



# Introducing Office Live

**T**he World Wide Web was invented for sharing research papers among particle physicists. Scientists and nerds were really excited. The rest of us yawned. After all, what can you possibly do with an invention that encourages you to read incomprehensible reports filled with Greek letters?

Just about everything, it turns out.

The Web is perhaps the most versatile invention since the wheel. Geeks, big corporations, small businesses, institutions, governments, presidential candidates, artists, poets, astronauts, conmen, pornographers, and terrorists—they all have web sites these days. Even my elementary-school-going children have inquired about the possibility of having their own web sites in exchange for good behavior.

Just a few years ago, building web sites was like brain surgery—mere mortals couldn't do it themselves. You had to hire geeks with goatees and long hair to get a web site up and running. These people usually wore Coke-bottle glasses and spoke only in acronyms. Not only did you have to pay them a king's ransom, but you also had to pick up the tab for their pizza and Coke, which often made their pay look like a real bargain.

Not anymore.

Now anyone can build his or her own web site, thanks to sophisticated yet easy-to-use site-building tools. A recent addition to such tools is Microsoft Office Live, the subject of this book.

In this chapter, I'll give you an overview of Office Live. I'll explain how Office Live spares you pain and suffering by performing a good deal of work behind the scenes. I'll go on to compare its three editions and discuss the features and strengths of each. Finally, I'll help you choose the edition that's right for building your web site.

But you can't really appreciate what Office Live does for you unless you know how you would build and publish web sites with your bare hands. So that's where I'll begin.

## Building Web Sites with Your Bare Hands

To build and publish a web site, you need to do a lot more than simply create web pages. The process consists of six steps:

1. Register a domain name.
2. Build web pages.
3. Find space for your site on the Web.

4. Set up e-mail accounts.
5. Publish your site.
6. Point your domain name to your web server.

## Registering a Domain Name

A *domain name* is really the address of your site on the Web. If you want people to type `http://www.yourdomain.com` in their browsers, then `www.yourdomain.com` is your domain name. Actually, that's not the whole truth, but it's good enough of a definition for now. I'll revisit domain names in Chapter 2.

Only one person or organization can own a particular domain name. The only way to enforce this rule is to put someone in charge of managing domain names. The organizations that manage domain names are called *domain registrars*, or *registrars*, for short.

Registrars maintain records about a domain and charge an annual fee for the service. Domain records contain information such as the person or the organization who owns the domain, the contact information of the person who is responsible for the domain, information about the computers in the domain, and ways to find those computers on the Internet.

Typically, you open an account at a registrar's web site. Then you choose a domain name that hasn't been snapped up by someone else yet. After supplying some personal information and a credit-card number, the domain name is officially yours.

After you publish your web site, you must come back to your registrar's web site to point the domain name to your web site.

## Building Web Pages

The first step in building web pages is to decide what goes on them. Web pages typically contain some text and a few images. The text on your web pages is called *copy*. You have to write the copy, find suitable images to go with it, and transform this content into formatted web pages.

Web pages have their own language called *Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)*. HTML text looks more or less like English text typed by a typist of questionable skill—English words are interspersed with angular brackets, colons, exclamation marks, and other keyboard characters. It's not exceptionally hard to learn. If you master HTML, you will have complete control over the look and feel of your web pages, which is why professional designers like to hand-code all their pages in a text editor.

If you don't want to abandon your present career in favor of web design, you would do well to buy a site-design tool such as Microsoft Expression Web or Adobe GoLive. Designing sites with tools such as these is a lot easier than going the Notepad route.

However, these tools usually have a learning curve. If you think you can design a complete web site in one Saturday afternoon with these tools while watching TV with your kids, you're in for a rude awakening.

Still, building a web site with these tools is not impossible. If you persist with them, you will eventually have a web site, even if it does nothing more than sit on your computer's hard disk.

## Finding Space on the Web

A site that sits on your C: drive may be a source of pride and joy for *you*, but it's of little use to others if they can't view it. To make the site available to everyone, you have to move it to the hard drive of a specialized computer on the Web. These computers are called *web servers*.

Unless you have plenty of money and an overpowering desire to install and maintain web servers, the job is best left to professionals. People who maintain web servers for a living are called *hosting service providers (HSPs)*.

### SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

#### Web Hosting

- **Domain name:** The name your web site is known by. My web site is `www.acxede.net`. For all practical purposes, `acxede.net` is my domain name. I'll revisit domain names in greater detail in Chapter 2.
- **Domain-name registration:** The process of reserving a domain name. Once you register a domain name, nobody else can get it.
- **Domain registrars:** Authorized organizations that reserve domain names on your behalf and manage the necessary records for an annual fee.
- **Server:** A computer that fulfills requests for data or service. For example, a file server serves files and documents, and a database server answers queries about the data stored on it. Technically speaking, a computer can't fulfill requests; a software program running on it does. The software program is also called a server.
- **Web server:** A computer dedicated to serving web pages. As stated previously, a computer can't serve web pages by itself; it needs a special software program to do so. The software program is also called a web server.
- **Web storage space:** The amount of disk space available to you on your web server for storing your pages, pictures, and other documents.
- **Bandwidth:** The total amount of data that can be sent to and from your web server in a given period—usually a month. Whenever someone requests a web page, the web server sends back the HTML page along with the images and other types of information associated with it. These transfers consume bandwidth.
- **Internet service provider (ISP):** The company that connects your computer to the Internet. If you have a DSL connection, your phone company is usually your ISP. If you have a cable connection, your cable company is your ISP.
- **Hosting service provider (HSP):** The company that connects your web server (and, therefore, your web site) to the Internet. In a way, an HSP is also an ISP. Calling it an HSP helps you distinguish between the Internet connection to your computer and the Internet connection to your web server.

- **Mail server:** A computer dedicated to processing e-mail for a domain. The computer runs a software application that is also called a mail server.
- **E-mail account:** A unique e-mail address in a domain. For example, `info@acxede.net` and `webmaster@acxede.net` are both e-mail accounts.
- **Mail forwarding:** Automatically redirecting e-mail from one e-mail address to another e-mail address. Many small businesses set up multiple mailboxes, such as `sales@somedomain.com` and `support@somedomain.com`, and then forward all mail to one e-mail address, such as `john@somedomain.com`. It helps them appear larger than they really are.
- **Hosting plan:** A package of services that usually includes a web server, domain-name management tools, a mail server, a certain number of e-mail accounts, a fixed amount of bandwidth, some storage space, and an online application to manage the account. HSPs charge a monthly fee for the package.

HSPs offer *hosting plans*, which are preconfigured bundles of their services. A typical hosting plan includes the following:

- An allotted amount of space on the web server's hard disk
- A fixed amount of bandwidth, which is the amount of data that can flow to and from your web site
- A certain number of mailboxes with e-mail addresses that can be customized, such as `you@yourdomain.com`
- An assortment of features, typically known by three- and four-letter acronyms such as ASP, PHP, ODBC, and SQL, which determine what you can do with your web server
- A number of grand-sounding but meaningless features, such as 99.99998% up-time, to fluff up the plan

Hosting plans have more options to choose from than cell-phone plans. To make an informed choice, you need the ability to decide whether 2 GB of extra bandwidth and three fewer e-mail addresses will compensate for 1 GB of extra disk space and an additional \$1.95 a month. Even geeks can't make such decisions easily. In fact, eeny, meeny, miny, moe might be the best way to choose a hosting plan.

## Setting Up E-mail Accounts

Strictly speaking, setting up e-mail accounts has nothing to do with your web site. But you will invariably have links on your web pages for visitors to contact you via e-mail. For these links to work, you must have working e-mail accounts. And you might as well set them up before your web site goes live.

Your HSP usually includes a mail server in your hosting plan and gives you an administrator's account on it. You have to sign in to that account on the HSP's web site to create e-mail accounts in your domain and set up rules for processing your e-mail.

## Publishing Your Site

Once you find a home for your site on the Web, you have to transfer the site from your C: drive to the web server using a program called an *FTP client*. Most operating systems, including Windows, have FTP clients built right in. Browsers can act as FTP clients too. However, these free options are usually difficult to use. Almost always, you are better off buying a commercial FTP client instead. Your HSP gives you an FTP account, which you can use to connect to your web server from your FTP client.

FTP clients are whiners. From time to time, they come up with novel excuses for not transferring your files as instructed. But it's not really their fault. File transfer across the Internet is not always reliable, especially if your files are really large. Fortunately, if you retry failed transfers, they usually succeed.

## Pointing Your Domain Name to Your Web Site

Even though you have registered a domain name, built your web pages, and copied them to your web server, you're still not done. People who type `www.yourdomain.com` in their browsers still can't reach your web site. For that to happen, you must set up a pointer in your domain registration records that establishes a relationship between your domain name and your web server.

Your HSP will supply you with a couple of numbers that seem to have too many decimal points. These strange numbers are called *IP addresses*. You must sign in to your account with your domain registrar and enter these IP addresses in your domain records. These entries link your domain name to your web server and your mail server. They are called *name server* entries.

Now you're done.

But don't be in a hurry to type your domain name in your browser. You have to pace up and down, like an expectant father, for about 24 hours before the link actually begins to work. This whole process is not always smooth. Many things can go wrong. When they do, you usually get error messages that, like the sections of the penal code, are expressed only in numbers, such as 403.9, 404, and 500.13. Troubleshooting these errors is often quite tedious, which is why the pizza-eating, Coke-guzzling guys charge an arm and a leg to fix them.

