Welcome to Reno!

Convention Special Issue

by Gianfranco Berardi
President, ASP

The ASP has changed and grown with the industry in these last 25 years. We promoted try-before-you-buy as a marketing method until it became The Way Things Are, we've made our interests known and were successful at getting important laws changed that would impact our industry, and most recently we're hosting an amazing conference. The ASP is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and this month kicks off the 25th anniversary celebration. Starting on July 1, ASP members are providing their offerings to the public with discounts of 25% or more. Head to anniversary.asp-software.org/ for more details on this celebration.

Also this month, the Association of Software Professionals is running ISVCon, the new Software Industry Conference, for the first time since purchasing the rights to the conference from the Software Industry Awards Foundation. As a conference that started over 20 years ago and focused on businesses and individuals involved in the software business, it is a great fit for the ASP's efforts to promote software entrepreneurs and independent software developers. Our reboot of the conference takes place in Reno, Nevada, from July 13-15, and it is sure to be a good time for making new connections, gaining invaluable knowledge, and learning about profitable business opportunities.

As a three-day event, the conference is a great opportunity to learn about industry trends. For instance, if you attend any of the mobile-specific sessions at ISVCon, you might hear this statistic: did you know that there are six billion so-called feature phones, aka non-smartphones, on the market? There are estimates that those phones will be upgraded to Internet-connected smartphones within ten years. And this statistic ignores tablets and other mobile devices that are becoming more and more popular. Are you working on your mobile presence to take advantage of this amazing growth? What about the opportunities available in the huge growth of Big Data? Cloud computing? Software as a Service (SaaS)? How does the recent change to a First to File system in U.S. patent law impact you and your business?

Of course, three days ends quickly. For the other 362 days of the year, how can you keep on top of what's happening in this ever-changing industry? You become an ASP member.

You can learn more about the many reasons for joining the ASP by reading Jiri Novotny's article in this issue of ASPects, but know that the Association of Software Professionals offers a vibrant community of hundreds of members who help each other find ways to gain an edge and profitably run their businesses better. And we do so every day of the year.

This public copy of ASPects is just a sample of the kinds of articles you'll find in our monthly newsletter. Enjoy it, and consider signing up as an ASP member at http://asp-software.org/ to enjoy all of the ASP member benefits and to become part of a trade group that can make a positive difference in your industry. I think that, like many of our existing members, you will find that membership in the ASP is vital to your success.

Join us, and be involved in your industry as we start new initiatives and continue to be the premier organization for independent software developers and vendors.

Gianfranco Berardi runs GBGames, LLC as an indie game developer at www.gbgames.com.

Advertising Sizes

Full page
1 issue $120, 3 issues $330
6 issues $600

Half page
1 issue $70, 3 issues $200
6 issues $360

Quarter page
1 issue $40, 3 issues $115
6 issues $220

Business card
1 issue $30, 3 issues $80
6 issues $155

Email banner:
1 issue $30, 3 issues $80
6 issues $155

Trade Show Calendar

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

Casual Connect
Seattle, Washington, July 24-26, 2012
http://seattle.casualconnect.org

Game Developers Conference Europe
Cologne, Germany
August 13-15, 2012
http://www.gdceurope.com

Sociality Rocks! 2012
Social Games Conference #1
Kiev, Ukraine
September 27-28, 2012
http://en.socialityrocks.com

Business of Software 2012
Boston, Massachusetts
October 1-3, 2012
http://www.businessofsoftware.org/

Casual Connect Kyiv
Kiev, Ukraine, October 24-26, 2012
http://kyiv.casualconnect.org/

European Software Conference
Munich, Germany
November 24-25, 2012
http://www.euroconference.org/

CeBIT 2013
Hannover, Germany
March 5-9, 2013
http://www.cebit.de

Multiple Dates & Cities, World-wide

Microsoft Devcamps
Free training events for Phone, Azure, Web, and Windows
April though August 9
http://www.devcamps.ms

WordCamp
WordPress Conferences
July through November 11
http://central.wordcamp.org/schedule/

Send conference news to the ASPects editor.
View the full list online at: http://www.asp-software.org/resources/events.asp

The Biggest Mistake You Can Ever Make

by Jiri Novotny
Dextronet.com

The biggest mistake you can ever make is to wing it alone.

Being a mISV is awesome. But I think that doing it all alone and never fully connecting with other mISVs is not awesome. I'm not talking about getting a co-founder or team members here–while doing that can be incredibly helpful, I am talking about something even more fundamental.

Is it possible that by not connecting with other mISVs, you are preventing your business from growing to the next level? Is it possible that your business will be gone in five years, just because you didn't connect with other mISVs? In this article, you will find the answer.

There is a certain point when things get so complex and advanced that you just can't figure some stuff out for yourself. Being a mISV means running a business, which is one of the most complex endeavors a human being can ever possibly do.

If you are serious about your business, you must connect with other professionals. Most people do this by joining all different sorts of forums and communities–a marketing forum, SEO forum, ecommerce forum, entrepreneurial forum, etc. But for a mISV, that might not be the best way to play this game. For example, if you join a SEO forum, you will completely immerse yourself into the SEO world. But you will probably miss the bigger picture. You will be tweaking some obscure little things on your website ad nauseam, while you could double your business in the same time by doing something different. When it comes to SEO, or any other area, you need to extract 80% of the value in 20% of the effort and move on.

