DesktopX

Building a better desktop

In 1984 Apple Computer shipped the Macintosh with a static iconic based desktop interface. In 1991, Microsoft released Windows 3.0 with a static iconic based desktop interface. The computer desktop has not progressed very far since…

DesktopX changes that. DesktopX is a revolutionary program that makes the Windows desktop fully object-oriented. It enables users to take their desktops to the next level by enabling Windows to support a host of new desktop content. It's both a desktop environment and a desktop development tool.

DesktopX can:

Add desktop *objects* to the Windows desktop. Desktop objects are similar to the standard Windows icons except that they can be independently sized and interact with the system. For example, a hard drive icon on Windows would display a static image of a hard drive. A hard drive object might display the hard drive image with a small pie chart connected to it to display how much free space is available.

Add *widgets* to the Windows desktop. Widgets are the big brother to desktop objects. They are essentially mini-applications that can perform a wide variety of simple tasks such as display the weather conditions in a particular zip-code, provide stock quotes, give system information, keep track of a mailed package, display the latest headlines from a news source, etc.

Replace the Windows desktop. Users can replace their existing Windows desktop environment ("Explorer" which has the Windows Start bar at the bottom and icons on the desktop) with an alternative one created by someone else.

DesktopX Pro adds the ability to export widgets as "gadgets". Gadgets are the same as widgets except for one crucial difference – gadgets are stand-alone programs and do not require a DesktopX run-time to already be installed on the person's computer to use. A gadget can be sent to anyone running Windows 2000 and XP and used just like any other program.

DesktopX Feature Overview

When a user loads DesktopX 3, they are presented with the DesktopX Manager. This enables users to quickly access the part of DesktopX they want. Specifically, it lets people who want to *use* content (objects, widgets, and desktops) created for DesktopX be able to do so without interacting with the portions of DesktopX designed for people who want to *develop* content with DesktopX.

In fact, the DesktopX Client version of DesktopX ($14.95) does not include the "Create" option on the DesktopX Manager – it is purely for *using* DesktopX created content.

DesktopX comes with a host of high quality objects, widgets, and desktops for users to try out. But they can get more on www.wincustomize.com

There are 3 types of DesktopX content users and developers deal with: **Objects**, **Widgets**, and **Desktops**.

Desktop Objects

At the most basic level, DesktopX gives Windows users the ability to have live objects on their desktops. These live objects can be of any size or shape. They can also respond to user input or system events. This makes them ideal for creating "super icons" that can be everything from simple system monitoring to animated icons.

For example, creating an animated "icon" (object) with DesktopX is very easy. A user creates a series of frames in their favorite graphics package, saves it as a .BMP or .PNG and then in DesktopX points to that image and tells DesktopX how many frames of animation there are and how fast to play it. The user now has an animated icon.

Similarly, DesktopX objects can respond to messages. Instead of "My Computer" being merely a static icon, a DesktopX object of my computer might change color depending on CPU temperature or disk space available. The email icon might change how it looks or play a sound when there is email waiting.
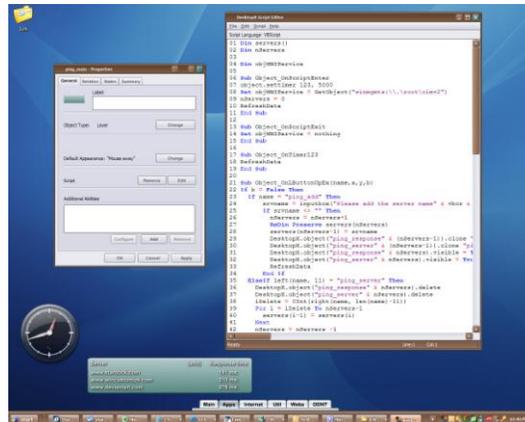
Desktop Widgets

Users/Developers can take DesktopX objects and group them together to do increasingly sophisticated tasks. When they are satisfied with the results, they can export it as a .EXE called a "widget". These mini-applications can be used for a variety of things both useful and, frankly, useless. An example of a useless widget might be an animated kitten that chases your mouse cursor.

Popular (and useful) widgets include calendars, calculators, weather monitoring, MP3 players, sticky notes, clocks, stock monitors, news feeds, search bars, and picture frames. There are thousands of useful objects and widgets already available.

So how are widgets different from say a traditional program? What makes widgets special, as a concept, is that casual users (non-programmers) can create them. There is no "compiler" involved. Often times, a widget can be made through the existing GUI options in DesktopX. If there aren't options built in, users can use JavaScript or VB Script for the code logic part.

Figure 1: What might take tens of thousands of line of code with a traditional compiler can be created with DesktopX as a widget in a few dozen lines in just minutes.

Desktops

As its name implies, you can also use DesktopX to build a completely new desktop environment. Movie studios, corporations, and end users alike use DesktopX to create completely new desktops.

DesktopX can provide the functionality of the standard Windows desktop (Start menu, system tray, taskbar, etc.) but allow users to control where these items are displayed and how they will look.

As a result, virtually any type of environment can be created using DesktopX.

