

INTRODUCTION

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

Expression Web is an exciting new Web development product and there are going to be plenty of authors writing about it. That puts readers in a tight spot when trying to figure out which book to purchase to learn how to use Expression Web to its fullest. Let me tell you who should be reading this book. If you find that you fall into the category, then this is the book for you.

I'm a tech addict. As such, I have read plenty of technical books, and I find many of them to be frustratingly light on any meaningful content. In fact, most of them are just complex rewrites of the documentation that ships with the product. I get the documentation with the product, and I'd rather not pay for it again from a third party. Instead, I want a book that tells me what the documentation *doesn't* tell me.

That's exactly what this book will do. It will show you how to use the features in Expression Web for *real-world* Web design. I'll give you pointers on how to effectively use several features together to achieve a common goal. I'll give you a strong foundation in the technologies involved (for example, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), Extensible Hyper-Text Markup Language (XHTML), ASP.NET, and more) so you aren't working in a vacuum.

The goal of this book is to equip you to be a better Web designer using Expression Web as one of the tools in your arsenal. If that sounds like something you're interested in, keep reading!

REST IN PEACE, FRONTPAGE

Let me start by saying that Expression Web should not be considered the next version of FrontPage, but neither is it a new application built from the ground up. Instead, it's a mixture of some of the best elements from FrontPage and entirely new features that address just about every complaint FrontPage users have voiced over the years.

Many Web designers have remained loyal to FrontPage over the years despite its shortcomings. There are forums and Web sites dedicated to teaching Web designers how to work around the issues encountered by FrontPage users.

NOTE

I'm well aware of the problems FrontPage users encountered. I started Jimco Software in 1998 so I could distribute add-ins to work around some of the shortcomings in FrontPage.

When Microsoft designed Expression Web, one of the primary goals was to deliver a Web design tool that allows Web developers to create standards-compliant Web sites. If you followed the marketing hype that Microsoft issued prior to Expression Web's release, you no doubt heard plenty of talk about this. I'm happy to say that Expression Web lives up to the hype and makes FrontPage completely obsolete.

As you'll see throughout this book, Expression Web marks a significant improvement in Web design tools. It stands poised to draw in users from all the other professional-level tools while still maintaining the ease of use for which FrontPage is so well-known.

THE NEED FOR EXPRESSION WEB

As soon as Microsoft opened a public forum for the discussion of Expression Web, people started asking why Microsoft needed a new Web development tool. After all, FrontPage (the legacy Web design tool from Microsoft) had spent the better part of a decade building up a committed user base. Why did we need a new product?

Ask any professional developer who's ever used FrontPage, and he or she will tell you exactly why. Microsoft desperately needed a Web design tool that would adhere to current Web standards, and they needed a Web design tool that would make creating and maintaining a standards-driven Web site easy. Not only that, but they needed a Web design tool created from the ground up to support ASP.NET 2.0 from a designer's perspective. Expression Web meets all of those needs.

You'll not only be able to create dynamic, standards-compliant Web sites with Expression Web, but you'll be able to do so in a way that allows you to take advantage of your creativity. The tool won't drag you down with complex dialogs and frustrating code changes. After using Expression Web for a while, you'll never consider going back to your previous Web design tool.

A COMPARISON GRID

Here's a short comparison grid that shows how Expression Web (EW) compares to FrontPage (FP) 2003:

Feature	FP 2003	EW
Produces XHTML 1.0/1.1 compliant code	No	Yes
Produces HTML 4.01 compliant code	No	Yes
Has full ASP.NET 2.0 support	No	Yes
Has full CSS 1.0/2.0/2.1 support	No	Yes
Is a standards-based designer	No (IE-based)	Yes
Relies on FrontPage Server Extensions	Yes	No
Has powerful XML/XSL support	No	Yes
Has a built-in Web server	No	Yes
Generates Section 508 compliant code	No	Yes

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is broken up into multiple sections so you can quickly find the information you need. Here is the rundown on all the sections:

- Part 1, “An Overview”—Part 1 comprises an overview of Expression Web and discusses how it compares to Microsoft's legacy Web design application, FrontPage. You'll receive a complete tour of the Expression Web feature set, along with some tips and tricks on using the interface.
- Part 2, “Web Sites in Expression Web”—The chapters in this section teach you how to work with Web sites in Expression Web. You'll learn about creating sites, publishing sites, managing sites, and working with other site-related features.
- Part 3, “Creating and Editing Web Content”—In this section, you'll learn how to create Web pages and add content to them. I'll not only talk about adding and formatting text, but also about how to add graphics and dynamic content. Finally, this section will cover the details of how to take advantage of some of the great productivity features in Expression Web.
- Part 4, “Using CSS in Expression Web”—Instead of including CSS as an afterthought, I've dedicated two complete chapters to using this important design concept. You'll

learn not only the details of CSS in general, but you'll also learn how to use the powerful CSS tools in Expression Web.

