
One Last Compile...

The Midas Touch

I am currently involved in a Mexican stand-off with Borland. They, of course, are blissfully unaware of this fact. But, get this, *I think I'm winning.*

The issue on which Borland and I are currently disputing is MIDAS, Borland's technology for developing thin clients. We all want thin clients because, let's face it, the BDE is a royal pain and is heading for oblivion anyway. Now, quick show of hands: how many of you actually use MIDAS? (No, sorry, not you Dr. Bob, you're not allowed a vote. I mean average Joe Punter.) I suspect the number is on the low side. And I think your reasons are probably one or more of the following:

- 1) It costs money.
- 2) I've only just finished doing a two-tier app. I can't face the prospect of doing it in three-tier.
- 3) What's a three-tier app?
- 4) It costs money.

I do not use MIDAS, though I'd like to. Reasons 2) and 3) are certainly a factor in this, but you will not be entirely surprised to learn that 1) and 4) are the big sticking points. After all, there are two great constants in life: the first is that you always pay through the nose for

the top-end edition of Delphi, whatever it is that they're currently calling it, and the second is that clients hate paying anything extra. It seems a tad unreasonable to me that applications developed using the top-end Delphi at not inconsiderable expense should then be subject to an extra 'deployment tax'.

But then, I don't work in the Borland Accounts Department (for which I give thanks every day). There are probably endless good reasons why there should be an extra charge for MIDAS. In so far as I understand it (not very far) it is very clever technology which took a lot of R&D effort and dollars which they would like to recoup. The main reason I know this is that the icons for the components look a lot more complicated than their brethren: always a dead give-away that something took a long time to develop.

Borland implicitly admitted the strength of my argument with MIDAS 3 when the price dropped from something in the low three zeroes to something in the low two zeroes. I imagine they did this because they were making diddly squat in MIDAS revenues, and felt

that the high price was a deterrent. (Even now the Editor is probably receiving reams of faxes from Borland HQ disproving this hypothesis, but let's press on regardless.) So now they've dropped it to a level where even if it is more widely used, the revenues still aren't going to add up to much. And from the developer's point of view, it's just an irritant.

What makes it even more irritating is that parts of MIDAS are free, and parts aren't. Or rather, it can be free, providing you don't use it on two machines in the same room that are the same colour [*Ed: Please can you check this for me. Thanks*]. And parts of it are not only free, but are actually the new, recommended way of doing things: like cached updates, for example (this is particularly irritating as I've only just figured out how cached updates work, and now my hard-won knowledge is already redundant).

It's all far more confusing than it needs be, and it's pointless, and Borland should just ditch the whole idea of charging for MIDAS and let Delphi become the easiest way to build thin-client apps. Which will, in turn, lead to more sales and more revenue, Borland will dominate the world of software development, and the world will be a better, happier and more peaceful place.