



Shedding Light on Silverlight

Microsoft's Platform for the Next Generation of Web Applications





Presenter

Todd Snoddy, MCSD
Software Development Practice Manager, Sophicity

ToddSnoddy@sophicity.com
770-670-6940 x104





About This Talk

- What is Silverlight
- Who is using Silverlight
- Why to use Silverlight for Business Applications
- Drawbacks to using Silverlight for Business Applications
- Alternatives to Silverlight
- Q/A



Web Application Trends

1. Static HTML with server side code (ASP, Perl...)
2. Client side Javascript / DHTML
3. Java applets
4. Flash
5. Silverlight and competing technologies



Problems with previous technologies

1. Inconsistent browser support for standards (e.g. CSS)
2. Heavy load on web server and network for large web applications
3. Web applications could not run without network connectivity
4. Hard to debug applications running within browser

Introducing Silverlight

Microsoft's Silverlight is a next generation technology that provides solutions to yesterday's web application problems.

What is Silverlight?

- Small (approx. 4.6 MB) browser plug-in
- Provides features that allow developers to create Rich Internet Applications (RIA)
- Cross platform - runs on Windows, Mac OS X, Linux
- Cross browser - Supports multiple browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari
- Current official release is version 2, with version 3 in beta and due to release later this year



Demo

Seeing is believing.



Who is using Silverlight?

1. NBC - Used it for streaming thousands of hours of video for the Olympics in China last year
2. Netflix - Using it as a cross platform player for streaming video on demand
3. The web site <http://silverlight.net> has an online gallery with links to almost 600 sites and applications using Silverlight.
4. Georgia Municipal Association - Using it for complex next generation application for managing retirement plans

Demo of a Business Application

A prototype of a serious business application using
Silverlight



Why use Silverlight?

- Better user experience, leading to increased user satisfaction
- Consistent behavior across browsers
- Increased application scalability by reducing load on web server and network



Why use Silverlight?

- Upcoming version of Silverlight (version 3 - currently in beta) supports running disconnected from the network, as well as standalone outside of the browser
- Excellent developer tools and debugging support, similar to desktop application development

Drawbacks to using Silverlight

- Potential security issues to consider
- Older platforms not supported - consider the target audience for the application
- Learning curve for developers not familiar with Silverlight or Windows Presentation Foundation (WPF) technologies



Alternatives to Silverlight

- **AJAX** - Builds on top of DHTML/Javascript. Can be fairly complex to develop with, although newer technologies like jQuery make things easier.
- **JavaFx** - Supports desktop, browser, and mobile phones. Runs on Windows, Mac, Windows Mobile, Android, planned future support for Linux. Uses language called JavaFxScript.



Alternatives to Silverlight

- **Flash** - Undoubtedly the current market leader in this space, supports more platforms and OS's. Uses scripting language called ActionScript, similar to Javascript.
- **Adobe AIR** - Provides browser-less runtime for Rich Internet Applications that can be deployed to the desktop. Uses technologies such as Javascript and Flash.



Additional Resources

- <http://silverlight.net> - Home to all things Silverlight
- <http://quince.infragistics.com> - Recommended user experience patterns and guidelines



Thank You!

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