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EE Podcast #71 EE Hosting

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Lea Alcantara: You are listening to the ExpressionEngine Podcast Episode #71 with special guest, Nevin Lyne, here to talk about optimizing your hosting experience with EE. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host,

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis.

Lea Alcantara: This episode is sponsored by FindBacon.com. There are so many places across the web today that offer job posts for web designers and developers, and it can be time consuming to keep them all under watch. FindBacon.com hand selects the best job sources and aggregates these opportunities into one stream with a single search bar. Head over to FindBacon.com today to see what all of the sizzle is about. Oink, oink.

Emily Lewis: The ExpressionEngine Podcast would also like to thank Pixel & Tonic for being our major sponsor of the year. [Music ends] Hi Lea, how are you?

Lea Alcantara: Pretty good. I had a combination lazy/busy weekend so I was kind of sitting through Season 2 of the Sopranos.

Emily Lewis: Nice.

Lea Alcantara: And I saw Prometheus this weekend.

Emily Lewis: Oh, what did you think of it?

Lea Alcantara: Eh, my two-second review is that it really doesn't live up to the hype. It was kind of great in the first half, and then kind of faltered in the last half.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. So how about you, what were you up to?

Emily Lewis: I've been working my tail off. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Oh yeah.

Emily Lewis: It's been a really busy few weeks lately, which is good, but I don't think I've had a full day off in almost a month.

Lea Alcantara: Yikes.

Emily Lewis: I did though get some much needed ass-on-couch time on Sunday and had a mini-Netflix marathon.

Lea Alcantara: Nice. Nice. So we've reached a few milestones for EE Podcast this month. By the time we closed the survey, we've received a total of 173 responses!

Emily Lewis: I still can't believe it. Our community is just incredible.

Lea Alcantara: And for those listeners who entered, you must be wondering which lucky five entrants won a lovely [EE Podcast t-shirt](#). Basically, we just put the entry numbers into a random number generator and those chose the emails attached to those entry numbers. So without further ado, the lucky 2012 EE Podcast survey tee shirt winners are – hopefully I'm saying these right, I apologize in advance if I'm mispronouncing your name - Bas van Ginkel, Leevi Graham, Tom Gorham, Wayne Speir, and Preston C.

Emily Lewis: Congratulations, all you winners! [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]



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Emily Lewis: Thank you so much for taking the time with our survey. We will be contacting each one of you guys shortly to get your mailing addresses. Oh, and before I forget, Lea, I also wanted to mention another milestone, it's our anniversary this Saturday, June 23rd. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Oooh!

Emily Lewis: We've been co-hosting the podcast together for a year, which just blows my mind. It doesn't feel that long.

Lea Alcantara: I know. I don't know how to respond to that without sounding clichéd.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: But yeah, this year has totally zipped by.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, it has. On a personal note, I want to let you know how wonderful it's been working with, not just the time we spent on the actual episodes, but all the time we spent behind the scenes. It's been incredible learning so much from you not only about EE, but also running my own business. And I just feel so lucky we are more than colleagues. You've been just a great partner.

Lea Alcantara: Oh, thanks, Emily.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I feel the same way. I couldn't imagine having a better co-host. You're the best.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] All right, now that we've got the "I love you man" stuff out of the way, let's dive into today's topic and introduce our guest, Nevin Lyne. Nevin is the Founder and Director of Technology for [EngineHosting](#). I suspect many of our listeners are already familiar with EngineHosting, which provides fully managed hosting services and offers solutions highly optimized



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for EE. As a customer myself, I can also say that EngineHosting happens to have some of the best customer service in the business. Welcome, Nevin! Thank you so much for joining us today.

Nevin Lyne: How are you two? Thank you for inviting me, and thank you for the great introduction. I'm happy to hear that our support staff is living up to what they should be doing. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] They really are great. Before we get too deep into the hosting topic, can you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself like how you got into web hosting?