Have you ever fully connected with another mISV author, who runs a business on a higher or an equal level to yours? Think about this, really. Maybe you are introverted. Maybe you are afraid that other people will steal your ideas. Maybe you don't want to share because you feel vulnerable or because you think that others don't deserve your knowledge and experience. But any of this doesn't matter. Let's assume, for a moment, you can put these things aside.

As the first step, join the Association of Software Professionals (ASP). Compared to public forums, it has one tremendous advantage: It's private. You have to pay $100 to join, and the members are screened (but don't worry, you will get accepted). The things you post in the ASP discussion will never appear on Google.

Being an ASP member is not just about success, but also about friendship and community. The feeling you actually belong somewhere should not be underestimated. The outside world might never quite "get" you and what you do (often trying to "help" you get a "real" job), but the ASP is full of people just like you!

If you want your business to be sustainable in the long-term and still exist and prosper in five years from now, you need to burst your personal little bubble which could prevent you from seeing the bigger picture.

Get yourself immersed in lively discussion with other successful mISVs. Ask for feedback, ask for advice. When someone else glances at your website or product, he can see something that you are completely missing. And yet, even such tiny little details can sometimes have an absurd impact on your bottom line.

Get different kind of feedback for a change. You probably already get enough feedback from your users. But in the ASP, hundreds of years of experience of other fellow mISV's can be often summed up in just a few sentences, tailored exactly for you and your business. Such advice can propel your business to the next level. Fresh eyes are priceless. For example, your customers will almost never tell you to raise prices, even if it would make perfect sense from the business stand-point. But other mISVs will. All you have to do is ask.

Is it possible that you have one leg on the gas pedal, and another on the brake? Well, there is an easy way to find

out–join ASP, ask for feedback, and perhaps get in a deeper private conversation with someone specific, ideally someone that you can in turn help in some way as well. You would be quite surprised by the fact that other mISVs are often overjoyed to help their fellows.

In a way, we all live in a personal bubble. And that's good, having your own private world is fun and feels good. But sometimes, you need to make your bubble larger.
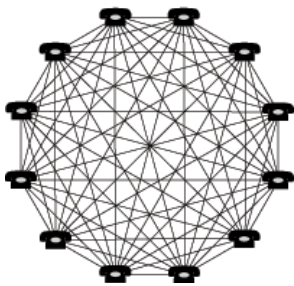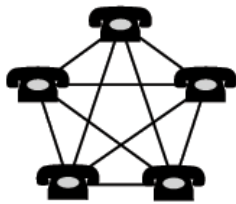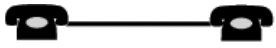
Ever heard of the network effect? This applies to many things. For example, two connected telephones are far, far less valuable than 100 telephones. The more nodes you add to the network, the more powerful the network becomes. The network has far greater value than the sum of its parts. All this is well known. But what is less known is that by joining a network the node itself also becomes more powerful. When you become a part of the Association of Software Professionals, you make the network more powerful. But more importantly, you will also make yourself more powerful. This element is often overlooked.

Maybe you are in a comfortable position right now, and are not really feeling like growing your business. Let me tell you one thing–I don't know anyone who has done the work and created success for himself who regrets it, and thinks "Oh boy, if only I had browsed the internet more, watched more TV and slacked off more".

You have probably heard of the ultra-famous book Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill. Perhaps the book sounds like some new-age woo-woo, but Napoleon actually went and interviewed over 500 American millionaires across nearly 20 years, including Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell and Henry Ford. Do you know what the first rule in Think and Grow Rich is? The first rule is called "The Master Mind." It's about synergy between like-minded individuals. I think that if Napoleon Hill thinks it's that important, then there must be something to it. By joining the ASP, you will create your own Master Mind. All you have to do is to participate in the discussion–ask for advice, and give advice in return.

And it doesn't have to end with advice. While I think that "synergy" is the most over-used, over-hyped buzzword that we've ever invented, I also think the closest a mISV can get to synergy is when he forms partnerships and/or joint-ventures with other mISVs. This can help both mISVs grow their business more than they could on their own.

Never forget why being a mISV is awesome.

It's awesome, because you have total freedom. There is no boss. You work when you want. When you wake up each day, chances are, you are richer, because orders come in 24/7. There is unlimited upside. You grow and develop yourself holistically, as you have to wear many different hats, unlike cubicle slaves in corporate jobs. Software will be needed even more in the future, because we live in the information age. If you want to quadruple your income, no one is stopping you. (Try to do that in a regular job). You can build true wealth. You can have real positive impact on the world.

But all that is possible only if you can sustain and grow your business. Being in a local maximum can be comfortable, but it might not be sustainable. I think that stagnation is a myth. Your business is either growing, or dying. If you can't make it grow, it should be alarming to you. If your business is stagnating, it probably means it is growing and dying at roughly the same rate. But you can change that. If you want to grow your business, you need others to expand your reality.

Join the ASP today:
www.asp-software.org/join

PS: You will also get a cool "ASP member" badge for your website, which can increase visitor trust, one of the scarcest internet commodities in 2012.

Jiri Novotny is 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 a powerful list view control for .NET WinForms, then check out Better ListView at www.componentowl.com/better-listview
Reach Jiri at novotny@dextronet.com - he is happy to chat and trade ideas.

ASP Indie Games SIG

by Gregg Seelhoff
Charter Executive, ASP IndieGames SIG

Did you know that the Association of Software Professionals has a SIG (Special Interest Group) specifically for game developers? The ASP Indie Games SIG is intended to provide a community in which independent game developers can improve their products and businesses through information exchange, collaboration, and social interaction.

