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Using Blacklists to Fight Spam

By Wallace "Wally" McClure

I was fed up with all the spam we were getting here at SDI. I, personally, was getting approximately 150+ spam messages per day. That was just not acceptable.

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Revenue Share for Software Projects

By Stu Lustman

In my last article I mentioned how the business model in software development has similarities to the pharmaceutical industry. While that's true, it's only partially true. In fact, there are three common pricing models for software projects, and they are:

1. Fixed Fee Pricing (the project will cost \$X)
2. Fee Per Hour Pricing (the project will cost \$X/hr till completed)
3. Revenue Sharing Model Pricing (the project will cost X% of Revenue it helps generate for the business)

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The Good vs. the Great

By Luci Harrell

When it comes to embarking on a custom software development project, knowing the difference between good companies and GREAT companies can make all the difference in the world to your business. Not a developer myself, I've been able to form my own sort of *outside* take on the work that John Croft and Wally McClure do here at Scalable Development.

I think that many people get the notion that we're here to push some sort of concise solution on you. False. We can and DO create great custom solutions, but we do more than that. Software development is a process. It involves collecting info and meeting with the client to help insure what is talked about and intended are the same for all parties involved, and that those things *remain* the same (or change collectively) for the duration of the development process. The process involves an idea that fuels a design, which forges the beta version which forges the working version, which then requires testing and revisiting and revision. The development process is no small endeavor, and is (or should be) different for every project.

So what, then, makes us different? Our expertise. We don't just have experience, we have lots of qualified experience, and in several different platforms and languages. We also have experience training other developers, and writing handbooks and articles on the latest and greatest in the programming world. This keeps us at the forefront of new technologies, allowing us to create solutions for you that will outlast the competition's, saving your business money.

It is important to understand that not all companies have the actual capabilities to design and write an application that is optimized for a customer. That is to say, even many good development companies have no idea how to work with underlying databases, and that lack of experience can often lead to inefficient, poorly designed solutions for clients. Sure, you'll get a finished product, but to what efficiency will that product work?

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Revenue Share

We won't address fixed fee pricing here, as we believe it's a flawed pricing model and is a disincentive to performance and making deadlines. Fixed fee pricing has nothing in common with pharmaceuticals, but the Revenue Sharing Model does. Revenue sharing in both industries shares the idea that costs are absorbed in the front end (in research and development time, or programming time, respectively) in return for those costs being spread out over many dollars of marginal (additional) revenue gained.

A business owner seeking custom software for his business should be ecstatic about this pricing model for many reasons, not the least of which is because the developers absorb all the costs of development themselves. The risk/reward ratio is very favorable to the business owner in this model. This is also a downside, as the developers must have enough cash on hand to cover expenses while the software is being created. From the developers' point of view, a better way to translate how much good custom software can do for a company is to say, 'Wait. You don't have to pay us until it makes money for YOU.' What a great value proposition. I think more firms should do this. After all, even with a 50/50 split, if the software gains the company an extra \$2 million in revenue that they would not have gotten otherwise, who would complain about having to make out a check for \$1 million? Sometimes this might be the only way to show a business owner the value of great software versus only mediocre software.

Great software programmers versus only mediocre ones are not unlike great attorneys versus mediocre ones. Both fields have many intangible qualities to them, making the differences difficult to quantify. A great attorney might charge 50% more per hour, but all it takes is evidence of their abilities in other cases, or evidence of the inability of the mediocre attorney, for us to see that the best value all along was to pay for the highest quality. Does this sound familiar, programmers? If businesses need to be convinced of your programming talent, then do a revenue sharing project. When business owners ask about the revenue share project and you can tell them that a piece of software that cost \$75,000 generated \$2 million in revenue and you got half of it, they will be convinced that your work is great, where others' might be mediocre. Revenue sharing is a bet, more like investment, with yourself. And who doesn't like to see someone with that kind of belief in what they do?! ■

“...a better way to translate how much good custom software can do for a company is to say, ‘Wait. You don’t have to pay us until it makes money for YOU.’”

Blacklisting Spam

As a result, over the course of one weekend, we started using the Realtime Blacklists on our mail server. We have implemented the following urls: sbl.spamhaus.org, bl.spamcop.net, dnsbl.njabl.org, list.dsbl.org, cn-kr.blackholes.us, relays.ordb.org, unconfirmed.dsbl.org, multihop.dsbl.org.

After implementing these Realtime Blacklists, my spam volume dropped down to about one message every one to two hours. Though this is a great improvement, the Realtime Blacklists don't seem to help on the spam that comes from the botnets.

I got ten spam messages, all about OEM software, within ten minutes one morning. Most likely, this was someone simply turning on an infected PC. Still, despite these types of drawbacks, using the Blacklists is better than nothing. ■

Good vs. Great

You *have* to ask yourself when shopping for a development company, “How much time and money is this person going to save my business in the long run? How much time and money might my business GAIN by going with this company vs. the others?”

I think it's also fair to note that our goals for you, the client, give us an edge that the competition lacks. There are no fly-by-night programmers here. We attach our names to things, taking pride in each accomplishment met and each problem solved. We want to give you a solution that makes perfect sense for *you*, something that fits your company like a glove. We want to use the most up-to-date technologies to build you the most secure and efficient application achievable. We want it to work for your company for years to come, requiring the minimal upgrades and maintenance possible. We want you to be the most competitive company in your field, because that's what makes us the most competitive in ours. ■

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