Nevin Lyne: [Laughs] That's a really long story, but to summarize, I've been doing this pre-Web. I was a server administrator for online services. I did network consulting. In early 1994 with the company I worked for, we set up our first web server and sort of blossomed from there. Of course, online services like CompuServe and AOL in the early days online fell by the wayside as the Web took off, and of course, consulting needs to change. It's just the direction that the market went, and that's sort of where I followed.

It's a nice industry to stick in. You get to meet a lot of people. We get to deal with interesting issues almost on a daily basis. It's a great part of the IT industry, but we are not on similar deadlines to software developers or corporate IT-type jobs which I have held as well.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: It's a very different portion of the industry, and it's quite fun. We get to experience a lot of interesting websites, with some public, some privates. We have a lot of corporations that are actually running almost intranet-style websites that just are not publicly reachable at all. It's an interesting thing to do. I really do enjoy it.



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Emily Lewis: For many years, and I don't think "partnership" is the right word to use, but you did have a relationship with ExpressionEngine. Was that a choice in the beginning because of some sort of natural chemistry between web hosting and EE, or was it due to the relationships with people at EllisLab?

Nevin Lyne: Well, actually, I initially had read an article way back in MacAddict Magazine that was actually talking about how Mac OS users could deploy pMachine Pro on their local systems, and it was just an interesting product. I reached out to Rick after reading through his support forums. He had a lot of clients that were having issues with their web hosting providers that were obviously not geared towards the coming of dynamic web applications.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: If you went and read most of the websites, they were definitely hosting companies that were still geared towards Dreamweaver websites or FrontPage.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: And they were likely expecting people to have a simple contact form and maybe a little guest book application or something on their website, hence they were getting kicked off or turned off or whatever from these hosting providers, and I was coming from a background of doing high-performance web hosting consulting for a number of industries. We were doing web hosting, but it was not the mainstay of our company at the time. Consulting for web services realistically was the primary focus of our company, and it just seemed like a good fit so I reached out to Rick. We talked some things out over lunch basically, and it sort of run from there. We grew basically as pMachine grew. Obviously, pMachine, if anybody in the audience actually remember using it, it was more of a blogging platform, although it did have content management aspects to it. ExpressionEngine, obviously, went quite a different direction. We really focused on more of the content management



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which really a blog is just content, but we took it a good step further, and obviously we are all here now.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] Right.

Nevin Lyne: So the ecosystem around ExpressionEngine grew dynamically over the years. We at EngineHosting have worked with a lot of the third-party developers out there that have either focused on weaknesses, or I shouldn't necessarily say weaknesses but just areas that ExpressionEngine or EllisLab have not focused on in the core of ExpressionEngine.

Solspace, a lot of Solspace's add-ons are definitely geared towards performance be it Super Search or static template caching, Template Morsels. Those different add-ons definitely grew out of a need for larger websites that needed more performance in specific aspects of ExpressionEngine. We've done a lot of work with Pixel & Tonic, and actually a lot of the third-party add-on developers actually do host with us too, which is great, and it also helps our staff deal with the third-party add-on developers. If we do see issues, we already have that connection with them as well which makes sense and nice for us and our clients.

As a lot of people have maybe seen that or that you may have missed the blog post that a couple of months ago we decided to separate ways in a sense. It was never partnership-partnership, but there were a lot of things that we had clients have asked to focus on that are not necessarily EE-centric. It was a mutual separation. Nothing has affected our clients. Nothing has affected ExpressionEngine clients. We still have our expertise on staff. Greg Aker, which was a EE core developer, is on staff with us as a systems administrator and he does a lot of our research and development work, and again, with some of the technology that we are releasing to help ExpressionEngine sites and after content management solutions.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees] So...

Nevin Lyne: I'll just leave it at that.

Lea Alcantara: So speaking of that, if someone is looking to host an ExpressionEngine site or looking for a host for their EE project, what should be the main items and features to look out for when hosting an EE site in comparison to another system? Like what specifically for EE should we look for in a web host?

