Simon Free - CFUnited 08 Review

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[Simon Free](#), who spoke on [Bring your CF application to Desktop with AIR](#) at CFUnited, sent us the following review of this years conference.

"I am pretty new to the conference scene. I have only attended a few but have been lucky enough to be a presenter each time. From the experiences I have had from those, I am able to compare them to CFUNITED and whole heartedly say that CFUNITED was by far the best conference I have attended to date. Let's start with the venue. There were a lot of attendees for CFUNITED, so it was important that they chose a large enough space to hold the conference. I feel that the DC Convention Center was a great choice.

Many people feel that the backbone of the conference is not in fact the presenters, but the food. If that is the case, then I would say this conference had a pretty solid backbone. I was very happy with over 80% of the meals and even delighted by the finger foods available to us during the evening networking events. The foods varied from chicken dishes to pasta dishes to even some amazing deserts. There was even some sweetened ice tea that had the ability to put even the healthiest among us into a sugar coma. The only negatives I would say about the food were the bagels and sandwiches, and I only mention those as I always see those at the conferences, and for anyone who regularly attends conferences, they can be pretty monotonous.

There were 2 main networking events during the conference, one on Wednesday and one on Thursday night. I thoroughly enjoyed both of these events. Even though there was an open bar at both the events, this is not in fact what made me enjoy them so much. I enjoyed them because people actually networked! This may sound strange, but I have been to a number of different networking events where people stayed with their crowd of friends and people they know and do not try to talk to new people. This was far from the case with these events. Not only did you have new attendees walking around, introducing themselves and striking up conversations, but you also had seasoned veterans and presenters walking around, meeting and greeting people. I was very excited by the fact that I was able to stand

and have a conversation with the people who I follow and admire the most in the industry and have them actually be excited to have a conversation with me also. There was no looking over my shoulder trying to find the next person to talk to; everyone seemed genuinely interested in talking to people.

For a conference to be successful I believe it is important to have a good selection of presenters, and I feel that the selection for this conference was very nicely balanced. All the speakers I saw were very knowledgeable on their subject and were well equipped to answer questions from the audience. The selection of topics I had to choose from was nicely varied. I love the track approach that the conference takes. Often with conferences they will choose a single technology, but for CFUNITED they had a number of different tracks, such as RIA, Frameworks, Management, and Advanced ColdFusion. This gave us the ability to move away from what we normally learn and experience something new. I got a lot from the number of management sessions I attended as well as from some of the framework sessions. I feel that I was able to make myself into a more well rounded developer and that I will be able to take the knowledge I learnt and not only become a better programmer but also a better business person.

I feel that the organizers (Liz, Nafisa, and Elliot) truly understand the industry and the developers within it. With the help of the advisory committee, they were able to devise a varied and rewarding schedule of presentations that I think was rewarding for everyone. One of the things that stood out most to me and amplified that they care about what they do, was the speakers diner. This was the first conference I experienced where the organizers actually stepped up and said thank you to the presenters. To me it is these little gestures that have the biggest impact.

I would definitely have to say that CFUNITED was a total success for me. I have learnt a lot of new techniques and have walked away with a lot of new ideas. I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations that I gave. Everyone that attended my sessions seemed to be interested in the subject which makes it even more enjoyable as a presenter. The only major negative (and I mean MAJOR!) I have of the conference is that it is once a year. I am not sure how I will last 12 months until CFUNITED 09."

- Simon Free

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