Joining the Games SIG (for short) is easy; it requires nothing more than an ASP membership and participation in the SIG forums ['asp.sig.games' from http://members.asp-software.org/newsgroups/]. There are (currently) no additional dues or requirements, through an active interest in games or game development would make a certain amount of sense.

Estimates of the current size of the video game industry vary from a conservative $25.1 billion US [ESA] to a truly staggering figure of $105.0 billion US [Avista Partners], and it continues to grow, with average growth projected to be around 12% annually through 2015 [Gartner]. Most of that growth is expected to be in digital game downloads, an area in which the ASP is a pioneer.

What makes the game industry great, though, is not its size, but its diversity. There are enough genres and niches within the field to allow for both huge, blockbuster (a.k.a., AAA) titles on the latest consoles, and more contained efforts from smaller, independent teams (i.e., "indies") on just about any platform: desktop, mobile, online, console, and others. The opportunities are almost limitless.

Making games is fun. Most programmers work on at least one game, if only for their own enjoyment; some of these developers make money from selling games, and thousands actually turn game development into a career. The game industry, however, is full of challenges and pitfalls, so give yourself a competitive advantage by joining us in the ASP Indie Games SIG today!

Gregg Seelhoff is the Charter Executive of the ASP Indie Games SIG. You can find him and other ASP game developers in the 'asp.sig.games' forum, as well as on the How Games are Different panel at ISVCon 2012.

PAD Specification Update

by Joel Diamond
PAD Specification Chair

Plans are being made for a major overhaul to the entire PAD platform beginning this summer. Members will be notified in the very near future with the full plans for both changes and enhancements to the PAD Specification as well as the authoring tools, shortly after ISVCON.

Taking place immediately, the current specification will be maintained but the affiliate extensions that have been added to prior to the current v3.1 and that are supported by PADGEN 3.1, PADManager, will be "edited." Support for V-Share (NetSuite), Digital Candle, NorthStar, Order1, Yaskifo, as well as the Digital River brands Emetrix, DigiBuy and RegSoft, will be removed as they are no longer in service or used by software publishers, based on a review of over 150,000 PAD files.

An entirely new list of affiliate and ecommerce candidates are being reviewed and qualified to replace v. 3.1. Feel free to nominate any affiliate service or major software ecommerce provider by email to joeld@wugnet.com
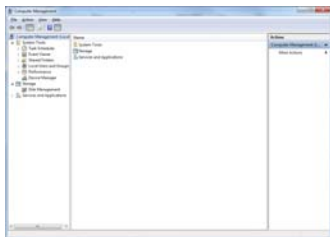
How to Capture a Screen

by Jerry Stern
Webmaster, Software Knowledge Base

I spent some time looking at software screen shots recently. It was something of an eye opener. As in, it caused considerable visual stress to look at the ugly things. They were, for the most part, worthless. Some were just plain screen captures , or of programs that just aren't very pretty when you look at the main screen from a distance of five feet. Some were box shots, and those weren't always of products that are available in a box–there's another problem there. And some were just logos with no tag line or URL. Others weren't sized properly for their likely use, either too big or too tiny, or much, much too tall. A few had a centered screen image, with wider text below, effectively shrinking the artwork down to unreadable.

It's not just that these screenshots don't show what the program can do; they don't even identify what program we're looking at.

Let's go through the process of building a readable screenshot, step by step. It's not just run, grab, paste, save. There's some planning involved here. Most of the samples are for the Windows 7 edition of Microsoft Paint.

First, Consider the Viewer

How will the screenshot be used? On your website, showing steps 1, 2, 3 of a project? So the images will be shown big, and there will be sample data or art or projects in the samples. Those are very easy images; plan them, capture and convert as-needed, and generally, done.

Marketing images are another image type altogether,

and the rest of these steps will cover images that sell. For example, will the screenshot be listed in a PAD file for display by a download site? Then the images will be shown small, very small, with maybe an option to click for a full-size look, but maybe not.

These are very different uses. In the first, the image is educational, not marketing. In the second, it's an attempt to call for action, usually a download or a purchase. That's marketing, and marketing isn't reality; it's a visual representation with a purpose. To achieve that purpose, add text, logos, icons, artwork, anything that will express that purpose, but not overwhelm the viewer. It's closer to a title page than an advertisement.

Second, Prepare and Capture

Before capturing the images for your screenshot, remove any distractions from your screens–in Windows, that usually means either turning off the Aero options, or setting your desktop background to solid white. Turn off auto-arrange for the desktop icons, and drag any icons away from where your program will appear during the screenshot–usually, that means removing the top row of icons from your screen so that the top bar isn't showing see-through effects of your desktop.

If your program is always full-screen, reset the resolution of the desktop to the lowest possible pixel size that will make your program look good. That might be smaller than a usable size for the program; this is about visuals, not usability. If your program can be sized, skip this step.

