

June, 2002

Advisor Answers

Creating Installation Materials

VFP 7.0

Q: What happened to the Setup Wizard? I've just installed VFP 7 and I can't find the Setup Wizard anywhere. How am I supposed to create installation disks?

-Name withheld

A: This has been a very common question since VFP 7 was released. The answer is that the Setup Wizard is no longer included with Visual FoxPro. Instead, VFP 7 comes with a special version of InstallShield, called "InstallShield Express-Visual FoxPro Limited Edition."

InstallShield is one of several widely-used installation applications. It comes in a number of versions. InstallShield Express is the entry-level version, but still far more powerful than the Setup Wizard. Many VFP developers were already using some version of InstallShield before VFP 7.

Let's back up a moment and talk about what was wrong with the Setup Wizard. Certainly, a better set-up process has been on the wish list of many VFP developers for a long time. The Setup Wizard was quite limited and performing a "standard" Windows install required a lot of tricks. Among the things it didn't do easily were putting icons on the desktop, and adding Registry entries. The Setup Wizard also couldn't handle different levels of installation (Standard, Full, Custom, for example). There were also issues from Microsoft's point of view: the Setup Wizard's behavior was not compliant with the logo requirements for Windows 2000 and XP. In particular, it didn't support various Microsoft Installer features, and it put DLLs in the Windows directory.

Microsoft finally heard our pleas for a more professional installation process and, for VFP 7, licensed a special version of InstallShield Express (ISX). Why not just an improved Setup Wizard? Because the Setup Wizard doesn't use the newer Windows Installer technology. ISX does, but puts a wrapper around it to make it easy to create installation packages.

Unlike the Setup Wizard, you install InstallShield Express separately from VFP. The start-up screen for the VFP Installation gives you a number of options - the second is installing ISX. (Not surprisingly, it uses an InstallShield-based setup.) The only option in setting it up is where to put it. Once you've installed ISX, you can run it from the Start menu.

InstallShield Express is project-oriented. You use a project for each application for which you want to create installation materials. When you've created a new project or opened an existing one, you see a display like Figure 1. As you can see, it offers a lot more options than the Setup Wizard.

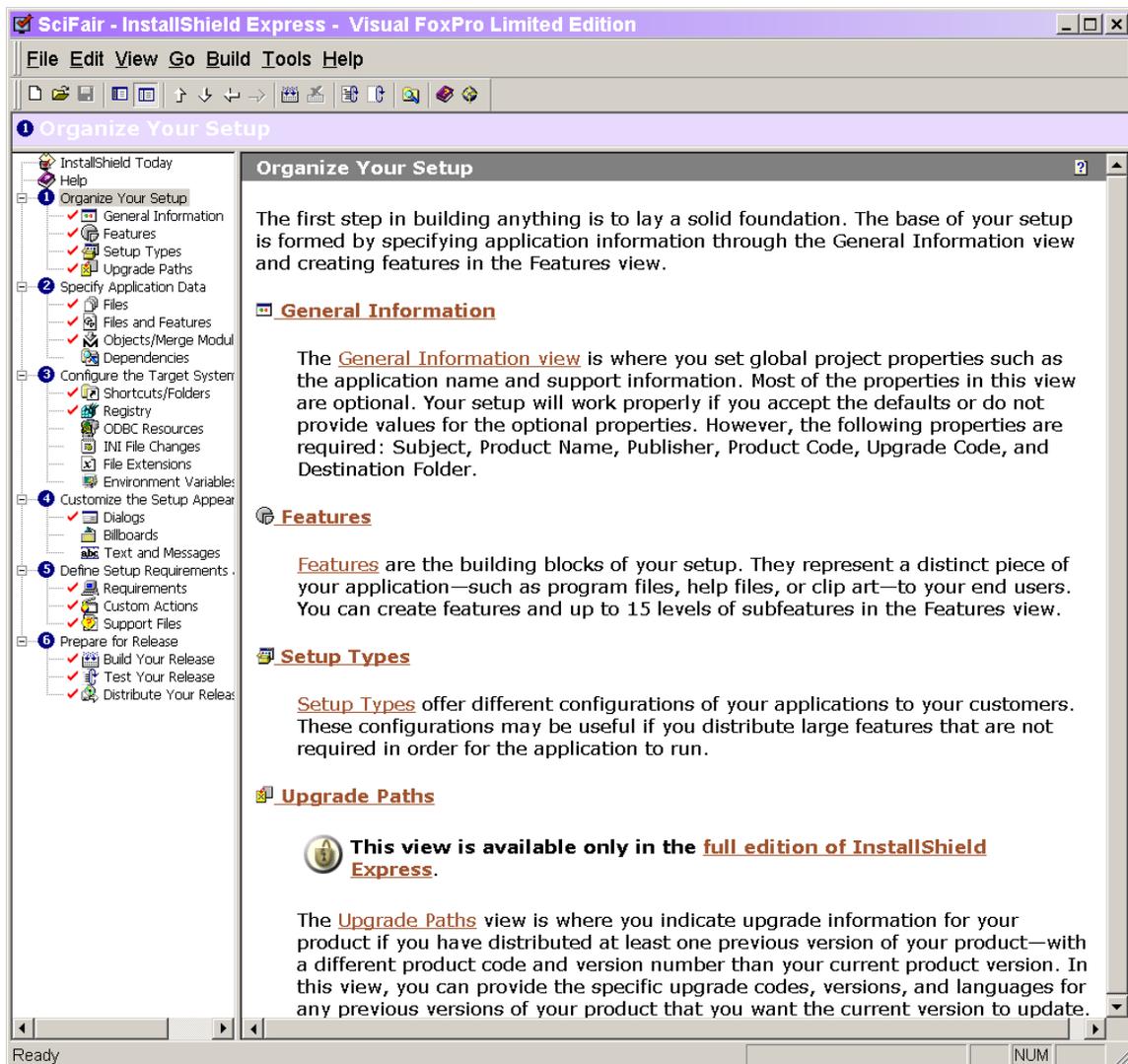


Figure 1. Opening a setup project—When you create or open a setup project in InstallShield Express, you get a list of steps in the left pane. The right pane shows information and choices for the step selected on the left.

I'm not going to walk you through the whole process of creating a setup. You have several resources available to help you with that. ISX includes a Help file, a Getting Started Guide and an interactive tour—between them, they should answer most of your questions. In addition, the VFP 7 installation CD includes a paper titled "Walkthrough: Creating a Visual FoxPro Application Setup Program using InstallShield Express." (It's also available on the VFP website: as of this writing, at <http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/dnfoxgen7/html/vfpdeploy.asp>.)

I found the walkthrough article helpful when I created my first ISX set-up. Using it (and not dipping into Help at all), I was able to create a setup for a simple application in about 15 minutes. When it turned out I'd set up a couple of things not quite the way I wanted them, changing it and regenerating took perhaps 5 minutes.

Figure 1, along with the name of the included version, gives you a clue as to the one fly in the ointment. "Limited Edition" means that some facilities of InstallShield Express are not available in this version. You can find a complete list of what's omitted in the ISX Help file under the topic "Limitations of InstallShield Express – Visual FoxPro Limited Edition." I suspect the biggest issues for VFP developers will be the inability to specify upgrade paths, and the limits on managing multi-lingual setups. Fortunately, as of this writing, InstallShield is offering any special pricing for those who want to upgrade from the Limited Edition to the full product. Information is available at <http://www.installshield.com/microsite/msdn/>.

–Tamar