Nevin Lyne: Well, I mean, you've got the obvious parts which is to make sure that the web host that you are selecting does meet the minimum requirements of EE now, and of course, in the near future. EllisLab has announced that the future version of ExpressionEngine will require a minimum of PHP 5.2.4, I believe, and you will likely find a host that are out there and even we have some older clusters that are not PHP 3 yet. We actually sort of get the PHP 5.2.

Lea Alcantara: Oh, wow!

Nevin Lyne: The problem out there in the hosting industry is that you have to really balance what you're using as far as an operating system for support stability when you can actually upgrade.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: It's easy when you're upgrading, let's say, one virtual server and you're running a website on it. When you have thousands of clients that are hosting, and we find clients daily that are still running, let's say, EE 1.5.2.

Emily Lewis: Oh, wow!

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Nevin Lyne: We found a client the other day that had EE 1.2.1 running.

Lea Alcantara: Wow!

Nevin Lyne: So if we blanket upgrade systems, we are going to break sites. So we generally do not blanket upgrade our systems. We migrate clients from older clusters to newer clusters.

Emily Lewis: Is that something that's common with a web host, or is it more common for them to do blanket upgrades?

Nevin Lyne: It's more common realistically for them to do blanket upgrades.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: If they are running control panel systems, you're going to get to where they are actually going to do upgrades. When they upgrade their control panel system, it's going to upgrade the version of PHP along with it, or it's going to get to the point where the operating system that they are using just doesn't support the version of the operating system that they were running. Our older PHP 5.1.6 clusters, which has been actually the minimum of EE 2 for a while, are running Red Hat Enterprise in 5. That is still a fully supported version of Red Hat Enterprise. They make security back ports and stuff to PHP to keep it secured for the namesake of enterprises that are running critical applications, and we've since actually moved to other long term supports operating systems to actually keep that same functionality. But yeah, it's something that you do occasionally see people. It does catch people. You will see people, "Oh, you know, my host told me that this weekend they are upgrading to PHP 5.3 and we are still running EE version 1.6.1 will we have any issues?" Maybe.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Nevin Lyne: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: And as I was going to say, and I'm assuming the answer most of the time is going to be yes.

Nevin Lyne: EE doesn't have a lot of things that pop up when moving to 5.3, even with some of the older versions. It's usually add-ons.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: Oh, that's a good point.

Nevin Lyne: Especially if they have older add-ons that may not have a developer behind them anymore.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: They installed it four years ago with EE and it probably will run fine, but you have no idea what the minimum requirements were for that add-on or what the developer was actually thinking when they actually developed the third-party add-on. So it's a mixed bag in there because, of course, it's not just EE that you have to worry about, it's what add-ons you're using.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Nevin Lyne: And of course, in this day we know that a lot of people run a lot of different add-ons.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: And again, that is something that you need to take into consideration too.

Lea Alcantara: I've actually...

Nevin Lyne: I've...

Lea Alcantara: Sorry.



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Nevin Lyne: Go...

Lea Alcantara: I just wanted to say an actual example that happened to me specifically with this. I have a client who is on EE 1.7.2 now. He originally was on 1.7, and out of the blue I just get this email saying, “Okay, well, the site works and all these other channels or weblogs,” I guess as it was still called on 1.7, “all these stuff works here except these two channels. I can’t get into it. I can’t edit it. What’s wrong?” I think what happened essentially was the host they were on upgraded their PHP so that one particular add-on that I found which was Engine File Field that we were using for them was just no longer working and it was just stalling the control panel. So the control panel worked for everything else, like if you click on everything else but these two specific channels, so it looked like nothing was wrong. So I first upgraded EE to the latest version of the 1.7.2 because this particular client doesn’t want to move to EE 2 yet. So I did that and it didn’t work, and then I found out it was specifically only Engine File Field, and the moment I updated that to the latest version, which, thank God, actually accommodated the PHP changes like everything was fixed. So yeah, that was an exact example of something that happened to me recently just because the host decided to upgrade and my client didn’t know, I didn’t know until things stopped working.

