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Winter Scripting Games: Profiles in Perfection

Steven Barnes

As part of the [2007 Winter Scripting Games](#) the Script Center is profiling competitors who recorded a perfect score in the 2006 Scripting Games. Here, in his own words, is a little something about Steven Barnes, who received a perfect score of 100 in the 2006 Winter Scripting Games.

Check out more [Profiles in Perfection](#) from the 2006 Scripting Games.

Steven Barnes



Real scripters don't use IDEs, we use Notepad and like it. We code from the top down, like nature intended. We can knock out functional code in minutes that would take a Software Engineer months just to get out of committee. We are the cowboys of the programming world. Members of the opposite sex swoon at our mad skillz. Uh, OK, now I'm getting carried away.

When I first started programming it was in BASIC on punched paper tape, where editing code involved scissors and tape. I kept playing with BASIC for my own amusement throughout the years, until BASIC became Visual and had to be compiled. It was then that I quickly lost interest in programming. Gone was the immediacy of running the program after every few lines of code and receiving instant feedback on the quality of your work. Gone was the fact that anyone with a text

editor could be a coder; now you had to invest in a compiler to become a "Developer."

During the dotcom era, as CTO of an e-commerce company, I became acquainted with Perl. Scripting turned out to be what I was looking for all along. Quick, powerful, and flexible, it rekindled my interest in programming as a hobby. This hobby even led to some renown for my work with XML Web Services:

<http://developer.amazonwebservices.com/connect/entry.jspa?externalID=235>.

After the dotcom bust I was forced back into the real world of corporate systems management for a Microsoft-centric shop. It didn't take long to realize that Perl was not the best tool for managing Windows systems, not when VBScript was included with the OS and had access to the incredible WMI.

Managing a network of dozens of servers, hundreds of desktops, and terabytes of data with a staff of 2 and a limited budget meant implementing as much automated maintenance and monitoring as we could, using whatever we had on hand. VBScript fit this need perfectly. Before the use of VBScript those 2 people didn't have enough time in the day to proactively manage that size of a network; consequently, they were working strictly in a reactive mode. When a user screamed they responded to the emergency. Through the use of scripting we were able to automate much of the routine maintenance and implement several proactive measures that let us take action on issues before they became problems. I believe that scripting has had the single greatest impact on increasing the reliability of our systems over the past 5 years, and it has done this at zero cost. Even the cost of the time involved in creating the scripts has been more than made up for in the reduced man hours need for maintenance.

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Steven Barnes' Scripting Tips

I'd like to share with you the 2 main benefits that I brought over from Perl scripting to VBScript. These are the 2 biggest things that are standard fare in Perl and vastly underutilized in VBScript.

- Dictionary Objects. Proper use of hashes, uh, Dictionary Objects, will provide huge gains in speed. If you ever find yourself looping through an array to determine if a value exists then you should have used a Dictionary Object.
- RegExp. This is where the magic dwells. Learn the ways of the Pattern and you will become a Scripter like your father.

And feel free to check out my Web site, [MrRat.com](#).

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