## Thankfully, There's an Easier Way

As you can see, building web sites with your bare hands is quite a convoluted process in which you must perform the following tasks:

- Sign up for two new accounts—one with your registrar and one with your HSP.
- Manage four sets of user IDs and passwords—one for your registrar's web site, one for your HSP's web site, one for your FTP account, and one for your mail-server administration account.
- Install and learn two software programs—your web site design tool and your FTP client.
- Log in to these accounts several times and in the correct sequence to tweak settings.

Why can't there be a service that does all this for you with a single registration? Ideally, such a service would

- Register a domain name for you
- Open a hosting account
- Set up a mail server
- Include a site design tool
- Feature an FTP client, or even better, allow you to build your web site directly on your web server
- Set up domain pointers for your web site in your domain records
- Provide tools for managing your web site after you build it

As a matter of fact, there is such a service—Microsoft Office Live.

## What Is Office Live?

The name *Microsoft Office Live* has a familiar ring to it. It sounds like an edition of the Microsoft Office of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint fame. It's not.

Let me repeat that.

*Office Live has absolutely nothing to do with Microsoft Office.* It's actually a bundle of services for taking your small business online.

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**Note** The marketing folks at Microsoft often come up with confusing names for their products. Then they add to the confusion by changing the already confusing names. And they repeat this process several times.

My teacher at Harvard Extension School, David S. Platt, came up with a term for this phenomenon—Microsoft Nomenclature Foul Up (MINFU). He even tried to get it added to Oxford English Dictionary, but the good folks at OED declined politely, citing lack of common usage.

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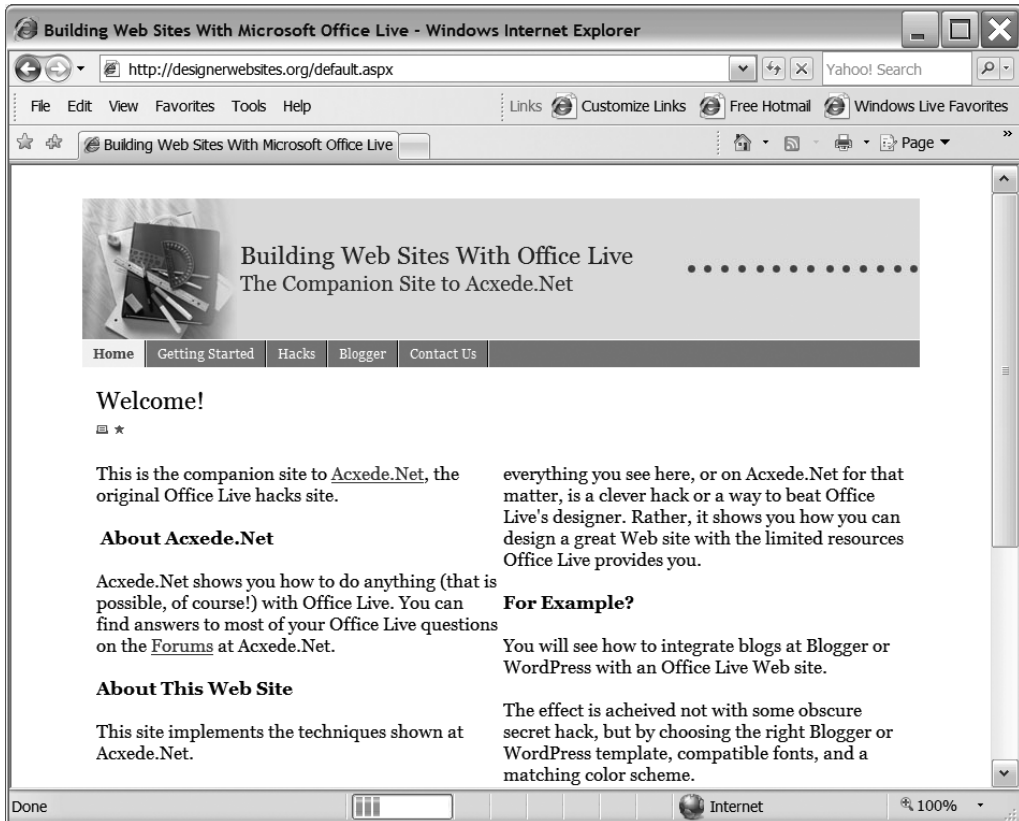
Office Live comes in three flavors: Office Live Basics, Office Live Essentials, and Office Live Premium, which happen to be marketing terms for Free Web Site, Cheap Web Site, and Not-So-Cheap Web Site, respectively.