Emily Lewis: Is that common for a host not to inform their customers that something is being upgraded, or should that be the norm when you’re looking for a hosting company?

Nevin Lyne: That’s actually really a good question. It’s been a long time since we’ve actually enforced any upgrades. We usually wait for the clients. We require a new hosting plan, or if they are actually looking to run something specific and they are having issue, or they realize that they need a new version of PHP, they will open a support ticket with us and we schedule a migration between whatever they are currently running on with us to whatever will actually accommodate their needs. We usually like taking the reactive stance of not breaking people and allowing people to move as they need to. Of course, there will eventually come a time that it doesn’t work if the operating system we

are using isn't supported anymore with the version of PHP that was supported. Usually by that time, most people have realized, "Hey, I'm running something really old. I need to upgrade."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: But what I've seen, it's probably a mixed bag. I mean, it's really hard to tell because, of course, most people that you will see on Twitter or whatever are going to be complaining that their host didn't contact them or gave them short notice. You'll really never going to see somebody tweeting saying, "Hey, you know, my host contacted me and everything went smooth."

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: Sort of back on that other subject, something else that you probably should look at too is, the hosting provider that you're selecting, are they actually offering solutions that you may need to scale the website?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: Is this a very small website? It is a brochure website for a dry cleaning company that likely isn't going to have a mass rush of clients during events or something? Or is it a news website or a review website that may get listed on other high-profile websites and driving their traffic up, and especially with the third-party add-ons out there now. You have things like CE Cache to be able to move ExpressionEngine caching into using a Memcache server which is a RAM-based caching system. Solspace and a couple of others out there have or are working on add-ons, and for lack of a better word, to tickle a Varnish server to basically say, "This article or this URI has changed, update your cache."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: More and more websites are being fronted with Varnish. We offer Varnish add-ons for some of our larger hosting plans. We don't offer them on shared hosting because really if you're looking at more traffic, you probably shouldn't be on shared hosting anyway. These are things to look for. Does the host have the options for them, or are you going to end up running into a roadblock of "They don't offer them cache, so I can't really use CE Cache fully. Or they aren't really going to support Varnish. They don't have a content distribution network that I can easily use where I could integrate it better with this other hosting provider." So really look at where you can go, not what they can do right now.

Emily Lewis: I'm woefully undereducated in terms of hosting and servers and performance, and so when I get a new client, I'm like, "Well, just get EngineHosting." Because it's just easier for me because I've worked with you guys. But when it's in a situation where maybe the client wants to be educated a little bit more, how can I go to look at, let's say, three different hosting providers and evaluate? Are there certain keywords or key phrases or key features that I should be looking for in terms of their marketing materials or their website information?

Nevin Lyne: I would probably actually suggest, especially if you're looking at places that you have never used before, find out if anybody else in the community has also used them. That's probably a really good indicator, especially with the ExpressionEngine community.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: If you're on Twitter, if you throw a hashtag on asking, "Hey, I'm running into X problem where I need a blog from a hosting provider," you're going to get probably us come up as part of it, but there are obviously other hosting companies out there that people like a lot, and some of them are even country-specific. It's very specific like European regulations for where data is housed, depending on the type of business it is or the type of information that's being collected. If you have a

client that specifically needs a UK-based web host or most of their clients are in Asia and they really don't want to be pushing people across the Pacific, those are things to take into consideration when you're actually looking for the hosting provider and hopefully the client will provide that information ahead of time.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: And the other thing too is that depending on, I guess, at that stage that you're working with the client, again it all sort of fall back to what features are you developing into this website. Are you picturing this website ever needing to scale beyond being a small solution, or are they ever going to need advanced functionality like Varnish or Memcache or multiple web servers?

