



From the Standards Blog

March 23, 2005

#26 Creation 3.0 The sun was shining brightly on the Creator as he gazed at the scene before him. Steam rose from the ground, and an eerie silence everywhere pervaded the world -- except for an incessant thumping emanating from inside a large houseboat beached on the hillside ahead.

As he approached the vessel, the Creator's emotions were strangely mixed. On the one hand, he relished the chance to start anew - no more reality television, Michael Jackson or Rush Limbaugh. Still, perhaps if He had given the Cubs just one more season....

But enough of that. This time, He was taking no chances that he would once again experience that disquieting sense of failure that was so incompatible with omnipotence. Omniscience and human free will just didn't mix. Both times before, He had given humanity every tool they needed -- every chance to succeed -- and still they had insisted on messing it all up. This time, He wasn't going to waste His time. He was outsourcing the project.

Punching the keypad on the side of the boat, the Creator swung wide the door and waited. Eventually, a hesitant band of men and women emerged, blinking with bewilderment in the bright light of the first day of the third release of creation. And well they might be bewildered, as the Creator had wiped their brains clean of every memory of the world that they had left behind.

There were two of every kind of business person in the amorphous group that He had saved - two software engineers and two hardware engineers; two marketing and two sale types; two CXOs this and two CXOs that. Association directors, government employees and academics. Except that none of them actually knew what they used to do when they went to work in the morning. Still, the Creator had left their underlying skills intact. They would be able to make use of their former life experiences, even if they couldn't recall exactly what those experiences might have been.

It was time to begin. The Creator cleared His throat and the motley crew came to sudden, startled attention.

"Welcome" said the Creator. "I take great pleasure today in presenting you with the design contract of the millennium. I have selected you to create The World, Release 3.0. Before you are through, you will create all of the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. I'm sure I don't have to tell you what an honor it is to be selected for a project of this importance." Everyone looked appropriately pleased.

"Given the size of this contract, I'd like to give you a little professional advice, based on my own past experience: first, you've got to get your process down cold. Then, come up with some really good standards of creation, and compete on the value-added features you add to each animal. Go at it that way, and I'm sure that everything will turn out just fine. Now get cracking!"

Walking away, the Creator lit up a cigar with a sense of quiet satisfaction. This was more like it.

* * * * *

Two days later, the Creator checked in to see if the project was proceeding on schedule. When he reached the job site, it was immediately clear that things were not getting off to a smooth start.

Instead of one group, there were three. The first group included all of the engineers, each of them talking at the same time and madly working away at something in the center of their huddle. The second comprised all of the business types. They had thrown up a palisade around themselves to prevent anyone from the other two groups from looking in. The third group was made up of everyone else - association executives, government agency employees, professors, and so on. They were embroiled in a heated discussion over a parliamentary point of order.

It looked like this time, the job was going to take a lot more than six days.

* * * * *

Some months later, the Creator received notice that the first milestone of the development contract had been reached - each of the design teams had created its first creature.

Arriving at the project site, the Creator was surprised at how much things had changed. The business team was where he had left it, but the rough palisade had been replaced by an office building with drawn blinds and a security guard. He saw that it also sported a pennant flapping in the breeze, with the letters "TEAM SIG" emblazoned upon it. The engineers had withdrawn well off to the side, and were surrounded by a circle of pizza boxes, coffee cups and take-out Chinese containers. Each wore a Hawaiian shirt, and a ball cap with the words "OG Rules" on it. And high on top of a hill, where they could look down on everyone else, was the third group, wearing T-shirts with the slogan "Accredited Developers Make Better Lovers."

When they saw the Creator, each group assembled proudly before Him, anxious to show off what they had designed and built. A spokesperson for the [self] Accredited Developers team elbowed ahead of the others.

"Greetings!" He said. "Despite the fact that not everyone has acknowledged the One True De Jure Way, I'm sure that you will agree that the OTDJW process has yielded the superior result. We created a splendid system that welcomed all would-be participants, acknowledged all viewpoints, reconciled all differences, and achieved complete consensus. Voila!"

With that, the team leader whisked away the blanket covering the OTDJW creation, and the Creator's eyes widened involuntarily.

Before Him stood what could best be described as the Swiss army knife of the new animal kingdom. The overall effect recalled an enormous sea urchin, but a sea urchin that had not spines, but every conceivable -- and, the Creator realized with astonishment appropriate to One who was omniscient -- inconceivable appendage jutting out at every available angle. A single horrified eye peered out forlornly from between a flipper and a tusk.

"Yes! Quite! I see that your creation is equipped to serve many purposes, some of which might possibly be useful," the Creator offered diplomatically.

The OG leader next stepped forward, and with a pitying look at the OTDJW offering, he presented a small, furry creature with enormous black eyes.

With relief, the Creator gave a smile of recognition. "Ah! A lemur! And a cute little fellow he is, too."

The OG project manager gave a smug smile. "Close, but no. A simple lemur would be so last creation. This is a Lemurix - created using the Open Gene process. The Open Gene process will permit our creation to constantly evolve. Everyone can work on any part of the Lemurix they wish to, and then contribute their features back to the same creature. The more that people work on him, the better he gets. The Lemurix is the ultimate, nonproprietary primate."

The Creator felt a little queasy as he looked at the Lemurix; it was actually morphing into something chimp-like before His very eyes.

With relief, He turned to the project leader of Team SIG, who bore a strange resemblance to what used to be Larry Ellison. Motioning him forward, the Creator wondered where in Creation 3.0 he'd managed to find a jacket and turtleneck sweater?

The Team SIG leader looked appreciatively at the Lemurix as he stepped forward; he'd have to send a few of his people over to the engineers' huddle and see if he could get in on the action. But that would have to wait till later.

"Now you'll see something that's insanely great!" the Team SIG leader said, more over his shoulder to the others than to the Creator. With a flourish, he revealed Team SIG's entry in the creation sweepstakes.

Team SIG's contender looked more or less like an anteater, but with some intriguing differences. Instead of the usual snout, its elongated nose terminated in the barrel of an AK-47. Also, the Creator noticed that the creature's back was armor-plated, while its antenna-shaped tail suggested wireless capabilities.

"And that would be exactly what?" the Creator asked with caution.

"That", the team leader pronounced, "is an AnTerminator. It not only does the job, but it will do in anything else that tries to compete with it. Level playing fields are great, but there's nothing like having it a little more level for you than the other guy, right?" The SIG Team leader gave a leering wink and tried to give the Creator a little poke in the ribs.

This was not going according to plan at all. As the Creator considered his options, the three teams hurled insults at each other. Several Team SIG members emerged from behind a bush, now disguised as members of the OG team, and sidled up for a closer look at the Lemurix. With disgust, the Creator noticed that the Lemurix had donned a single white glove and was starting to Moonwalk.

As he walked away, the Creator raised his eyes to the endless, timeless sky. With satisfaction, he saw that the world was in for a little rain.

Comments? updegrove@consortiuminfo.org

Copyright 2005 Andrew Updegrove