

Introduction

A LITTLE OVER THREE YEARS AGO, when I completed my sixth book entitled *Scot Hillier's COM+ Programming with Visual Basic* (SAMS, 2000), I thought I was done with technical writing. Since then, I have seen some new technologies emerge, but none that were compelling enough to coax me back to the keyboard. That all changed when I got my hands on the beta of the Microsoft Office System.

Although the Office System certainly has its limitations, several elements really got my attention. The developer in me had a hard time resisting the .NET architecture upon which SharePoint Portal Server (SPS) is based. All true developers love to tinker with products, and the extensive API associated with SPS made development fun again.

From the business perspective, I saw the possibility to create some solutions that would solve real issues that were currently plaguing our business—we needed to organize our file systems and create some light process automation. Both of these tasks are achievable for small and mid-sized organizations using the Office System.

Ultimately, it was the combination of interesting development projects and the promise of improving some business processes that drove me to suggest the book to the Apress staff. In fact, this is really the perspective I tried to bring to the book. I wanted to combine my business needs and programming skills to create a vision of how to use the Office System. You can judge how well that goal was met.

Who This Book Is For

Many years ago, I asked a colleague what professional developers wanted in a book. He responded simply, “Code they can steal.” I have never forgotten this advice and it has been the foundation of every book I have written since. This book is therefore targeted squarely at the intermediate to advanced developer in a corporate environment with a pending SPS project. Therefore, readers should be well versed in .NET development with either VB.NET or C# in the Microsoft Visual Studio environment.

How This Book Is Organized

I began my technical career training professional developers in Visual Basic 3.0. As a result, my writing style and chapter organization reflect a training class.

Each chapter in the book begins with an explanation of the appropriate foundational concepts followed by practical exercises to reinforce the explanation. A brief description of each chapter follows.

Chapter 1, SharePoint Business Solutions: This chapter is an overview of SPS and the Office System from a business perspective.

Chapter 2, SharePoint Products and Technologies Overview: This chapter is an overview of SPS and the Office System from a technical perspective, and it contains the detailed instructions necessary to set up the development environment for this book. All of the exercises in the book assume the environment established in this chapter.

Chapter 3, SharePoint Portal Server Basics: This chapter is a detailed look at SPS features and functions and contains detailed instructions on setting up the basic portal.

Chapter 4, SharePoint Content Development: This chapter examines the different ways to create content for SPS that do not explicitly require programming.

Chapter 5, Building Web Parts: This chapter thoroughly investigates the web part life cycle and all the steps necessary to create web parts for SPS.

Chapter 6, The Microsoft Single Sign-On Service: This chapter covers the single sign-on capabilities of SPS and how to use them in web part development.

Chapter 7, Advanced Web Part Development: This chapter examines all of the advanced web part concepts. These include the processes of implementing interfaces for web part interoperability, custom web part properties, and client-side web parts.

Chapter 8, The Microsoft Office System: This chapter focuses on development for Microsoft Office products. In particular, the chapter covers Smart Documents and custom Research Services.

Chapter 9, Programming SharePoint Services: This chapter focuses on programming SharePoint Services through the .NET API. Readers will create a custom workflow engine and create several web parts to overcome limitations found in SharePoint Services.

Chapter 10, SharePoint Portal Server Administration: This chapter presents the basic administration tools associated with SPS.

Chapter 11, Office Solution Accelerators: This chapter examines two of the available *accelerators* for the Office System. Accelerators are solution foundations available as a free download from Microsoft. This chapter examines the proposal and recruiting accelerators.

About the Project Material

This book is intended to give you all of the business and technical background necessary to get a jump start deploying solutions based on Microsoft SharePoint products and technologies. I am assuming that you are an intermediate to advanced technical reader who is involved in an effort to roll out a portal solution. I also assume that you have a reasonable level of business experience to provide context for the work.

Because SharePoint solutions affect the entire enterprise, portions of the book deal with various technical disciplines. In some cases, I will discuss network engineering principles. In other cases, I will write code using Visual Studio .NET. Therefore, readers should have some experience with intermediate networking and a strong understanding of programming concepts.

Throughout the book, I will ask you to participate in the concepts presented. Where a concept is easy to demonstrate, I will provide you with short, hands-on activities. These activities are intended to reinforce basic ideas or demonstrate simple features. You will also find complete exercises at the end of chapters. These exercises are intended as in-depth aids to reinforce several concepts and create a complete vision for a solution. The exercises are a critical part of the book, and readers should complete as many as possible. Additionally, the exercises assume that you have established the development environment defined in Chapter 2. For those who do not want to type in all of the code associated with each exercise, you can access the completed exercises as a download available from the Apress site or www.sharepointstuff.com.

I use a wide variety of software products to simulate a true enterprise environment in this book. Throughout, I invite you to try out features and functions of SPS and see how it integrates with other major Microsoft products and technologies. In order to create the basic environment used by this book, you should have the following software available:

- Microsoft Windows 2003, Enterprise Edition
- Microsoft Exchange 2003
- Microsoft Windows Terminal Services
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server
- Microsoft Office 2003
- Microsoft InfoPath
- Microsoft Visual Studio .NET

Finally, you should note that I intend this book to be read cover to cover. Unlike some technical books, this one is not intended simply to be a reference that readers access primarily through the index. This book is intended to be an educational experience, and each chapter always assumes that you have read all previous material carefully.