

Course Outline

APIs and SDKs: Breaking Into and Succeeding in a Specialty Market

Instructor: Ed Marshall

Best Western Pony Soldier Inn | Portland, Oregon

August 28, 2010

Registration and breakfast buffet

Introductions

Course goals

The goals of this workshop are to:

- Learn what APIs and SDKs are, who uses them, and why.
- Learn what typical documentation deliverables are for these products.
- Learn two common methodologies for producing documentation for APIs/SDKs from the source code, a “single source of truth.” Be able to describe why this approach is preferred by many developers. Practice using two common tools for producing documentation from the source code, Doxygen and Javadoc.
- Learn recommended sources of training to get the skills needed for this area.
- Create an API/SDK sample that you can show to potential clients or employers.

Discussion of APIs and SDKs

- What are APIs and SDKs? How are these similar and different?
- Who uses APIs and SDKs?
- What are the typical documentation deliverables? What information should you provide to users?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks to working in this area for technical writers?
- How much do you have to read software code? What information can you get from the code and what can't you get from the code?

Doxygen discussion and demo

- What is Doxygen? Why and when should you use it? How is it used?
- Instructor gives demo of Doxygen.

Setting up Doxygen exercises

Instructor helps students set up their computers to run Doxygen successfully on a test project.

Doxygen exercises

Students will complete these tasks:

- Inserting typical reference information into the source files, generating the online help, and viewing the output.
- Inserting conceptual information into the source files, generating the online help, and viewing the output.
- Finding undocumented functions in a set of source files. Practicing extrapolating likely information from previously documented functions, inserting the information, and generating updated help.

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Lunch (catered onsite)

Doxygen exercises review Students will compare their output with the instructor's version and discuss the results. Problems found will be discussed and solutions recommended.

Javadoc discussion and demo

- What is Javadoc? Why and when should you use it? How is it used?
- Instructor gives demo of Javadoc and Sun's NetBeans, an Integrated Development Environment (IDE). (NetBeans is to developers as RoboHelp with technical writers).

Setting up Javadoc exercises and Sun's NetBeans IDE Instructor helps students set up their computers to generate Javadoc successfully on a test project using the NetBeans IDE.

Javadoc exercises Students will complete these tasks:

- Inserting typical reference information into the source files, generating the Javadocs using NetBeans IDE, and viewing the output.
- Inserting conceptual information into the source files, generating the Javadocs using NetBeans IDE, and viewing the output.
- Finding undocumented functions in a set of source files. Practicing extrapolating likely information from previously documented functions, inserting that information into the source files, and generating updated Javadoc using NetBeans IDE.

Javadoc exercises review Students will compare their output with the instructor's version and discuss the results. Problems found will be discussed and solutions recommended.

Additional training for API/SDK writers

- Instructor covers traditional training, such as college courses, self-paced tutorials, and other ways of getting the training needed to succeed in this area.
- Other sources of information, such as listservers and Web sites, are discussed.

Q&A

Closing