Hey, that is undocumented!

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While working on a new application I ran into an interesting issue. The solution to the issue was complex, and I was not pleased with the result. The solution was far from elegant or streamlined. The code was totally bloated, but for necessary reasons. I reworked the code a few times and made it more compact but the end result was still not pleasing.

I bet you are saying, "If it works leave it alone" or something like that. If so I would tend to agree. However, I am one of those people that would spend an hour coding to squeeze out 500ms of processing. I am very critical of what I write and do my very best to make performance paramount.

After leaving the code sit for a few days I want back to it with a clear head. I then started poking around the net looking for ideas. I then started playing around using underlying java objects to make the code better. I then found some undocumented functions in CF that made the code even better.

This is where I hit a crossroad. I was faced with a very perplexing issue. Do I, A: Leave the code alone knowing I could make it better or B: Use some undocumented functions and get the result I was looking for. After pondering it for a while I ended up with option B.

Now, why is this such a big deal? There are many reasons this could be a potential issue. For starters any issues that arise by using an undocumented item are not supported. You can find people that can help you but that would be a very short list. Also, potentially the level of skill required to work in it after you are done could a problem. Then there is the potential that the undocumented item becomes unavailable after an upgrade. This is probably the biggest reason not to do it.

On the other hand, undocumented things usually fill a gap. They provide new functions and tools that are generally unavailable. For instance "queryname.isFirst()" does the same thing as "query.current_row EQ 1". Obviously the undocumented function is more elegant and probably faster. This is just one item in a long list of undocumented items in CF.

Every situation is unique and has unique challenges. Those challenges should be evaluated separately. Do what works for what you are doing. The important thing is to understand the risks involved. If the reward outweighs the risk then go for it. Just be prepaired for the fact that the risk may not pay off.

till next time.

--Dave