## Office Live Basics

As its name suggests (for once, thank goodness!), Office Live Basics is the entry-level edition of Office Live. It is a web-presence package complete with domain-name registration, web-site hosting, simple site-building tools, domain-branded e-mail accounts, and assorted bells and whistles. And it is free.

You read that right. *Free*. No strings attached.

Whenever the provider of an online service touts a free offering, the first question that should come to mind is “Who is paying for it?” At the top of the list of suspects are, of course, advertisers. And Office Live is indeed supported by revenue from advertisements. The advertisements, however, do not appear on the public face of a web site built with Office Live, as you can see in Figure 1-1.



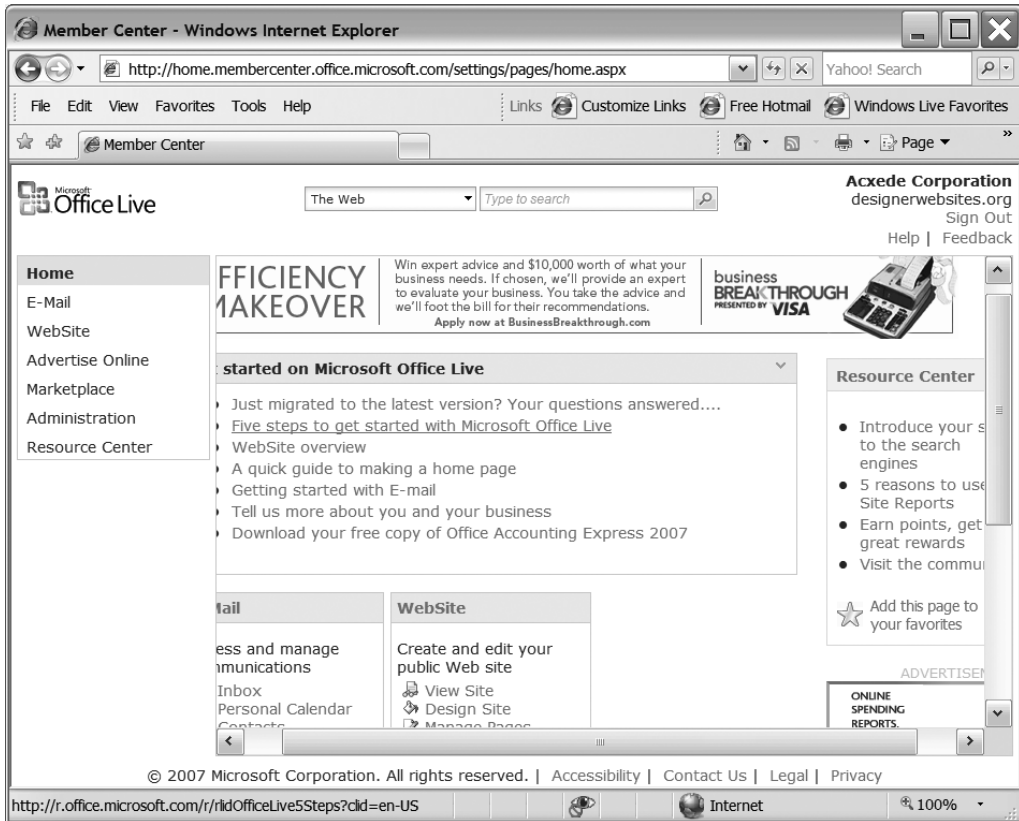
**Figure 1-1.** Look, Ma! No ads! Advertisements don't appear on the public face of Office Live sites.

Only the site's administrative interface (see Figure 1-2) and e-mail pages carry advertisements. Owners and administrators are the only people who can see these pages; visitors to the site can't.

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**Note** There was a time when you had to pay \$25 to get an e-mail address. But now, thanks to the change in the revenue model, e-mail is largely free. I believe that reliable, good-quality hosting will go the same route. Someone had to take the first step in that direction, and Microsoft has taken it with Office Live.

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**Figure 1-2.** Advertisements appear only in a web site's management interface. Only you will see them.

## SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

### Web Sites and Web Applications

- **Public web site:** What *web site* generally means. Public web sites are visible to anyone on the Web.
- **Intranet:** A web site for the use of people within an organization. It houses information that you would not normally share with outsiders. Retirement-plan and health-insurance documents, internal memos, announcements, and company-wide telephone directories are examples of information you can expect to find on intranets.
- **Extranet:** A web site for sharing information with clients, partners, associates, and other stakeholders outside the organization, but not with the general public. An extranet site could deliver custom monthly reports to clients and make billing information available to them online. This kind of information is obviously private, and it is usually protected by passwords.



