
One Last Compile...

Blazing a trail on the electronic frontier

Good news and bad news. The good news is that we've finally joined the rest of civilisation and got an Internet connection and a Web site. Productivity has duly nose-dived, as we now all surf the Web for at least four hours a day, checking out the *What's New* pages at our favourite *Friends* sites.

The bad news is that my boss asked me to set up some pages of interest to Delphi programmers. He'd overheard me telling Jane the temp about my exploits on the cutting edge of Delphi development.

"That all sounds very impressive" he said. "Why don't we use your talents to give something back to the Delphi community? It'll be good publicity for us. Let people see how good we really are."

That was a frightening thought, but I managed to stay calm. Give something back to the Delphi community? What did I have that they could possibly want?

"Um..." I said. Then I saw Jane looking at me. I couldn't shatter her illusions. She looked up to me. We'd been close ever since her first morning, when I'd shown her how to do double-sided collated copying on our Xerox machine. Besides - why not? I could make my Web page a beacon of light in the darkness of Delphi. Programmers worldwide would turn to my pages as they sweated over their new components, giving silent thanks for my brilliant input. Usenet newsgroups would buzz with praise of my efforts. Appreciative email would flood in. Maybe even offers of dates.

Failing that, at least keeping it up to date would be a neat way to goof off for an afternoon each week.

After a couple of hours of doodling with my colour pens and drinking coffee, I realised that the best way to proceed would be to use the Delphi Development Paradigm. This involves spending half an hour knocking up a flash interface which impresses people and

gives the appearance of massive effort, then leaving the hard stuff (like the ability to actually do something useful) until later on (for example, when people are starting to shout at you). The Internet equivalent is to provide a page of links to other pages, which is like hanging a sign outside your house saying 'Beer' and then saying to people who stop by: "Beer? No, sorry, I don't drink. But I think there's a bar in the next town you could try."

Another hot tip for would-be Webmasters is this: putting together a page of links is dull. Steal somebody else's if you can. Just find a page of useful looking, well-organised links, copy them, add a couple of new sites (or make some up, you can always claim the site used to be there), rearrange their order, and you're done.

Final tip: Try and use the words "photo", "Pamela" and "Anderson" as often as you can in your pages. Millions of people will visit your site. They'll leave again pretty quickly, but in the meantime your WebCounter will have clocked up another visitor and this will make you look cool and popular.

I told my boss the following week that my pages were up and running.

"Excellent," he said. "Well done! Any feedback yet?"

"Some," I said. "All very positive." This wasn't strictly true, as the feedback so far consisted of some mis-spelt email from Kristian in Stockholm, offering me eternal good fortune if I would just send him \$2.50 and forward his message to ten of my friends, and a rather forlorn note from Chuck in Minnesota asking if I'd be interested in including his new data-aware bevel component on my pages.

"Terrific!" he said. "Keep up the good work."

"Hey," I said. "That's what I'm here for."