

# Microsoft Announces ActiveX Technologies

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Posted March 12, 1996 By

**SAN FRANCISCO, March 12, 1996** — Microsoft Corp. today announced ActiveX

Technologies, which make it easy for the broadest range of software developers and Web designers to build dynamic content for the Internet and the PC. Through ActiveX Technologies, today's static Web pages come alive with a new generation of active content, including animation, 3-D virtual reality, video and other multimedia content. ActiveX Technologies embrace Internet standards and will be delivered on multiple platforms, giving users a rich, open framework for innovation while taking full advantage of their investments in applications, tools and source code. More than 100 companies immediately supported the initiative and announced their intent to develop content, applications and tools based on ActiveX.

"ActiveX brings together the best of the Internet and the best of the PC," said Paul Maritz, group vice president of the platforms group at Microsoft. "Users want the richest, most compelling content delivered through the ubiquitous Internet."

"Our clients are constantly asking for more interesting content – more than just 'paper and eye candy' on the Web," said Mark Avnet, director of new media at radical.media inc., developers of Hachette Fillipachi's Web sites. "The bottom line is brand differentiation. ActiveX Technologies give us a way to create unique content for our customers. We can also apply ActiveX immediately to the multiuser interactive games we are developing."

## Building Blocks for Active Content

ActiveX Technologies form a robust framework for creating interactive content using software components, scripts and existing applications. Specifically, ActiveX Technologies enable developers to build Web content easily using ActiveX Controls (formerly OLE Controls), active scripts and active documents.

ActiveX Controls are small, fast, full-featured components for the Internet, intranets, and the desktop. ActiveX Controls are already broadly supported by hundreds of software vendors; they represent the building blocks of active content. Microsoft has enhanced the ActiveX Controls specification to optimize their use on the Internet by incorporating new features and functionality, including progressive rendering and the ability to reduce the size of ActiveX components by up to 300 percent. ActiveX Controls work with a variety of programming languages from Microsoft and third parties, including the Microsoft® Visual C++® development system set, Borland® Delphi® , the Microsoft Visual Basic® programming system and, planned for the future, Microsoft's development tool for the Java language, code named "Jakarta."

ActiveX Controls enable developers to embed a wide variety of software components, such as graphics viewers, animation sequences, credit-card transaction objects or spreadsheet applets directly into hypertext markup language (HTML) pages. For example, the ActiveMovie

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API, the audio and video playback technology announced by Microsoft last week, is an ActiveX control that enables users of Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 to play video directly in the browser. With thousands of ActiveX controls available today, developers can immediately start to create active content for the Internet. In addition, Java applets can coexist with ActiveX Controls on an HTML page.

Active scripts, including those created in Visual Basic, Scripting Edition, or JavaScript-compatible scripts, can be used to

"glue"

together these building blocks to create rich Web-based applications.

A key benefit of using ActiveX Technologies is the ability to integrate applications into Web browsers so data managed by those applications becomes accessible as Web pages. This technology, called ActiveX Documents, lets a user navigate a corporate intranet to view a department's Web page, examine the department's budget spreadsheet, query the database for sales data or write a memo – all from within the Web browser and without undergoing the expensive and unnecessary process of converting that content into HTML format.

### **Rich Server Applications**

Another component of ActiveX Technologies is the ActiveX Server Framework. This framework, based on the recently released Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) integrated with the Windows NT® Server networking operating system, allows developers to create the same rich, interactive applications for the server, using their existing experience, knowledge and tools. It enables Web developers to take advantage of the power of the Microsoft BackOffice

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family, which includes Microsoft SQL Server

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, Microsoft SNA Server and Microsoft Systems Management Server and is currently available. When the forthcoming Microsoft Exchange Server becomes available, it will be included with the Microsoft BackOffice family.

The ActiveX Server Framework is composed of ActiveX Server Scripting and ActiveX Server Controls. ActiveX Server Controls are the building blocks for server-driven active content, allowing customers to tie into legacy systems or build applications rapidly from reusable object components. ActiveX Server Scripts can be written using a host of popular scripting languages including Visual Basic Script, PERL and JavaScript. Together, these ActiveX controls and scripts allow Web developers, using familiar tools, to build smart, interactive server applications with little or no programming knowledge. In addition, the framework helps customers integrate the Web with their current mix of environments and mission-critical applications, enabling them, for example, to conduct database searches and access legacy mainframes. To date, more than 50 ISVs support the ActiveX Server Framework and hundreds of customers have begun deployment of active Internet Web sites based on this framework.

### **Open, Cross-Platform Solution**

ActiveX is the result of an extensive open design-review process. Microsoft has worked with more than 200 ISVs, Web designers and hardware vendors since September 1995 to review and refine the ActiveX specification. These specifications for ActiveX Technologies have been available to developers on the World Wide Web since January 1996. In the near future, Microsoft will submit ActiveX Technologies to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and IETF for review.

In a separate announcement today, Microsoft announced it is working with Macromedia Inc. to implement ActiveX Technologies on the Macintosh®

, making use of Macromedia's extensive cross-platform expertise. This announcement further demonstrates Microsoft's commitment to working with third parties to provide cross-platform support for all core Internet technologies.

In addition, Microsoft has co-developed an ActiveX plug-in for NetScape

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Navigator with nCompass Labs Inc., enabling NetScape Navigator browsers to view active content. The ActiveX plug-in allows developers to target browsers from multiple vendors when creating Internet content using ActiveX Technologies.

### **Availability**

ActiveX Technologies are available in the form of the Microsoft ActiveX Development Kit, which is being distributed to more than 4,000 developers attending the Professional Developers Conference in San Francisco today. The kit contains more than 600 MB of Internet information and products designed to assist developers in jump-starting Web development. Specifically, it includes Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 (developer prerelease), Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS), a comprehensive sample application, Help

files, and Windows NT 3.51 updates to support IIS. Additionally, the development kit provides extensive information on ways to use Microsoft tools in Internet and intranet solutions. For more information on obtaining the development kit, developers can visit the Internet Developer Toolbox Web site at <http://www.microsoft.com/intdev/>.

**The following companies have announced support for ActiveX Technologies:**

### **Link to Company List**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (NASDAQ  
"MSFT"

) is the worldwide leader in software for personal computers. The company offers a wide range of products and services for business and personal use, each designed with the mission of making it easier and more enjoyable for people to take advantage of the full power of personal computing every day.

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### **For Online Product Information:**

Windows Internet Web site: <http://www.windows.microsoft.com/>

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