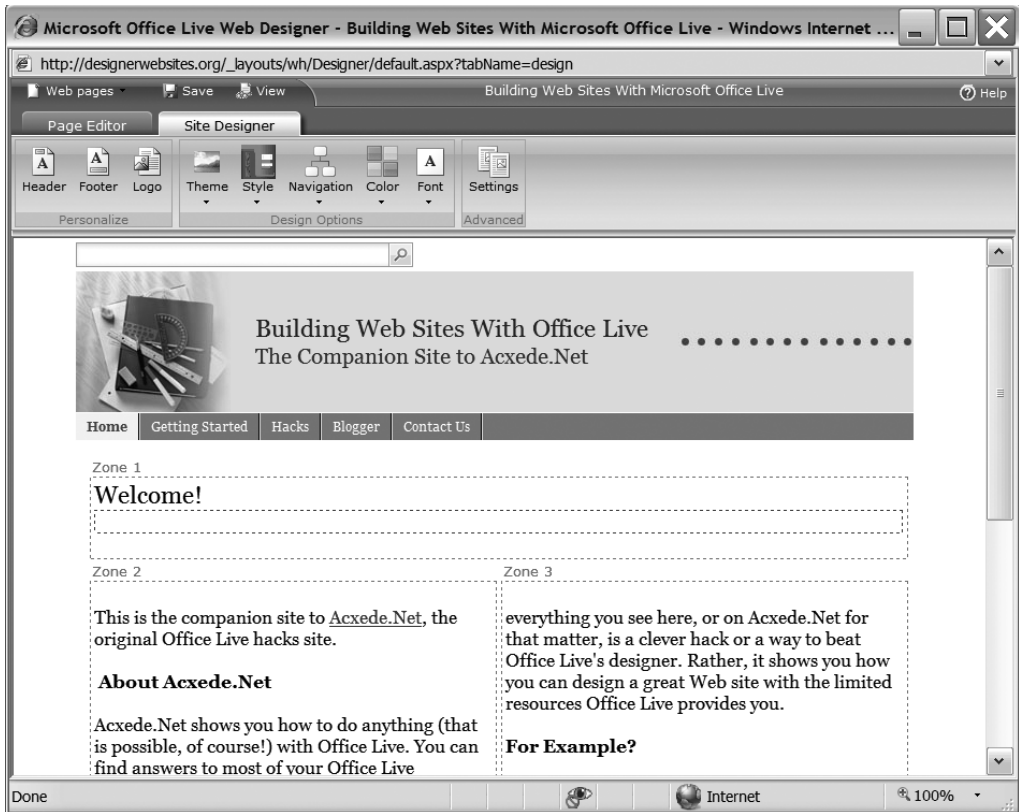
- **Application server:** A software program that processes business rules and provides business logic to other software programs. Application servers can be run on web server computers to generate web pages on the fly. Blogs and forums are examples of web-based applications that use application servers. In fact, Office Live itself is an application that runs on an application server called ASP.NET.
- **Microsoft Office SharePoint Server:** Microsoft's platform for building intranets and extranets. SharePoint Server is quite a sophisticated application, and it requires an elaborate setup, so it is mostly used by larger organizations. Office Live's "applications" are built with SharePoint technology. Microsoft is attempting to bring SharePoint technology within the grasp of smaller organizations with Office Live Essentials and Office Live Premium.
- **Site statistics or traffic reports:** A detailed account of visits and visitors to your site. Site statistics can tell you a lot about how visitors use your site. Based on the reports, you can make an educated guess about what visitors like on your site and what turns them away. You can use such information to improve your site. Office Live has site statistics built in. They are called Site Reports.

For a free package, Office Live includes quite a few features:

- Registration and annual renewal of one domain name
- Twenty-five domain-branded e-mail accounts (i.e., you@yourdomain.com), 2 GB of storage space per account, antivirus software, and a configurable spam filter
- 500 MB of disk storage space
- 10 GB bandwidth
- Web Designer, a built-in site-design and web-page-creation tool
- Detailed web site traffic reports
- adManager, a tool for purchasing and managing keywords for Windows Live Search
- Free technical support by e-mail

To build a web site with Office Live Basics, you must use Web Designer; you can't use any other tool. Web Designer is geared toward novice users and is therefore very easy to use. Figure 1-3 shows what Web Designer looks like. I'll walk you through it in Chapters 9 and 10.

If you don't know HTML or don't want to bother learning it, Office Live Basics is perfect for you. However, the ease of use comes at the cost of flexibility. If you know HTML, you won't be able to put your skills to use by building your site with a tool such as Microsoft Expression Web or Adobe GoLive. And if you already have a web site, you might have to scrap it and build a new one from scratch with Office Live's Web Designer.



**Figure 1-3.** You can build web pages with Office Live's Web Designer even if you don't know HTML.

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**Note** Only Office Live Basics subscribers are limited to using Web Designer. If you're an Office Live Essentials or an Office Live Premium subscriber, you can use a design tool of your choice instead. However, you can only use existing sites from other hosting providers if they are plain HTML sites. If your site is built with a dynamic page-generation technology such as Active Server Pages (ASP) or PHP Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP), you won't be able to reuse your pages; you will have to start over.

