Realtime Web Apps

With HTML5 WebSocket, PHP, and jQuery

Jason Lengstorf

Phil Leggetter

Apress®

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For Tim the cat.

—Jason Lengstorf

Contents at a Glance

About the Authors.....	xv
Acknowledgments	xvii
Introduction	xix
■ Part I: Getting Familiar with the Required Technologies	1
■ Chapter 1: What Is Realtime?	3
■ Chapter 2: The Tools	15
■ Chapter 3: Pusher	35
■ Part II: Planning the App	55
■ Chapter 4: Choosing Web Apps Over Native Apps	57
■ Chapter 5: Determining the App's Functionality and Structure	65
■ Part III: Building the Basics	87
■ Chapter 6: Designing the App	89
■ Chapter 7: Creating HTML and CSS Markup	109
■ Chapter 8: Building the Back End: Part 1	155
■ Chapter 9: Building the Back-End: Part 2	197
■ Chapter 10: Implementing Realtime Events and jQuery Effects	241
■ Appendix A: OAuth	259
Index	285

Contents

About the Authors.....	xv
Acknowledgments	xvii
Introduction	xix
■ Part I: Getting Familiar with the Required Technologies	1
■ Chapter 1: What Is Realtime?	3
The Evolution of Media.....	3
Web Sites, Not Web Apps.....	4
HTTP Hacks.....	5
But First: What Does “Realtime” Actually Mean?	5
AJAX	5
Polling.....	5
HTTP Long-Polling	7
HTTP Streaming.....	8
Additional Problems with HTTP-based Solutions in Web Browsers.....	8
The Solution: WebSockets	10
The WebSocket Protocol.....	11
Why Bother Learning about Realtime Web Technologies?	12
Using Realtime Web Technologies in Your Apps Now	13
Summary.....	13
■ Chapter 2: The Tools	15
What Are We Building?	15
What Does That Mean Development-Wise?.....	15
Choosing Our Tools.....	16

HTML5	16
CSS3	18
JavaScript and jQuery	22
PHP	25
MySQL	27
HTML5 WebSocket Technology and Pusher	30
OAuth	32
Summary	33
■ Chapter 3: Pusher	35
A Brief History of Pusher	35
Why Use Pusher?	35
Scalability	35
WebSocket, Fallback Support, and Auto-Reconnect.....	36
Other Client Libraries	36
REST API	36
Server Libraries	36
Developer Tools	36
Documentation	36
Pusher Terminology	37
Getting Started with Pusher	37
Using Pusher to Send Events	43
Debugging Your Pusher Application	52
Summary	54
■ Part II: Planning the App	55
■ Chapter 4: Choosing Web Apps Over Native Apps	57
Why Does It Matter?	57
Factors to Consider	57
Know Your User	58
Marketing	58
Sales	59

Distribution	60
Look, Feel, and Performance	60
Development.....	61
Choosing Based on Requirements	63
Choosing Web Apps Over Native Apps	63
The Final Decision: Let's Build a Web App	64
Summary.....	64
■ Chapter 5: Determining the App's Functionality and Structure	65
What Does the App Do?	65
Give the App a Mission Statement.....	65
What Doesn't the App Do?	66
What Roles Will Users Play?	66
Presenter	66
Attendees	66
Front-End Planning.....	67
What Technologies Are We Using?	67
Using HTML5	67
CSS3, Media Queries, and How That Affects the Design and HTML	69
Effects and Animations.....	73
Back-End Planning	74
Determining the Database Structure	76
Putting Everything Together in a Wireframe	80
Organizing the Home Page	80
Organizing the Q&A Page for Attendees	82
Organizing the Q&A Page for Presenters	84
Summary.....	86
■ Part III: Building the Basics	87
■ Chapter 6: Designing the App.....	89
Setting Goals for the Design.....	89
Defining the Color Palette.....	90

Choosing Fonts.....	90
Designing the Common Site Elements	92
Creating the Header.....	92
Creating the Footer.....	94
Form Elements	95
Designing the Home View	100
Create-a-Room Form.....	100
Join-a-Room Form	102
Designing the Room View(s).....	104
Designing the Attendee View	104
Designing the Closed Room View	106
Designing the Presenter View.....	106
Smaller Screen Layouts (and Why You're Not Designing Them Here)	108
Summary.....	108
■ Chapter 7: Creating HTML and CSS Markup	109
Starting with the Basics: Setting Up an HTML5 Document	109
Getting Fonts Ready to Go	110
Common Elements	113
The Header Markup	113
The Footer Markup	114
The Styles	115
Making the Header and Footer Responsive.....	119
Developing the Home Page View.....	121
Writing the Markup.....	121
Adding Media Queries	127
Developing the Active Room View for Attendees.....	129
Writing the Markup.....	129
Implementing the CSS.....	133
Adding Media Queries	141