Now, run your program. Identify which screen shows that the program is unique, wonderful, and that it's really attractive. The Windows shortcut to capture the active window is alt-Print Screen, sometimes shown as PrtScrn on your keyboard. Nothing appears to happen when you press those keys–that's OK. Go to any painting program, like Microsoft Paint, and paste in the image–Control-V will generally work. Save the result. Here is the resulting
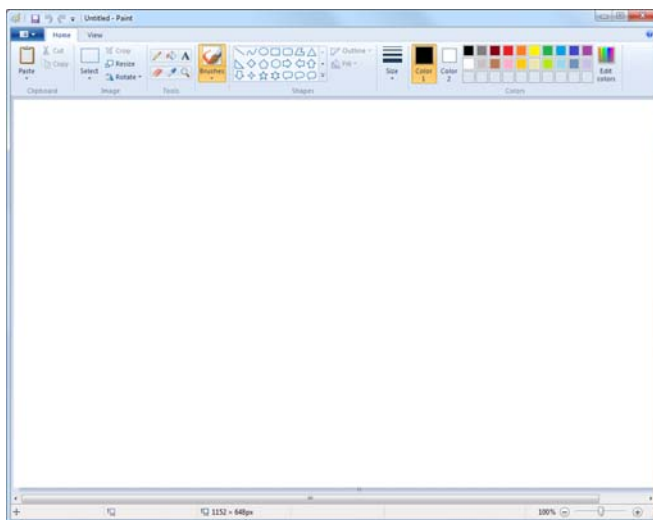
screenshot for MS-Paint. *(bottom left)* It's not really useful yet–it's mainly whitespace, and you can't read the program name.

Now, resize the program. Take it down to the smallest possible size it can be on-screen, and then enlarge it until the menus and toolbars, or most of the design elements, look good. Capture that.
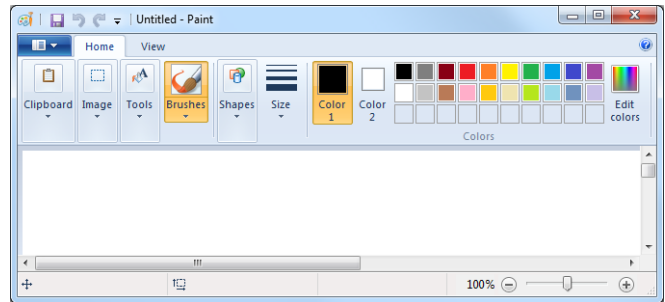
Next, you'll need supplemental artwork. The logo for the program is good, and as the developer, you'll have the original drawings. In this case, there is just the program icon, so for MS-Paint, I've copied the program from the start menu, right-clicked the desktop, and chosen to paste a new shortcut to the program. Then I click elsewhere to remove the 'selected' box from the image, and press Ctrl-PrintScreen to capture the entire screen, paste it into a paint program, and crop it down to just the icon. Finally, I resampled the icon to double-height and double-width; any more that would look badly aliased or stair-stepped along the edges, and ugly.

Bad Visuals

Some programs are ugly, or boring, but they create great printouts. For these programs, consider capturing the printouts as art for the screen capture. Install any 'print - to- PDF' driver, and make a single-page PDF printout of the program doing its most dramatic work. Convert that PDF to PNG format, and crop down to a visual detail that will work well on-screen, and use that as a major part of the screenshot.

Combine the Artwork

Now, you'll need a good art program; start by creating a new image. Import and size the screen shot. Frequently, that will be full size, but it doesn't have to be. Import any other art you'll use, arrange it, and leave room for some text.

Some programs aren't going to look good full-screen, no matter how you adjust the program size. Consider

cropping the screen capture to only show the top-left corner of the interface; that will show the program name, and usually the file menus or toolbars. That may be enough; we're looking for pretty, not complete.

Finally, add some text. Download sites aren't great about showing the web address of the program, so I generally will include that in the image as well.
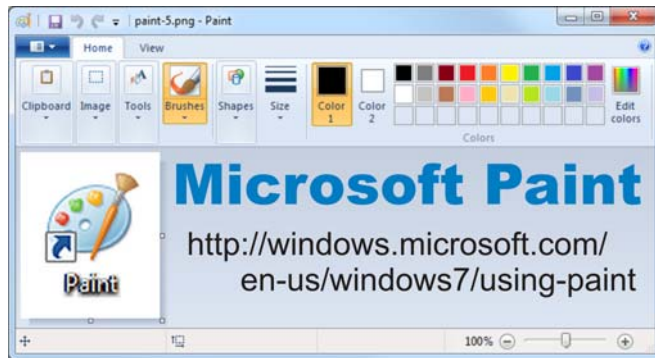
Building an image in a drawing program will result in a big image. Save that, and export the result in a reasonable size for web use. 600 pixels wide, and not more than 300 high, is probably as big as you can get away with for a screenshot on most websites. Some download sites may want more specific sizes; export them from your large original artwork–that's going to provide the best possible artwork. Remember to design first, and resize last.

I kept this sample screenshot for Paint fairly simple. Usually, that's ideal; you can add more lines of text, or start adding shadows and shading, but remember that the image is going to be seen small. Walk away from your monitor, and look at the capture from across the room–it should still be clear, and should still identify the program in a simple and iconic way.

Jerry Stern is the editor of ASPects, the ASP's Coordinator of Anti-Spyware Operations, runs Startupware.com and WordPerfect.org, and is online at www.sciencetranslations.com.

Customer Relationship Management for microISVs

by Al Harberg
the press release guy from DP Directory, Inc.

Customer relationship management (CRM) is good software marketing. CRM is a simple notion that can help software developers sell more of their applications: It costs most businesses less money to generate sales from old customers than it does to find new ones.

Manage your customers

The concept of CRM was popularized by Don Peppers and Martha Rogers in their book The One to One Future–Building Relationships One Customer at a Time.

Today, most of us in the software development industry think of CRM as a database system that coordinates all of our software sales, marketing, and demographic information. By contrast, Peppers and Rogers talk about CRM as a core management process, and not as a technology challenge.

