Excel Pluggable Export

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James Corriveau, October 2008

Product Background / Overview

Verge Consulting is an independent consulting company which offers installation, training, and other consulting services for a 3rd party Marketing Research product line. Due to the open framework of the product line, Verge Consulting has developed bespoke applications and customized components to fill gaps within the product line.

This case study outlines the success Verge Consulting had with developing a pluggable Excel export component using the Aspose Cells software.

Requirements Scenario

The product line already had a component for exporting Microsoft Excel, Word, and PowerPoint documents. However, the Microsoft Office API's are used which are very problematic, unstable and slow. Clients were asking desperately on forums if there was any solution to the "30 minutes" (in some instances) to run an export and solutions to the frequent crashes.

The requirements for this solution were:

- Increase the speed of the Excel export

- Better the visual aspects of the Excel export

- Port existing VBA code quickly

Solution Implementation

Verge Consulting used the Aspose Cells component to implement the same functionality of the existing export. There were no thoughts of increasing the functionality beyond what already existed. This was due to the (incorrect) expectation that it would require additional time and effort to build additional "wish list" functionality.

Surprisingly, not only was existing functionality implemented quickly but other "free" benefits were also realized that were not considered initially.

Benefits

Verge Consulting immediately realized the most import requirement which was to increase the speed and stability of the export. Timing for an existing (real project) export took ~30 minutes. The new Aspose based export took ~10 second. This is not a mistake: minutes down to seconds. And, this is included the extra visual aspects that were added to the new export.

Expected Benefits

- Increase speed and stability

- Remove need to have Microsoft Office installed

- Export remotely from a server and/or desktop

- Better visual aspects

Unexpected Benefits

- Performance way beyond expectations

- Support more Excel formats (with same code base)

    o Excel 2003, Excel 2007, Excel Single File Webpage

- Support for other formats (with relatively minor effort)

    o Aspose offers additional components with very similar API's for Acrobat PDF, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft PowerPoint

Future Implementations

Verge Consulting definitely has plans to continue using the Aspose components to resolve similar issues with the built-in Word and PowerPoint exports in order to realize the significant benefits that were gained while implementing the Excel export.
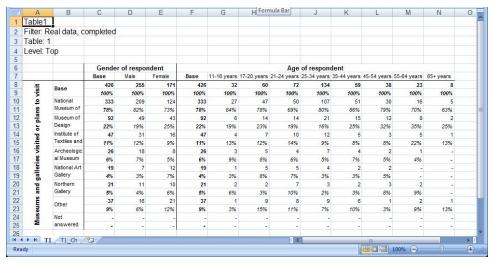
Verge Consulting is also reevaluating previous Microsoft Office automation solutions that were built previously and plan to build in the future. The Aspose components will have high precedence over Microsoft Office automation for any future projects done by Verge Consulting.
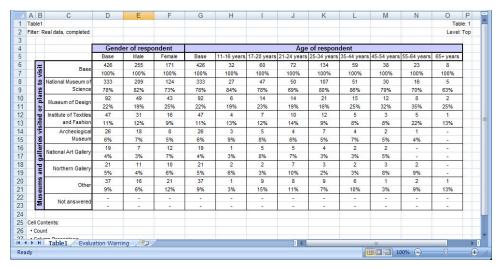
Conclusion

Verge Consulting is extremely happy with the Aspose components. The ease of use, performance and flexible formats were beyond initial expectations. Simple put… It does what they say it does, and it does it extremely well.

Regarding Aspose "the company", Verge Consulting encountered two minor (maybe even unique) issues with the components. Aspose was very, very response to the issues. Not only were the issues recognized and replicated, but Aspose fixed the issues (correctly) within 24 hours. So, it's not just about the product and its impressive capabilities but the company's loyalty to the product and desire to make customers satisfied.

Original VBA-based Export

New Aspose-based Export