Developing the Closed Room View for Attendees.....	144
Striving for as Little New Markup as Necessary	144
Adding Styles.....	145
What About the Media Queries?	147
Developing the Room View for Presenters	147
Reworking the Existing Markup.....	147
Updating the CSS.....	149
Updating the Media Queries	151
Summary.....	153
■ Chapter 8: Building the Back End: Part 1	155
Rolling Your Own Simple MVC Framework.....	155
Determining the Directory Structure	155
Setting Up a Router for All Requests	156
Setting Up Utility Functions	160
Finishing the Router	169
Setting Up the Core Classes	171
Adding the Header and Footer Markup	179
Setting Variables for the Header.....	181
Building the Home Page.....	182
Creating the Home Controller	182
Creating the Home View	183
Adding an Error Handler.....	186
Creating the Error Controller.....	186
Creating the Error View.....	187
Adding Error-Specific Styles.....	188
Testing the Error Page	188
Building the Database	189
Handling Form Submissions	190
Planning the Form Submission Workflow.....	190
Setting Up and Checking for Valid Actions.....	191

Preventing Duplicate or Fraudulent Submissions.....	191
Writing the Form Handling Methods.....	193
Summary.....	196
■ Chapter 9: Building the Back-End: Part 2.....	197
Building the Questions	197
Building the Question Controller.....	197
Adding the Question View.....	199
Finishing the View	200
Adding the Ask a Question Form	207
Building the Question Model.....	208
Adding Form Handlers and Data Access Methods to the Controller	213
Building the Rooms	216
Adding the Room Controller.....	216
Building the Room Model	222
Adding Form Handlers to the Room Controller	227
Testing it All Out	232
Creating Your First Room.....	232
Closing the Room.....	233
Reopening the Room	234
Joining a Room.....	235
Asking Your First Question.....	236
Voting Up the Question	237
Answering the Question	239
Summary.....	240
■ Chapter 10: Implementing Realtime Events and jQuery Effects	241
Adding the Required Credentials and Libraries.....	241
Obtaining Your Pusher API Credentials	241
Downloading the PHP API Wrapper for Pusher	243
Loading Pusher's JavaScript API Wrapper	244
Loading jQuery.....	244

Implementing Realtime on the Back End	245
Creating the Event	245
Testing Out Realtime Events	246
Implementing Realtime on the Front End.....	249
Subscribing to the Channel	249
Binding to Events.....	250
Adding Effects	251
Handling Room Events.....	251
Adding New Questions with Animation.....	252
Adding Votes to a Question.....	253
Answering a Question with Animation and Reordering	256
Summary.....	258
■ Appendix A: OAuth	259
What Is OAuth?	259
The History of OAuth.....	259
How OAuth Works.....	260
OAuth Developer Workflow	261
Why OAuth Is Better Than Building a Login System	264
Index	285

About the Authors

Jason Lengstorf is a 20-something from Portland, Oregon who has spent the last decade or so learning how to make a living without wearing pants. Along the way, he started Copter Labs, wrote a few books, drew a few pictures, and spoke to a few like-minded geeks. He's a music nerd, a foodie, a shameless coffee snob, and a big fan of wandering the globe.

Phil Leggetter is a Developer Evangelist at Pusher and has been developing and using real-time web technologies for more than 10 years. His focus is to help people use these technologies to build the next generation of interactive and engaging real-time web applications. He does this through writing articles; creating sample open-source applications; running workshops; and speaking at universities, companies, and conferences.

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—Jason Lengstorf

Introduction

A couple of years back, I went to a conference called “Keeping It Realtime.” It was a collection of presenters who were deep in the trenches of the realtime world, solving problems that most of the rest of the world had never even heard about.

The power of this technology was staggering, and the number of places that it was already being used was pretty surprising. I wanted to know more, start using it *right then*. How could I start using this wonderful, magical new idea in my own applications?

I sat down in the audience for one of the hands-on sessions and was immediately lost. A small, shy dude with a beard was at the podium with his laptop, mumbling into the microphone and coding in Vim at *incredible* speeds. By the time I was able to figure out that he was initializing socket.io, he’d already gotten halfway through the meat of the app.

My spirits sank, and I started to wonder whether this kind of awesome technology was reserved only for that elite shadow group of secret ninja developers. If I can’t keep up with a guy who is *teaching* this stuff, how am I ever supposed to build anything on my own?

If you’ve ever asked a really smart developer how to do something, you might know the feeling: when someone hits a certain level of smart, they can sometimes forget how to talk to the rest of us who haven’t used that tech before. This puts us in a situation in which we can either dig through tons of complex code and specifications and rough documentation, or we can just give up.

This book is intended to help demystify realtime coding and make it accessible to any developer with medium PHP and JavaScript chops. If you want to use this stuff in real projects *right now*, and don’t need to know how to build a Flash polyfill or maintain Node.js, this book is right up your alley.

We believe that while theory is fun and necessary, the real exciting part of development is in putting it to use and seeing it come to life. To that end, the technologies used in this book are simple to set up and don’t require you to learn a new programming language or framework; the book is based on the same web technologies used in some of the most popular apps, websites, and content management systems out there today.

Realtime should belong to the caffeinated masses, so grab your coffee (or tea) and let’s get started. You’ll be up and running with realtime before it gets cold.