

The NEW Software Industry Conference: ISVCon

by Sue Pichotta
ASP Conference Manager

With new owners, a new nickname, a new location, a new venue, and even a new website, the Software Industry Conference is being re-born!



ASP buys SIC

The Association of Software Professionals is proud to announce that it has purchased the rights to the Software Industry Conference (SIC), which took place every summer from 1991-2010. SIC has been an event where you could learn more about software marketing and other business of software issues, meet with other ISVs, and get a chance to talk to some of the businesses serving the ISV community. The ASP is honored to be able to continue making this worthwhile conference available to our industry, and give it a reboot with some new ideas.

Get ready for Reno!

SIC / ISVCon 2012 will be in a new, exciting place: Reno, Nevada! Besides casinos, entertainment, great restaurants and a fantastic ISV conference, Reno has abundant natural beauty and a large amount of outdoor activities. Located where the Great Basin Desert and the Sierra Nevada Mountains meet, you have the best of

both in a high-altitude, dry-weather environment. Note, Reno is 450 miles (725 km) north of Las Vegas, so the climate is somewhat different. Summer daytime temperatures in Reno average 85°F/30°C, with nighttime temps around 60°F/15°C.

Reno has mountains, deserts, lakes, parks, golf courses, history, children's activities, and more. Downtown not only has casinos, it has a theater, a river walk that runs for miles, a kayak park, and more. The city next door, Sparks, has a wonderful water and amusement park. There are a dozen golf courses in Reno/Sparks. If you want to visit nearby sights, stunning Lake Tahoe is only 35 miles (56 km) away, desolate Pyramid Lake only 30 miles (48 km). History-filled Virginia City is 25 miles (40 km) away, and Donner Lake, California (think the Donner Party) is 40 miles (65 km).

Venue: Atlantis

The new Software Industry Conference / ISVCon will be held at the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa, a



beautiful, newly-renovated 4-star property voted "Reno's Best Rooms" and "Best Overall Casino Resort."

The Atlantis has a new conference and events center on the second floor, accessible directly from the hotel elevators (or from the casino, of course). The large conference area foyer overlooks the casino, and has an adjoining bistro restaurant. There are nine other restaurants in the Atlantis, including a steakhouse, buffet & grill, oyster bar, deli, all-you-can-eat sushi bar, pizza cafe, hot dog eatery, 24-hour American-style restaurant and a coffee-and-dessert place. There are also 10 bars and lounges, lots of gambling opportunities, and for families, an arcade area.

Let's not forget the pools, fitness center and world-class spa. The Atlantis' indoor Atrium pool is stunning, with a 2-story-high waterfall running down the wall

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Trade Show Calendar

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WordCamp

WordPress Conferences, various cities:
St. Louis, Missouri, August 6
San Francisco, California, Aug. 12-14
Los Angeles, CA, September 10
Salt Lake City, Utah, Sept. 10
Kobe, Japan, September 11
Cape Town, South Africa, Sept. 15
Albuquerque, New Mexico, Sept 16-18
Portland, Oregon, Sept 17-18
Lisboa, Portugal, September 24
Louisville, Kentucky, October 1
Sevilla, Spain, October 8-9
<http://central.wordcamp.org/schedule/>

Game Developers Conf. Europe

Cologne, Germany
August 15-17, 2011
<http://www.gdceurope.com>

Affiliate Summit East

New York, New York
August 21,-23, 2011
<http://www.affiliatesummit.com/>

Build (Microsoft, Windows 8)

Anaheim, California
September 12-13, 2011
<http://www.buildwindows.com>

ISDEF 2011

Moscow, Russia
September 29 to October 2
<http://isdef.org/en/conference/>

Casual Connect Kyiv

Kyiv, Ukraine, October 20-22, 2011
<http://kyiv.casualconnect.org/>

Business of Software 2011

Boston, Massachusetts
October 24-26, 2011
<http://www.businessofsoftware.org/>

AnDevCon II (Android)

San Francisco, California
November 6-9, 2011
<http://www.andevcon.com>

European Software Conference

London, England
November 19-20, 2011
<http://www.euroconference.org/>



ISVCon 2012
Atlantis Casino Resort Spa,
Reno Nevada
July 13-15, 2012
<http://www.isvcon.org>



The Association of Software Professionals™ is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to furthering try-before-you-buy as a unique software marketing alternative to commercial distribution methods.

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The NEW Software Industry Conference: ISVCon

– continued from front cover –

behind it, and there is a nice outdoor pool, as well. The fitness center located near the Atrium pool is sizeable and has rows of new fitness equipment. The Atlantis' large, exquisite spa was rated Top 10 for "Best Casino Spa" and "Best Spa for Men" by SpaFinder.

Best of all, the Atlantis has given us fantastic room rates. Only \$69/night Sun-Thurs, and \$99/night Fri-Sat, with the \$10/nightly resort fee waived for SIC / ISVCon guests. The rooms include free wifi, 42" HD flat screen televisions, coffee makers, and easy access to the conference area. And the Atlantis has a free shuttle bus that runs continuously from the Reno/Tahoe airport to the hotel—and it's only a 10 minute ride.

New Owner, New Domain

While the Software Industry Conference is a venerable lady in terms of tech age, she has a problem with her URL. The domain "sic.org" has been the conference home, however, the related "sic.com" domain is owned by someone else. Also, there have been concerns about the sic=sick acronym. While the acronym may or may not be an issue, not owning the related dot-com domain is definitely a problem. Also, "Software Industry Conference" is a bit vague and requires explanation, which makes it harder to remember and sell.

ISVCon

The name "ISVCon" is descriptive and obvious to those in our industry, and the domains isvcon.com and isvcon.org were available. So we are co-branding the website and conference with both names, and all the domains (sic.org, isvcon.org & isvcon.com) will go to one place.

We also have the Twitter username, "@ISVCon".

New Conference

SIC/ISVCon 2012 has more than just a new name, it has other new things, too. We are keeping the best of SIC and updating it with new ideas. We have some exciting new plans for a first rate-program, as well. For instance, we're adding an optional extra day (Monday!) with an interesting new format. We've even started lining up some new, dynamic and interesting speakers for the conference (see isvcon.org for the latest info).

