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Advisor Answers

Visual FoxPro 5.0

Q: VFP 5.0's ability to comment and uncomment code is a terrific new feature, but I want the comment to include useful information like my initials. I seem to remember seeing this in one of Calvin Hsia's sessions at DevCon. What secret switch did he flip?

–Dan Freeman, Chicago, IL

A: This is one of those cases where they're put something into the product, but haven't, as Microsoft likes to says, exposed it in the interface. In this case, there's a registry setting that, if present, controls the comment string used, but there's nowhere to set it in VFP5. However, you can put the setting directly into your registry. As always, be careful when working in the registry - careless changes can really mess you up.

The registry entry needed is called EditorCommentString and needs to appear as one of the items for the key HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\VisualFoxPro\5.0\Options. To add your customized comment notation, run the registry editor (REGEDT32 in NT 3.51 and REGEDT in NT 4 and Windows 95), choose the HKEY_CURRENT_USER window and navigate down the tree until you reach the key above. In Windows95 or NT 4, select **Edit** | **New** | **String Value**, and enter EditorCommentString. Select **Edit** | **Modify** or press Enter or click on the key to set the value. In NT 3.51, choose **Edit** | **Add Value** from the menu. Specify EditorCommentString as the Value Name and leave the default data type of REG_SZ. When you choose OK, another window appears in which you can specify your customized comment string. Be sure to begin with one of FoxPro's comment delimiters (*, NOTE or &&) because the exact string you specify is used in VFP. You have to restart VFP 5 if it was already open for the new setting to take effect.

Now, when you choose Comment from the right-click or Format menu, the string you specified in the Registry is placed in front of every affected line. Similarly, Uncomment works only on lines that begin with your specified EditorCommentString.

To edit the comment string setting, navigate to the entry in the registry editor and double-click. You can change the comment string. To restore the default setting of *!*, delete your entry by highlighting it and pressing the Delete key.

For now, I've set EditorCommentString to * because I don't want my initials or anything else on *every* comment line and I don't like the appearance of the default *!*. Figure 1 shows the entry in my registry.
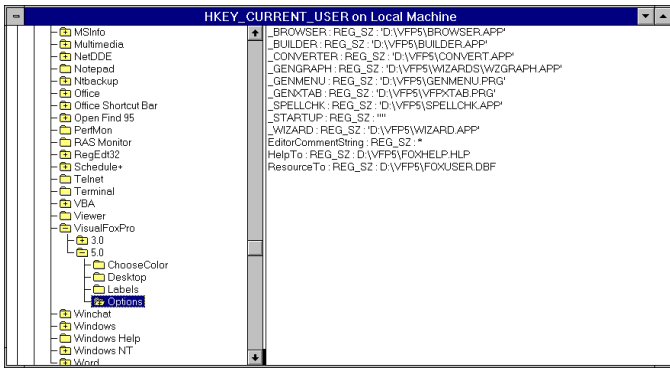
Figure 1: You can set the comment string used by the VFP Editor by changing a Registry setting.

The other new feature I'd like to be able to configure is indentation. The new Indent option uses a Tab; I prefer spaces. I haven't yet heard of a Registry setting to control that one, but I won't be surprised if there is one. If you find out about a setting for this, let me know.

–Tamar