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The domain-branded e-mail accounts that come with Office Live Basics are glorified Hotmail accounts, although they have the look and feel of the new Windows Live Hotmail. They are web-mail accounts. You can't use e-mail clients such as Microsoft Outlook or Microsoft Outlook Express with them, nor can you forward mail automatically to another e-mail address—something that people who have multiple e-mail addresses like to do.

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**Note** *Windows Live Hotmail* is yet another MINFU. A few years ago, Microsoft rechristened Hotmail to MSN Mail, but people still called it Hotmail. When Microsoft unveiled the *Live* platform, MSN Mail's name was changed to *Windows Live Mail*. This confused people to no end. Predictably, the service was rechristened to Windows Live Hotmail.

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Office Live lists Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2007 as a feature of Office Live subscriptions. It is a surprisingly complete accounting package. But just about anyone can download it free of charge, even without an Office Live subscription. The same is true for adManager, a tool for creating your own keyword-based ads for Live Search, Microsoft's new search engine.

Subscribers get free technical support for any aspect of their Office Live Basics account, but only via e-mail. While it can't beat phone support, it is not a bad deal for a free service. And the folks there actually reply to your questions—at the time of this writing, at least. You usually get a reply within just a couple of hours.

Office Live Basics is an appropriate package for individuals and small businesses in need of simple web sites with a few pages and domain-branded e-mail addresses. If you don't have a web site, if you're unhappy with your current web site, or if you're still making do with Hotmail addresses, take a look at Office Live Basics. It is a rare opportunity to get something for nothing.

## Office Live Essentials

Office Live Essentials is Office Live Basics' big brother. But it is not free. A subscription to Office Live Essentials sets you back \$19.95 per month. In exchange, you get everything you get with an Office Live Basics subscription, along with several additional features and a few feature upgrades.

Office Live Essentials' features include the following:

- Registration and annual renewal of one domain name
- Fifty domain-branded e-mail accounts (such as you@yourdomain.com), 2 GB of storage space per account, antivirus software, and a configurable spam filter
- 1 GB of disk storage space
- 15 GB bandwidth
- Web Designer, a built-in site-design and web-page-creation tool, as well as the ability to use a tool of your choice, such as Microsoft Expression Web or, if you're feeling especially masochistic, Notepad
- Detailed web-site traffic reports
- Office Live Business Contact Manager, a rudimentary customer relationship management (CRM) package

- Microsoft SharePoint-based workspaces for ten users with 500 MB of total storage space for the workspaces
- adManager, a tool for purchasing and managing keywords for Windows Live Search
- Toll-free phone support

## FAQ

### **Can I Switch Between Web Designer and a Tool of My Choice?**

Yes and no. If you're an Office Live Essentials or an Office Live Premium subscriber, you can switch between design tools, but the site you build with Web Designer won't be compatible with other tools. In other words, if you switch tools, you must abandon your current site and start building it again with the new tool.

However, all bets are off if you're an Office Live Basics subscriber—Web Designer is your only option.

Office Live Essentials doesn't provide precanned applications, such as shopping carts and community builders; you'll have to write your own code for them, if you can, using a scripting language. This is harder to do than you might think, because Office Live doesn't permit you to place any server-side code in your pages.

## FAQ

### **What's Server-Side Code?**

A typical application running on your desktop has one or more windows, or *screens*, as some people like to call them. Because the application runs entirely on your computer, it knows how to pass information from one window to the next. It also knows how to store, or *cache*, the information for reference further down the road. Programmers refer to this as *maintaining state*. Desktop applications, therefore, are often called *stateful* applications.

With web applications, however, the story is entirely different. Each web page you see in your browser is the result of an independent request to the web server. One web page doesn't know anything about the next. Web pages in their simplest form don't maintain state. As a result, they are *stateless*.

Stateless applications can only solve the simplest of problems. To build advanced features into your web applications, you would somehow need to make them stateful. In other words, you would need some kind of mechanism that would help you store information between page requests.

Such a mechanism does exist. It's called a *session*. When you point your browser at a stateful web application, it toils with your browser to simulate an environment that appears stateful to you. However, to simulate a stateful environment, the web server must be able to execute programming code. Such code is called *server-side code*. Most web applications that you take for granted—online stores, chat rooms, blogs, and bulletin boards, to name a few—need server-side code.

Server-side code basically gets processed on the server, and then the results of that processing are sent to your web browser (the client) to be displayed, whereas client-side code is sent from the server to the client unprocessed, and then processed and displayed all on the client. The advantage with server-side code is that pages can be made a lot more dynamic (i.e., things can be updated depending on different conditions, and different information can be shown) than with client-side code alone.