Reno is only a 4 hour drive from California's Silicon Valley, the driving source behind much of the progress and innovation in the tech industry. We hope to recruit many new faces from there, both as attendees and exciting speakers.

While some of the new things for SIC/ISVCon have



been decided, others still need to be worked out. Would you like to help with that? Or would you like to get more information about the conference? Or perhaps you would like to hear about upcoming discounts on conference registration? Then please visit the...

New Website, Sign up for Info & Discounts

There is a new website at isvcon.org (isvcon.com works, too). Sign-up for discounts and more information, so you can learn what's going on as new things are added and new ideas are worked out, and so you can get information on how to save money on conference registration, too. We are also looking for volunteers to help plan some of the conference details (you can sign up for that as well). Please visit isvcon.org and let us know you are interested in this exciting new conference!

Sue Pichotta is the ASP's Conference Manager. When not working on the upcoming conference, she is developing new products for her business, Alta Web Works. You can contact Sue at manager@isvcon.org

ASP News

by Dennis Reinhardt
President, ASP

Don Waterfield has agreed to serve as ASP Webmaster and resign as ASP director to assume this position. This is a contracted position with 1 year initial term, \$200/month retainer, and provision for early termination.

Don has served the ASP with distinction in the past as Technical Webmaster transitioning to our current site and has superior understanding of our site. I am especially pleased to have him assume this responsibility.



Don Waterfield

PAD Futures

by Joel Diamond
PAD Chair, ASP

An entire software industry flourishes now that has been built on top of the ASP specification of PAD. The Portable Application Distribution changed the way the software authors and distribution sites publish product information. Before PAD, authors provided descriptions to web sites one-by-one, dealing with unique description requirements and agreements for each distribution opportunity. But software has radically changed, the methods of distribution have changed, and the needs of sites who have built their business on the PAD platform have changed.



I will use my recent appointment as PAD Chair to assist the ASP in strategically leading the efforts to update, enhance, and expand the current PAD platform, which consists of the PAD Specification, PADGen, PADKit and the PAD Repository, while benefitting the ASP and our industry.

It is my intention to utilize my nearly twenty-plus years of background at WUGNET, involving software distribution, promotion, and marketing, all while as a committed active member of the ASP, to actively contribute to the success of the PAD platform and the ASP. At the same time, we can also add benefits for the entire software community, including both content and service providers, who gain from an improved PAD platform from the ASP.

There are some obvious and not so obvious needs for the PAD Specification to be improved, changed, and enhanced. Some of our proposed goals for the PAD specification, that we've identified through active discussions with both ASP member publishers and non-members, include the immediate implementation of critically-needed and requested new fields supporting social network links that many publishers



have for their products. For example, the PAD spec should include the links for the product's Facebook Fan Page, the vendor's Facebook home page, the product's Twitter page, and the company's Twitter handle. The PAD platform should also support the inclusion of product video content, including either embedded or direct YouTube videos.

I believe that the ASP needs to immediately address the dark side of the PAD platform, some very well-known problems, and some not so-known abuse. Spam, Fraud, Copyright infringement, trademark infringement, and so on, need immediate actions and changes in the PAD specification. I personally believe, after confirmation from publishers, affiliates (sites) and software e-commerce providers, that millions of dollars of their revenues are directly impacted by third parties who actively or directly exploit the PAD standard. There is a moral obligation on the part of the ASP and its members to address these problems, while at the same time maintaining the value of PAD to our industry and to the ASP.

We also want to bring a new vision to the PAD platform, to ensure that it truly reflects and mirrors the active changes that the ASP has been undergoing for the past year, from shareware professionals to software professionals. I believe there is great and urgent need for the PAD platform to include mobile software, web-based software (and services) and finally, digitally delivered software ("ESD" or applications delivered directly into a device). This addresses an urgent need to help ASP publisher members who sell digital packaged software outside of the traditional "download" software model. With over 1,000 sites basing their catalogs on PAD submissions from software publishers, practically all would love to see publishers submitting PAD files of their software created for additional platforms.

Besides these initiatives that cover PAD Specification, there will be many exciting plans for both change and relevance of the other parts of the PAD platform, including the current PAD Repository, PADGen and PADKit. Please stay active on the ASP Newsgroups' PAD Spec board (asp.committee.pad_specs) as we will be posting upcoming news on each.

Joel Diamond is Co-Founder/VP Bus Development of WUGNET Publications Inc, a Lifetime Member of the ASP, and recipient of the Software Industry Awards Foundation Hall of Fame '98.

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Beyond this Point, There be Technobabble or: How to Write for Today's PC Users

by Jerry Stern

PC Tech, www.pc410.com

Many years ago, a friend was grumbling about the things we did to configure our computers. It was mostly downloading programs that could do things with types of files that were newer than what the operating system knew about—this was in 1981, by the way, and the computers were not IBM compatible. Nothing has changed.

What he wanted, he explained, was a computer that was a true black box. In scientific methodology, a black box is basically a sealed object that does something to input and creates output. If it's a flashlight, it eats batteries and produces light; we don't care how. If it's an electronic widget, it takes signals in and puts other signals out; it's all very mysterious. If you put in sliced bread, and toast comes out, it's a toaster. He didn't want to understand that if you send an electrical current through a very thin Nichrome wire, you get increased resistance to power flow and some of the current is converted to heat; he was hungry, and wanted toast. Never, never explain it. Beyond this point, there is only technobabble.



So his ideal computer would be a black box. We wouldn't open it and tinker with the cards and chips, and deliberately install fans of the wrong voltage so they'd run quiet. (Yeah, it was 1981.) We wouldn't go into CompuServe and search for software. We wouldn't go looking for all kinds of converter software so that we could move data files from the program that could read it to the program that we wanted to read it. None of that stuff. Just put in files, and do productive stuff.

