



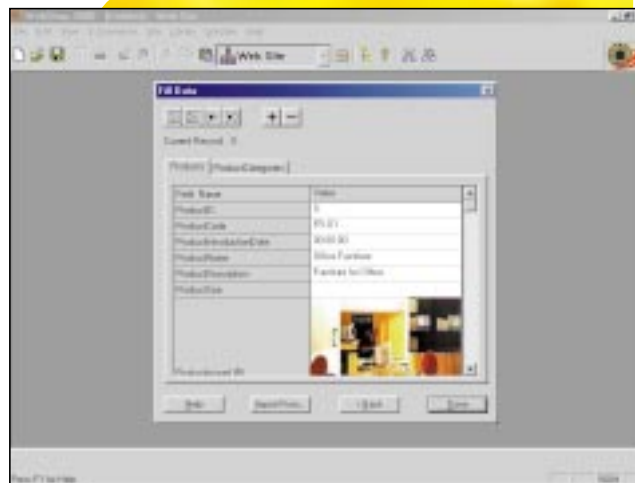
HTML editor

WebShop Designer 2000 takes a wizard approach to creating and populating your shop site, and you can add products and departments as you go.

BOOMERANG SOFTWARE WEBSHOP DESIGNER 2000

Web design studio and shop creator in one, but hard work for the uninitiated

Requirements Pentium PC or higher with 32MB RAM
Tested on Intel Pentium II 350 with 64MB RAM running Win98



PRICE £140 EX VAT £119 SUPPLIER Ivell Trading Ltd PHONE 01206 878 700 WWW www.boomerangsoftware.com PUBLISHER Boomerang Software

If design flexibility is high on your list when creating an e-commerce Web site, then maybe a 'shop-in-a-box' type solutions like Actinic, ecBuilder Pro or ShopFactory might not be quite what you are looking for. What you really need is a fully WYSIWYG Web site design package with e-commerce features built-in.

You can buy third party e-commerce add-ons for products like FrontPage, but the thinking behind WebShop Designer 2000 is that an integrated all-in-one approach should provide the best of all worlds. This software promises a one-stop Web authoring and e-commerce solution straight out of the box – and the list of features looks impressive.

Design studio

First impressions are that WebShop Designer offers all the tools you might expect from a modern Web site design package. There is a site manager for navigating your way around a project, showing both a Physical view of your Web site's folders, and a Logical view describing the structure of your site. You also get another view called Navigational, which displays the hyperlinks from one page to another. The naming of parts may be a bit confusing, but everything seems to be here.



Plenty of templates to choose from in WebShop Designer 2000, you can choose forty or so themes from four different groups, complete with colours, buttons, banners and font styles.

These views seem mostly designed for display purposes, however. You can't drag and drop pages around on the logical view like you can with FrontPage for instance, although you can use cut and paste. To implement an instant look for the site you can employ one of the many templates on offer, and with approximately forty themes to choose from you should find one to fit. As you might expect, each template comes with ready made buttons, bullets, font styles and colour schemes.

Once you have a look and feel to your taste, most of the day to day work will probably be spent at page design level in the WYSIWYG editor. Here the software uses several unique page types to achieve differing results. The most often used example would probably be the standard HTML page, and these can contain the usual tables, borders and images. Plus you can insert Java applets, automatic navigation bars and banners – much like FrontPage in this respect.

WebShop Designer can also create what are termed 'free' pages. This puts the software into Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) mode, which means the resulting page will probably only display correctly in version 4 of the market leading browsers. It also means you can take advantage of absolute positioning of page elements, which is great fun if you've been used to the limitations of standard HTML.

Web shopping

The final page type WebShop Designer supports is a 'dynamic' page, and these are used for the back-end database driven e-commerce features. Dynamic pages are actually ASP (Active Server Page) creations, and once you look at the programming involved you may well look elsewhere.

Although an e-commerce site can be started by simply picking the appropriate template and then using the add product Wizard to populate the shop, anything more in the way of layout changes will require ASP programming. There is an ASP generator attached to each dynamic page, where you can add programming elements in a tree like command structure – as far as ASP is concerned this is probably as user friendly as you can get.

So WebShop Designer 2000 is definitely not FrontPage with e-commerce built-in, the software is too heavy going and this is mainly down to a lack of usability. When it comes to e-commerce, the Wizard approach is fine but the results are basic, and design alterations are definitely not for the faint-hearted – which defeats the purpose somewhat. Tax facilities are also inadequate, but this isn't unusual in stateside software. If you want easy e-commerce in look at the 'shop-in-a-box' site generators, if you want flexible Web site design stick to the market leaders – perhaps one day someone will combine the best of both.

Tim Woodward

VAT AND E-COMMERCE

VAT for sale

How UK VAT is calculated

UK VAT is not sales tax, so it doesn't work like sales tax – hence lots of e-commerce software gets it completely wrong. If you sell from the UK your e-commerce software should be able to charge UK customers VAT on taxable products. EU customers should be charged VAT as well – but not if they can show a business to business usage and supply a tax registration number. The rest of the world doesn't get charged VAT on exports, and VAT on carriage should be applied at the same percentage it applies to the total order – that's the basics anyway, from here it gets complicated.

PC Plus

VERDICT

BOOMERANG SOFTWARE WEBSHOP DESIGNER 2000

For Lots on the menu

Against Inaccessible and hard work
Range of features.....6
Ease of use.....5
Documentation.....7
Performance.....5
Value for money.....6

5/10