The main disadvantage of server-side code is complexity. Writing server-side code requires extensive training in computer programming. It is not a skill set Office Live subscribers are likely to possess. Trying to write server-side code without adequate training can produce disastrous results. Therefore, Office Live doesn't allow server-side code.

Office Live Essentials' subscription includes domain-branded e-mail addresses for 50 users—an upgrade over the 25 for Basics. And you may use Microsoft Outlook as your e-mail client. But Essentials' most significant improvement over Basics is *Office Live Business Contact Manager*, a rudimentary CRM application. Business Contact Manager is a derivative of the *Business Contact Manager* application in the Small Business edition of Microsoft Office. You can use it to synchronize mail and customer information with Microsoft Outlook. If you decide on Outlook as your e-mail client, then you'll get the added advantage of being able to manage multiple e-mail accounts from one place.

To justify the \$19.95 monthly tab, Office Live Essentials includes Microsoft SharePoint-based *workspaces* for ten users. Workspaces are configurable storage locations for storing and sharing information. You can think of workspaces as temporary web sites that you can create on the fly. You can then grant access to your workspaces to specific people. In effect, Office Live Essentials workspaces enable you to create simple intranet.

Office Live Essentials offers better technical support too. In addition to e-mail-based support, you can call a toll-free number to get your questions answered right away.

## Office Live Premium

Office Live Premium is the proverbial Cadillac of the Office Live lineup. Its subscription lightens your wallet (or rather loads up your credit card, to be precise) by \$39.95 every month. In exchange, you get everything you get with an Office Live Essentials subscription, along with even more additional features and feature upgrades.

A subscription to Office Live Premium includes the following:

- Registration and annual renewal of one domain name
- Fifty domain-branded e-mail accounts (such as you@yourdomain.com), 2 GB of storage space per account, antivirus software, and a configurable spam filter
- 2 GB of disk storage space
- 20 GB bandwidth
- Web Designer, a built-in site-design and web-page-creation tool, as well as the ability to use a tool of your choice instead, such as Adobe GoLive, Microsoft FrontPage, Microsoft Expression Web, or Notepad

- Detailed web site reports
- Office Live Business Contact Manager, a rudimentary CRM package
- Online “applications” for managing employee, customer, and project data
- Microsoft SharePoint-based workspaces for 20 users and 1 GB of total storage space for the workspaces
- adManager, a tool for purchasing and managing keywords for Windows Live Search
- Toll-free phone support

Office Live Premium ramps up storage space and the number of accounts as compared to Office Live Essentials, but the crown jewel is its collaborative functionality—*applications* and *sites*.

Like the workspaces in Office Live Essentials, Office Live Premium’s applications and sites have their roots in Microsoft’s SharePoint technology. Applications are views of custom data lists. They are not programs, as the word *application* commonly implies. So you can’t use these applications to file your taxes or to keep your accounts. The Expense application in Office Live Premium, for example, is just a list of your expenses with a custom view. You can’t transfer the expenses to Intuit QuickBooks, like a real application could do. Microsoft has precanned approximately 30 such applications for various purposes, such as listing employees, managing contacts, tracking company assets, and monitoring the progress of a project.

A site, in Office Live Premium’s lingo, is a container to group and hold applications. You can create a Customer site, for example, by grouping customer lists and customer projects together. You can then give selective access to the site to your colleagues or even to customers. All those who have access to the site can share the data and documents on the site, which is a much better alternative than e-mailing documents and notes back and forth.

You can use sites creatively. If you have a meeting with a client, you can create a “Meeting Workspace” site that has the meeting agenda, related documents, and reference materials. Or you can create a “Team Site” to exchange documents and information with members of your team. You can, in effect, create intranets and extranets at will.

However, Office Live Premium is appropriate only for those businesses that have the need for people to share a lot of information and documents in collaborative projects. If you’re a one-man plumbing service, you may not need collaborative features. But if you’re tired of e-mailing documents back and forth, sending copies of the same information to lots of different people, figuring out which of the 200 copies of the same document is the latest, or repeatedly collating information that you must extract from communications from the same set of people, Office Live Premium will make perfect sense to you.