Now, it's 30 years later, and there are two basic ways to look at what's changed. We, the software industry and hardware gurus of the computing industry, see that nothing has changed except for pushing complexity down to an ever-larger group of computer users. We still spend time abusing, patching, downloading, converting, and tweaking, and not actually creating stuff with our computers. Our typical software users, on the other hand, have black boxes now. Or they use them that way, which we should be helping with, but generally don't.

Yes, the boxes are black, just as in the traditions of scientific endeavors. What goes on inside of them is a total mystery. And they put in random clicks on anything and everything that appears on their screens, and they get output

that has no apparent relationship with what they clicked. They see some messages that aren't in English, must be some sort of polyglot stuff with lots of clicks in it, and mostly 3-letter words in all CAPS, and they know what that means—click on the “Go Away” button—that's the big one. The message had stuff in it, but nothing memorable.

This is apparently perfectly logical to many computer users. They click something that says “Click here to install (something something, technobabble mystical-acronym)”, and hocus-pocus, up comes a magical new program that announces that it is dumb-loading and installing something for you that will fix the 521 new (something) holes, or was it detected bacteria, that it found in your monitor. Right, a new computer consists of a glass thing with pictures on it—that's the CPU, or “Color Picture Unit”, and the box on the floor—that's the big thing on the floor that the cat sleeps next to, because it blows warm air on her back. Sometimes it's called that “thing I can mess up if I touch the wires.”

Now inside these boxes, there's apparently something that stores smoke, something that makes a whizzing noise, and the clicky-clicky thing. These are all extremely dangerous items on their own, but if you leave them alone, nothing scary will happen. No, really. The best way to handle those things is to not get near them.

So, software developers, there you have the typical home user of computers, and quite a lot of business users, too. If you're writing software for a non-expert, there are a few things you have to keep in mind when you put messages on a screen, in the help file, or on a web page:

Don't use TLA's

TLA means Three-Letter-Acronyms, but avoid acronyms of all lengths. Abbreviations in general should be removed from your messages. KISS applies. That's an acronym for “Keep It Simple, Stupid” and don't use that one, either.

Acronyms require previous knowledge in a specialized field, so don't assume your customers understand any acronyms. After all, do you really want to explain that a picture program can work with a “TWAIN” device? Call it “scanner software” instead; no one will take your software seriously after you explain that it really is “Technology Without An Interesting Name.”

Don't be FBC

Resist the temptation to keep your messages Fully-Buzzword Compliant. Putting in this year's buzzwords is cool, it's hip, or whatever this year's word for groovy is, and sometimes those words prove that your software can work

with the newest gadgets. And they date it as obsolete twelve months later. Save it for your keywords list and features specifications, and leave it off the screen and out of the “Getting Started” section of the help file.

Buzzwords, like acronyms, require prior knowledge in a specialized field. Yours, not theirs. Leave it out.

Don't Write in Passive Voice

You can write in the first-person style, as in “I wrote this.” Or use the third person, like “Spot runs fast.” And the second person style would be “Next, you should click on the OK button.” And finally, there's the omnipotent mystery person, who doesn't exist. Writing teachers like to call that Passive Voice, where the subject of the sentence is unknown, and the action is described, but not assigned to anyone. They don't like that—it's the difference between “Teachers don't like Passive Voice.” and “Passive Voice is frowned upon.” Always write in the Active Voice, they say. Well, why? Because when the sentence has no actor, and no one is doing the stuff in the sentence, you can't picture it. If you can't picture it, it's harder to remember the steps you're supposed follow in the instructions.

So how do you write in Active Voice, automatically? Use the second-person style for instructions. Tell the reader that “Next, you will select what color to use for your on-screen design.” That's much clearer than reading the passive form: “Next, the color will be selected” and easier to maintain over a long explanation of steps.

Don't Ask Questions

Software has to work on the first try or most computer users lose interest. Some will download something else. Others will ask that smart kid who shoveled the walk last Winter to fix their computer because you messed it up. So don't ask any question that can be avoided.

For example, your software works with email. During the install, don't ask which email software your user wants to work with. Just look in the system to see what's installed as the standard mail reader, and configure for that choice. Yes, there can be an ‘advanced install’ button for the techies. For everything else, if there is any way to avoid a question, then don't ask.

Don't Pop Errors

Again, if you put a message on-screen, it will cause pain in some users, and the snow-shovel kid only knows how to configure Warcraft and iTunes, so if he's shown an error, he's going to show his nice neighbor who bakes cookies how to search for desert recipes. So there should never be an avoidable error message.

For example, your program works with graphics. The

user clicks on Open, File, and clicks a file format that is normally not opened, but imported into the program. Software for a techie can pop an error, suggesting that the sequence should be File, New, and then File, Import. That's not for a mass audience—instead, just switch to Import silently, and do what has to be done.

In other words, if you can make your software understand the most-likely user errors, and auto-correct for them, your customers will be happy that what they wanted happened, and you won't have another tech-support answer to write. So auto-fix all random input—your goal is for the program to run properly even if the customer left the computer, after putting a small Capuchin Monkey, or maybe an attentive cat, onto her office chair, and saying “Now don't touch my keyboard, sweetie!”

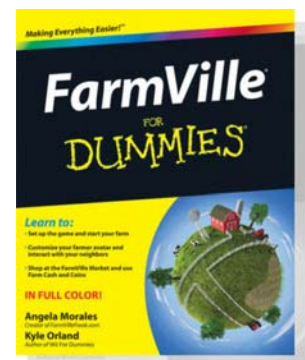
Not All Software is for Dummies

Right about now, I'm hearing, “My customers aren't dummies.” Yes, I hear that because the most-important skill in writing articles, or in writing software instructions, is to internally picture your audience in your mind as you write. Anticipate objections to what you're writing, and picture a skill level. Don't try to write a program without understanding the audience you're going to sell to—the result is a mixture of styles, and confusing.

For a mass-market program, try picturing your customers as experts on a topic that doesn't have anything to do with your software. OK, they're rocket scientists trying to learn a music program. Accountants trying to use a drawing program. Lawyers trying to create web pages. Cookie bakers trying to send email. And write your instructions as if they're sitting at the computer listening as you explain how to make your software pop out what they really asked for: toast.

