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We have another truly talented ProcessWire module developer as our 3rd interviewee, Bernhard. He is an active contributor on the ProcessWire Forum and has a solid grasp of web development techniques.

Important Note: It should be noted that Bernhard himself provided the first question for his interview.

How did you find out about ProcessWire?

I started with web development during school almost 20 years ago (*omg). Our teacher showed us the Mambo CMS and (for me) it was quite impressive to be able to manage a website without modifying HTML files in an editor and copying files over to some server (and not having to program all that via plain PHP/MySQL). Later I switched to Joomla, just because it got a lot of traction, it was similar to Mambo and I was not a professional at that time.

When I started my company back in 2010 as a side-job and projects became more complex I needed more control over what my clients can do with their content. I tried various extensions for Joomla and did one project with K2 and some with Seblod. Those are similar to the Advanced Custom Fields plugin that some might know from WordPress. What bothered me most about Seblod was the really bad community experience. When I had a problem it took ages to get a response - if any. But at least I got one invaluable hint there: Gerhard (gebeer), who was also working with Seblod at that time, mentioned ProcessWire in the forum and even forced me to take a second look when I told him that ProcessWire does not look powerful enough. I was so wrong and he was so right - and it feels so great! Thank you Gerhard!!!

That brings me right to the next question.

PW Review: What do you feel are the major benefits, to you, of using ProcessWire over the Open Source platforms that you have used before?

One huge benefit for me as a mostly one-man-show is the outstanding support that you get in the PW forum! I registered quite a while after discovering ProcessWire and that has one reason: All questions that I had have already been asked in the forum and have already been answered. Since then I've been quite active in the forum. I learned a lot by reading through other people's problems, seeing how advanced users solve them and sometimes by trying to solve things on my own and help others.

Besides the community I also love ProcessWire for it's genius API, the simple and flexible backend (I do most of my work now in the backend) and the high level of security and stability it provides by default. I love how easy it is to adopt the GUI for my clients exactly how they need it. It's also great how easy one can create custom modules and as if that would not be enough, the power and ease of hooks is just incredible!

PW Review: What improvements to the ProcessWire Core do you feel needs addressing or enhancements?

I love the flexibility and stability of the ProcessWire Core and its features. What I'm missing is mostly what I've developed modules for or what I'm working on:

First, I'd love to see an easy and solid solution for continuous integration workflows. For moving sites from one server to another. For pulling instances of a site, working on changes and pushing back those changes wherever necessary. I know that we have several tools for that already (Duplicator, Migrations, DB Backups, Site Profiles), but none of them comes close to what I'm dreaming of (Migrations being the best option so far and my own implementation "RockMigrations" of course).

Second, I'd love to see other "Lister" options than we currently have. I need RockFinder + RockGrid in almost any project and it's so great for all kinds of visual data listings, doing column aggregations etc.; But I also know its limitations and I totally understand that such an approach might never find its way into the core, because ProcessWire is built to scale and my modules have a limitation in that regard.

PW Review: What other parts to the ProcessWire ecosystem, other than the Core, would you like to see changed or improved?

What really bothers me from time to time is what I'd call "community management". We all know that Ryan is working hard and he does a great job (it's really impressive!). Also, the community that he has built is great already as it is, but sometimes it just does not feel good to have such a huge project relying almost exclusively on one person. I'd love to see more transparency in that regard, some kind of organizational structure and some kind of feedback and communication-system between the community and the core development "team".

But those are vague wishes and I can imagine that building such structures is also very hard and not without other risks! So I'm not even sure if those wishes would really be an improvement or not... ProcessWire has been following a solid track since 2011 and we all know the phrase "never change a winning team". So maybe it's the best to just have a little hope and trust...

PW Review: What are your favorite Non-Commercial and Commercial ProcessWire modules?

Non-Commercial: TracyDebugger, TracyDebugger, TracyDebugger! I can't thank Adrian enough for what he has brought to ProcessWire here!

Commercial: ProCache is my favourite here. It makes it so easy to get stunning performance even on cheap hosting environments. It's a must have in my opinion.

PW Review: As a long-term ProcessWire Professional, what is most important to you and your clients when building or maintaining a website?

That's a tough question, because it's always about the perfect mix and it depends from project to project. For me ProcessWire is a great choice because of its flexibility and stability. I can build whatever I want and do not have to search for the best plugin out there that I'd then have to rely on. I can just build whatever I want (or whatever my clients need) exactly as I want it (or my clients need it). That is a great feeling and was a very different experience to my Joomla days... Though I have to admit that I've improved a lot since that time and the gap might not be that big on any other system.

What my clients like most is similar: Flexibility and stability. And maybe also the "ease of use" of the backend. They love when they have ideas for some little changes and I can quickly just add a new field and add feature X to their site within no time.

PW Review: What would you recommend to anyone new to ProcessWire that will make their journey to this platform easier?

That depends a lot on the person. There is no one single answer to that question. It depends on the background and experience of the person and also their goals and motivation. The Hello World Planets tutorial is of course a must-do. Then TracyDebugger with its genius console and dumping features is an invaluable module.

For more advanced users I'd recommend to get used to the hooking paradigm as quickly as possible. Then, when you are familiar with hooks I'd directly dive into module development, because it's easier than one might think! And don't forget about ProcessModules aka custom admin pages - I wrote a blog post about it because it opens up so many possibilities and it's sometimes so much easier to just create a custom ProcessModule compared to bending existing GUIs (like the page edit screen) to one's needs.

But those recommendations are my point of view and that's mostly a developer-centric/backend type one.

Oh, one more hint that should be valid for any user: Register in the forum, say hello, and don't hesitate to ask questions! Be nice, be as expressive as you can (telling about your situation, your background, the context, the goal etc) and you'll get extremely helpful answers in no time!