You can quickly compare the features of Office Live’s three versions by scanning Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1.** *Feature Summary of Microsoft Office Live Editions*

Feature	Office Live Basics	Office Live Essentials	Office Live Premium
<b>Public Web Site</b>			
Domain-name registration	Included	Included	Included
Storage space	500 MB	1 GB	2 GB
Ability to buy additional storage space	Yes	Yes	Yes
Built-in Web Designer tool	Included	Included	Included
Ability to customize web sites with other tools	No	Yes	Yes
<b>E-mail and Communication</b>			
Custom-domain mailboxes	25	50	50
Windows Mobile/Smartphone access	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web mail access	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outlook synchronization and integration	No	Yes	Yes
Windows Live Messenger	Included	Included	Included
<b>Support</b>			
Free support via e-mail	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free support via toll-free phone number	No	Yes	Yes
<b>E-commerce</b>			
Ability to advertise online with adManager	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ability to sell on eBay with Office Accounting Express 2007	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>SharePoint-Based Business Applications</b>			
Workspaces	Not included	Included	Included
Business Contact Manager	Not included	Included	Included
Document Manager	Not included	Not included	Included
Project Manager	Not included	Not included	Included
Time Manager	Not included	Not included	Included
Company Administration	Not included	Not included	Included
Ability to install custom/third-party applications	No	No	Yes
Workspaces/application storage space		500 MB	1 GB
Ability to buy additional space	No	Yes	Yes
Number of workspace user accounts		10	20
Ability to buy additional user accounts	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Fees and Charges (*)</b>			
Monthly service charge	None	\$19.95	\$39.95
Additional domain names (per year)	\$8.95	\$8.95	\$8.95
Additional bandwidth (24 GB/per month)	\$1.95	\$1.95	\$1.95
Additional storage space (500 MB/per month)	\$4.95	\$4.95	\$4.95

\* The charges, of course, are subject to change.

## FAQ

### What Happened to Office Live Collaboration Beta?

During Office Live's beta days, it also had three editions: Office Live Basics Beta, Office Live Essentials Beta, and Office Live Collaboration Beta. But they were somewhat different from their present-day counterparts.

Office Live Basics Beta was the entry-level package even then. Its features were more or less comparable to those of Office Live Basics. Office Live Essentials Beta, on the other hand, had more in common with the present-day Office Live Premium; it was then the high-end edition. Office Live Collaboration Beta was the odd one. It did not include domain registration or a public web site. It only had the SharePoint-based collaborative features of Office Live Essentials Beta.

At some point, Microsoft decided that Office Live Collaboration didn't make sense. Rightly so, if you ask me. But now Microsoft has a problem on its hands—what to do with the Office Live Collaboration Beta accounts. Microsoft chose to leave those accounts in the beta program. Their future is somewhat unclear.

If you're one of the Office Live Collaboration Beta subscribers, you have my sympathies.

## What Office Live Is Not

Although Office Live packs plenty of wallop, even in its free version, it's not a suitable platform for some types of web sites. You can't build the following types of web sites with it:

- Online storefronts (Yes, you can sell on eBay using Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2007, but that's not the same thing as selling on your own web site.)
- Blogs
- Communities
- Bulletin boards
- Streaming audio and video
- Complex web sites that require server-side code

It's important to understand that you don't get these features even if you subscribe to Office Live's most expensive edition, Office Live Premium. The Office Live platform is just not appropriate for such applications.

However, these deficiencies shouldn't deter you from considering Office Live for your web site. Many small businesses only need calling-card web sites—that is, sites that provide information about their businesses, products, and services. Office Live is the perfect package for such sites.

Before you dismiss Office Live, ask yourself whether your site really needs a blog or a community. A blog with a daily entry during its first week of existence—but nothing after that—is very common on the Web. Do your clients really need to know your opinions? Would they *want* to read your opinions? Would these features really add value to your web site? A blog for the sake of simply having a blog makes little sense.

A little soul-searching may lead you to conclude that these features are not the must-haves you once thought them to be. Office Live may be the right platform for you after all.



## Summary

Office Live is Microsoft's new web-presence platform for individuals and small businesses. It is a complete package that you can manage with a single account. You can build a simple but attractive web site with Office Live without spending a penny. Or you can use it to build sophisticated, collaborative online environments for a low monthly fee.

In this chapter, I gave you an overview of Office Live's features. Here are the important points that you should remember:

- Building a simple web site is not impossibly hard, but you need a good understanding of how the Web works, familiarity with several site-building tools, and a few online accounts to manage it all.
- Office Live attempts to simplify your life by providing everything you need to build a web site under a single account.
- Office Live comes in three versions—Basics, Essentials, and Premium. Basics is the free version and is appropriate for simple web sites. Essentials and Premium require a monthly subscription. These versions are appropriate for those who need collaborative intranets or extranets in addition to a simple web site.
- All editions of Office Live include a built-in design tool called Web Designer. It's great for building simple but attractive web sites without spending a penny.
- Office Live Essentials and Office Live Premium include tools for collaborating online with Microsoft's SharePoint technology, but they both require a monthly subscription.
- Office Live is not the right platform for building advanced web applications, such as online stores and communities, which require server-side programming. But if your requirements fall within the realm of its capabilities, Office Live is an irresistible deal.

In the next chapter, I'll go through the requirements for opening a new Office Live account and help you prepare to sign up for one.

