Creating Powerful Access Solutions without Visual Basic expertise
An OpenGate Whitepaper

Businesses commonly rely on Microsoft® Access™ to develop quick software solutions that meet very specific needs. Rather than spending money to have a custom application created, a talented employee can generally turn out a solid solution to the problem using Access in a matter of days or weeks. A key value offered with Microsoft Access is the ability to create database applications without ever learning how to program. This brief paper discusses how you can take your Access-based application even farther using off-the-shelf software that does not require VB expertise.

CUSTOM DEVELOPMENT

The typical path taken by many businesses is to develop a rudimentary solution that meets their specific needs using Microsoft Access. With a brief amount of work, even novice users can create an Access database with basic data entry forms, reports, and queries. Over time, additional functionality is often needed, which may mean taking an Access or Visual Basic course, engaging with a contractor to perform the enhancements, or even purchasing an expensive off-the-shelf software solution specifically built for your business or industry. If you choose to perform the development yourself, it may require training, or hours spent in help documents or user group forums online. On the positive side, your efforts translate to new skills, and a software solution that should closely meet your business processes.

USING OFF THE SHELF TOOLS

In many cases, the functionality needed in a Microsoft Access database is common to many businesses. Specifically, better menu capabilities, effectively handling multiple users in the same database, recording errors and other events, or merging information to a document or email. Until some time ago, no single off the shelf solution gave Access users these advanced capabilities without resorting to hours spent in help documents learning Visual Basic and Windows API calls. UI Builder™ for Access offers the most commonly needed functionality for Microsoft Access databases out of the box. UI Builder provides a powerful application framework you can build upon whether you are an expert with Access and Visual Basic, or just beginning with no understanding of VB or macros. The time you spend incorporating standard functionality into your application can then be spent focusing on more important activities, like user forms that encourage efficient data entry, or even more important, running your business.

WEIGHING THE COST/BENEFIT

When considering whether to learn and perform Visual Basic development yourself, outsourcing to a contract developer, or purchasing, a solid cost/benefit analysis helps to decide which path to choose. The decision ultimately comes down to what your time is worth, if you can afford distractions from your core focus, whether you can pay for custom development, or choose to purchase a solution like UI Builder. For larger organizations, the cost/benefit analysis may also entail examining the cost of individuals in multiple departments performing Access development to solve the same problems. Finally, it is important to consider whether the solution you choose is flexible, reliable, and includes ongoing support and upgrades.

For assistance creating a cost/benefit analysis to solve the most common Access development challenges, visit http://opengatesw.net/products/UI Builder/ROI Calculator.htm

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