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Partners prep for Microsoft's big Feb. 27th launch

After guaranteeing the released date channel partners hurry to get ready for the new products

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by Maxine Cheung

Although Microsoft Corp. has just released its Visual Studio 2008 Beta 2, .NET Framework 3.5 Beta 2 and Silverlight 1.0 RC solutions, both Microsoft and its partners are still in the midst of preparing for the upcoming multi-product launch that's slated for next year's February 27.



The new releases are geared towards developers and designers, said Rini Gahir, senior product manager of developer tools at Microsoft Canada.

"We have a beta program for early adopters for all of our products," Gahir said. "We've got some partners, ISVs and SIs in this program. We're working closely with these early adopters to make sure we get their feedback to build in any changes to the products."

Along with the early adopter program, Microsoft is also looking into spreading awareness and education by means of a partner tour which is set to roll out

sometime this fall. Gahir said the dates and locations have not yet been confirmed for the Canadian Microsoft launch, but assures these details will soon be made available within the next few weeks.

"We'll have sales training so the channel partner knows how to sell and talk about these new products and features," Gahir said. "We'll also have technical training for high level support."

With Visual Studio 2008 Beta 2, developers are able to build interactive and rich applications while at the same time are able to reduce development costs. With this new release, the company explains Visual Studio 2008 Beta 2 can be used to build and enhance on applications on all of the .NET Frameworks including, 2.0, 3.0 and 3.5. In addition, Microsoft says there's not much of a learning curve involved since users can take advantage of already familiar tools such as Microsoft Expression Suite when working with layouts and other controls.

The .NET Framework 3.5 Beta 2 is the latest platform for building. By utilizing ASP.NET AJAX, users can create more efficient and interactive Web experiences that work with a variety of browsers.

Also recently released is Silverlight 1.0 RC, a tool that aids in designing and developing rich and interactive Web applications using things like video animation and interactive user interfaces.

"From a developer's perspective, everything can be managed in one environment without the use of

multiple tools running," Gahir said. "As a complete kit, this is a powerful solution for partners to help build solutions."

Peterborough, Ont.-based Microsoft partner Gregory Consulting, is ramping up for these new releases. Kate Gregory, partner at Gregory Consulting believes users will find the new Visual Studio 2008 productive.

"Builds will be faster with incremental builds for managed code," Gregory said. "It's also a great time-saver because the tool's faster."

Brodie Computing, a Guelph, Ont.-based consulting and customer management relationship solution provider, is also getting ready for the big release date.

"One of the things I think is so important to our customers is that Visual Studio 2008 will bring an improvement to programmer productivity," said Karen Brodie, president of Brodie. "Whenever we can create functionality and creativity by writing less code, we can share the savings with the customers and also the ability to create richer applications."

While Brodie says her staff will be attending the Microsoft partner tour this fall, she says Brodie is already working towards next year's launch.

"We will build on our existing .NET and ASP.NET and will embrace the new functionality," Brodie said. "We see this as a way to broaden our existing scope because it's an evolution process for us."

On Microsoft's end, if margin potential of achieving anywhere from 15 to 20 per cent isn't enough to get the channel's attention, Gahir suggests downloading the solutions off the Web will be.

"Visual Studio 2008 beta 2 is an exciting milestone for us," Gahir said. "We encourage all partners to download it and give it a try. We've already been getting great feedback from partners who've tried it so far and they've just started downloading since last week."

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