First, the authors tell us, we have to identify potential customers. Second, we have to figure out what they want and need, how our software products and services can fill that need, and how to optimize the lifetime value of each block of customers. Third, we need to develop a relationship with our customers so we can know enough about their tastes and preferences to make intelligent decisions about the software that we'll be marketing. And fourth, we need to find a way to customize our products, services, and sales messages to meet each individual customer's needs. Or, more realistically, we need to define specific groups of prospects and customers, and target them with communications that are tailored to their needs.

Too often, developers create a new application because they're unable to find a program that meets a specific need. Instead of making development and marketing decisions based upon the developer's personal need for software, it makes a lot more sense to target a larger group of people, define their needs, and build an application that solves problems that a significant number of people are wrestling with.

Before Peppers and Rogers published their book, marketers spoke about managing products; Peppers and Rogers urge us to manage customers, too. We need to differentiate our customers, in much the same way that we differentiate our products and services. Managing customer

relationships touches all of the processes that are crucial to the success of our business.

Make Clients Feel Important

Harry Beckwith discusses our relationships with all of our clients. In his book The Invisible Touch - The Four Keys to Modern Marketing, Beckwith reminds us that business is about people, and that relationships matter. Lots!

If we want to make initial software sales and encourage future sales, we need to find a way to make our clients know that we think that they're important. Beckwith presents eight keys to lasting relationships:

(1) Natural affinity

Convince prospects that you share things in common with them. For example, you understand their need for educational software for their children because you have children, too, and you know how difficult it is to find good software. You understand their need for Windows productivity applications because you, too, spend too much time doing routine work on your computer. If you want to sell more software, talk to prospects about them, and not about yourself. But be sure to let your prospects know that you understand their problems.

(2) Trust

Beckwith urges us to show integrity because integrity builds trust. In the software development industry, this means not presenting prospects with sales hype. Perhaps it means not pre-checking the box that says "Yes, send me the program on CD, too, for only $10(US) additional." Some would argue that integrity means not showing a box shot on your website if you don't offer a boxed product.

(3) Speed

In business, response times matter. Create a website that displays your marketing message quickly. Answer prospects' and customers' inquiries briskly. And send customers their unlock keys as quickly as possible.

(4) Apparent Expertise

Look like an expert by behaving like an expert. Communicating expertise to your software clients is clearly more important than having credentials. They don't care about your university degrees. They care about your responses to their support questions. Words matter. They're tools. Learn how to use them more effectively, and build your expertise in your customers' minds.

(5) Sacrifice

Do something above-and-beyond for your customers. Develop a reputation for working on weekends and holidays to deliver the best support in the industry. Add the features to your application that they need.

(6) Completeness

You'll sell more stuff, Beckwith urges, if you can find a way to solve all of your clients' problems. Many software developers have built a family of products that help their target audience solve all of the problems in a particular field.

(7) Magic Words

Say "thank you." Ask how people are doing. Use your customers' names when writing to them.

(8) Passion

Customers and prospects can tell if you love what you're doing. Show them how interested you are in your products,

and in them.

Pick the Low-hanging Fruit

In his book Your Marketing Sucks, Mark Stevens takes customer relationships a step further by suggesting that working with existing customers will generate the easiest money that we'll ever make. Translated into the software development industry, Stevens' ideas include cross-selling other applications that you've written.

Stevens would also encourage microISVs to get their customers to buy somebody else's software that they're offering on an affiliate basis. Select another developer who markets excellent applications. The other developer has to target the same group that you're targeting, and they can't be offering a competing application.

And the other developer's applications must have the same appeal as yours. For example, if your software is known for its ease of use, then you shouldn't select a developer whose application is known for being a full-featured powerhouse. Instead, choose another developer who takes the same minimalist approach to software design that you do. Set up an affiliate relationship with this other developer, and sell their software to your user-base.

Encourage your existing customers to upgrade from the Light version to the Standard version, and to the Professional version. If they're a home user and they've bought a single-user license, offer them a family license. If they're a business user, talk to them about multi-user and site licensing.

It's always easier, Beckwith tells us, to sell to somebody with whom you already have a relationship.

Start with an Easy Sale

Jay Conrad Levinson, in his book Guerrilla Marketing Excellence, tells us that if we can get prospects to take one or more soft steps, it's easier to get them to take the hard step of making the purchase. For example, a software developer might encourage prospects to subscribe to a newsletter, or to contact them with questions about their software.

Start building a relationship with them, and it will be easier to get them to buy from you. Offer them a free flyer, brochure, DVD, demonstration, phone consultation, or seminar. Establish a relationship with them, and then ask for the sale.

Selling to Women

Women are three times more likely to recommend a brand to friends and colleagues. Help women connect to each other, and they can tell others about your product or service. So says Faith Popcorn in her book EVEolution.

Popcorn insists that she is not talking about word-of-mouth marketing or relationship marketing. This isn't about putting a simple "tell a friend about our soft-

ware" link on your website. It's about creating a genuine community around your brand. Weight Watchers did this. They transformed dieting from a private act to a public one.

Create a site where people can discuss what they're worried about and passionate about. If the site is centered around your brand, then you can get women to join your brand. And you can build solid relationships with all of the participants.

What CRM Means for Software Developers

If you decide to adopt customer relationship management techniques in your software development business, try not to get bogged down in the technical aspects of implementing a CRM solution. The most important problems that you need to tackle are defining all of the contact points that you have with your prospects and customers, and deciding how to optimize every one of them. By making dozens or hundreds of improvements with your customer interactions, you'll build far better relationships with your target audience. And that will mean more sales, more referrals, and a better reputation for your company.