Below are some examples:

Figure 2: An alternative vision of what Windows might look like

Figure 3: A completely alternative desktop

Figure 4: Media Desktop
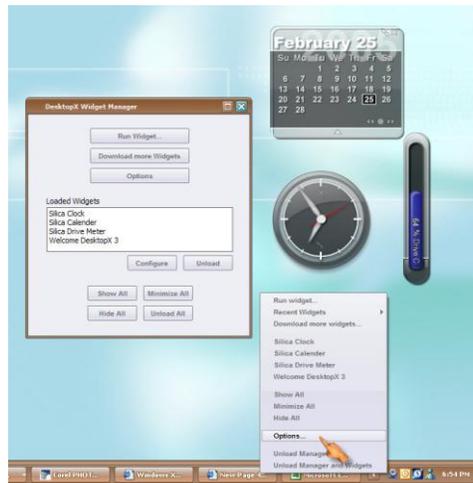
DesktopX Photo Gallery

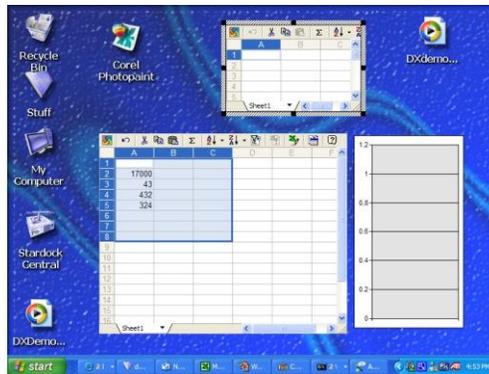**Figure 4: Managing widgets with DesktopX's Widget Manager.**

Figure 5 For Developers, COM objects can be embedded in the desktop. A Microsoft Excel control can be made into a DesktopX object that interact with Apple's Quicktime video player also embedded.

Figure 6 This custom desktop completely changes the look and feel of Windows. This is one reason why movie studios use DesktopX.

Figure 7 The ultimate kid's desktop. Only the websites specifically defined are accessible because this desktop is the browser and there is no field to enter in a URL.

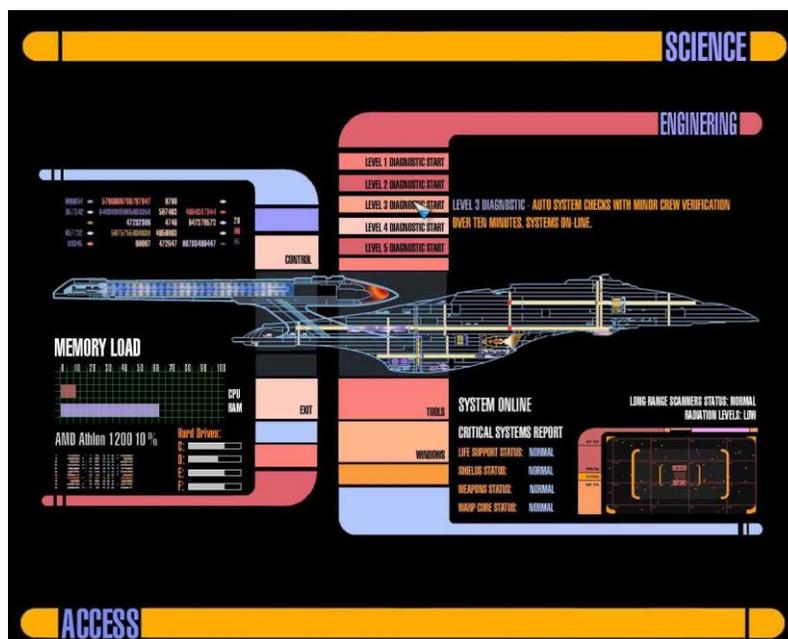**Figure 8: Widgets come in all shapes and sizes to serve a wide variety of purposes**

Figure 9: Using DesktopX to create a trekkie desktop

Pricing & Availability

Feature	Client	Standard	Pro
Load alternative desktops created by others.	✔	✔	✔
Load objects & widgets	✔	✔	✔
Create objects & widgets		✔	✔
Create desktops		✔	✔
Scripting support via JScript and VB Script		✔	✔
Export objects as stand alone programs!			✔
Target Market	End Users	Power Users	Developers
Price	$14.95	$24.95	$69.95

A trial version of DesktopX is available for download at http://www.desktopx.net.

Contacts

Product Manager: Brad Wardell (bwardell@stardock.com)
Stardock's home page: http://www.stardock.com
Object Desktop home page: http://www.objectdesktop.com
DesktopX home page: http://www.desktopx.net
Order by phone: 1-888-STARDOCK

Specifications

Version: 3.1
Requires: Windows 2000 or Windows XP
Category: Desktop Enhancement utility designed to enable users of Microsoft Windows to add new types of content to the Windows desktop.

DesktopX comes in 3 forms:
- **DesktopX Client:** $14.95. Enables users/companies to make use of DesktopX created content.
- **DesktopX Standard**: $24.95. Allows users/companies to use and create DesktopX content.
- **DesktopX Pro**: $69.95. Allows developers to export DesktopX widget content as stand-alone programs called "Gadgets".

Developer: Stardock (www.stardock.com)
Home page: www.desktopx.net