And no, they aren't dummies. They do, however, own a few books in the “For Dummies” series by Wiley Publishing (www.dummies.com). The publisher knows something—write for easy reading, write without assuming background knowledge, write as if every reader is completely new to the book topic, and you'll sell stuff. It's a pretty good model to follow—there are over 1,800 books in the series. So far.

Jerry Stern is the editor of ASPECTS, the ASP's Coordinator of Anti-Spyware Operations, does malware cleanups and hardware repair work for 'dummies' at PC410.com and is online at www.sciencetranslations.com.





Optimizing Your Purchase Page (Basics)

by Jiri Novotny
Dextronet.com

Your mISV website has three main goals:

1. Attract visitors.
2. Get them to download your software.
3. Get them to purchase your software.

All these steps are vital; however, I would argue that the purchasing page is the most important part of your website:

- If it doesn't work at all, your income will be zero.
- If it's broken or doesn't work as expected, the losses will be huge.
- And even if it indeed works flawlessly, but it is not optimal, you will be possibly losing money every single day, which can amount to very significant sum over the time.

Just boosting your sales by a few percent can make a huge monetary impact over the year. And optimizing your purchase page can lead to a very significant sales growth, possibly in tens of percent.

Your purchase page is definitely worth your time and attention - the payoff can be enormous, relative to the time and energy invested.

So, what are the elements crucial to purchase pages that helps your business close as many sales as possible? The three main concepts are: Trust, security, simplicity.

Trust

First and foremost, your purchase page should look trustworthy, and shine credibility and trust. Scary stories of internet scams are endlessly recycled in popular media and many people are very wary of purchasing anything over the internet. Especially the older and less tech-savvy audience needs multiple reassurances that you won't steal their pants off them.

Your potential customers need to know that you are a real person, and not a Nigerian scammer.

To accomplish this, you should list either your full mailing address, or the address of your ecommerce provider (or both).

If you are based in a small country, the address of your ecommerce partner will probably be preferable. For example, USA address looks better than Czech address, therefore, we display the mailing address of our ecommerce provider, since they are based in USA.

If possible, list a telephone number. Either yours, or a number of your ecommerce provider for placing orders. Virtually no one will call that number, but by displaying it, you look much more credible.

Another thing you can include is a couple of testimonials from your satisfied customers. Keep them short and sweet.

Seamless Integration

All steps of the purchase process should look like a part of your website. Different styles at various steps of the purchase process can harm sales.

Security

Your page should convey security as much as possible, by various means.

I'm going to describe what we personally do at www.dextronet.com to attain this goal. While reading the following list, you might think that we are going overboard, but we are definitely not. When you look at our purchase page it will seem "normal", yet, the sense of security can be strongly felt by visitors.

Use the word "Secure" prominently on your purchase page.

Consider our purchase page for Swift To-Do List:

<http://www.dextronet.com/buy/swift-to-do-list>

- The heading reads "Secure Software Store".
- We've also included the words "Secure Software Store" at the end of the page title.
- The "Proceed To Checkout" button includes a small icon of a lock, which communicates security
- The sidebar includes a "Secure order" paragraph, which displays a larger lock icon along with description of how the purchase process is secured (128-bit SSL encryption).
- The "What's Included" list includes "Encrypted and secure order" as the last bullet. Sure, secure purchasing should be the standard, and not something to list in such a list, but it always helps to reassure your potential customers.

The screenshot shows a purchase page titled "Secure Software Store" with a breadcrumb trail: "Buy Different Software > Go Back". The page has a blue header and a white main content area. A navigation bar includes "Make Your Selection", "Secure Payment", and "Your License Code". A message asks the user to select the number of licenses and click "Proceed To Checkout".

	Licenses	Price (USD)
Swift To-Do List 7 Professional Number one to-do list software (see more...) <small>(i) What's the difference between Standard and Professional?</small>	1	\$114.95 \$89.95
Swift To-Do List 7 Standard	0	\$44.95
Swift To-Do List 7 Professional 1-user-3-PC Pack For example, run at home + work + laptop and save 50%!	0	\$134.95
Swift To-Do List 7 Standard 1-user-3-PC Pack For example, run at home + work + laptop and save 50%!	0	\$67.95

At the bottom, there is a "PROCEED TO CHECKOUT" button with a lock icon. A sidebar on the right features a "90 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE" badge, "Unconditional 90-day money back guarantee", "Instant email delivery", and "Get extra discount" (Buy 2+ licenses of the same product and get 20%+ volume discount!). A "Secure order" section with a lock icon states: "All orders are secured with strong 128-bit SSL encryption. Your information is absolutely safe. Orders are processed via our BMT Money, Inc. ecommerce partner based in North Carolina, USA."

Volume Discounts
Discounts apply for total price.
2-9 licenses 20% off
10-19 licenses 25% off
20-39 licenses 30% off
From 40 licenses 35% off

What's Included

- ✓ Free technical support
- ✓ Free minor updates
- ✓ 90-Day Money back guarantee
- ✓ Instant delivery
- ✓ Encrypted and secure order

- Our purchase page clearly displays the three steps of the purchase process. The steps are: Make Your Selection >> Secure Payment >> Your License Code. Again, the second step is called “Secure Payment”, and not just “Payment”.

Now, when you click the “Proceed to checkout” button, the actual order form once again conveys security in multiple ways. The heading still reads “Secure Software Store”, etc., but since this page is now really secure (https://), additional elements can be added.

The word “Secure” is now included directly in the URL, as the URL starts with [https://secure.bmtmicro.com/...](https://secure.bmtmicro.com/)

There are also three security badges.

- Thawte badge “Secure Site. Click to verify” is shown, since our payment processor is BMT Micro with a certificate issued by Thawte.

- Security Metrics badge is added as well—it reads “Identity Theft Protected. Security Metrics.” When you click it, a popup window with certification and reassurance will be shown.

- The third badge is also by Security Metrics—it reads “Credit Card SAFE.” Clicking this badge does exactly the same thing as clicking the previous one, so it might seem redundant, but this “redundant” badge helps our goal to make the page look as secure as possible. It has a different design than the previous badge.

