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Subject: Re: getting structure elements by tag name string  
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 08 Jan 2003 13:40:55 GMT  
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s@visita2.die.upm.es (s@visita2.die.upm.es) writes:

> I try to use a structure as a bad substitute for a hash map (hashes or  
> associative lists or dictionaries or anything similar don't exist in  
> IDL, do they?)

Humm. I guess I'm used to thinking of IDL as  
nothing \*more\* than one giant hash map. Are you  
familiar with the WHERE function, or with array  
operations, in general?

> Suppose I have a structure like this:  
> s = {a:7,b:9}  
>  
> and I have a variable that contains a tag name:  
> tag = 'a'  
>  
> Now I want to put the value of the structures element with name tag into a  
> new variable called value:  
> value = s.tag  
>  
> This doesn't work of course, because tag is undefined for this structure.  
> But how can I get this the elements value?  
>  
> I found a somewhat crude way:  
> res = execute('value = ' + 's.' + tag)  
>  
> That works, but it's really ugly. Is there a better way to do this?

I should think so. Hash tables generally have ways to  
add, delete, and find items. That almost sounds like  
a linked list to me.

[http://www.dfanning.com/programs/linked\\_list\\_\\_define.pro](http://www.dfanning.com/programs/linked_list__define.pro)

> And, is there a way to delete an element from a structure?

Do you mean delete a "field" from a structure? If you have  
anonymous structures (see your "s" structure, above), then  
you could just re-define your structure with that field:

```
s = (a:s.a)
```

Cheers,

David

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