Putting It All Together

Well, we've covered quite a bit in this book! By now, you have a good idea of what Ajax can do for you, and you have a starter kit of examples to get you going. We've introduced you to a number of tools that will make developing Ajax applications easier, and you have no excuse to skip testing! In this chapter, we'll cover some additional topics such as patterns and frameworks and show you a more involved Ajax example.

Introducing Patterns

No technology book is complete these days without at least a casual mention of patterns. As we've said before, Ajax is quite new, so the area has a lot of churn. Also, your knowledge will certainly grow as more and more Web sites take advantage of all Ajax has to offer. Still, we'll touch on a few basic patterns in the following sections. For a more complete list of patterns, point your browser to ajaxpatterns.org. *Ajax Patterns and Best Practices* by Christian Gross (Apress, 2006) also outlines the various patterns which you'll need to quickly write applications that work.

Implementing the Fade Anything Technique (FAT)

One of the really slick things about Ajax is that you can modify just part of a Web page. Rather than repaint the entire view, you can update just the part that changes. While this is a handy technique, it may confuse users who are expecting a full-page refresh. With this in mind, 37signals used the Yellow Fade Technique (YFT) in its flagship Basecamp product as a way of subtly indicating to the user what had changed. YFT does just what it suggests: the part of the page that changed is repainted in yellow, and it slowly fades back to the original background color.

The Fade Anything Technique (FAT) pattern is similar in nature. In essence, the only real change is the color you use to fade; after all, yellow might not be the best option for you. Implementing this technique is not terribly difficult; you can find sample code using your favorite search engine. For an example of this pattern, see Figure 8-1. The new stories are highlighted in gray, which allows users to easily identify the freshest material.