Packing list for Startupbus

Five developer tools to save time on the road

We are only a week away from the StartupBuskick-off party that we'll be hosting at 3scale HQ in San Francisco. Since the bus will leave the next day, it's already time to pack!

What do you need to bring with you on this crazy journey? Besides your usual list of travel essentials, I have some suggestions for tools you'll need as a developer on the bus. These tools will help save you precious time in the face of weak internet connection, rate limiting on APIs, using a language you're not familiar with, and the huge bandwidth needed for communicating with APIs. Check 'em out.

And join us for the party on June 3rd. If you're interested in riding StartupBus this year but haven't signed up yet, there may still be time to apply.

Dash

As developers, we use a lot of different technologies each day, and it's challenging to master all of them. Few people can quote a language's reference or know all of its tricks by heart. We usually have to actually go to the reference to look things up or search for answers on Stack Overflow when we're stuck. Both are great resources and should have answers to most of the issues you'll face, but when you're on a bus, each request to the Internet is cherished – the less you have to use it, the better!

Using Dash you can save documentation references locally for all of the languages and tools you're using. There are also couple of packages available to make a link between Dash and your favorite editor, so you can browse documentation directly from there. I suggest you download all the docsets of stuff you're likely to use on the bus. If you do web, go for JavaScript, jQuery, Underscore, Bootstrap, Rails, Ruby, and Node.js. Even plan ahead to think of tech you might pick while riding. This will save you time.

APItools



Definitely sign up for 3scale's API testing product, APItools. I recommend it for *any* hacker attending a hackathon or coding competition. It will save you time and many headaches!

It's a simple proxy between your app and the API you'll use. It's great to debug API calls and see what's going on. I've used it to bypass some CORS issues I had when I wanted to build an app without using a server, to authenticate to an API passing keys, and to reduce payload between an API and a mobile app. You can also use it do the OAuth dance like we did with Twitter API. Recently, I've also used APItools to connect different APIs together, like to create a a Slack bot for Uber. In the context of StartupBus, you can use it in your team, so you don't have to store API keys in your code.

You can use the cloud version on APItools.com or install it on your own machine.

Postman

Postman is an awesome Chrome extension that will let you execute API calls directly in your browser. It's great to test out and debug calls. They just launched the beta version of Postman Sync, their new product for team collaboration. This one is definitely a "must use" when playing around with APIs.

planb

I just discovered planb a few weeks ago. It's a simple open source project that will, again, save you a lot of time on the bus. Basically it creates a cache version of an API call and serves it to you locally. When you have connection, list all the API calls your app needs. planb will make the calls for you once and keep a local version of it.
Then when you're out of range and can't connect to the internet, you can just call the local cached version. Give it a try.

A prototyping tool

If you don't want to code everything right away, it might be a good idea to create prototypes to test the UI and the interaction of your app. I would highly recommend it so you don't waste time implementing stuff that won't work. There are plenty of tools available, for multiple purposes. The most generic one is Balsamiq, which you can use to prototype desktop and mobile apps. The best part is – it's an app! So you don't need internet connection to use it. Just remember to download it before getting on the bus!

To prototype mobile apps, you can also check proto.io. With this one, your prototype can almost look native. Telerik platform can also help you prototype with a drag and drop interface. It even generates some code for you. The only drawback is that you'll need internet connection for both of these products.

I'm sure you can think of more great tools that'll be useful for the buspreneurs – some specific for designers, some for hustlers. We're curious about what's on your packing list. Tweet at @picsoung and @3scale to let us know which tool you're using for what :)