The word “secure” is also used in the submit button. The submit button has text “PLACE SECURE ORDER”, and also incorporates a small lock icon.

Additionally, the form field “Card number” has a small lock icon and text “Secure” attached to it.

Ease of Use and Simplicity

The order form should be ridiculously easy to use.

- Remove as many hoops as possible.

- Remove all unnecessary fields. Do you really need the customer’s telephone? If not, get rid of that field.

3 Easy Ways to Use Twitter

by Gianfranco Berardi

Charter Executive, ASP SIG Games

You’ve joined the party! You’ve heard that Twitter is a free and easy way to promote your business, and so you’ve signed up for a Twitter account to promote your business, added a profile picture and a bio, and followed a number of interesting people. You even have people following you back. Now what?

Of course, you only have so much time in a day. Like any communications medium, Twitter could easily become a waste of time if you’re not careful. What follows are three easy ways to use Twitter to improve your business, increase

Feel free to use the GUI concept of progressive disclosure. For example, if you require extra information when the purchase is for a company, hide the extra fields necessary for company purchases until the user expresses the fact that the purchase is for a company.

- Avoid tiny fonts.

- Avoid difficult or overly-technical language. Think fourth-grade level. The only exception being when talking about how secure the page is—it’s okay if that sounds technical and impressive.

Multiple Payment Methods

It is a good idea to enable as many payment methods as possible, provided they don’t confuse your customers or complicate your order form. Check with your e-commerce provider what payment methods they support, and make sure they are offered in your order form. Some of them might be hidden by default.

Additionally, you can list all the supported payment methods on your website, probably in your Frequently-Asked Questions list.

Summary

There is much more to be optimized and done. I’m just scratching the surface here. However, by mastering these basic concepts (trust, security, simplicity), you can reap huge benefits with relatively small effort. If your order page could use some improvements, these things represent low-hanging fruit.

Next time, I will cover some advanced optimizations.

*Jiri Novotny is also the founder of www.dextronet.com and author of *Swift To-Do List*, the number one task and notes organizer for Windows. If you need an improved list view component for .NET, then also check out Jiri’s *Better ListView* at www.componentowl.com/better-listview*

your networking opportunities, and interact with your customers.

Interact with Other Users

You can tweet and receive tweets from anywhere in the world, and it is possible to tap into a wealth of information. Make use of it! Ask people to tell you what they think of your latest prototype. Ask them to help you with a technical problem you’ve been having. Ask for links to good articles on marketing to mobile users. Just ask good questions!

Twitter can be great for quickly growing your network, but just like in real life, you can’t be passive and expect

people to come to you. If someone helps you out, remember to thank him or her. If other people are asking questions you know the answer to, feel free to give it. Share links you think your customers or colleagues will find useful or interesting. Live tweet your presence at a conference. You'll gain followers and trust, and as you do, you'll be seen as a leader in your field.

You can also search for your company or product name to see if people are tweeting about it, which can help you keep track of your branding efforts. When I search for my company's name, I can see someone tweeted a link to an article I wrote on indie game developers making big games, which helps me see that my article made an impression on someone enough for them to share it with their followers. (see below) You can even save the search query and get access to it quicker by looking at your Searches tab on the home page of Twitter.

Feel free to follow the people tweeting about you. If they're prospects or customers, they see you're a real person and might enjoy having a chance to connect with you. If they were complaining about you or your company, here's your chance to fix things by taking a personal interest in the problem. Major companies have successfully used Twitter as a customer service channel, and users enjoy the responsiveness.

Automate Your Social Media Presence

Between Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Google +, MySpace, Hi5, or any number of social networks, you have to worry about providing a lot of content if you want to engage your followers consistently. While you should endeavor to provide unique content for each network, you can automate some of your Twitter usage to make it easier to share between them.

You can update your Facebook status from Twitter, and you can tweet whenever you post a new blog entry or upload a new video to YouTube. There are apps such as TweetDeck and HootSuite which make it easy to update

The screenshot shows a Twitter search interface with the search term 'gbgames'. The results are filtered to show tweets with links. Two tweets are visible:

- GBGames** (GBGames): "Great discussion on Google+ re: my recent post on indies making big games: plus.google.com/10853484849535..." (19 Jul)
- bonder** (Bruce Onder): "Should Indies Make Bigger Games? <http://feedly.com/k/mPtjo2>" (18 Jul)

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Feed' configuration page on Twitterfeed.com. It is divided into three steps: Step 1: Create Feed, Step 2: Configure Publishing Services, and Step 3: Done. The current step is Step 1: Name Feed & Add Source URL. The form includes fields for 'Feed Name', 'Blog URL or RSS Feed URL (help)' (with the example 'http://gbgames.com/blog/feed=rss2'), and a checkbox for 'Active'. Below this is the 'Advanced Settings' section, which includes 'Update Frequency' (set to 'Every hour'), 'Post Content' (set to 'title only'), 'Post Link' (set to 'bit.ly'), and 'Facebook options' (with a checkbox for 'Include automatic thumbnails in Facebook wall posts').

multiple social networks at once, and some even provide statistics to let you see how your followers are interacting with you.

I'm a fan of Twitterfeed.com. When I publish a new blog post, Twitterfeed sees it and automatically sends a tweet with the title of the post. You can add prefixes and suffixes to those tweets, and you can choose the URL shortener of your choice for the link to your post. In my case, I use "GBGames' Blog update" as a prefix, and bit.ly URLs for the links. I could even ensure that only certain blog posts are tweeted automatically by having Twitterfeed check for keywords.

It's been said that if a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth over one million words! YouTube allows you to update your Twitter and Facebook accounts whenever you upload a new video, which makes it easy to share tutorials, interviews, or talks with your followers. In fact, since you should create unique content for Facebook, tweet whenever you upload a video to your Facebook page that isn't available on YouTube or your website, even if the video is only accessible to people who "Like" your page.

Twitter can be your hub to send prospects and customers to your other social media efforts, including your own website.