CRM is good software marketing.

Since 1984, Al Harberg has been helping software developers write press releases and send them to the editors. You can check out more CRM ideas on his new Software Marketing Glossary on www.dpdirectory.com/glossary-creativity.htm#crm_at_the_speed_of_light

Call Yourself!
Are You Impossible to Reach?

by Jerry Stern
Editor, ASPects

I'm surprised by basic web page failures among microISVs. I follow a link to a product I've heard about for years, or was recommended to me, and I see, well, crab grass. Or what's left of the lawn has turned brown. No, wait, that's another problem. Or is it?

We run software and technology businesses, and many of us are guilty of liking our technology so much, that we want to just do that. Be the programmer, all the time, and never delegate or outsource that work, and never move on to keeping our offices running. But that's basic introduction to Management material; management isn't production. Management is hiring, firing, delegation, training, and supervision, and making sure that everything else gets done, even if you have to outsource, hire, or do it yourself to make sure that everything gets done.

The common error in a small business is skipping supervision. "What! I work alone! I don't need supervision!" Yeah, right. Unless you work off proper to-do lists that include double-checks that your systems are working, you aren't supervising either your own workload, or your technology. For now, I'll leave 'supervising yourself' as an exercise for the programmer; here's the short version–make a list, and assign hours to each item. You can steal hours from each item if you have to, but can't cut any category to zero. Especially not supervision, marketing, or bookkeeping.

Programmer, Phone Home!

But back to supervising your technology, as that's what I see failing from the outside world; that's what your customers see. Business management classes usually tell you: Call yourself! It's really that simple. Pick up a phone and dial your number. No, that's not it. Go to a search engine, find your web page, find your phone number, dial it, and leave a message. Oh, and do it from outside your office. Repeat it once a month, and repeat that for each of your contact methods. The first try might result in shock, however.

What you're looking for are communication road blocks. A bad phone number, or none. Web mail pages that no longer work. Missing paper-mail addresses. A full phone mail box, or a generic answering service message. A web page that displays security warnings in WebOfTrust (mywot.com) or at SiteAdvisor.com. Web pages that go nowhere, or display badly on browsers you don't use. Have you visited your sites from an iPAD yet? Sure you want to use Flash animation for your main welcome message? It's not universal, never was, and the usage percentages are dropping now.

OOPS story 1: I visited a microISV's web site to look at his product. His site shows up in Danish, with an English button, which refreshes the page and once again, shows me Danish. Nice site, but all I can read in Danish are the technology words that don't normally get translated. The author doesn't really visit his own site in English, apparently. And neither does anyone else. *Lost sale.*

OOPS story 2: I find someone on LinkedIn, I call their phone number, and it goes to voicemail, and the voicemail is full. Or their email bounces, unknown recipient. *Lost opportunity.*

OOPS story 3: OK, this one was me. I visit a friend, show them my website. It's too wide to fit her low-resolution screen without scrolling; it doesn't resize to fit the screen width. *Lost readability.*

OOPS story 4: I see a web URL in the email address of a contact, and look at the site. The site looks like it was created 12 years ago, the copyright date is 2003, and the web links go to 'file:\\web\details.asp'. Web page closed, *lost another sale.*

OOPS story 5: Nice product site, no contact information on it. Nothing but links to a third-party sales company, maybe Paypal. No phone, email, webmail, or paper mail address, no hint of which time zone, continent, or star system is the closest. Sorry, I don't buy anything from off-planet yet.

Right about now, I hear a few comments: "I can't publish my phone number; I work from home," or "I'm uncomfortable with spoken English for calls," "I'm on the Pacific RIM and my time zone is very different from my customers," or "I don't want emails; just buy my product and leave me alone." OK, your customers can and will buy from a company whose expectation of normal communications matches their own.

It's OK to not have any *one* of these on your site: a phone number, or an email address, or a physical delivery address. It's *never OK* to not have a mailing address (post office boxes are OK). It's a bad idea to not have most of these:

Phone number: The phone number has to actually reach a message that identifies your company or main product. A generic message from an cell phone service that "555-1212 is not available. Please leave a message" is not acceptable. The phone number doesn't have to actually ring (or wake you up on the far side of the planet), but it has to reliably take messages. The number doesn't even have to be a device; a virtual phone number, like Google Voice, is perfectly OK; you can set virtual phones to ring at another number during some hours, and go directly to voicemail the

rest of the time. Definitely list your office hours, and *time zone*, near your phone number.

Email address: There has to be a way to reach you by email on your web site. It doesn't have to be a plain-text email address; a working web-mail form is OK.

Mailing address: Yes, your mailing address has to be on your web site. I have to teach end users about online security. I show them how to tell if an order page is en-crypted, how to see who the company taking orders is, and sometimes how to look up the reputation of a site, or see if there are complaints. And I stress not ordering from companies that hide their locations. Look, I'm not going to show up at your door. (It's happened to me, once, and that character did buy software, but it took an hour to get him out the door again, and I can't work an hour for a $20 sale. And that's why I use a post office box.) But if you hide your city and country, you aren't going to get sales from your neighbors–remember that all search engines are moving towards 'local results first.' And you won't get orders from anyone who knows that in case an online order fails, there has to be a way to reach someone to fix things.

Again, I hear cries of despair: But I'm in Lower Slobbovia! Or for those who haven't heard of it, East Elbonia is pretty much the same. It's somewhere you won't admit you're from. Perhaps the real problem isn't that your offices are remote–I've done business with great companies on six continents. The good ones aren't hiding their locations. Companies that hide their locations are automati-cally suspicious–what else is hidden in their software?

