

## Will Microsoft Expression Web Threaten Dreamweaver?

When Microsoft released Expression Web, a lot of people expected it to be an upgrade to FrontPage 2003. Instead, it turns out to be a very professional web development tool which looks set to be a serious rival to the current market leader, Adobe Dreamweaver CS3. It's interesting to see Microsoft in the role of underdog for a change but how will their new contender fare?

Expression Web is part of Expression Studio, which also includes Expression Design, a graphics tool which focuses on the creation of web interfaces. The full version of Expression Studio also includes Visual Studio 2005 Standard Edition. Although Expression Studio is by no means a direct competitor to Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft are clearly aiming to create a solution for professional web designers similar to the one available from Adobe. So, how good is Expression Web and will it enable Microsoft to make serious inroads into Adobe's share of the professional web development market?

The truth is, Microsoft being who they are, Adobe had better sit up and take notice. Expression web is not just a revamped version of FrontPage (a product which was clearly no match for Dreamweaver). It offers web designers a fairly complete set of tools for building sites compliant with current standards. It has excellent support for XHTML, CSS, XML, XSLT, ASP.Net and JavaScript. It also shows users a very accurate representation of the web page they are building even without previewing in a browser.

On the downside, Expression Web only runs on Windows and its tight integration with Visual Studio suggests that a Mac version may be some time in arriving, assuming one ever does arrive. A significant number of web designers prefer to use Macs and, for this reason, will never see Expression Web as a serious rival to Dreamweaver. To win over such Mac diehards, Microsoft will have to make Expression Web not just as good as Dreamweaver but significantly better.

Both Dreamweaver and Expression Web allow developers to visually generate server-side code. However, both programs have limitations in this department. In the case of Dreamweaver, support for ASP.Net and PHP is fairly limited and the overall server-side functionality has not been enhanced for several years. In the case of Expression Web, only ASP.Net is supported; there is no support for PHP, ColdFusion or JSP.

Dreamweaver's relative maturity in the market place gives it a huge advantage. There are over a million web developers using the program. It is perceived as the industry standard for web page creation. As well as the program itself, third-party developers have also created hundreds of useful add-ons ("Dreamweaver extensions" ) which offer such enhanced features as ecommerce and security. Although Expression Web has similar support for add-ons, it will be some years before they significantly enhance the functionality of the basic program.

To summarise, Expression Web is a quality product. Like Dreamweaver, it focuses web designers on creating standards-compliant web pages with the minimum of effort. Adobe will have no option but to take this new contender seriously and come up with some new and innovative features in their next release of Dreamweaver. So, good news all round for users of web development software!

### About the Author

Author is a developer and trainer with [Macresource Computer Solutions](http://www.macresource.com), an independent computer training company offering [Adobe Dreamweaver training courses](http://www.adobe.com) in London and throughout the UK.

Source: <http://www.citylinkpcs.com.au>