The screenshot shows the 'TweetDeck Directory' website. It features a search bar at the top right and a navigation menu with categories like 'Business & Professions', 'Mobile World Congress', 'All Business', 'Accounting', 'Advertising & Marketing', 'Agriculture', and 'Airlines & Aerospace'. The main content area displays a grid of profiles, including 'Team' (391 following, 7632 followers), 'World Leaders' (38 following, 15221 followers), and 'Mashable Staff' (39 following, 9730 followers).

Create and Get Added to Lists

When you first signed up for Twitter, didn't you wish you knew who to follow? Didn't you want to know who the most interesting and smartest tweeters in your industry are? Since Twitter introduced the list feature, there have been plenty of lists made by industry leaders who knew they were providing a benefit to new users who weren't sure who to follow yet. You can be one of those leaders by creating your own Twitter list. If you're a mISV owner, you'd likely want to follow other mISV owners. Similarly, if you're interested in direct marketing, you'd want to see tweets from direct marketers.

How do you find lists to follow? Check the users you follow. They may have created lists, and you can see them in their profile. Also, there are some applications that allow you to search for lists. Tweetdeck, for example, has a Directory which allows you to find lists by clicking on topics such as "Business & Professions," with subtopics to help narrow down to your specific interest. You can also search for keywords.

In your market, create a list of the top Twitter users for others to use, and you'll be seen as a great resource. Don't forget to tweet about the list to let people know it exists! And since you want to be a leader, you should look to make sure you're ON lists made by others. If someone else has created a list about tech bloggers, and you have a tech blog, send a tweet to the list owner and ask to be added to their list.

Conclusion

You want to connect with your customers, participate in your industry's conversation, and promote your business. The above tips are easy ways to do all of those things with Twitter.

Gianfranco Berardi is the Charter Executive of the ASP SIG Games and a director for the ASP. He runs GBGames, LLC as full-time indie game developer at www.gbgames.com and is @GBGames on Twitter.

Software Marketing and Website Artwork

by Al Harberg

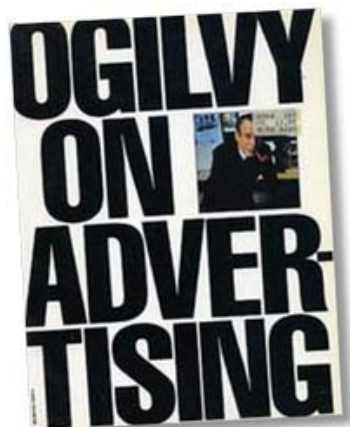
the press release guy

There are a lot of theories about the effectiveness of photos, drawings, and other illustrations on software developers' web sites. For example, some microISVs believe that including stock photographs is a great idea, while others believe that including these pictures would hurt their software marketing efforts.

I'd like to discuss some of the ideas of David Ogilvy, a giant in the field of advertising. In 1963 he founded Ogilvy & Mather, and grew it from a specialty shop to one of the four largest ad agencies in the world. By 1983, the company had 140 offices in 40 countries.

1983 was the year that he wrote "Ogilvy on Advertising." The book provides an enormous amount of practical advice about how to write and illustrate ads that sell. Back then, Ogilvy was writing to an audience of advertising specialists who needed to prepare sales material for magazines and for direct mail sales letters. I'll bring Ogilvy's ideas up to date, and translate them into the software development industry.

The subject of your illustration is critical.



Ogilvy believes that photos and drawings aren't just space-fillers. They have to contribute to the sales process.

Today, many microISVs include screenshots and box shots in their software marketing mix. Whether the illustration was for his high-end Rolls-Royce account, or for the more budget-minded Volkswagen account, Ogilvy often included product shots in his advertising photo mix, too.

I'm not sure how Ogilvy would feel about the use of stock photographs on many software developers' websites. These photos often feature a number of people staring with admiration at a computer screen.

In general, Ogilvy worked with customers who had huge budgets. There was no need to cut corners when it came to hiring photographers to create ad-related artwork. Back then, stock photographs were available for use in advertisements for several hundred dollars each. So hiring a photographer could actually be less expensive than using stock images for a well-illustrated print ad.

It's not realistic to assume that many microISVs are going to hire professional photographers or artists to create their website illustrations. So, stock photos play an important role in creating today's mISV web sites.

My advice would be to avoid the free image sites when looking for photos and drawings. The quality is generally pretty low, compared with the moderately-priced sites such as www.fotolia.com. With millions of images to choose from, and most of them selling for about one US dollar each, it's easy to find illustrations on Fotolia for software development sites of all types. You'll find studio photographs, lifestyle shots, charts and graphs, abstract drawings,

and photographs of all types.

Appeal to Prospects' Curiosity

If your photo makes your software prospects curious, Ogilvy tells us, then your image will increase your software sales. Tell a story, and use an image that helps deliver the story to your prospects.

In my experience, there are two types of curiosity that an image can generate. Ogilvy is talking about good curiosity—the kind that makes your prospects want to learn more about the image, and the story behind it. Bad curiosity, on the other hand, gets prospects to ask, “What on earth is that picture about?” I don’t think confusing pictures add to the sales process.



I wonder if Ogilvy’s approach would work today on websites where, if you don’t get the readers’ attention in the first three or four seconds, they’ll click something and leave. The world of the mid-1980s that Ogilvy was describing was a time when people would sit down and thumb through a magazine, studying the ads and thinking about the articles. Today’s fast-paced world doesn’t encourage the luxury of looking at images, or carefully reading online sales presentations.

Illustrate the Product

If your software marketing doesn’t involve telling a story, then simply illustrate your product. I mentioned screenshots and box shots earlier. Showing happy people using your software is another way to illustrate your product. And stock photograph companies provide an affordable way to acquire these images.

Show the Results of Your Product.

Ogilvy recommends that we illustrate the end-result of using our products or services. He suggests that before-and-after illustrations can be effective. As an example, he tells us that when we advertise products for use in cooking, we should show a photo of the finished product, and not the ingredients. This principle carries over into the software development industry, too. Show the results that people can achieve with your application installed on their computer.