Emily Lewis: You have to know your client and where that project may go, not just now but in the distant future.

Nevin Lyne: Yes, and I've seen a mixed bag on that from web developers. Many web developers are looking at "The client just wants the website and after it's done it's theirs, and I'm pretty much not dealing with them, so what hosting should I put them on?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: And then you have other developers that they can hold the client for long periods of time, or they are the client's go-to person for anything as far as technical changes on the site. They may have in-house developers for the actual web design, but they need people that know ExpressionEngine itself and they are relying on that developer to know what they need in a sense.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: And so yeah, it really does come down to what do you provide your client. Is it a very hands off, or are you doing the development of the site and then it's going away, or are you the one

that is going to be sort of the go-to person for that client for the next three years? What are you hoping to get out of the hosting provider that you're selecting for them? A lot of times you may not have a choice, and we see that a lot too, and you guys probably have too. A client comes in and says, "We've always hosted with X and we want to host with them still."

Emily Lewis: This is something that came up for me, I guess, about ten days ago. I have a client who is GoDaddy, and other than the fact I want to shoot myself every time I log into their FTP manager. The performance has been lacking, and the client, I could feel some sort of commitment to GoDaddy for this project and it's a e-commerce site so it does need to have much better performance that it's currently showing. How do you move a client from a host that they are happy with, but it's happy because not their current needs are being met but just some sort of history they have?

Nevin Lyne: It's really hard. I'm not really sure how you would approach that necessarily. Possibly a good way of actually doing it, especially if you have your own account on a hosting provider that you like, let's say us, if you can stick a copy of that client's site under a development setup on your hosting provider.

Lea Alcantara: Sub-domain.

Nevin Lyne: Yeah, a sub-domain of your own account, and do a side by side comparison for them.

Emily Lewis: That is a great idea. I never even thought of that, but that's a good idea.

Nevin Lyne: We have a number of developers who actually hold on to a virtual server account or even a shared hosting account with us depending on the majority of their client sizes. If they are usually smaller clients, the development shop will usually have like a shared hosting account that they use for initial development work or they will use it to sort of sandbox show the client, "Hey, this is why I really like using them. Look at the performance. Or they handle the future set that we want." And it also is going to be just a place that you can show the work in site without sticking it on their current

hosting to start with, but that is something that I have seen developers use quite a bit. Sometimes it's just going to come down to dollars.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: It's amazing how many even medium to large companies will outline how much of a mission critical. "This website has to be up. It has to be fast, but we only want to spend \$10 a month."

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: And it's amazing if you think about that because, of course, I have no idea how much they are paying you as the developer that developed the website. But in the general scale of things, pretty sure you are probably charging way more than \$10 a month to develop the website for them.

Emily Lewis: Right. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: So if they go through that effort, even internal time, you figured time is money for everyone. If they have staff that is actually been working on this with you as the developer for months. We have some people that have had development sites they've been working on with their client for a year before they actually launched it. So if you've invested all of that time and money and this is something that is critical to your business, why are you spending the cost of two cappuccinos a month to host your corporate website?

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: For GoDaddy especially, what are their desired price points does GoDaddy provide anybody really?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: Except for extremely sexist ads and a variety of other really poor choices that they seem to do as a corporate entity, what exactly does GoDaddy provide anybody that is performance related?

Lea Alcantara: So I want to interrupt you right there. Speaking about performance... [laughs]... just to be all on the same page. When we are talking about performance, we are talking about speed? Yes?

Nevin Lyne: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Or what?

Nevin Lyne: It could be a combination of speed as far as ExpressionEngine rendering the page. It could be speed as in you have a 12K home page of HTML, but you're pulling in 200 images.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Nevin Lyne: How long does it take for 200 images to load?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees] Sure.

