Ken Levy becomes New VFP Product Manager; Green kicked upstairs

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Clickity-clack, clickity-clack… This just in… Ken Levy has just returned to Microsoft as the new Visual FoxPro Product Manager.

A few months ago, I talked about where the future of Fox lay after the announcement that it was no longer part of the Visual Studio.NET family. Everyone in the community knows the enthusiasm and vigor that Ken has for our beloved Fox, and Robert has been the staunchest support of Fox at Microsoft for the better part of a decade - having Ken take the immediate reigns of the Product Manager position with Robert still involved in a higher level role is the most incredibly exciting news we could have this year.

I've already scheduled a trip out to Redmond to meet with Ken, Robert, Ricardo and the rest of the team…. more details to come soon! But here's what we know now – and rather than spend a lot of time trying to reword the announcements that Robert and Ken have already crafted…. and possibly miss my deadline – I've included what Robert and Ken have had to say directly:

Robert:

When we announced back in February that Visual FoxPro would no longer ship in the Visual Studio .NET box, we promised two things: 1) We would be on our own ship schedule and 2) We could do more marketing.

That we are on our own ship schedule is pretty clear. We RTM'ed Visual FoxPro a month ago and it will soon be available in stores. I have a dozen boxes of it in my office (and that is after giving a bunch to the product team <bg>) so I can vouch that it is done. MSDN Universal subscribers can download it now and it will be in the September shipment (we apologize for the delay in getting it up on the MSDN servers and into the monthly shipments). We are very proud of VFP 7.0 and we think it makes for a great upgrade.

As most of you know, shortly after RTM we discovered a couple of bugs. The fixes were made and updates are currently available on the Visual FoxPro Web site. Talk about our own ship schedule! I know there were some mixed emotions on this. We basically had 2 choices: 1) wait until a Service Pack to release fixes or 2) get fixes out to the community as quickly as we could. We chose option 2 and we stick by that decision.

Those of you who have already installed VFP 7.0 can download the fixes and apply them. Those who haven't already installed VFP 7.0 can select the option at the end of the install to check for updates. When you do you will see the fixes and can download and apply them immediately as part of the install process. Being out of the Visual Studio box gives us the freedom to post fixes and issue Service Packs when we feel the need. We think this makes us more responsive to your needs and we like the flexibility.

As for marketing, we have been planning for a long time to increase the marketing. We just needed the right resources. I am very happy today to announce that as of today, Ken Levy has returned to Microsoft as the new Visual FoxPro Product Manager. Ken will be part of the Fox team and will report directly to Ricardo Wenger. Ken brings a tremendous knowledge of the product as well as a seemingly limitless energy level and we are thrilled to add him to the team.

Ken's initial focus will be to provide greatly expanded support to the Visual FoxPro community. He will take over the Visual FoxPro Web site and drive lots of new content, both technical content for beginners and experts and also things like case studies and success stories so you have materials you can readily use to show why Visual FoxPro is a smart choice for a project. Ken will work with MSDN to get the technical information into the MSDN Library. He will also speak at conferences and will make his keynote debut at DevCon in San Diego in September. Ken and I have spent a lot of time the past few weeks swapping ideas and I will let him share more of them with you.

What is my role now? Consider me kicked upstairs. I will work closely with Ricardo and Ken to determine what we need to do, but Ken will drive making it happen. When I am not working on VFP, I will be focused on launching Visual Studio .NET, which is nearing completion. I will still lurk around here of course, and speak up from time to time.

Getting Ken on board is awesome news for all of us, and I am thrilled to announce it today.

Robert Green
Visual Studio Lead Product Manager

And from Ken:

Effective August 6th, 2001, I have joined Microsoft as the Visual FoxPro Product Manager within the Fox team reporting directly to Group Manager Ricardo Wenger. While owning all of the classic technical marketing aspects the Visual FoxPro, I will work in tandem with Visual FoxPro program management and the tools product marketing team to help launch Visual FoxPro 7.0 and to provide greatly expanded support to the FoxPro community. I will be the keynote speaker at upcoming Visual FoxPro conferences including FoxPro Advisor DevCon in September 2001 (http://advisor.com/cmf0109p.nsf) and GLGDW FoxPro Conference in October (http://www.hentzenwerke.com/glgdw/zglgdw.htm). There will also be plans for me to speak at various user groups around North America in the near future. More information about what I will be doing will be posted on the UniversalThead (http://universalthread.com) over time and announced at various upcoming events.

My brief bio relating to FoxPro: Ken Levy started working with FoxBase 1.02 in 1986 and has developed many high profile applications and tools in all version of FoxPro through Visual FoxPro 6.0. Ken spent 5 years as a software engineer consulting for Microsoft on the Visual FoxPro development team from version 3.0 through 7.0. While working as a consultant at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Ken developed several public domain programs including GenScrnX and other developer tools. Ken is a former technical contributing editor and writer to many FoxPro magazines, a frequent speaker at industry conferences, and an the author of many components of Visual FoxPro including the Class Browser, Component Gallery, etc. Ken is a long time active and recognized member of the FoxPro community.