Photos Sell Software Better than Drawings

In the 1980s, Ogilvy had better results with photographs than with drawings. It’s possible that things have changed

today. But following Ogilvy’s advice and using photos to illustrate our websites is a good starting point for those of us in the software development industry.

Keep Your Software Marketing Photos Simple

Use photographs that people can understand instantly. “Crowd scenes don’t pull,” Ogilvy explains. As I mentioned above when discussing curiosity, use photos that make people curious about your sales message, and not curious about what’s depicted in your image.



Head-and-Shoulder Shots Work Best

Larger-than-life human faces repel readers. Don’t use them. Normal portraits are best for illustrating sales presentations, including software marketing material.

Same-Gender Photos

While most people might want to look at pictures of people of the opposite sex, they identify best with pictures of people of their own gender. To the extent possible, you want to paint your software prospects into a word picture in which they see themselves successfully using your application. So, if you offer a program that appeals mainly to women, you should show photos of women using your software.

Historical Subjects Bore Readers

Ogilvy never had much success using historical subjects when selling his clients’ goods and services. His advice is to stay away from historical images, and use illustrations that people can relate to today.

Show Babies, Animals, and Sexy Adults

If a baby picture or an animal photo will grab your prospects’ attention long enough to sell them your software, then use these images on your website. But don’t use images that are so intriguing that people will remember the picture, and not remember why they should buy your software application.

Using adult-themed images on your website is a high-risk strategy. If you can find a way to use these images without distracting or offending people, then try it, and

measure the results in terms of downloads and sales. If sales drop, then return to a more conservative approach to illustrating your software marketing messages.

Opinions Vary

Don't assume that the things that interest you will interest your prospects. Try to understand your software buyers as much as possible, and use images that will capture their attention.

The Bottom Line

Ogilvy's success as an advertising professional can be attributed to his people skills and his keen insights. But he

was a guy who measured the effectiveness of every element of all of his ad campaigns. His company did a huge amount of direct mail work for his clients. And direct mail provides the easiest environment in which to measure the relationship between advertising and sales.

The ideas that he wrote about in 1983 reflect his lifetime of advertising experience. Some of them may not work in today's culture. But they can provide a starting point for developers' software marketing strategies today.

*Since 1984, Al Harberg has been helping software developers with their software marketing and press release campaigns. Visit him on www.dpdirectory.com or check out his new *Software Marketing Glossary* on www.dpdirectory.com/glossary-a-b-test.htm*

ASP Member News

Erik M. Pelton & Associates Reaches 1,500th U.S. Trademark

Erik M. Pelton & Associates ("EMP&A") announced this week that its clients have now been issued more than fifteen hundred (1,500) U.S. trademark registrations. Since its founding in 1999 by former U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ("USPTO") examiner Erik Pelton, EMP&A has excelled at providing cost effective and skilled trademark legal services to businesses and entrepreneurs of all sizes. Few other boutique law firms have succeeded in obtaining so many trademark registrations during the last decade.

To commemorate the milestone, EMP&A recently launched a new slogan: Experience is our trademark. Trademark is our experience.® "While we are proud of achieving a milestone number of registrations, we are even more proud of the success achieved by many of our entrepreneur and small business clients" said Pelton. "We view our role in protecting their trademark and brand as helping to create a solid foundation on which to build their business."

EMP&A has represented a diverse range of clients from at least 48 states and 15 countries, including restaurants, law firms, software developers, race car drivers, real estate brokers, consultants, non-profits, farmers, beauty salons, associations, film studios, fashion designers, fitness clubs, radio and television programs, sports leagues, bands, toy companies, and many more. In addition to filing for USPTO registration, EMP&A advises clients on all aspects of brand creation, protection and infringement. "For clients interested in creating vibrant brands," says Pelton, "we provide counseling and guidance based on the insight we have gained working with hundreds of businesses and brand

names."

"I particularly enjoy it when our clients succeed and their protected brand names are in the spotlight," notes Pelton. For example, after President Obama and Russian Premier Dmitry Medvedev visited Ray's Hell Burger® in Arlington, Virginia last year and the restaurant was featured prominently on national newscasts, Pelton worked with the owner to register the restaurant name to help prevent infringements and secure relevant social media user names and domain names.

Pelton is particularly proud of another accomplishment: each one of the 1,500 trademark registrations secured by EMP&A's client was billed as a flat fee, without any hourly charges or hidden costs. According to Pelton, "Our flat fee clients appreciate never being surprised by an unexpected bill for our services."

Erik Pelton has been widely quoted on small business trademark issues and launched the Apptorney® iPhone® app last year. Pelton also believes in practicing what he preaches; the firm owns multiple trademark registrations for its logo and for the names of its IPelton® blog, smar(tm)ark® newsletter, as well as for the new Experience is our trademark. Trademark is our experience.® slogan. Learn more about EMP&A at www.erikpelton.com.

Plimus Survey: More 'Likes' Matter

Research Finds Consumers Seek Engagement with Brands as Social Networks Become More Influential in the Purchase Process

Fremont, Calif.-Plimus Inc., the leader in hosted e-Business Digital Commerce solutions, today released the results of a survey on the impact of social media on the online shopping experience. The random at-large consumer survey conducted via Facebook and Twitter examined the influence that social networks have on the digital commerce market, and ways in which vendors can leverage these

networks to better engage shoppers and increase customer loyalty.

The survey “More ‘Likes’ Can Equal More Dollars for Online Vendors” found:

- 85 percent of survey participants visit social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn daily.
- One in three consumers indicated that online vendors could better engage them by incorporating more social media elements into their sites.
- More than half of all respondents reported that peer recommendations most influenced the purchases they make online.

As the popularity of social networks continues to grow, vendors have the opportunity to capitalize on the social shopping trend by eliciting positive peer recommendations and reviews in order to drive consumers to their sites.

“In today’s digital economy, vendors must enable a fluid transaction process in order to ensure positive feedback on social media channels and build customer loyalty,” said Charlie Born, vice president of marketing at Plimus. “That’s why the Plimus focus has been on simplifying the

shopping experience and streamlining the payment process, so that vendors not only will drive new visitors to their sites, but they will keep visitors coming back time and time again.”