Web sites: All of your web sites must work, in all the major browsers. If you sell Mac software, they had better work perfectly when viewed from an iPAD. Preferably, every domain you use should have a really sharp and good looking web site. But if you have a domain you haven't touched in years, and can't be bothered to update it, then redirect that domain to your best web site. Kill the old site, move on, and don't leave straggler web sites lying around. If you must leave an old site un-updated, run a link checker on it and fix whatever is broken.

Don't skip any steps on these checks. It really does work best if you leave your office, and then try to communicate from the outside world. Then you see that your web site has the wrong country code on the phone number, or it doesn't display properly on other browsers, or it's blocked by web security software, or the links are local and broken. Or one browser is flagging a site certificate as bad, or a security toolbar is popping warnings.

It's the equivalent in a big company of dialing the main switchboard, trying to get past the phone board, past the executive assistant to the vice president, and actually having an executive listen to you long enough to hear the 10-second version of what you're selling. Sales pitches don't work without communication; don't lose your sale because you can't be reached.

Jerry Stern is the editor of ASPects, the ASP's Coordinator of Anti-Spyware Operations, runs Startupware.com and WordPerfect.org, and is online at www.sciencetranslations.com.

ASPects

The Monthly Newsletter of the Association of Software Professionals

WRITE FOR FAME; WRITE FOR CASH

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

ASPECTS AD RATES

Full page:
Measures 7-1/8" wide x 9" high
1 issue $120,
3 issues $330,
6 issues $600.

Quarter page:
3.4" x 4.5"
1 issue $40,
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7-1/8" x 4.5"
1 issue $ 70,
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6 issues $360.

Business card:
Measures 3.4 x 2.25"
1 issue $30,
3 issues $80,
6 issues $155.

http://www.asp-software.org
Contact the editor at aspects@asp-software.org

Software Passwords and Software Marketing

by Al Harberg
the press release guy from DP Directory, Inc.

If your software asks users to create a password to protect the privacy of their information, then you have an opportunity to offer additional value to your customers. And that can mean increased software sales, additional recommendations, and good will for your company in your marketing niche.

Help your users choose effective passwords. According to the "Worst Passw0rds" article in the April 2012 issue of AARP Bulletin, online users have a terrible track record for choosing effective passwords to protect their security.

The most popular password, the article tells us, is "password". Changing the lower-case letter "o" to a zero to form passw0rd is the 16th most popular password choice.

The top 25 list includes such clever choices as 123456, 1234567, 12345678, and 123123. "qwerty" and "letmein" are also on the list of popular user choices.

Every day, computer users worry about their privacy. If your software asks your users to create a password, then you have an opportunity to show that you care about their privacy and security. Don't let them create low-quality passwords.

Andrei Belogortseff is the CEO of WinAbility Software, at www.winability.com, a Utah-based software developer of security and password utilities. WinAbility markets USBCrypt, a program that makes it simple to encrypt and password-protect your USB drive, as well as other removable and fixed drives.

"It's important to protect your data with a long, complex password," Andrei tells us. "Use a mix of upper-case letters, lower-case letters, digits, and special characters."

USBCrypt has a built-in password recovery function that lets users recreate lost or forgotten passwords. On a typical modern business PC, it can take 30 minutes to recover a three-digit password that contains only lower-case letters. By contrast, a five-digit password made up of a mix of upper- and lower-case letters can take up to 15 days to recover. And a seven-digit password that mixes upper- and lower-case letters with numbers and special characters can take thousands of years to recover.

If your application asks users to choose a password, you can help them select wisely. Build a list of terrible passwords into your application, and don't let your users select these easy-to-guess codes. Examine the passwords that they create, and encourage them to use longer passwords, with a mix of characters.

"Be sure to remind your users of the flip-side of using a complex password," Andrei tells us. "If you forget your password, it will be nearly impossible to recover it."

Add your password protection information to your website, and make it part of your software marketing presentation. By creating keyword-rich pages that describe your thoughts about privacy, security, encryption, and passwords, you'll get more search engine traffic from people who include these words when they search for software like yours.

Use your application's help file to provide your users with a short explanation of why passwords are important. They'll appreciate the guidance, and they'll be much more inclined to recommend your software to their friends and colleagues. Helping customers choose powerful passwords is good software marketing.

Since 1984, Al Harberg has been helping software developers write press releases and submit them to the editors. You can check out his press release services on www.dpdirectory.com

ASP Member News

Slimbrowser – a Fast and Secure Tabbed Web Browser

FlashPeak Inc has released SlimBrowser V4.1, a compact tabbed browser that is super-fast, easy to use and packed with wonderful features including popup-blocker, form filler, autologin, spell checker, site groups, ad filtering, quick search and much more.

SlimBrowser manages web sites as child windows with clickable tab labels in a single main window to avoid task bar clutter. With SlimBrowser, searching the web is easy–type in the quick-search box and press enter to get the search results you want immediately. You can either use the predefined list of search engines or easily create your own favorite search engines.

SlimBrowser also includes a URL filter which blocks web pages and components by address matching. Furthermore, the advanced in-page ad-filter automatically eliminates the obtrusive floating images and flash animations from the original web pages.

SlimBrowser includes site grouping functionalities which enables you to save a number of sites as a group and open the group of sites next time with a single click. The form filler fills your personal information into web forms with the best field-detection accuracy and saves you a lot of repetitive typing.

