



Foreword

By Don Box

WOW, I CAN'T believe that after all that time in the chute, .NET 3.0 and Windows Vista have finally shipped.

I vividly remember scrambling backstage at PDC 2003 with Chris trying to ready the first live demonstration of .NET 3.0 (then called WinFX) for the keynote speaker, Jim Allchin. It was an especially stressful keynote because Los Angeles was plagued with brush fires at the time and Chris Anderson's flight had been canceled; fortunately Chris Sells had already arrived and was ready to pinch-hit both in preparation and presentation if Chris Anderson, in fact, couldn't make it to LA in time. At the time, Chris Anderson's job at Microsoft was to make sure that Vista—including Windows Presentation Foundation (WPF)—was a smashing success. Little did he know it would take almost four years until the product actually shipped (which of course is a prerequisite for success).

So, what's the big deal with WPF?

Like its sister .NET 3.0 technology, Windows Workflow Foundation (WF), WPF embraces the “it takes a village” approach to software development and uses XAML to allow people with different skill sets to collaborate in the development process. In the case of WF, XAML lets high-level process and rule descriptions integrate with imperative code written in C# or Visual Basic. In the case of WPF, XAML is the bridge between us code monkeys and the beret-wearing, black-turtleneck set who design visuals that look like they weren't designed by, well, us code monkeys.

WPF really is an impressive piece of technology: documents, forms, and multimedia all wrapped up nicely in a markup- and code-friendly package.

What I find even more impressive is the fact that Chris found the time outside his day job to pull together the book you're holding in your hands right now, capturing those four-plus years of experience with WPF (including screenshots!) into a digestible and portable form.

I've had the good fortune of having many conversations with Chris over the years about the nuances of WPF—sometimes on the phone, sometimes in his office (it's across the hall from mine), and sometimes at the poker table.

This book has taught me a whole lot more.

Now that it's all shipped, let the light blinking begin!

Yarrow Point, WA

January 2007



Foreword

By Chris Sells

THANK GOD THERE weren't more people like Chris Anderson when I was making my living outside of Microsoft.

I work at Microsoft now (two doors down from Chris, in fact), but not all that long ago I was an instructor at a Windows developer training company. My brethren and I were led by a deep-thinking Ph.D. candidate who applied the same rigor at work that he applied to any scholarly pursuit that would have to stand up to the "crush or be crushed" mentality of academia. We learned how to think clearly as a defense mechanism and to communicate clearly as a survival technique. If we didn't do it to his exacting standards, he'd sweep us aside and redo our work before our eyes (we learned to call it "swooping," and we worked hard to avoid the phenomenon).

In a similar fashion, we learned to ignore the tutorial and reference materials produced by our vendor of choice because it was obvious that however clearly they might or might not be thinking inside their hallowed walls, it was certain that they weren't up to communicating it with the rest of us. Arguably, our whole job for close to a decade was "swooping" Microsoft itself, redoing its materials in the form of short courses, conference talks, magazine articles, and books. We called it the "Microsoft Continuing Employment Act," treating it like a pork barrel entitlement program that kept us in the style to which we had grown accustomed.

In fact, we made a nice living traveling the country saying things like, "Remember to call Release," "Avoid round-trips," and "Ignore aggregation,"

because these were clear guidelines that distilled for developers what Microsoft couldn't manage to say for itself. That's not to say that there weren't clear thinkers inside of Microsoft (Tony Williams and Crispin Goswell being two of my very favorites), but the gap between the beginner and the reader of such advanced writings was largely unfilled in those days.

With this book, that gravy train has run right off the track. Chris Anderson was one of the chief architects of the next-generation GUI stack, Windows Presentation Foundation, which is the subject of the book you're now holding in your hands. You might have thought that the very nature of the architecture job—that is, to make sure that the issues deep, deep inside are solved properly so that others can come along and build the trappings that make it into plain sight—would disqualify Chris from leading the developer from “go” to “whoa,” but that's not the case. Chris's insight allows him to shine a light from the internals of WPF to those standing at the entrance, guiding you through the concepts that form the foundation of his creation (and the creation of more than 300 other people, too, let's not forget).

As the author of a competing book from another publisher, I can't say that this is the only book you'll ever need on WPF (or they'd have me in front of a firing squad), but I can say this with certainty: It belongs on your shelf within an easy reach. I know that's where my copy will be.

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October 2006