



How Does Microsoft Define a Server Expert? by Kera McAllister

Do you have a server at your office? Are you thinking of getting a server? Upgrading your server? If you don't have a server, do you need a way to centralize your electronic data? Are you hesitant about dealing with an outside IT service provider for assistance with your server? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you will certainly benefit from the useful information that is provided below...

You may have seen a logo that says Microsoft Certified Partner or Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. Do you know what that means? According to Microsoft, "The worldwide Microsoft Partner Program is for technology companies that use Microsoft software for building and distributing software or hardware solutions or as the building blocks for value-added services. A technology company who qualifies to become a Microsoft Certified Partner represents a high degree of competence and expertise with Microsoft technologies. These partners have access to a rich set of benefits that can help them gain an advantage in the marketplace, including, at a minimum, telephone-based account engagement. This closer relationship with Microsoft helps them stay on the cutting edge of the latest technology."

In addition to becoming a Microsoft Certified Partner, partners also have the opportunity to obtain other competency levels that demonstrate an area of expertise in Microsoft technologies. There are a dozen different competencies that companies can achieve from Microsoft, ranging

from Microsoft Business Solutions to Learning Solutions to Mobility Solutions. In Nicom Ltd.'s case, we have obtained the Networking Infrastructure Solutions competency designation. This competency demonstrates that we have proven our proficiency in implementing solutions based on the Microsoft Windows Server Operating Systems, with a particular focus on Microsoft Windows Small Business Server. As of June 2005, of the 18 Microsoft Certified Partners in Nova Scotia, Nicom is one of only two companies who have achieved the Networking Infrastructure Solutions competency and we are the only one in the Halifax Regional Municipality.



Networking Infrastructure Solutions

Following are but a few examples of recent server implementations that we have performed for our clients. We have migrated Novell Netware server users to Microsoft Windows Server 2003; we have upgraded Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 server users to Microsoft Windows Server 2003 and Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 and we have upgraded peer-to-peer network environments to a server environment. These clients can now be assured that they have the most up-to-date security patches as well as have greater server reliability, manageability, scalability and compatibility.

Part of our service is to provide our clients with ongoing support and maintenance on their servers to ensure optimal performance of their systems. After all... this is where all of your electronic data is stored... don't you want to protect it?

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Nicom Receives Small Business of the Year - Bronze Award 2005 by Kera McAllister

Nicom Ltd. was one of 12 Halifax Chamber of Commerce member-businesses to receive their "highest honours" at the Metro Halifax Business Awards in February. Winning the bronze award for Small Business of the Year, Nicom was the only Information Technology (IT) company to receive a Metro Halifax Business Award this year. Other categories included New Business of the Year, Business of the Year and Business Person of the Year - where gold, silver and bronze awards were also presented.

This year's awards ceremony, attended by over 600 business people, marked the 5th anniversary of the Metro Halifax Business Awards. These annual Business Awards celebrate the success of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce's members. The awards show provides businesses in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) with the opportunity to be recognized for their drive, passion and successes. It certainly brings HRM's corporate family together for one big celebration!

"It is only through the efforts of each and every one of Nicom's employees that we have been able to achieve the level of success we are now enjoying." said David Nicholson, President of Nicom Ltd. "I believe this demonstrates our goal to be the best IT services provider Halifax Regional Municipality has to offer."



By winning the bronze plaque, Nicom has also received the "proof" that we "go above and beyond" what is expected. We extend a "big" thank you to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce for providing businesses with this opportunity to shine! As well, we offer our congratulations to all businesses out there who are continuing to strive to succeed.



Java Versus .Net by Michael W. Hatfield

Java. No doubt you've heard the term. You may have heard of .Net. You may have even heard of them used together in a heated discussion. OK, unless you frequent a software development department, you probably have not heard the heated debates, but believe me, they are happening.

It seems that each of these technologies has its proponents and its adversaries and, similar to the Windows vs. Apple Macintosh debate, most views are expressed passionately.

So, what are these technologies and which one is best? Those are the kinds of questions we will explore in this article.

Java, it's more than just that hot cup of "insta-wake" you try to scarf down before 9:00 AM. It also happens to be the name of a very successful software development platform that was developed by Sun Microsystems in the early

1990's. It had a shaky start at first until it found its niche or "killer app" in a fledging technology called the World Wide Web. Yup, that's the "www". What made it so popular was that it was the first development platform that allowed developers to create programs that can run on many different computer platforms, such as Microsoft (MS) Windows, Apple's OSX, Linux, and many other less common systems.

Java was widely embraced at a time when it looked as though other platforms competing against MS Windows would infiltrate the business environment. Some companies, such as Canada's own Corel, adopted Java early and converted their popular WordPerfect Suite to Java. Imagine the allure; develop a system using Java that has the ability to run on dozens of different computer platforms. Unfortunately, Java was not all that it promised. The early systems ran much slower than their predecessors and customers quickly dropped the Java based products. *Continued...*

Java Versus .Net Continued...

