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# VFP Community to get First Shot at New Microsoft Certification Exams

Whil Hentzen

If you've already taken the VFP 6.0 certification exam, you probably thought it was safe to forget where the local test-taking facility was located, didn't you? Well, hot on the heels of the VFP exams come another set of exams, and this time, Visual FoxPro developers get to be the first to try them out.

Many of you are aware that Visual FoxPro doesn't behave like other Microsoft software – no wise cracks about actually being fast, about not having bugs, that sort of thing. Rather, what I'm talking about is the way that VFP is built on the inside, and how it communicates with Windows. For example, if you have a form in Visual Basic that contains four command buttons, that form is using five Windows resources – one Windows handle for the form, and four more Windows handles – one each for each of the command buttons.

This behavior is both good and bad – good in that Visual FoxPro can be much more efficient in many situations than comparable tools, and bad in that you can't assume an VFP app is going to act appropriately – as you would expect it to in the Windows environment. Perhaps the easiest of these behaviors to demonstrate is to use a sophisticated screen capture program that allows you to crop a screen shot according to the Active Window – in other applications, doing so will capture what you and I would call the "ActiveForm" – but in VFP, you're relegated to grabbing the entire application, and then manually cropping to just grab the form you're interested in.

This behavior, of course, has its roots in the days of Fox Software back in Toledo, when Dr. Dave and cohorts wanted everything to be fast – fast – fast, and as a result, played a lot of tricks with hardware and memory to optimize performance. How many of you remember the cryptic DOS message

**Normal Program Termination**

that appeared out of nowhere in the FoxPro 1.0 and 2.0 days? Yes, Fox liked memory – lots of it, and once in a while, didn't care if it tried to grab the memory that another program happened to be using at the time.

Anyway, I digress – the point is that VFP stresses the hardware like few other applications – other than games – do. And this is why the VFP community has first dibs on the new set of certification exams Microsoft is releasing this year. And in another FoxTalk exclusive, I've been asked to make the only public announcement about these exams.

So what are these exams? You're all familiar with the various certification tracks – MCSD - the one for Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (that's French for "programmers"), MCDBA – Microsoft Certified Data Base Administrator, MCT – Microsoft Certified Trainer, MCP – Microsoft Certified Professional, MCSE – Microsoft Certified System Engineer, and the all-new MCSOO – Microsoft Certified Something Or Other.

So who has this slew of exams and programs left out? The end user, that's who! Microsoft has now begun the process of certifying end users, and naturally, the first place that's going to be certified is where the rubber meets the road, or, more accurately, where the user meets the computer – at the mouse, the keyboard, and the monitor.

In order to gain Microsoft Accelerated Certified Hardware End Users certification – MACHEU (yes, it's pronounced "mmmm-a-CHOO! just like you thought it would be) – an individual will have to pass three tests – one each for the monitor, the keyboard, and the mouse. Naturally, since there are so many types of these devices, the user will in some cases have their choice of which test to take – just like VFP developers had their choice of the Desktop or Distributed exams.

**New Exams**

Exam 69-101: Installing, Powering Up and Configuring CRT Monitors will test the end-users' basic ability to use a standard cathode ray tube monitor. The user will be expected to identify the front, sides, and back of a monitor, identify whether or not the monitor has a hidden control panel, locate and open the control panel if appropriate, and manipulate each of the controls, including horizontal and vertical resize, horizontal and vertical position, and other features commonly found in mainstream monitors.

The exam will also test the use of the Display applet in Control Panel, including the use of wallpapers, screen savers, color schemes, color palettes, font sizes, and resizing the desktop area.

Exams 69-201->204 are all variations on the Installing, Configuring and Operating the Microsoft Keyboard. The four exams are for each version of keyboard, including the Internet Keyboard, Internet Keyboard Pro, Natural Keyboard Pro and Natural Keyboard Elite.

The user will be expected to identify all 26 letters of the alphabet, the ten numbers from 0 to 9, and each of the characters that cartoonists use to illustrate swearing by their characters. The user will be expected to identify the difference between the backspace and delete keys, the backspace and left cursor arrows, and all of those specialized keys. Identification of the Any key will also be required when appropriate.

Exams 69-301 through 69-309 are all variations on the Installing, Configuring and Operating the Microsoft Mouse. Each exam is for a particular version of mouse: Mouse, Basic Mouse, Wheel Mouse, Cordless Wheel Mouse, IntelliMouse, IntelliMouse Pro, IntelliMouse TrackBall, IntelliMouse with IntelliEye, and IntelliMouse Explorer.

These exams will cover the proper placement of the mouse, the placement of the hand and fingers over the various buttons, keys and other gizmos on the mouse, and demonstrate proper clicking, double-clicking, triple-clicking, and professional quad-clicking techniques. The user will be expected to be equally proficient with left- and right-handed mice in the event that the mouse they use would be placed on either the left or right side of the keyboard.

### **Get Involved!**

You can be involved with these new exams in two ways. The first is the opportunity to submit questions for the exam. You can do this at any of the major conferences in 2000, including Fox DevCon in Miami, Tech-Ed in Houston, Windows World in New York City, and VBits in San Francisco.

You can also write the beta exam and provide feedback on the questions that make it to the exam. As this exam covers Microsoft hardware, you'll need to bring your own specialized hardware for parts of the exam. In other words, you'll need to bring two sharpened #2 pencils with un-used erasers.

### **Tread lightly!**

Naturally, those working on or taking the beta exams are under NDA to discuss the exams with others not under NDA. However, emotions can run high during the beta period of a new Microsoft SKU, so you should be aware that not everyone in the industry is pleased with Microsoft's foray into the certification of end-users. Specifically, many Linux and BeOS zealots are openly dismissive. "Certify a keyboard? What's next? Requiring programmers to be certified in English so they write comments with good grammar? Puh-lease!"

Richard Stallman, Open Source Advocate and general software weirdo, said, "We don't believe these tests should be closed to Microsoft developers and users. Everyone who scrolls a mouse or taps a keyboard should be allowed to take these exams. And, in the spirit of the Open Source movement, we also believe that the questions on the exam – and the answers – should be freely available to anyone who has the capability to download them. The whole concept of knowledge being restricted to a certain "elite" smacks of yet another plot of the Establishment."

Thus, be careful who you talk to about the exams – keep your friends close – and your enemies closer. The deadline for applying is April 1, 2000.