Nevin Lyne: It's static content, but that's a lot of it. Is the hosting provider actually handling that? Is that something that you can push off to... oh, actually, that would be a good example. If you do get stuck on someplace that is slow, GoDaddy may handle the EE side well enough, but if you have image-intensive website, that could be a bottleneck too. Is the CSS, your JavaScript, your images, all of the assets as far as the page is loading, is that actually as fast as it could be?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: There are great solutions out there. There is content distribution networks. We have our own that we are actually building that right now is focused more for our own clients. We will probably eventually open it up as a general tool. But right now you have CloudFlare, which is gaining popularity.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: There are a lot of places that are using it. It sits in front of you website. It caches images, JavaScript. You can have a cache pages. Especially if it's like a brochureware-type corporate website that really you want to stick it on something really bad like GoDaddy, you have options out there that could actually speed it up for not a lot of money. Some of them are even free. CloudFlare I think actually even has a free plan that can handle probably most smaller websites so there are options. Finding those sometimes could be hard. You can always ask. I'm on Twitter a lot. I'm more than happy to share knowledge even if you're not hosting with me as many have found, but that's sort of a hard thing to say. Performance is, I guess, hard to pin down what actually is the performance aspect you're looking at. EE is one, but again your assets, static assets, are another.

Emily Lewis: When it does come to EE for performance, I've seen in threads or in forums other hosts sort of blaming EE for lack of performance. Is that an ever a valid point? Is there anything with regard to how EE when the core is set up when it's installed on in a hosting infrastructure?

Nevin Lyne: Possibly. They could say the same thing if you were running WordPress or Drupal or any other place or any other CMS. It's just happens if you're running EE and they would probably like to blame the software more than themselves, so it's a good out.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: There are some things that could be causing issues. There are white papers out there. Well, actually, there is even been talks at EECl that have touched on a lot of the things that you should look at as best practices using ExpressionEngine, and there are some things in the user manual for EE that also outline over-caching stuff.

Lea Alcantara: Oh.

Nevin Lyne: A lot of EE's current caching technology was really truly designed, well, back when ExpressionEngine 1 was first written. The page caching, the SQL caching, or database caching, all of those are off by default. There are good reasons those are off by default. Depending on the hosting environment, those could be a good thing or those could be a really bad thing. Those were designed when most software is being housed on local hard drives on a single server sitting somewhere. There are some performance aspects as far pulling files off of a hard drive versus over a network.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: When you get into cloud hosting, virtual private servers, some places, store those on local fast RAID arrays inside of a single box, to some people virtualization is actually more part of what you consider Cloud hosting where your server is not physically attached to one physical box sitting somewhere. It can move around between systems, which means it's using some type of centralized storage somewhere with you writing a ton of files out and reading them back constantly over a network is going to have some slower aspects than if it's sitting on a hard drive on a box. Well, it may be fast if you're looking at it locally. It's going to be a quite a bit different once you actually stick it out on a web server somewhere, and this is really sort of where some of those third-party add-ons come into play.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: CE Cache can actually push a lot of what you normally would be caching in ExpressionEngine into files and the file system you're putting it into Memcache which is RAM-based so you are removing a lot of the overhead of using caching, and it's the same thing, Template Morsels actually does that from Solspace as well except that it pushes it into a MySQL server. There are pros and cons to either one. They both are great solutions, but again those may or may not work depending on what your hosting provider can provide you. But one of the things that really I see a lot of people do is they build a website in ExpressionEngine and they go in and they turn on every caching option available without testing anything first.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: Does the site actually performing great before you turned on all that caching, or did you just assume that more caching equals better?

Emily Lewis: That's what I have to admit. Mentally, when I hear caching and I think that must be good.