Even with this early setback, Java's popularity grew and it is still going strong today. Java is a vibrant development platform that found a seemingly permanent place in the large Enterprise development arena as well as running the back ends of many of the e-commerce and e-business web sites throughout the world. Again, this is because Java is great for those wanting to communicate between disparate platforms.

In the late 1990's Microsoft, seeing the great potential in Sun's Java, licensed Java from Sun and provided tools to developers for creating Java based applications. Unfortunately, the relationship between Sun Microsystems and Microsoft soured and this culminated with Sun Microsystems filing a multi-million dollar lawsuit against Microsoft.

So, Microsoft got to work. They still saw the potential that Java offered and decided to create a seemingly competing technology. Yes, you've guessed it. This technology is what we now know as .Net (pronounced DOT-NET) - an open technology that is not necessarily bound to a Windows based development, and a technology that offers a simplistic, secure way of allowing disparate systems to communicate with each other using industry adopted standards.

.Net is not a programming language as much as it is a development philosophy. In fact, there are dozens of computer languages that can be used to develop .Net applications, not just Microsoft's Visual Basic, C#, or C++, but also languages provided by third party vendors such as COBOL, Perl, FORTRAN, etc. This alone offers a great advantage to developers wanting to get into the .Net development arena. They can do so without having to learn a whole new development language, allowing them to leverage their existing expertise.

.Net was released early in 2003 to the fanfare of Microsoft developers and to the chagrin of just as many Java developers who especially saw it as "another Microsoft rip off".

Herein lies the heart of this passionate debate.

I think most programmers, no matter what they

think of Microsoft as a company, would agree that Microsoft creates some of the best development tools on the market today. Microsoft's Visual Studio.Net, for example, is no exception to this tradition. The Integrated Development Environment (IDE) provided by Microsoft allows developers to create, test, debug and secure their code faster than ever. In fact, this is another advantage of .Net, the speed of development.

Murphy's Laws of Computing:

If you consult enough computer experts it is possible to confirm any opinion.

In our business, increased developer productivity and efficiency combined with powerful development tools allows us to develop powerful custom built solutions for our customers less expensively.

So which then, you may ask yourself, is better? The honest truth is that both Java and .Net serve their own purpose. The decision concerning which technology is right for a development is one that needs to be carefully weighed against the many factors involved.

You need to ask yourself such questions as: Does the solution need to run on another platform other than MS Windows? Are there server components, for example, that need to run on Linux web server, or is it a Windows web server? Do your systems need to talk to different legacy systems such as AS400 or UNIX?

If you take these common business scenarios into consideration, the definitive answer is that there is no definitive answer; both technologies can be used to develop solutions that meet the requirements of end users.

In the end, the best technology to use is dictated by the situation at hand. Thankfully there are experienced "techies" like us out there that know the ins and outs of both of these technologies and can help guide you in the proper direction.



What is SPAM & What Can You do About it? by Orin Eisenhauer

Depending on whom you ask, you can get many definitions for SPAM and how email becomes classed as SPAM. In general, SPAM is unsolicited automated email normally of commercial content, with the intent to sell you some product or service. Many people equate it to unsolicited phone marketing calls or junk mail you get through the postal system.

So, just how do spammers get your email address? Some use programs to search websites and newsgroups for email addresses, some purchase email lists, while others will build their own lists by having a contest or offering you something free that requires you to register. They may in turn sell this list to other spammers. Another method that is used when sending SPAM is to send to a list at a domain. For example; if your domain was ABC.COM, they will have a program generate emails to joe@abc.com, jsmith@abc.com, bob@abc.com, etc. Programs can generate millions of addresses and it costs the spammer almost nothing to send them.

Sometimes when you get SPAM there will be a link in the email to "Remove your name from the mailing list". Unless the email is from a reputable company, this link is most likely just a method for the spammer to confirm that they have a good email address to send more SPAM.

There is probably no way to stop SPAM being sent to you but there are ways to reduce what actually reaches you. On an individual basis, you can set up filters on your email client to either delete suspicious email or move it to a junk email folder, where you can first review it before deleting it. There are also third party programs such as SpamAssassin that can filter your email. If you get SPAM, don't reply to it, that only confirms your email address. If you want to sign up for "free offers", don't use your main email address. Instead, set up an email account with one of the companies offering free web based email and use it. And avoid posting your main email address in newsgroups or online discussion groups.



About Nicom Ltd.

Nicom has been helping organizations become more efficient through the use of information technology since 1982. We provide all the services required to effectively define and implement these technologies for you.

Services We Offer:

IT Consulting

- Strategic Planning
- Requirement Analysis

Software Development

- Custom Database Applications & Systems
- System Integration

Technical Support

- Ongoing Maintenance & Support
- Procurement, Installations & Repairs

Web Design & Development

- Corporate Website Design
- e-Business & e-Commerce

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