- Part 5, "Optimizing Your Web Site"—A good Web designer doesn't just slap pages together. It's important to make your site work well in all the major browsers, and it's also important to pay attention to accessibility issues. You'll learn about both in this section.
- Part 6, "Scripting, DHTML, and Other Dynamic Content"—In this section, you'll learn tricks to differentiate your Web site from the status quo. You'll learn how to add dynamic components automatically in Expression Web. You'll also learn how to read and write client-side JavaScript so you can understand what goes on under the covers when Expression Web adds code to your page.
- Part 7, "ASP.NET Development in Expression Web"—Expression Web fully supports Microsoft ASP.NET 2.0. In this section, you'll find out what ASP.NET 2.0 gives you as a Web designer and you'll learn how to use Expression Web to create some pretty powerful site features, all without writing any code at all.
- Part 8, "Accessing Data in Expression Web"—Connecting a Web site to external data has become commonplace. In this section, you'll discover how to easily design a data-driven Web site with ASP.NET and Expression Web.

I've also included four appendices that cover the topics that Web designers are really begging for in the Web design community. These appendices will cover specific topics such as creating and debugging ASP.NET applications, combining Expression Web with Microsoft's free Visual Web Developer Express Edition, and using Expression Web to make money on the Web with e-commerce solutions.

- Appendix A, "Using Expression Web with Visual Web Developer Express Edition"
- Appendix B, "Taking Advantage of E-Commerce"
- Appendix C, "The Future of Web Development"
- Appendix D, "Resources on Expression Web, Web Design, and ASP.NET"

SPECIAL ELEMENTS

Throughout the book, you'll find some special elements that are designed to make it easy to locate important information or special tips to help you get the most out of Expression Web.

When an important term is used for the first time, it will be printed in *italics* and defined close by. When instructions require you to enter text or values into a dialog, the data you are to enter will appear **bolded**. Finally, for those of you who find it faster to work without a mouse, hotkey indicators will be given for all menu commands. Simply press Alt and the underlined character.

CROSS-REFERENCES

Nothing's worse than a technical book that assumes you will read it from beginning to end like a novel. Most folks use technical books like reference materials, so this book makes generous use of cross-references.

If a feature is mentioned that is covered elsewhere in the book, it will have a cross-reference, directing you to where you can find details on that topic.

NOTES, TIPS, CAUTIONS, AND SIDEBARS

You'll find numerous bits of information in these special elements.

NOTE

Notes will include additional technical information or links to important information.

TIP

Tips will provide you with information to make using a feature easier, or provide you with information you might not have considered.

CAUTION

Caution elements are designed to prevent you from shooting yourself in the foot. They'll point out problems so you can avoid them and save yourself time and possible headaches.

Read Sidebars for the Big Picture

You won't find sidebars in every chapter. They're designed to give you more insight into a particular topic. If you're the kind of person who wants to know all the details, you'll find sidebars to be extremely valuable.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The Troubleshooting section is where you can go when things don't quite work out right. Chances are you'll find the solution to your problem there.

I've included notes in the chapters to direct you to these sections.



This is what a Troubleshooting note looks like. Text here will describe a possible problem and tell you where to look for the solution.

In keeping with the concept of this book as a reference book, it includes a complete table of all the troubleshooting topics from the entire book. You'll find this table after the Table of Contents at the front of the book.

LAGNIAPPE (lan yap') *n.*, a gift or bonus

I always include a special section at the end of each chapter that gives you some bonus material. I wanted this section to have a name with character—one that truly illustrated the purpose of the section. I chose *Lagniappe* as the name of this section. Lagniappe is an American French word that refers to a special gift given out of gratitude by a merchant at the end of a transaction. I felt that lagniappe was the perfect name for this section because it truly denotes the intent. (Thanks, Dad, for the recommendation.)

I sincerely hope you enjoy this book and find it to be an invaluable resource as you build Web sites with Expression Web. I think you'll find, as I have, that Expression Web is a huge departure from the proprietary nature of previous Microsoft offerings.

Thank you for purchasing this book, and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it for you!

Jim