

Typical Charlie (Tips and Resources from a Veteran CFML Developer)

by Charlie Arehart



How to Increase Your 'Net' Worth

Share your knowledge and learn from others while expanding your network reach

I'm departing from tech tips to focus on how developers can contribute to and benefit from the CFML community, and especially on how this helps them gain work or recognition.

- ✦ **Join a user group:** User groups are a great way to learn from others and connect with local developers. You never know what might come of participating - job opportunities, consulting gigs, or chances to contribute to group efforts. It's worth traveling, if necessary. ColdFusion user groups are listed at <http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/usergroups/index.cfm>.
- ✦ **Contribute to mailing lists:** Most user groups have mailing lists where folks help each other solve problems. They often don't care if you're local, especially if you answer questions. This increases your visibility and demonstrates your abilities.
- ✦ **Writing an article:** You could write an article, whether for this magazine, the ColdFusion Developers Journal, Adobe.com, or another website. It's worthwhile even when unpaid. Don't know what to write about? A long response on a mailing list could become an article.
- ✦ **Speak at user groups and conferences:** Your article can become a presentation for a user group or conference. This may seem daunting, but most audiences are small and understanding. Start with your own user group, or consider presenting remotely. All Adobe groups have access to a free Acrobat Connect account, though not all use it. Also, the CF Meetup, <http://coldfusion.meetup.com/17/>, meets online. You can find upcoming conferences at www.cfconf.org.
- ✦ **Start a blog:** Your next step as a contributor is to blog. There are hundreds of ColdFusion blogs, but different writers reach different audiences. You'll grow yours. Blog entries become good topics for articles or talks. You can create a blog on your site easily using BlogCFC, BlogCFM, BlogFusion, or MachBlog, or non-CF tools like WordPress, TypePad and Movable Type. There are also hosted services like Blogger or Blog-city.com.
- ✦ **Start a podcast:** If you really have lots to say, start a podcast, which is a recording on some topic, posted on a website, with an RSS feed to notify listeners of new recordings. Podcasts are expected to recur, so be prepared to broadcast regularly. There are currently only a couple of ColdFusion podcasts, so there's room for more. Consider using Adobe Soundbooth, currently a free, open beta at labs.adobe.com.
- ✦ **Contribute to an open-source project:** Participate in an open-source project or create one of your own. You'll find many open-source ColdFusion projects at Brian Rinaldi's <http://remotesynthesis.com/cfopensourcelist/> or Ray Camden's <http://www.riaforge.org/>. You don't have to code to contribute. For instance, many projects need documentation.
- ✦ **Organize or assist a user group:** Consider helping organize a user group. You could start one for your in-house developer community if you don't want to create a bigger one. Adobe is very supportive of new groups. See the Adobe CF user group link above and the "Find a User Group" link on the right toolbar.
- ✦ **Join LinkedIn:** LinkedIn.com is a professional networking service that helps you showcase your services and abilities by making connections through people you know and the people they know, and so on. Think six degrees of separation. People often find and offer jobs and contracts there.

I'm sure I'm forgetting some useful example. If so, drop me a note at charlie@carehart.org.

Charlie Arehart is a longtime contributor to the ColdFusion community. A certified Advanced CF Developer and Instructor for CF 4-7, he is now an independent contractor and member of the Adobe Community Experts program. He also runs the Online ColdFusion Meetup with Ray Camden and is a frequent presenter at conferences and user groups worldwide.