Nevin Lyne: Maybe. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: I guess sort of a sad part is the fact that even EE 2 is still using a caching code that was written a long, long ago. I had sort of hoped personally that when EE 2 came out or at some point since then, ExpressionEngine 2 would actually use the native caching functionality that exists in CodeIgniter. CodeIgniter actually has a really, really nice caching functionality that was written in actually by one of my staff members, Greg, when he was working at EllisLab before. CodeIgniter can actually write caching to APC, Memcache. It's file caching system is a little bit more advanced than ExpressionEngine is, so I'm hoping that we will eventually see EE actually use first-party, the advanced caching that CodeIgniter actually has in it. I don't have insider information as to why or

why that may not have been used, but a lot of the same things that CodeIgniter can actually deal with caching is actually supplanted by the CE Cache add-on.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: I'm not sure if it's actually tying into the CodeIgniter caching library or not. I've never actually looked at this code, but the caching mechanism that CE Cache supports are really close to the same or are the same that I've seen listed as what CodeIgniter can do. So yeah, don't cache just because you can.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Nevin Lyne: And another thing, again especially if you're new to the ExpressionEngine community, find people's slides. I know the 2011 EEI Conference, there was at least one, if not two talks that actually talked about performance in ExpressionEngine.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: They linked to their slides online, and there are some good resources online as far as best practices, I should say. Most long time EE developers are going to know to turn off things that you're not using in the channel tag or in EE 1, the weblog tag, you have parameters that if you're not using them, disable them.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Speaking of that, because you were mentioning EEI 2011, and it was actually Jacob Russell who did talk on EE in speed optimization, and Emily and I actually had him on [Episode](#)

[55](#) and we've got links right there. We will put it in the show notes, but that particular episode talks all about the different slides and how he specifically made Devot:ee faster, but this was also on the era before CE Cache existed and I believe that since then, Devot:ee is using CE Cache and a whole bunch of other uses to make their site faster also like Switchee and Mark Croxton's stuff with Stash and all that fun stuff.

Nevin Lyne: Yeah, Stash is another one that's new and definitely being used a lot. Again, if the site uses a lot of search functionality or you're doing advanced search stuff to pull in channel entries, I've seen a lot of sites that are using Super Search from Solspace for that. It really does seem to make a big difference, and sometimes, bottom line, I've seen a lot of developers that just simply write their own stuff. There is a couple of developers that they've realized that there are certain sections with their client's home page that are very intensive to develop and they simply know that they only need to be rebuilt once a day. They write little PHP script or something in the template that actually write, or I should as an add-on that builds that chunk and writes it out as a static HTML file and they simply pull that in. That really comes down to whatever your expertise is. Obviously, not every web developer out there is actually going to be a programmer by trade.

Emily Lewis: When it comes to not just choosing a hosting package to start, but maybe you already are in a situation where you have a shared hosting solution, what are the signals to know when you need to move to a different solution such as a VPS or dedicated server?

Nevin Lyne: One I would say the obvious choice would be performance. The other one would simply be if you're getting to that point that you really want to use functionality like CE Cache with the Memcache server or the client is mostly primarily in their advanced wizard. Just as an example, we've had clients in the past that are corporate merger websites. News press releases go out their two big major corporations that are merging into a single one. They end up being a ton of actual national and international news. Usually they have a video of the CEO of both companies talking, blah, blah, blah, and they require all of that to be housed on the hosting provider. They can't shove

the video off to some video service or something. So you have this very static website that still needs to be managed in the content management system. This stuff isn't dynamic. You don't have comments. You don't have users logging in. That's a primary website to stick a Varnish server in front of it. But if you are on a shared hosting provider, if it's a small company that just got butt out by a large company and they are going to have some type of a press release and the site needs to be there for a while, the shared hosting probably isn't going to stand up to that and you probably are not going to have the option to be able to add some advanced functions on top of their virtual servers. Especially if you talk to your hosting provider, the virtual servers they may actually even have more advanced options that they can provide if they move you to virtual or physical dedicated servers.

Emily Lewis: You know, I'm...

Nevin Lyne: Those are some of the markers you should probably look for. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I've yet to be in a situation where I've had to move a client from one to another, and so this is just pure curiosity. Is there downtime to be expected if you move from, let's say, shared hosting to VPS, or is it something that should be kind of seamless? How does that go from the website's perspective?