SlimBrowser is free, from www.flashpeak.com/sbrowser

Affordable Cloud-Based Speed Reading Software for Colleges and College Prep

StepWare, Inc. announces the availability of AceReader Online, the Cloud version of its flagship Windows/Mac application AceReader Pro. AceReader Online is a powerful educational tool that assesses, improves, and monitors students' reading speed, fluency, and comprehension.

AceReader Online teaches students to break bad reading habits such as subvocalization (pronouncing the words in their minds as they read) and regression (reading passages more than once). This educational software also helps expand students' eye fixation zone so they can read multiple words at a time.

The online version of AceReader offers features that benefit college, university, and high school teachers and students. Students can work independently on a personalized self-adjusting reading course, or choose from a library of reading assessment and improvement regimens. Educators can monitor each student's progress by viewing reports for each student consisting of reading speeds, comprehension scores, graphs, activity logs and much more.

Since AceReader Online includes 13 levels of text complexity, it is being used by younger students (i.e. grade schools) and even for students who need vision training (i.e. students with dyslexia).

AceReader Online has been used by 30 colleges and schools during the 2011/2012 school year with great success and is now is available to all education institutions. www.acereader.com

Create Handwriting Fonts In Many Major Languages

High-Logic B.V. has released Scanahand 4, an application that makes it easy for each member of the family to create custom, hand-written fonts for use in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Notepad, and any Windows program. Scanahand lets you quickly create a font, install it in Windows in seconds, and use it immediately. You can type notes and cards in your favorite word processing software, and print them in your own handwriting.

Scanahand lets you create signature fonts, set a font style by going bold or italic, has the ability to automatically include diacritical marks, and provides full Unicode support. New features in version 4 include a smart character mapper that automatically links missing letters to their upper/lower case counterpart and a brand new algorithm for calculating the best possible left and right-side bearings for the basic Latin character set. The tracing method used by Scanahand has been further improved to generate even more stunning fonts.

The Premium Edition also includes a Template Editor that allows users to create templates, each containing a user defined set of characters. This allows the generation of fonts that support numerous languages not available in the Standard Edition.
www.high-logic.com

News & Press Corner

Microsoft Announces Windows 8 Upgrade Offer

Microsoft Corp. announced the availability of the Windows Upgrade Offer for consumers purchasing a qualifying new Windows 7 PC. The Windows Upgrade Offer provides consumers who buy an eligible Windows 7 PC the option to purchase a downloadable upgrade to Windows 8 Pro for an estimated retail price of just $14.99 during the time of the promotion, which will be redeemable when Windows 8 is generally available. The Windows Upgrade Offer is just the first of many consumer offers that will roll out in conjunction with the general availability of Windows 8.

"We've seen a great interest in Windows 8, especially given the availability of the Windows 8 Release Preview this week, and yet we know many consumers want a new PC now," said Tami Reller, chief marketing officer and chief financial officer of Windows at Microsoft. "The Windows Upgrade Offer gives people the flexibility to purchase the new Windows 7 PC they need today, with the knowledge they can easily get Windows 8 when it's available."

This program is available for consumers buying new Windows 7 PCs that are preinstalled with Windows 7 Home Basic, Home Premium, Professional or Ultimate and include a matching and valid OEM Certificate of Authenticity. The Windows 7 PC must be purchased new during the eligibility period June 2, 2012–Jan. 31, 2013.
www.windowsupgradeoffer.com

WinZip® Android App Now Available

WinZip Multi-platform Product Line Extends Mobile Support with Free Android App

WinZip Computing, a Corel company, today introduced WinZip® for Android, a new free mobile app now available on Google Play.

"With our free Android app, we're extending the power of WinZip to new mobile customers and delivering an essential tool for opening zipped files on the go. Our first mobile app, WinZip for iOS, enjoyed a great reception and has already been downloaded by more than a million iPhone and iPad users. Now, with apps for Android and iOS, we're offering WinZip tools to customers on both of the industry's most popular mobile platforms," said Patrick Nichols, President of WinZip.
www.winzip.com

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ASP Membership Form

Before submitting your application for membership, visit our website at www.asp-software.org/join/ and review the membership standards and requirements. There are two categories of ASP Membership. Please make sure you have reviewed the appropriate information and standards page.

Mail applications to:
Richard Holler
ASP Executive Director
PO Box 1522
Martinsville IN 46151 USA

***I have read the appropriate standards and agree to abide by them:** ❏ Yes ❏ No

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(Select either 'Developer' or one of the various Industry categories):

❏ Developer

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❏ Online Distributor
❏ Online Developer
❏ User Group
❏ Press/Media
❏ Consultant
❏ Shareware Enthusiast

Company/Product Description:
(120 characters or less, required if web site link is requested)

---

*Name _____

Company Name _____

*Street Address _____

Street Address _____

*City/Town _____

*State/Province _____

*ZIP/Postal Code _____

*Country _____

Public Phone (Voice)_____

Public Phone (FAX) _____

Public Email Address _____

*Web Site URL _____
(Required if web site link is requested)

*Private Phone (ASP use) _____

*Private Email Address (ASP use) _____

*Do you wish to have your listing included in the public member database? ❏ Yes ❏ No

*Do you wish to have your website link included on our ASP website? ❏ Yes ❏ No

***Signature** _____

Visa/MasterCard/American Express Authorization
If paying by credit card, all the following fields are required:

*Credit Card Number _____

*Expiration Date _____

*Name of Card Holder _____

*Amount to be charged $100 (USD) _____

*CVV2 code (back of card) _____