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Editor's View

Be a Famous Writer

Find out how you, too, can write for FoxPro Advisor

By Tamar E. Granor, Editor

I'm often asked about the process of submitting articles to FoxPro Advisor. I figure that, for every person who asks, there are many more who don't. So here's the Cook's Tour of how to write for FPA.

First, no one gets rich writing magazine articles. In addition, displaying your work and thoughts to your peers can be scary. Yet month after month, members of the FoxPro community choose to take the time to write about what they're doing so we can all learn from it. If you think you have something to share, give it a shot.

Getting Started

The first step is to get a copy of our Writer's Guidelines. The guidelines, which seem a bit daunting at first, contain a tremendous amount of information about the whole process. They're available as ADV_WG.ZIP in library 13 of the DBADVISOR forum on CompuServe and on our Web page (<http://www.advisor.com/>).

The next step is to have an idea. It might be the solution to a complex problem or a new way of explaining how something works. Maybe you want to review a neat product.

Look before you leap

Once you have the guidelines and an idea, it's time to contact me. Send me an e-mail briefly describing the article you want to write. Tell me a bit about yourself, too.

About 95% of article submissions come in via e-mail. Paper submissions typically take several times longer to work through the editorial process. You're better off borrowing a friend's e-mail account than sending me a disk or paper. (CompuServe is best.)

Once I have your article proposal, I'll review it and let you know if we're interested. I may ask some questions or make some suggestions about where to put the focus.

Ready to Write

Now you're ready to write the article. Use simple, declarative sentences. Write in the present tense, not the future. (That is, "Pressing the button starts the process." rather than "Pressing the button will start the process.") Proofread your work. (Do I sound like your High School English teacher about now?)

Don't try to emulate the look of the magazine. The best format is Word for Windows. Use a single font and size. The Writer's Guidelines explain how to tell me that something

should be emphasized, so you don't need to use bold or italics, either. The second best format is an ASCII file.

The Guidelines also explain how to name your article and any supporting files (like figures, sidebars, and so forth). If you follow the guidelines, you make my job much easier.

When you think the article is done, send it to me. You may want to ask a colleague to read through it before that. Often, what seems obvious to you will be clear as mud to the next person. (Don't take that personally—it happens to me, too.)

Back and Forth

Now the fun begins. I'll read over your article and, most likely, return it to you with comments, questions and suggestions. You make revisions and answer my questions, then send it back to me.

Once you've sent your article to me, don't make any changes to your version until you hear back from me. Similarly, if I respond with just a question and don't send the whole article back, just answer me, don't revise.

We repeat the process until we're both satisfied with the results. Along the way, I test any sample code headed for the Companion Resource Disk.

Once the article's done, I add it to the group from which I organize future issues. When I prepare your article for a particular issue, you receive a fax copy of the article as it will appear in the magazine. This gives you a final chance to correct any errors that may have crept in along the way.

Finally, your article appears in print. Your mother is incredibly proud and runs to buy all the copies she can find.

How Long Does it All Take?

Technically, we have a deadline of the first of the month for the issue dated four months later. (For example, April 1 is the deadline for the August issue.) In practice, because we're fortunate enough to always have a stockpile of articles, the deadline is really relevant only to our monthly columnists.

Once you receive the fax of an article, it normally appears either in the issue we're working on then or the next. The magazine actually hits the street just before the beginning of the month prior to the cover date. (It's confusing, but it's how the magazine industry works. The April issue you're reading became available in late February.)

But Can I Really Write for a Magazine?

If you look over back issues of FoxPro Advisor, you'll notice the tremendous number of different contributors. While we have a solid corps of regular writers (for whom we're very grateful), the collection of different writers in the history of FPA numbers in the hundreds. If they can do it, probably you can, too.

It's Soup

Many of you are aware that my major project for the last year has been writing a book about Visual FoxPro. I'm excited to say that the book is finished. *The Hacker's Guide to Visual FoxPro* (Addison-Wesley) should be available about the time you read this issue.

The book, co-authored by my co-columnist, Ted Roche, is meant to be the reference book you keep by your desk to look things up when Help doesn't. It covers every command, function, property, event and method in Visual FoxPro, telling you what the manuals don't. In the spirit of the other Hacker's Guides, it's irreverent and sassy. Ted and I hope that you'll find it as useful as we already have.