Web Design Series- Dreamweaver 8 And CS3: What's The Difference?
By: Semul Johnson

So you now have the Dreamweaver 8 and you are just not quite sure whether your web design company is willing to shell out some more to upgrade to the latest CS3 version. This is actually a challenging decision to make for your web design company. As a web designer, you have to work with the software, so it is both your right and responsibility to decide whether the new version will help you come up with improved web design. This makes you wonder too: Now that Adobe has already bought Macromedia, what have they done to it? Have they ruined it, or have they made it so much better that you should already kick yourself now for not buying it earlier? Well, if I were to be asked, I stand somewhere in between these two.

Web design feature #1: Adobe and Dreamweaver Together

Your web design company may find it reason enough to buy the new Dreamweaver CS3 because of its full integration with Adobe graphics tools like those found in Photoshop. When you have an image, you can directly click on it and edit right away.

Web design feature #2: CSS Support Made Better

One of the best features found in the new Dreamweaver CS3 is the integration of better CSS layouts. These layouts are all well-commented in the code, so it can be pretty easy to start knowing how CSS layouts tend to work. They now have over 32 layouts that you can choose from in 1, 2 or 3-column formats, in fixed and liquid type web designs. You may also define the position where you want the CSS to be when creating a new page, not to mention how easy it is to move the CSS styles around. You can stat out by styling the tag directly into the HTML through a style attribute and move it to your style sheet. With Dreamweaver CS3, you will only have to right click on the tag and set it to “Convert Inline CSS to Rule” to build a custom class for that specific style or to create one full CSS selector.

Web design feature #3: Mobile Support

Your web design company will also be pleased to know about the mobile support integrated into the new CS3 version. Creating pages made especially for mobile devices have been popular in the recent years, but it can be difficult to design one which is compatible both on mobile and web browser platforms. However, with the integration of the Adobe Device Central into the CS3, Dreamweaver now makes it easy to view your pages in cell phones.

Web design feature #4: Ajax Implementation Now Made Possible

The Dreamweaver CS3 now has integrated the Spry framework so that it adding Ajax widgets and effects onto your pages have now been made possible. All you do is to drag and drop them and incorporate them into your dataset. Dreamweaver CS3 features Spry components which include: widgets for tables, lists and forms: transition effects such as growing, shrinking, highlighting and fading, and integration of data from XML feeds such as in database or RSS.

Web design feature #5: XLST Support

Another amazing feature about the CS3 that both you and your web design company will love is the extensive support it has for XLST through the use of XML files as database source. Through XSLT, it is easy to view the XML in a tree form and integrate it right into your HTML document. This simply means that if you have a number of XML files set in the same format; it is relatively simple to create one single template for all of them in the new CS3 using XLST.

Web design feature #6: Support for Mac Intel Processors

If your web design company works on an Intel-based Macintosh platform, you will be happy with the performance improvements of the CS3. It is now native to the platform and does not run on Rosetta so that it loads a lot quickly than before. In fact, CS3 claims that what loads in Dreamweaver 8 for 4 minutes can load in the CS3 in under one minute. You can do further testing to confirm this.

To Upgrade or Not to Upgrade

That is the question. In my case, I have upgraded and haven't regretted any of it. I appreciate the new CSS features, the XSLT support and the Device Central. However, your web design company may see one piece that is still missing, which is that of web design time and programming. As in the previous versions, the Dreamweaver CS3 is also still difficult to use in terms of live databases and server side scripts. However, there may be extensions to make things easier for you. On a general whole, go on and upgrade and you will most likely never have to look back.

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