How this is regarded as being acceptable is beyond me. Do you think Wal-Mart would put up with 80 per cent of their

FAST

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Favourite author
Terry Goodkind

Favourite Web site
Macromedia and Community MX.

A good book ...
Doesn't insult my intelligence and engages me intellectually.

Guilty pleasure
Snickers bars

customers pushing a loaded cart to the cashier and then leaving the store?

How do you see video working with Web sites in the next few years? Are there links to Japan's use of video with cellphones and when will this be seen in Canada?

It is the next big thing on the Web. The Flash Player 7 is a media player and video is dead simple to add to a Web page if Flash is used instead of QuickTime, Windows Media Player or, god forbid, RealVideo.

Mobile is the next step in the evolution of video delivery through Web-based means. It is still in its infancy, but in Japan where DoCoMo has installed the Flash Player on practically every cellphone in the country, you see people on the subway browsing through their cellphone. There is hardly a portable computer to be found.

On the horizon as "next big thing on the Web" is e-learning. Companies and educators are just coming to the realization that it is more efficient to deliver courses and education through the Web than it is to put "bums in seats" or fly people to training sessions.

Can you give an illustration of a Web site that has been created and used to create product buzz in an indirect manner? Why did the Web site succeed at getting buzz?

Red Bull (www.redbullcopilot.com) puts you in the cockpit of an air race plane and is an amazing experience that tends to reinforce the brand rather than sell the drink.

Are Web sites the ideal way to reach a younger demographic and are more traditional corporations looking at the Web in a new way when it comes to marketing?

Absolutely. This demographic grew up wired and, in many respects, to them, if it isn't on the 'Net, it doesn't exist. These are my students. What I find fascinating is how they will drive the market. I was recently at an Educational Forum in San Francisco and the subject of wireless content and course delivery was raised. One attendee, from a prestigious university in the U.S. claimed it simply wasn't going to happen at his school. Rather than get into a debate with him I asked the 60 or so people in the room who had teenage children. All the hands went up. I then asked who hates paying the text messaging bill each month. All the hands went up. I then asked who sat down with their teenager and explained how to use text messaging on a cellphone. No hands were raised. The point is, if the tech is there, they will find it and they will use it.



INSIDER

Close encounters of the biometric kind

IN THIS LINE OF WORK, YOU HEAR A LOT ABOUT revolutionary technologies. You see a lot of demos. Analysts tell you about the profound impact. But you're rarely subject to their actual use.

So it was something of an eye-opening experience for your humble correspondent recently at (cue dramatic music) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration at Pearson International Airport.

A witness says it may have begun when I was filling out the paperwork. Going through the checklist of items I must not be transporting into the U.S. — firearms, explosives, live ranch animals, etc. — I was struck by an item that seemed incongruous: Snails. Not seafood. Not shellfish. Specifically snails.

"Damn. Guess I'll have to empty all them snails out of my pockets, huh?" I cracked to my travelling companion, who looked ashen.

"Don't. Even. Joke. About it," she hissed.

I can't imagine that, at a desk 50 yards and two doors away, the agent at Booth 13 (naturally) heard my univalve utterance. Nonetheless, when my

paperwork was returned, there was a large, red S scrawled across it in magic marker, and it was accompanied by a yellow plastic clipboard. I was ushered into a side room, where I surrendered my ID to a large, serious-looking, uniformed man at a counter and was told to "make myself comfortable" with no detectable irony.

The minutes passed like kidney stones. Eventually, I was summoned to the counter. "Take off your sunglasses, please." Flash. "Right index finger here." Scan. "Now the left index finger." It was over more quickly than bad sex. I was enshrined in some database in the bowels of U.S. bureaucracy with countless ne'er-do-wells and, apparently, randomly chosen victims.

As he handed over my paperwork, I asked the uniform why I'd been singled out for this treatment. Wasn't my passport in order? Was it because I wasn't born in this country?

He shrugged. "Maybe," he said. "Might have been something we heard. Or maybe, it was just random."



This, I shouted, is an arbitrary invasion of privacy that I will not countenance. Fortunately, I shouted this entirely in my head as I am aware that the first rule of international travel is Never Argue With A Border Guard. Violated, but graceful and unbowed, I collected my things and joined the general population, where my travelling companion was waiting with arched eyebrows and an I-told-you-so expression. "They didn't find the snails," I said in stage whisper.

PSST! Got an inside scoop? Email us at insider@itbusiness.ca