Introduction to
Developing Visio Solutions

This guide is about developing *solutions*—combinations of Microsoft® Visio® shapes and programs that model the real world and solve specific drawing problems.

A software solution typically combines a custom program with one or more packaged software applications. Rather than developing functionality from scratch, the solution developer uses functionality that is built into a packaged product.

A Visio solution typically combines programmable shapes-either supplied with a Visio product or developed for the solution-with a template to create drawings in which the shapes are used. A Visio solution might also use Automation to control its shapes and drawings. A custom program in a Visio solution can be written in any programming language that supports Automation as a controller, such as Microsoft® Visual Basic® for Applications (VBA), Microsoft® Visual Basic®, or C++. The Visio application provides an integrated development environment for convenient development of VBA projects.

This chapter introduces important Visio features and some concepts that will help you decide how to use them. To get the most out of this chapter and the rest of this guide, you should be familiar with Visio menu commands and tools. The best way to get acquainted with these is to create a drawing or two. If you haven't yet done this, we recommend that you do it now before continuing with this guide. Also, locate the Visio online Help and ShapeSheet Reference provided with your Visio product (choose Help > Developer Reference, and then choose ShapeSheet Reference), so you can find out more about the basics if you have questions about them while reading this guide.

Topics in this chapter