Robert Green is now a Lead Product Manager for Visual Studio .NET and will be spending most of his time dedicated to those efforts while still communicating closely with myself and the rest of the Fox team. Robert is still an active member of the Fox team and my addition should be considered an addition to the Fox team and marketing efforts and not a replacement. I am extremely excited about my new position as Visual FoxPro Product Manager as I have always had tremendous enthusiasm for FoxPro and all its powerful capabilities. Over time you will see me very active within the FoxPro community with both immediate and long term results.

I would like to summarize the current state and future of Visual FoxPro related to upcoming product development commitments and expanded marketing efforts. Microsoft Visual FoxPro 7.0 has gone to manufacturing and is available for MSDN Universal Subscription customers and also for purchase or upgrade as a stand alone product.

With its local cursor engine, tight coupling between language and data, and powerful features such as object-oriented programming, Microsoft Visual FoxPro 7.0 is a great tool for building database solutions of all sizes, from desktop and client/server database applications to data-intensive COM components and XML Web services. Visual FoxPro 7.0 is an application development tool for building extremely powerful database applications and components. Its data-centric, object-oriented language offers developers a robust set of tools for building database applications on the desktop, client/server, or on the Web, through components and XML Web services. Developers will have the necessary tools to manage data—from organizing tables of information, running queries, and creating an integrated relational database management system (DBMS) to programming a fully developed data management application for end users.

The new version of Visual FoxPro contains many new features for increased productivity including extensible and customizable IntelliSense, additional control over the IDE with bookmarks and shortcuts, and quick access to areas of source code with the document view window. More than 50 commands, functions, and system variables have been enhanced or added to VFP 7.0 some of which include new event binding to other COM components, as well as implements interfacing for improved interoperability with

various COM components and products such as Microsoft BizTalk Server. Native support for XML import and export to cursors plus full support for creating and consuming XML/SOAP/WSDL based Web services.

Microsoft IntelliSense® language assistance which improves coding productivity by using powerful, extensible language assistance as you type. IntelliSense engine which is fully extensible and customizable. Document view can be used to quickly navigate to procedures, functions, and methods. Enhanced code editor in the IDE support for bookmarks and shortcuts, find, and case conversion. Dockable integrated development environment (IDE) windows allows for docking common tools, such as Command, Data Session, and Debug windows. Integrated XML support for exporting Visual FoxPro data to XML and importing XML data into FoxPro tables. Additional tools such as the Object Browser and Task List manager are all part of the suite of new productivity features for increased rapid application development.

New database (DBC) events enables greater control over user actions by allowing source code to execute when databases are opened, closed, or modified. Support for COM+ services. Components for highly scalable n-tier distributed-transaction applications. XML Web services. Subscribe to and create publishable Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP)–based XML Web services. Active accessibility support allowing applications accessible to third-party tools, such as voice-recognition devices and screen readers. New OLE DB provider for Visual FoxPro data is easily accessible to non-Visual FoxPro–based clients. Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Desktop Engine (MSDE 2000) is included with Visual FoxPro 7.0 allowing shared solutions compatible with Microsoft SQL Server 2000 and migration directly without changing code. New deployment tools allowing the creation customized application setups using a special version of InstallShield Express.

Visual FoxPro 7.0 will not be included in the upcoming Visual Studio .NET product. Because Visual FoxPro 7.0 is not a Microsoft .NET language and does not share the Visual Studio .NET IDE, Microsoft has decided to ship it ahead of, and separately from, Visual Studio .NET. This will enable FoxPro developers to benefit sooner from the new features of the product and enjoy the productivity enhancements that it provides. Web services created with Visual FoxPro 7.0 can be consumed by Web service clients of Visual Studio .NET while Web services created with Visual Studio .NET and any other standards based Web Service can be consumed by Visual FoxPro 7.0 fully integrated with the new IntelliSense engine.

Upgrading to Visual FoxPro 7.0 is easy and rewarding as it is the most advanced and reliable version of FoxPro ever released and is 100% fully compatible with Visual FoxPro 6.0. Developers can even create applications with Visual FoxPro 7.0 and deploy them using the Visual FoxPro 6.0 runtime as long as no new commands/features are implemented in the distributed application. This allows those developers and teams to upgrade to Visual FoxPro 7.0 without delay and benefit from the wealth of new productivity features while still maintaining existing applications in transitioning to the newer runtime engine. Most developers have provided feedback indicating the new advanced IntelliSense feature alone is worth the upgrade and of course that is only a small percentage of the total of new features and functionality in Visual FoxPro 7.0.

Additional information about Visual FoxPro 7.0 can be found at http://msdn.microsoft.com/vfoxpro. Expect to see the FoxPro section on MSDN updated very frequently with lots of new content and information.

Ken Levy
Visual FoxPro Product Manager