

Simplistix

Plone Rocks My World!

Chris Withers

Who am I?

- Chris Withers
- Independent Zope and Python Consultant
- Using Zope and Python since 1999
- Using CMF since before it was CMF
- Using Plone since 2004
- Plone Foundation Member
- Zope UK Member

- Owner of asbestos underwear...

The Original Title...

Plone

“The hell in which I live my life from day to day”

Chris Withers

Who are you?

- Who's built a Plone site?
- Who's deployed a large Plone site?
- Who knows Python or ZPT?
- Who's written a Plone Product?

What's Wrong With Plone?

“It sucks!”

...not a very helpful or constructive answer

What's Wrong With Plone?

- Software quality
- Project management
- Intellectual property

“Don't worry, I'm not just going to bitch”

Software Quality

- Plone is made up of many components
- Many of those components are extremely complex
- Plone itself is very complex
- Complexity leads to cruft
 - unless you're very very careful
- Complexity requires documentation
 - not just end-user
- Plone 2.0.x shipped with failing tests!

The Plone Component Stack

- Python
- Zope
- CMF
- Various Helper Products
- “Plone the Product”
 - CMFPlone
 - PloneErrorReporting
 - PloneLanguageTool
 - PloneTranslations
- Plone Add-ons
 - Archetypes
 - BTreeFolder2
 - CMFFormController
 - CMFQuickInstallerTool
 - DynamicViewFTI
 - ExtendedPathIndex
 - ExternalEditor
 - GRUF
 - Kupu
 - PlacelessTranslationService
 - ResourceRegistries
 - SecureMailHost

Archetypes

- Evolved rather than designed
- Way too pluggable
 - why does it have a storage framework?
- Backwards compatibility
 - who might be using this wart?
- Little documentation
 - eg: class-wide validation
- Questionable python style
 - exec
 - dynamically generated accessors

Archetypes – Pet Hates

- Abuse of python logger
 - and Plone is way too noisy anyway!
- Reference Engine
- BaseUnit
- Binary Data Fields
 - don't take advantage of Zope's techniques
 - subtle and nasty bugs in imaging fields
- Reading a default causes a write
- getCharset is a *&%#ing python script?!

PlacelessTranslationService

- An early fork of a Zope 3 service
- Weird storage of message catalogs
- Pollutes the control panel
- Doesn't handle unicode well
- Lacks tools for extracting messages

GRUF

- Wrong level of abstraction
 - tries to re-use components in ways they weren't designed
- Breaks user folder contract
 - hooks not available
- Way too noisy
- You can't remove it cleanly...

CMFQuickInstaller

- A great idea!
- Doesn't work reliably
 - bits of products going missing
 - problems with version numbers
 - not understood by the authors who use it

Add On Products

- Very variable in quality
 - CMF Board
 - CMF Member
- Copy & Paste coding from bad examples
- Assume that complexity is required
- Always a new product rather than improve existing one

- Is any of the above “pythonic”?

Project Management

- my cynical perceptions
 - always new features
 - promises more than it delivers
 - never refactoring
 - no focus on scalability
- no recommended components
- 2.0 release debacle
 - how many alphas/betas/gammas/rc's
 - was 2.1 any better?
 - what's wrong with x.y.z?

Intellectual Property

“Licenses Suck!”

*...but there are too many lawyers, even with
10,000 at the bottom of the ocean...*

Intellectual Property

- Foundation owns CMFPlone, what about the rest?
 - 29 Zope Products, 2 with unclear licenses, 4 with unclear ownership
 - At least 4 licenses:
 - BSD, GPL, ZPL, Kupu License, unclear (2)
 - At least 10 copyright holders:
 - Zope Corporation, Ben Saller, Geoff Davis, BlueDynamics, Plone Solutions, IngeniWeb, Lalo Martins
 - "AT Content Types development Team", "Kupu Contributors"?!
 - Why the GPL?

What's the common theme?

- “Grew up too quickly”
- Good components weren't available
- Lack of understanding of existing functionality
- Always better to re-invent than improve
 - No feedback to Zope or CMF
- Duplication of code and concepts
 - PloneQueueCatalog, PlonePAS, error_log
- Overcomplexity – simplify!

What does this lead to?

- Easy to get going
- Hard to make scale
 - HOW many time must you re-index?!
 - Gives some of us jobs!
- Very difficult to debug
 - ever tried debugging a field validator?
- Very hard to maintain
 - ever tried to upgrade?
- Extremely fragile dependency hierarchy

“People are stupid, and do stupid things”

- “Plone – you might get hurt!”
- “Bad Examples”
 - encourages bad patterns by copy & paste programming
- How can people trust implementors without the technical knowledge to judge quality?

So why is Plone so Successful?

- It actually did it, rather than just talking about it!
- Succeeded with the available tools, regardless of their quality
- Invite everyone to participate
 - regardless of the quality of their contribution
- Built the community
 - Multi-lingual
 - Invite everyone onboard

So why is Plone so Successful?

“A Cynic's view”

- Concentrate on marketing
 - even if that means “inflating” features
- Worry about quality last of all
 - remind anyone of M\$? ;-)
- Any more ideas?

Is 2.1 any better?

- BTreeFolder2 got fixed!
 - ConflictError swallowing
- Have to have translations
 - but maybe that's not such a bad thing!
- All batteries included
 - should be able to gracefully remove components
- Broken Layout in Firefox
- Catalog is not the solution to all problems
- No offline docs!

Is 2.1 any better?

- Still GRUF, why not PAS?
 - or even PlonePAS ;-)
- Can take GRUF out
 - but Plone barfs on restart!
- Logging still far too verbose!
- Archetypes
 - ImageField and PhotoField not improved
 - Still has execs in classgen.py
 - Still has getCharset Python Script!

How can Plone do better?

- Avoid hyping things up
 - would that really have prevented Plone getting where it is?
- Control who commits and what they commit
 - but does this go against what made Plone great?
- Ratings system for Add-ons
 - peer review in more respects?

How can Plone do better?

- Pick Better Components
- GRUF
 - PluggableAuthService
 - SimpleUserFolder
- CMFQuickInstaller
 - CMFSetup
- Zope 3

Zope 3 / Five

- PlacelessTranslationService
 - Zope 3 i18n
- Archetypes
 - Zope 3 schemas / formlib
- Enable/Disable components
 - ZCML

- Learn from the Zope 3 process!

What to do until then?

“Don't use Plone”

...not a very helpful or constructive answer

But seriously...

- Don't fight the framework
- Don't fight the look and feel
- Find good examples to work from
 - ask on #plone
- Check the references of anyone you pay!

Avoid like the Plague!

- FileFields
- PhotoFields
- ImageFields

- Reference Engine

- ATContentTypes
 - if you really must, just use plain Archetypes!

The End

- Congratulations to Plone for getting where it has
- Sorry for pointing out more problems than providing solutions
- Any questions for me?

Thankyou!

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- Do people want these slides to be available?