



July 1996

Activate the Internet

The World Wide Web is no longer just an experience of browsing through static pages. Microsoft® ActiveX™ technologies activate the Web by populating its pages with interactive objects, all based on a common standard and therefore able to work together. Web pages can now come to life with rich multimedia effects, including animation, audio, video and virtual reality. Web content can now be dynamic, providing up-to-the minute information customized to the profile and preferences of each user, and thereby creating a one-to-one relationship between producer and consumer. Web sites can now include user control and choice, which means they can behave like traditional software applications, delivered on demand — from anywhere, to anyone. As a result of these exciting changes, the Web will have a more direct impact on people's lives and work, and it will likely transform the way people use the Internet.

Web Pages Come Alive With Multimedia Effects

Unlike the static text and graphics typical of today's Web pages, ActiveX technologies enable Web site producers to include multimedia effects in their sites so objects can play sounds, show video clips and animation sequences, or demonstrate ideas in 3-D virtual reality simulations. In addition to making the Web experience more fun, these multimedia capabilities can greatly enhance the educational and entertainment value of a site by communicating information more effectively and with greater impact.

Dynamic Content Creates One-to-One Relationships

Organizations that publish Web sites can use ActiveX technologies to create a customized experience for each visitor to their site. By capturing preferences from each Web visitor, companies can create individual profiles and tailor their content so each user receives only the information of interest to him or her. In this sense, a Web site becomes a unique Web experience for each user, and the company sponsoring the site gains an understanding of the needs of each of its customers. For example, an e-zine (electronic magazine) can collect information on readers' geographical, political or entertainment preferences (or a multitude of other interests) and create a custom publication for each subscriber. As the profile is refined over time, the publisher can establish a unique and highly relevant relationship with each of its customers and create a strong sense of

customer loyalty. This direct producer-to-consumer relationship eliminates the need for mass marketing and communications, resulting in lower costs for the producer and greater satisfaction for the consumer.

User Choice Results in More Productive Applications

With ActiveX Technologies, users can interact with a Web site and make choices that control what information they see. Unlike the simple hypertext linking of today's Web sites, ActiveX technologies enable the creation of highly interactive applications. Instead of a brochure that lists a company's products, for example, a Web site can be an online catalog that allows order placement and fulfillment tracking. Or a financial services site can transform simple advertising and prospectus publishing into financial modeling and portfolio management advice. Figure 1 gives examples of how static Web documents can be turned into productive applications with the addition of ActiveX technologies.

Static Web Documents

- HR handbook
- Real estate advertising
- Events calendar
- Hard-goods catalog
- Advertising-sponsored content
- Flight schedules
- Mutual fund advertising and prospectus

Active Web Applications

- HR benefits management
- Appointment scheduling, mortgage applications
- Online ticketing
- Order capture and fulfillment
- Fee-based content (micropayments)
- Reservations and ticketing
- Portfolio management

Figure 1

Sound Familiar?

These exciting enhancements to the Internet may sound familiar, since they are capabilities that have existed for some time in desktop and network applications. The benefits of multimedia effects, dynamic content and user-controlled choices have long been appreciated by PC users. Developers of PC and network applications understand, as a result of much trial and error, what it takes to build effective and productive interactive applications. The good news is they can transfer that knowledge and expertise directly to the Internet, using the same programming languages and tools — even the same code — that they already know. Or they can learn new languages, such as Java, and combine them with existing tools to build Web sites with mixed content. The important thing is that ActiveX makes it all work together.

A Powerful Combination

ActiveX brings the power and productivity of interactive programming together with the ubiquity and standardization of the Internet. This powerful combination will allow Web page producers to use the most innovative work from the software development community and make it available to the widest-possible audience. For users, this means Web experiences that are as engaging as the best CD-ROM titles. For Web site designers, it means the immediate availability of thousands of useful building blocks that can be incorporated into their Web pages in creative ways. For Web site producers it means Web sites with higher impact and broader appeal that users will return to again and again. For companies, it means Web sites that create a heightened level of intimacy with customers and visitors who can experience a more personalized message. For developers, it means their software objects can be put to new and creative uses by Web page designers for a whole new world of users. ActiveX is energizing the Internet industry to turn the World Wide Web into an exciting, personalized experience for each user.

#####

Microsoft and ActiveX are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corp. in the United States and/or other countries.

For more information, press only:

Patti Pierson, Waggener Edstrom, (503) 245-0905, pattip@wagged.com
Joscelyn Zell, Waggener Edstrom, (503) 245-0905, jzell@wagged.com