Nevin Lyne: Probably it's going to depend on the hosting provider and how they actually have technology laid out. Usually a migration for us is really, really minimal downtime because our shared hosting and any of our larger solutions are all behind our load balancers which means that we don't actually need to do an IP address change to move you from shared hosting to a virtual server setup.

Lea Alcantara: Okay.

Nevin Lyne: We can do that at a later point, but the website, after its move, can answer to the shared hosting shared IP address that you've been on for two years. The only thing that really requires downtime in there is when we move the database.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: If it's a static website that nobody is making changes, you probably are not even going to have downtime related because of that. If it's a website that you've got people that are commenting a lot, usually it's a good idea to stick the website off in a system offline like you're doing an upgrade. It really will depend. You will want to talk to your hosting provider and actually coordinate with them. Tell them what you need, why you are moving, and what they can do to help minimize it.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: Obviously, the other good thing to do is, where your client's main traffic coming from? If they are a European or an Asian company, most of their traffic is coming from those regions, you're most likely going to actually want to the move at a different time of the day than you would have if it's a US company.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: You may find out by just talking to your client that, "At 2 o'clock in the afternoon on a Thursday is really, really good for them."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: You'll never know unless you actually talk to your client, and probably the best thing that web developers can do is be frank, talk to your client. Find out what their needs really are as far as uptime. Do they expect their website to always be a small brochureware website or are they looking at making this the social media center of everything that they are doing in their online presence and they really, really don't want any downtime, or they want to be able to throw some coupon special on Facebook and not have their website blow up.



<http://ee-podcast.com/episodes/ee-hosting>

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So I think in short, anticipate, anticipate, anticipate, and ask a lot of client questions.

Nevin Lyne: And ask a lot of questions of your hosting provider too, especially if you are the single point of contact for your clients. If you're handling the set up of hosting for the client rather than you're developing the website and the client said, "Host that here." Make sure that you talk with both sides.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Nevin Lyne: Try as you will to anticipate what your client wants. We all know how well that works.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: But talk with your vendors. If you use a lot, even outside the web hosting, if you use a lot of add-ons from a certain add-on developer. As a web developer, probably a good idea to actually build some rapport with the third-party developers that you're using.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: I think that's all the time we have for today.

Emily Lewis: Thank you so much for joining us, Nevin. In case any of our listeners want to follow up with you. I know you mentioned you're on Twitter, what's your handle?

Nevin Lyne: It's my first name and last name, so it's [@nevinlyne](#), and while I don't guarantee that I will respond to your email, I don't mind people dropping email. It's just nevin@enginehosting.com.

Emily Lewis: Great.

Nevin Lyne: And if I can help, I'm usually quite happy to help.



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Emily Lewis: Yeah, I can definitely attest to that. I've asked you a few stupid questions in our history.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: Usually over tequilas somewhere in Texas.

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah. [Laughs]

Nevin Lyne: But that's a different story. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Thank you again.

Lea Alcantara: Thanks Nevin. Thank you.

Nevin Lyne: Okay, thank you very much for having me on, and I look forward to hearing the podcast.

Lea Alcantara: Perfect. [Music] Now, we would like to thank our sponsors for this podcast, FindBacon.com and Pixel & Tonic.

Emily Lewis: We would also like to thank our partners, EllisLab, EngineHosting and Devot.ee.

Lea Alcantara: And thanks to our listeners for tuning in. If you want to know more about the podcast, make sure you follow us on Twitter [@ee-podcast](https://twitter.com/ee-podcast) or visit our website, ee-podcast.com.

Emily Lewis: Be sure to tune in to our next episode when we will have the famous Leslie Doherty, better known as Mrs. Flinger, talking about Framing Logic in EE.



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Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara.

Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis.

Lea Alcantara: Signing off for the ExpressionEngine Podcast. See you next time.

Emily Lewis: Cheers.

[Music stops]