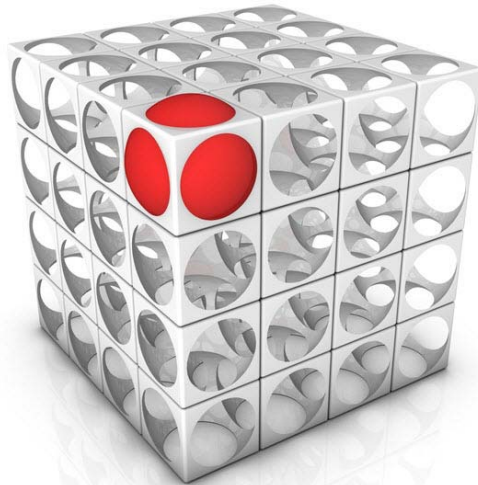


Chapter 1.

Beyond the Basics!



Time to make the box even better...

No plain, boring database for you. This book will show you how to add just the right elements for an amazing application. Enhance your forms and reports with images, charts, color and style. Make data entry effortless and customize to your client's content. And that is just a small sample of what you'll find around here. Enjoy!

Welcome!

Welcome to *Enhance Your Desktop App!* The subjects you will find here will help you develop professional and sophisticated applications. This book should be at your side while you are developing your own application because Alpha Five has so many valuable features that it is hard to absorb them all at once. This book will show you methods that you many not previously have considered and will dig into details about others.

While this book is independent of its sister publication, *Alpha Five Made Easy, The Basics and More*, it does presume that you know how to use Alpha Five. You should already know about databases, tables, field rules, sets, forms, embedded and stand-alone browses, reports, operations, how to create buttons and use Action Scripting. If you need more information on these topics, we suggest you become familiar with the material in *Alpha Five Made Easy*^{*} before you embark on these exercises.[†]

Alpha Five has two types of forms, standard desktop forms and web forms. Because it will be new to many of you, we will first show how to create a web form that can be used on the desktop. We will then move on to ways to enhance the standards with Action Scripting, charts, conditional color, Stylesheets and many more marvellous methods.

Finding and filtering records is discussed in detail, as are data controls. Images are a large part of our world today and we will show how they can be used effectively. Custom menus, toolbars and bubble help will make your application unique.

And let's not forget reports, another mainstay. We will show how to enhance them with charts and conditional color and even put one on a form. We'll wrap up with the Alpha Five built-in e-mail system.

All these extras will make give your application the functionality and fine appearance that it deserves. And we will do it all without a line of code – well almost. In the one small instance where Xbasic is required, we even supply it for you.

What's in this book...

WEB WONDERS DAZZLE DESKTOP!

In the web world, Alpha Five is revolutionary. It is far more than a database software program, it is a development environment that can be used by novice and expert alike. One of its signature pieces is the “grid component” that provides a point and click way to design forms that can be viewed on the Internet.

Standard desktop style forms cannot be used on the web because everything must pass through a browser – Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc. Regardless of the database program that creates them, these forms cannot meet the browser requirements. Since the desktop form cannot go to the web, the folks at Alpha have brought their web forms to the desktop.

So you can see how great grid components are on the desktop, we start right out with a quick demo – after which, we expect you will be champing at the bit and wondering how to create one of these marvels and add it to *your* desktop app!

- Then it's back to the desktop side of Alpha Five.

*. *Alpha Five Made Easy, The Basics and More* by Susan Hussey Bush is available at www.libertymanuals.com

†. If you are using Alpha Five with SQL, we will show you how to connect Alpha Five to your data, but to the full benefits of using Alpha Five on the desktop, such as Active- and Passive Link Tables, are described in *Alpha Five Made Easy, The Basics and More*.

CHAPTER 1. BEYOND THE BASICS!

Preparation for the Lessons

PICTURE PERFECT!

How many times have you heard it said that a picture is worth a thousand words? Your users will be impressed with images and go gaga when you add Google! And let's not forget about charts. Another winner, for sure!

DATA ENTRY MADE EASY!

Forms are all about data entry, so it's important to know which tool suits the job – do you need a drop down lists or radio buttons or a spin control? Learn which to use when. Then its time for a fun exercise that shows how to jump from the data in an embedded browse to a form with some fascinating features!

RADICAL REPORTS!

Reports can have personality, too. Since printing to PDF is almost as important as printing to a printer, color has become a consideration and so have bookmarks. Headers and footers are not old hat when you know how to use them. And there's more to munch on!

FIND IT! SORT IT! FILTER IT!

Finding and filtering data is one of the primary needs in a database and Alpha Five is loaded with tools that get the job done. This chapter will help you sort them out and choose the most apt for your application!

EXPERIMENT WITH XBASIC AND XDIALOG!

Learn how Variables and Xdialog can take your application to new highs. Don't be scared – we make them child's play!

CUSTOMIZE YOUR APP!

Tweak you application with custom menus and toolbars, add a dialog that shows the progress of a long script and add some really special bubble help. Be sure to take this car for a drive!

HOT COLOR AND COOL STYLE!

Up! Up! Up! Take your desktop forms to the sky with the right color scheme – and keep it consistent with sophisticated stylesheets.

EXCITING E-MAIL AND EFFICIENT FAXES!

How did we live without e-mail? Click a button to send a confirmation in seconds. Fax a report from your computer. Make mass mailings a part of your marketing methods!