Introduction

This book is about creating client extranets with SharePoint 2003. Although there are many fine books that expand upon or clarify the material found in the various SharePoint SDKs published by Microsoft, this book is different. Most SharePoint books focus primarily on SharePoint administration or end user features, not on SharePoint as a development platform.

Creating Client Extranets with SharePoint 2003 is written to give you exactly what you need to deploy a secure, reliable, and highly usable extranet as quickly as possible. By reading this book, you can expect to acquire a wide range of skills that are both necessary to take full advantage of SharePoint as a development platform, as well as being valuable in their own right. Specifically, upon completing the book, you will be able to:

- Install and maintain SharePoint in an extranet environment.

- Use the SharePoint object model to create custom components called web parts.

- Create .NET applications that use the SharePoint object model.

- Build a framework to provide full control over content targeting.

- Customize the SharePoint look and feel to present your firm's brand to your clients.

If you want to create secure websites in which you, your colleagues, clients, vendors, and partners can share and collaborate on documents and data, you need an extranet. Extranets provide individuals inside and outside your firm with a secure online meeting place, and SharePoint provides a robust and highly customizable platform on which you can create your extranet sites. In this book, you'll learn how to install and configure Windows SharePoint Services (WSS) to support secure access over the Internet. You will also learn how to customize SharePoint at the site and page level through CAML, the template definition language, and through .NET programming. We'll cover the creation of administration tools to aid you in supporting a large number of sites and improvements to user navigation that will make your end users happier.

Why Build an Extranet?

Because you picked up this book and read this far, I assume that you already have one or more good reasons for wanting to build an extranet. Perhaps you (or your internal "customers") want to provide better service to your clients by creating online collaborative spaces. On the other hand, your clients might have let it be known that they expect such services from their vendors. In any case, an extranet is the next logical step beyond "one-on-one" collaboration via email, or group collaboration via file shares and FTP. Extranets break down the barriers between what's inside and what's outside your firm, but do so in a controlled way. Extranets address the fact that the defining work unit at many firms is now the project and that project teams are fluid and made up of employees, clients, vendors, and partners.