The survey “More ‘Likes’ Can Equal More Dollars for Online Vendors” also revealed: More than half of survey participants consider an intuitive and simple order page the “ultimate” online experience.

50 percent of respondents stated that limiting the amount of personal information required to purchase digital goods enhanced their shopping experience.

The Forrester Research findings support the idea that today’s shoppers value a complete, immersive experience when it comes to purchasing online content. According to the study, consumers stated that their overall satisfaction lies in the total product experience, not just the content itself. Said Born, “In today’s digital economy, it has become essential for vendors to provide the best customer experience possible and secure positive peer reviews throughout the social Web.”

www.plimus.com.

News & Press Corner

FTC Provides Can-SPAM Video

New FTC Video Helps Businesses Comply with CAN-SPAM Rule

Say “spam” and most business executives think of annoying e-mail messages, like the ones that hold out a phony offer to split \$50 million that’s sitting in a foreign bank. Of course, this type of message is covered by the Federal Trade Commission’s CAN-SPAM Rule, which is designed to protect consumers from deceptive commercial e-mail.

But CAN-SPAM covers e-mails from legitimate businesses, too, such as e-mail notifying customers about a new product line or a special sale. To help explain what the CAN-SPAM Rule covers, the FTC has produced a new video for businesses with a seven-point checklist for sending commercial e-mail messages. For example, e-mail marketers must use accurate headers and subject lines and provide a method for consumers to stop getting e-mails. In addition to the video, the FTC also offers a brochure, *The CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business*.

For businesses that know the basics, compliance isn’t complicated. A business can be held legally responsible for violations committed by people they hire to handle e-mail, and each law violation can cost up to \$16,000. Given the cost of a violation to a company’s bottom line and reputation, complying with CAN-SPAM is just good business.

The Federal Trade Commission works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices

and to provide information to help spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint in English or Spanish, visit the FTC’s online Complaint Assistant or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). The FTC enters complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to more than 2,000 civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad. The FTC’s Web site provides free information on a variety of consumer topics. “Like” the FTC on Facebook and “follow” us on Twitter.

Video at:

<http://business.ftc.gov/multimedia/videos/complying-can-spam-act>

Sixteen Individuals Arrested in the United States for Alleged Roles in Cyber Attacks

More Than 35 Search Warrants Executed in United States, Five Arrests in Europe as Part of Ongoing Cyber Investigations

WASHINGTON—Fourteen individuals were arrested today by FBI agents on charges related to their alleged involvement in a cyber attack on PayPal’s website as part of an action claimed by the group “Anonymous,” announced the Department of Justice and the FBI. Two additional defendants were arrested today on cyber-related charges.

According to the San Jose indictment, in late November 2010, WikiLeaks released a large amount of classified U.S.

State Department cables on its website. Citing violations of the PayPal terms of service, and in response to WikiLeaks' release of the classified cables, PayPal suspended WikiLeaks' accounts so that WikiLeaks could no longer receive donations via PayPal. WikiLeaks' website declared that PayPal's action "tried to economically strangle WikiLeaks."

The San Jose indictment alleges that in retribution for PayPal's termination of WikiLeaks' donation account, a group calling itself Anonymous coordinated and executed distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks against PayPal's computer servers using an open source computer program the group makes available for free download on the Internet. DDoS attacks are attempts to render computers unavailable to users through a variety of means, including saturating the target computers or networks with external communications requests, thereby denying service to legitimate users. According to the indictment, Anonymous referred to the DDoS attacks on PayPal as "Operation Avenue Assange."

The defendants charged in the San Jose indictment allegedly conspired with others to intentionally damage protected computers at PayPal from Dec. 6, 2010, to Dec. 10, 2010.

The defendants are charged with various counts of conspiracy and intentional damage to a protected computer. They will make initial appearances throughout the day in the districts in which they were arrested.

In addition to the activities in San Jose, Scott Matthew Arciszewski, 21, was arrested today by FBI agents on charges of intentional damage to a protected computer. Arciszewski is charged in a complaint filed in the Middle District of Florida and made his initial appearance this afternoon in federal court in Orlando, Fla.

According to the complaint, on June 21, 2011, Arciszewski allegedly accessed without authorization the Tampa Bay InfraGard website and uploaded three files. The complaint alleges that Arciszewski then tweeted about the intrusion and directed visitors to a separate website containing links with instructions on how to exploit the Tampa InfraGard website. InfraGard is a public-private partnership for critical infrastructure protection sponsored by the FBI with chapters in all 50 states.

To date, more than 75 searches have taken place in the



WRITE FOR FAME; WRITE FOR CASH

ASPECTS, the monthly newsletter of the Association of Software Professionals, needs writers. We're

ASPECTS AD RATES

<p>Full page: Measures 7-1/8" wide x 9" high 1 issue \$120, 3 issues \$330, 6 issues \$600.</p>	<p>Quarter page: 3.4" x 4.5" 1 issue \$40, 3 issues \$115, 6 issues \$220.</p>
<p>Half page: Measures 7-1/8" x 4.5" 1 issue \$70, 3 issues \$200, 6 issues \$360.</p>	<p>Business card: Measures 3.4 x 2.25" 1 issue \$30, 3 issues \$80, 6 issues \$155.</p>

paying up to \$100 for each first-run feature article. Topics needed include how-to, tech, marketing, reviews, more. The best way to reach ASP members is to write regularly for ASPECTS.

<http://www.asp-software.org>

Contact the editor at aspects@asp-software.org

United States as part of the ongoing investigations into these attacks.

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys in the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Northern District of California, Middle District of Florida, and the District of New Jersey. The Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section also has provided assistance.

Today's operational activities were done in coordination with the Metropolitan Police Service in the United Kingdom and the Dutch National Police Agency. The FBI thanks the multiple international, federal, and domestic law enforcement agencies who continue to support these operations.

More online: <http://www.softwarekb.com/news/2011/07/24/16-arrests-in-cyber-attacks/>

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